

LENT 2021: Our Hope Renewed

Ash Wednesday



But when you pray, go to your private room and, when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in that secret place, and your Father who sees all that is done in secret will reward you.

Opening Prayer

Lord God on this Ash Wednesday,
grant that we may begin with holy fasting
this campaign of Christian service,
so that, as we take up battle against spiritual evils,
we may be armed with weapons of self-restraint.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

Readings for Ash Wednesday - Year B

First Reading: Joel 2: 12-18
Psalm: Psalm 50(51): 3-6,12-14,17
Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 5:20-6:2

Gospel Reading: Matthew 6: 1-6, 16-18

Jesus said to his disciples: 'Be careful not to parade your good deeds before men to attract their notice; by doing this you will lose all reward from your Father in heaven. So when you give alms, do not have it trumpeted before you; this is what the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets to win men's admiration. I tell you solemnly, they have had their reward. But when you give alms, your left hand must not know what your right is doing; your almsgiving must be secret, and your Father who sees all that is done in secret will reward you.

'And when you pray, do not imitate the hypocrites: they love to say their prayers standing up in the synagogues and at the street corners for people to see them; I tell you solemnly, they have had their reward. But when you pray, go to your private room and, when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in that secret place, and your Father who sees all that is done in secret will reward you.

'When you fast do not put on a gloomy look as the hypocrites do: they pull long faces to let men know they are fasting. I tell you solemnly, they have had their reward. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that no one will know you are fasting except your Father who sees all that is done in secret; and your Father who sees all that is done in secret will reward you.'

Lectio Divina

Reading

Take your time and read the passage. Get a sense of what it is saying. Read the passage a second time. Listen for any words or phrases that strike you, and listen in your heart. Be attentive to detail. Note versus or phrases that stand out to you. Where to understand meaning and background.

In this passage... My favourite verse was... I noticed...

Reflecting

Read the passage again, slowly. As you pause on the words or phrases that strike you, take time to consider what the word, phrase, or passage means, particularly its connection to your life. Imagine being present to hear the passage or witness the story.

This reminds me of... If I were there... I can connect this story to...

Responding

Read the passage again, slowly. Consider now how God has spoken to you in this passage and respond back to him. You may want to consider how this passage is asking you to act differently. Thank God for his word. Ask him to lead you into deeper understanding.

Dear Jesus... Thank you God for... Please help me understand...

Remaining

Now take some time to simply remain in the presence of God. Quiet expression of love between you and God. Note what God is trying to teach you through the passage and time of prayer.

I think Jesus is teaching me... Lord, I love you for... I believe...

Reflection

With the approach of Ash Wednesday, a common question to pass the lips of children is, "what are you giving up for Lent?". Displays of bravado with some would come in the form of a long list of sweet treats that they would undertake to forgo. Others would give up playing video games, while some would take up the task of doing the dishes or cleaning their bedroom. And there's always one who would declare that for Lent this year they were giving up homework. Once

the bravado wears off, Lent becomes an endurance test to see who can make it to Easter Sunday without giving in to temptation. While mostly associated with children, some adults take on the Lenten tradition of fasting, often taking on the task to abstain from chocolate or wine. Generally something we are comfortable doing. Something that makes it all a little easier, and not so much of a sacrifice.

Since Pope Francis became Pope in 2013, he has called us to different types of fasting for Lent. Pope Francis has referenced these over the years and developed them. They are Lenten observances that provide more of a challenge, and are more uncomfortable than comfortable familiarity. In 2017 he said:

- Fast from Hurting Words and say Kind words.
- Fast from Sadness and be filled with Gratitude.
- Fast from Anger and be filled with Patience.
- Fast from Pessimism and be filled with Hope.
- Fast from Worries and Trust in God.
- Fast from Complaints and contemplate Simplicity.
- Fast from Pressures and be Prayerful.
- Fast from Bitterness and fill your heart with Joy.
- Fast from Selfishness and be Compassionate to others.
- Fast from Grudges and be Reconciled.
- Fast from Words and be Silent so you can listen.

As you begin out on your Lent journey this year, what fasting can you do that will push you out of your comfort zone? What can you take on, or refrain from, to make this time a more fruitful, spiritual Lenten season for 2021?

Closing Prayer

Pour out a spirit of compunction, O God,
on those who bow before your majesty,
and by your mercy may they merit the rewards you promise
to those who do penance.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

May almighty God bless us,
the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.
Amen.