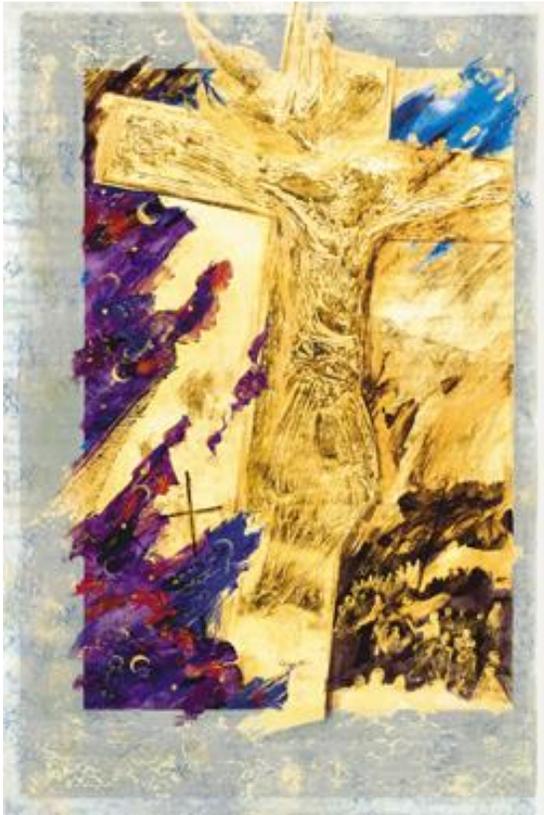


# Lenten Reflections

March 6, 2019



“...return to me with your whole heart...  
rend your *hearts*, not your garments,  
and return to the LORD, your God.”

*Joel 2:12-13*

It’s sometimes so hard to open our minds and hearts completely to another, to allow them to see who we really are...our smiles and our tears, our hopes and our anxieties, our victories and our failures...and yet this is exactly what we’re called to do during this sacred season of Lent.

The Creator and Father of all really has no need for offerings of chocolate...or wine...cell phones or computer games...He is seeking hearts open to accept His tenderness and mercy, His all-encompassing love and mercy, and minds open to embracing his wisdom and His wonderful vision for our lives, both now and throughout eternity.

As we enter into perhaps the most spiritual of all of our Church seasons, it is easy to fall back into the patterns of celebrating this holy season as we did as children...and indeed, the three cornerstones of Lenten preparation that we learned as when we were young remain the same: fasting, prayer and almsgiving. But as adults in our contemporary world, we come to realize that fasting, prayer and almsgiving are not the actual *goals* of our Lenten preparation, but rather the ways to achieve *the* true goal, which is the uniting of our hearts with our loving Father.

Our traditional “fasts” ...from chocolate, sweets, meat on Fridays, cursing...do, of course, have merit, for the Lord loves our efforts. Frequently, however, these “fasts” end when Lent ends. What if we tried something a little different this Lent, something that will help us open up a “new heart”...something with a lasting effect on our lives now and in the future? Can each of us select a habit or attitude

(and we all have them!) that keeps us from being whom God is calling us to be ...and *consciously* give up that habit or attitude for Lent? It is likely that once Lent has ended, we'll continue to practice the "fast" from actions that keep us from being the very best version of ourselves.

Are you willing to do it? Are you open to identifying *one* "non-traditional" fast that might "fit the bill"...perhaps a commitment to "fast" from criticizing others, from making insensitive comments, from judging others, ...even if it means eliminating gossiping, snarky emails, Facebook or Twitter posts (or responses), including negative political or societal comments?

Let's start *now*, for... "Behold, *now* is a very acceptable time; behold, *now* is the day of salvation." 2 Cor 6:2

*Virginia Topolski, Director, Human Resources*

## **Ash Wednesday**

### **Lectionary: 219**

#### **Reading 1**

[JL 2:12-18](#)

Even now, says the LORD,  
return to me with your whole heart,  
with fasting, and weeping, and mourning;  
Rend your hearts, not your garments,  
and return to the LORD, your God.  
For gracious and merciful is he,  
slow to anger, rich in kindness,  
and relenting in punishment.  
Perhaps he will again relent  
and leave behind him a blessing,  
Offerings and libations  
for the LORD, your God.

Blow the trumpet in Zion!  
proclaim a fast,  
call an assembly;  
Gather the people,  
notify the congregation;  
Assemble the elders,  
gather the children  
and the infants at the breast;  
Let the bridegroom quit his room  
and the bride her chamber.  
Between the porch and the altar  
let the priests, the ministers of the LORD, weep,  
And say, "Spare, O LORD, your people,  
and make not your heritage a reproach,

with the nations ruling over them!  
Why should they say among the peoples,  
'Where is their God?'"

Then the LORD was stirred to concern for his land  
and took pity on his people.

**Responsorial Psalm**

[PS 51:3-4, 5-6AB, 12-13, 14 AND 17](#)

R. (see 3a) **Be merciful, O Lord, for we have sinned.**

Have mercy on me, O God, in your goodness;  
in the greatness of your compassion wipe out my offense.  
Thoroughly wash me from my guilt  
and of my sin cleanse me.

R. **Be merciful, O Lord, for we have sinned.**

For I acknowledge my offense,  
and my sin is before me always:  
"Against you only have I sinned,  
and done what is evil in your sight."

R. **Be merciful, O Lord, for we have sinned.**

A clean heart create for me, O God,  
and a steadfast spirit renew within me.  
Cast me not out from your presence,  
and your Holy Spirit take not from me.

R. **Be merciful, O Lord, for we have sinned.**

Give me back the joy of your salvation,  
and a willing spirit sustain in me.  
O Lord, open my lips,  
and my mouth shall proclaim your praise.

R. **Be merciful, O Lord, for we have sinned.**

**Reading 2**

[2 COR 5:20—6:2](#)

Brothers and sisters:

We are ambassadors for Christ,  
as if God were appealing through us.

We implore you on behalf of Christ,  
be reconciled to God.

For our sake he made him to be sin who did not know sin,  
so that we might become the righteousness of God in him.

Working together, then,  
we appeal to you not to receive the grace of God in vain.  
For he says:

*In an acceptable time I heard you,*

*and on the day of salvation I helped you.*

Behold, now is a very acceptable time;  
behold, now is the day of salvation.

**Verse Before The Gospel**      [SEE PS 95:8](#)

If today you hear his voice,  
harden not your hearts.

**Gospel**      [MT 6:1-6, 16-18](#)

Jesus said to his disciples:  
"Take care not to perform righteous deeds  
in order that people may see them;  
otherwise, you will have no recompense from your heavenly Father.  
When you give alms,  
do not blow a trumpet before you,  
as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets  
to win the praise of others.  
Amen, I say to you,  
they have received their reward.  
But when you give alms,  
do not let your left hand know what your right is doing,  
so that your almsgiving may be secret.  
And your Father who sees in secret will repay you.

"When you pray,  
do not be like the hypocrites,  
who love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on street corners  
so that others may see them.  
Amen, I say to you,  
they have received their reward.  
But when you pray, go to your inner room,  
close the door, and pray to your Father in secret.  
And your Father who sees in secret will repay you.

"When you fast,  
do not look gloomy like the hypocrites.  
They neglect their appearance,  
so that they may appear to others to be fasting.  
Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward.  
But when you fast,  
anoint your head and wash your face,  
so that you may not appear to be fasting,

except to your Father who is hidden.

And your Father who sees what is hidden will repay you."