

**ASH WEDNESDAY**



**What a beautiful invitation awaits us today**

**“Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and merciful,” the prophet Joel urges us. Advice that helps us set a positive, encouraging theme, as we begin our journey towards Easter.**

**Today we hear words while receiving ashes on our foreheads in the sign of the cross, marking us as willing travellers on this journey of faith. We are reminded of our mortality, as we are called to humility, to live our lives well, to love abundantly and give generously.**

**In following Jesus, we are reminded to honor his life well lived; his sacrificial and atoning love; his gracious generosity.**

***“We are called to do no less!”***

**There are a million other things we need to do or want to do, instead of going to Church today, but God is calling us to set aside these things in order to attend Mass.**

**Let us remember that God does not try to make anyone love him, he simply invites us into a deeper relationship with him.**

***Let us accept this loving invitation!***

**We do a lot of things out of habit, without giving it much thought. However, we run the risk of our spiritual lives becoming a monotonous routine, or something we just go through the motions with as well, if we aren't paying attention.**

**Ash Wednesday rouses us out of our sluggishness and beacons us to grow closer to God and become aware of our tendencies to sin. We are urged to repent of our sins and become filled with the desire to be made clean and whole again, to set things right with God, to seek his forgiveness.**

**“Have mercy o Lord, we have sinned.”**

**Psalm 5**

**GOSPEL Matthew 6:1-6; 16-18**

**Jesus said to the disciples: “Beware of practicing your piety before people in order to be seen by others.”  
*“when you give alms, pray, fast, do so to your Father, who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.”***

**REFLECTION**

**In the gospel today, Jesus tells us not to draw attention to ourselves, by doing good works for others to see.**

**THOUGHT TO PONDER**

**Perhaps this Lent we might think about doing the opposite as well. Allow others to see that we are sinners and that we are trying to learn to overcome these sinful inclinations and become better people.**

**Sometimes it can be a healing thing to learn that other couples have had problems in their marriage too, or to meet parents that have children with problems similar to their own, or to hear a fellow Catholic talk about their struggles with an addiction and what helped.**

**We are on this journey together, for the long term, as a family. There is no such thing as a perfect family, but every Lent we do try to work on becoming a better person.**

**Let us journey together as a family trying to work on becoming better people, taking time and making an effort to right our wrongs, to enjoy the freedom in living the righteousness that lives in our Lord**

### **ASH WEDNESDAY PRAYER**

**Jesus, you place on my forehead the sign of my sister Death;  
"Remember that you are dust and to dust you shall return."**

**How not to hear her wise advice?**

**One day my life on earth will end; the limits on my years are set, though I know not the day or hour.**

**Shall I be ready to go to meet you?**

**Let this holy season be a time of grace for me and all this world.**

**Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain wisdom of heart"**

**O Jesus, you place on my forehead the sign of your saving Cross:**

**"Turn from sin and be faithful to the Gospel."**

**How can I turn from sin, unless I turn to you?**

**You speak, you raise your hand, you touch my mind and call my name.**

**"Turn to your God again."**

**These days of your favour leave a blessing, as you pass on me and all your people.**





**POPE FRANCIS**

**“Lent is presented to us as a shout of truth and hope.”**

**It is possible that all is made new and different in a world of destructive forces twisting the world and of history, because God remains, “ rich in kindness and mercy, always ready to forgive.”**

***“May God encourage us to begin anew time and again.”***

**An opportunity to grow, to mature in an encounter with the Lord, made visible in the suffering face of so many children, in the trembling hands of the elders, who have been forgotten, and in the trembling knees of so many families who continue to face life without finding anyone to assist them.**

**Today the words of the prophet Joel are strong and challenging;  
“Rend your heart, not your clothes, be converted to the Lord, your God.”  
Paul asks, “Be reconciled to God.”**

***Let us accept God’s invitation by rending our hearts,  
to experience in serene and silent prayer, the gentle tenderness of God.***

***Let us rend our hearts;  
-to hear the echo of so many lives, that indifference to suffering does not paralyze us.  
-to be able to love with the love, with which we beloved.  
-to console with consolation, with which we are consoled and to share what we have received.***

***We are invited in these 40 days to convert to the same holiness as God’s, to receive the graces, and to pray that all may experience the salvation won for us by Christ by his death and resurrection.***

***Let us all as a sign of our faith, next to prayer and penance, by grace and with love,  
take effective measures to alleviate the pain and sufferings of so many who walk alongside us.***

**“No act of virtue can be large if it does not benefit another.  
If you do not do good to others, you do not accomplish anything great.”**

**(St. John Chrysostom)**

**(Excerpts from address 2014)**

**“I wish you a holy Lent, a penitential and fruitful lent, and please, I ask that you all pray for me.”**

**“May Jesus bless you, and the Blessed Virgin care for you.”**

**Card. Jorge Mario Bergoglio. S.J.**

