



START
ANEW IN
CHRIST



DAILY
REFLECTIONS
FOR LENT
YEAR C
2025

WEDNESDAY 5TH MARCH

Ash Wednesday

Joel 2:12-18 | Ps 50:3-6, 12-14, 17 | 2 Cor 5:20-6:2 | Mt 6:1-6, 16-18

WE START AGAIN

Take a moment to quieten your mind and heart and ask the Holy Spirit to join you in this time of prayer.

“But whenever you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.” (*Matthew 6:6*)

We come forward, humbled and contrite, aware of our brokenness and in need of healing. We start anew in Christ. The minister reaches out, thumb blackened with ash, and signs us on the forehead: ‘Repent and believe in the Gospel.’

In the Gospel, Jesus seems to be speaking against outward signs of piety, such as this Ash Wednesday ritual. However, this would be too simplistic a reading of Jesus’ intention and understanding. Jesus himself engaged in outward signs and rituals, such as his baptism by John in the River Jordan (*Matthew 3:13-15*).

Jesus is not opposed to ritual; rather, he denounces mere ritual – the empty gesture, the false piety aimed at appearances of righteousness.

Similarly, Jesus insists that when we pray, we ought to go to our room and shut the door. However, since Jesus himself prayed publicly, we must reject an overly simplistic reading of the text.

Some early Christian writers (e.g. Origen) interpret this passage with

a more spiritual meaning, teaching that the room where we pray in ‘secret’ is our heart and soul. Thus, Jesus teaches that our prayer must transcend the external.

As we begin this Lenten journey, let us examine our intentions. Am I here for just another Ash Wednesday, or do I desire a change of heart, deeper integrity, a turning away from sin and a renewal of virtue? Do I truly intend to ground my life in the meaning of this ritual?

May our Lenten disciplines, assisted by the grace of this season, deepen our integrity. Thus, when we gather for the great feast of Easter, the words of praise on our lips may truly echo the prayer of our hearts.

FOR REFLECTION

What change of heart do I need to start anew in Christ?

Are there any Lenten disciplines I feel called to practice?

CONCLUDING PRAYER

God of grace and mercy, as we start anew on this Lenten journey, we pray for the transformation of our hearts. May the praises on our lips truly echo the deepest prayers of our heart. Amen.

THURSDAY 6TH MARCH

Thursday after Ash Wednesday

Deut 30:15-20 | Ps 1:1-4, 6 | Lk 9:22-25

TAKE UP YOUR CROSS

Take a moment to quieten your mind and heart and ask the Holy Spirit to join you in this time of prayer.

“If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me.”

(Luke 9:23)

We live in a world dominated by glossy posters and sleek advertising campaigns. Companies invest substantial time and resources honing their sales pitches so as to stand out from the crowd and persuade us to part with our hard-earned money. They tend to emphasise the benefits of their products or services, downplaying any associated costs.

Jesus, on the other hand, is remarkably upfront with his disciples regarding the cost of following him. His honesty is so radical that it's a wonder anyone did. In today's Gospel, Jesus insists upon a price that is so steep that a greater cost can scarcely be conceived. Christ's followers must walk alongside him on the path to Calvary, bearing the burden of their own crosses. For Jesus' original disciples, this summons was nothing less than a sharing in his own torturous execution.

Few of us are likely to face a literal cross; even so, Jesus' summons remains valid for us as well. Especially in this season of Lent,

we are called to contemplate a terrifying truth. The world will offer us the ‘easy way’, with its countless distractions - gizmos, gadgets, and superfluous services, none of which truly satisfy. None are worth the price. To follow Christ, however, while not easy, leads to a sharing in the Eternal Life of God. Jesus invites us to pursue the Kingdom, not as one good among many, but as the one good which is worth sacrificing all else to obtain. Finally, if we do not obtain the Kingdom of God, we will find no consolation, even if we possess all else. Conversely, having obtained it, we will want for nothing else.

FOR REFLECTION

In a world of relentless consumerism, how do you define ‘enough’?
What is the daily cross you take up when you follow Jesus?

CONCLUDING PRAYER

Christ Jesus, you call us to follow you always. Grant us the strength to walk wherever you lead so that we may become who you have created us to be. Amen.

FRIDAY 7TH MARCH

Friday after Ash Wednesday

Is 58:1-9 | Ps 50:3-6, 18-19 | Mt 9:14-15

THEN THEY WILL FAST

Take a moment to quieten your mind and heart and ask the Holy Spirit to join you in this time of prayer.

“The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast.” (*Matthew 9:15*)

Somewhere, languishing deep within, we find insatiable desire. This is a two-edged sword. On the one hand, we desire it because we perceive a good that fits our appetite. Yet, whatever satisfaction may be found in the goods of this earth, we desire still more. We must learn to rule our hungers, or else our appetites will rule us.

The season of Lent traditionally revolves around three key disciplines, namely prayer, fasting and charitable giving (sometimes referred to as almsgiving). In today’s Gospel, Jesus affirms the importance of fasting, stating that his disciples will fast in due season.

In the strict sense, fasting means abstaining from some or all food for a period of time. During the season of Lent, there are two ‘strict’ days of fasting, namely Ash Wednesday and Good Friday, when we only eat a little. However, the entire season of Lent is a time for fasting, in the ‘less strict’ sense of eating with a greater sense of restraint. Often, this takes the form of ‘giving something up for Lent’, perhaps some kind of treat or dessert. A recent trend, which is also

helpful and complementary, is to give up social media or other forms of digital distraction.

Fasting can help us to grow in self-control and master our appetites. Yet, self-discipline alone cannot achieve this; spiritual growth is always a cooperation of the work of grace. However, fasting is not just about self-mastery. In giving up a little food and by limiting unnecessary distractions, we are drawn to recognise in God alone, the truest object of our desires. In the presence of the 'Bridegroom', the disciples do not fast because they find in him one who can finally satisfy the otherwise insatiable desires of the human heart.

FOR REFLECTION

What are the appetites in your life that you need to learn to rule to grow in self-control?

Take a moment to ask God for his grace to grow in self-discipline and to overcome unhealthy habits.

CONCLUDING PRAYER

Gracious God, in this season of fasting, attune our hearts to you so we may find in Christ Jesus the one who alone can satisfy the insatiable desires of our hearts. Amen.



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