



Ash Wednesday
Wednesday 1st March 2017

Day of Fast and Abstinence

Keynote: Remember you are dust! Repent and believe the Good News!

The Prophet Joel 2: 12-18

'Now, now – it is the Lord who speaks – come back to me with all your heart, fasting, weeping, mourning.' The prophet calls upon the whole community, *'order a fast, proclaim a solemn assembly, call the people together... assemble the elders, gather the young children, even the infants at the breast... between vestibule and altar let the priests, ministers of the Lord, lament. Let them say, "Spare your people, Lord."* The prophet is confident that the Lord God will have pity upon his people as they repent of their evil ways.

Responsorial Psalm 50 [51] – A penitential psalm seeking God's mercy

Second Letter of Paul to the Corinthians 5: 20-6:2

Paul reminds his readers, *'we are ambassadors for Christ; it is as though God were appealing through us, and the appeal that we make in Christ's name is: be reconciled with God.'* The apostle reminds his readers that Christ is the sinless one sent by God who has come among us, *'so that in him we might become the goodness of God.'* Urging us his fellow workers, Paul says, *'we beg you once again not to neglect the grace of God that you have received... now is the favourable time; this is the day of salvation.'*

Gospel according to Matthew 6: 1-6, 16-18

Jesus warns his disciples, *'Be careful not to parade your good deeds before others 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.'* So our almsgiving is to be done in secret. *'When you pray',* says Jesus, *'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... to let men know they are fasting... 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... will reward you.'*

Prayer, almsgiving and fasting – giving things up for Lent – doing something positive to enrich the poor or the needy, these are the traditional spiritual exercises we are urged to undertake as part of our keep-fit regime and to deepen our relationship with God and our neighbour, then *'Your Father who sees all that is done in secret will reward you'*.

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