

ASH WEDNESDAY



We Belong to Christ

God of all ages,
your people gather before you
to be marked by the sign of faith.
May this universal sign of redemption
remind us, as we begin our Lenten
journey,
that we belong to Christ.
May we, like all of your disciples,
be on guard
against making impressions,
learn to offer prayer wrapped
in silence,
and fast with joyful hearts.
We ask you to bless these forty days
of preparation,
for we long to draw closer to you.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Wednesday, March 6, 2019

Torn Hearts



Today's Readings: Joel 2:12–18; Psalm 51:3–4, 5–6, 12–13, 14, 17; 2 Corinthians 5:20–6:2; Matthew 6:1–6, 16–18. Through the prophet Joel, the Lord tells us to rend our hearts, not our garments. To rend means to rip or tear apart. Throughout the Hebrew Scriptures, we hear stories of those who rend their garments as an expression of grief, pain, or sorrow. The traditional garment that the prophet references usually had a seam at the collar that allowed for a tear to be made in the front of the tunic, stopping just beyond the heart. The seam allowed for the garment to be easily mended. The Lord tells us that with our whole heart, through tears and sorrow, we are to return to him

and rend our heart, to internalize the outward gesture of ripping our garment.

How does one tear the heart? The heart is a vital organ, the center of our body. To tear it sounds like a painful process, but it allows the heart to be open. With the heart torn, we can more easily see the interior and are able to reveal the brokenness in our lives. God can then be invited to enter the heart and begin to heal us. The prophet Joel is telling us that the act of tearing a garment is empty if a conversion is not experienced. The Lenten practices of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving should truly change our hearts and draw us closer to God.



THIS WEEK AT HOME

Monday, March 4

Mission Impossible

Jesus' disciples are completely overwhelmed by his words and wonder who can realize this task. Jesus reminds them that what is impossible for a person is possible with God. What are the tasks in your life that you are trying to do without the Lord's help? How can you intentionally turn to God for what is seemingly impossible? Could your load be lightened by inviting God to accompany you with what is difficult? *Today's Readings: Sirach 17:19–27; Psalm 32:1–2, 5, 6, 7; Mark 10:17–27.*

Tuesday, March 5

Feels Like First

The last line of today's Gospel has been used in contemporary culture to serve as a consolation when one has suffered defeat. Jesus offers us these words as more than a comfort when feeling beaten or after a setback; he is promising us that even though we follow him and may endure suffering in this life, we will be rewarded with eternal life. Find a piece of beautiful paper and your favorite pen. Carefully copy Mark 10:31 and place that on your prayer table. May Jesus' words lift you up when it seems like you are in last place. *Today's Readings: Sirach 35:1–12; Psalm 50:5–6, 7–8, 14, 23; Mark 10:28–31.*

Wednesday, March 6

Rewards and Repayment

Jesus warns his disciples against making personal acts of piety into public displays. When our acts become an exhibition, we already have received our reward. Find a notebook that can serve as your Lenten journal. Begin by making a list of your favorite prayers. Is there a word or phrase from a prayer that strikes your heart? Discern when you may find a quiet moment each day during Lent to pray. *Today's Readings: Joel 2:2–18; Psalm 51:3–4, 5–6, 12–13, 14, 17; 2 Corinthians 5:20–6:2; Matthew 6:1–6, 16–18.*

Thursday, March 7

Difficult Choices

Moses proclaims that he has set before the people life and death, the blessing and the curse. Choosing may seem easy. We want life, prosperity, the blessings of the Lord. We hear this and wonder who would intentionally make the choice to be cursed. Yet we easily embrace choices that deaden rather than enliven. The Lord invites us today to love him, heed his voice, and hold fast to him. What does loving him look like for you? How can you heed his voice today? What actions do you need to take to hold fast to him? Write them in your Lenten journal. *Today's Readings: Deuteronomy 30:15–20; Psalm 1:1–2, 3, 4, 6; Luke 9:22–25.*

Friday, March 8

Fasting and Mercy

What motivates you to make a sacrifice to the Lord? The Church tells us that fasting helps us grasp our dependence upon God. Fasting is also a means of saving our resources to give to the poor. The prophet Isaiah shares that the fast that is acceptable to the Lord releases those bound unjustly, frees the oppressed, feeds the hungry, shelters the homeless, and clothes the naked. With your family, choose a work of mercy to live this week. How does your fasting impact this act of mercy? *Today's Readings: Isaiah 58:1–9a; Psalm 51:3–4, 5–6, 18–19; Matthew 9:14–15.*

Saturday, March 9

Change of Heart

Levi, the tax collector, feels empty when Jesus extends the invitation to come and follow him. Accepting the invitation, Levi leaves his former life and journeys down a new path with Jesus. God extends this same invitation to us to follow him. How will you intentionally follow him this week? Are you ready for your heart to be changed? *Today's Readings: Isaiah 58:9–14; Psalm 86:1–2, 3, 4, 5–6; Luke 5:27–32.*



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KEEPING THE SEASONS
LENT AND EASTER 2019