

Reflection for Ash Wednesday 2021

It is very sobering to hear the words, "*Dust thou art and unto dust thou shalt return!*" There is no dispute about this and it is a helpful and solemn truth. The three pillars on which we build our lives are equally basic truths: *Prayer, fasting and almsgiving*. They apply to everyone whether they believe in God or not. A danger in focusing on the ashes and the prescriptions for Lent is to miss the fact that Lent is a special time for discovery. It is not a morbid and difficult time unless we make it so. In discovering our limitations, we also discover our abilities, some of which only arrive in the later stages of life. Among other things, prayer is our way of seeking guidance from God, which is why Jesus went into the wilderness. Fasting is not just about food, it can also be fasting from bad habits, changing the priorities in our lives, time wasting and discovering the wonderful presence of God and the blessedness of life. Almsgiving is always about thinking of others. It could involve giving of one's time and service not just financial or material help. Lent could also be an opportunity to give more time to scripture, to reading, to longer periods of quiet and meditation. It could be about finding new ways to pray, introducing times of prayer and reflection as a family. Where two or three gather in prayer, Christ is truly present in ways beyond our imagination and thinking. Lent is a time of great opportunity but most of all a very special time of discovering how much God loves us in the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Holy One, we come before you on this day remembering those sacred words, *ash to ash and dust to dust*. Yet, this year is different. For nearly a year, we have lived in the wilderness-like atmosphere of Lent. Our world is broken, our hearts are hurting and we need healing and hope. Oh God, let your healing love seep into those broken places. In places where we hurt, even amid this pandemic wilderness, allow healing grace to slowly enter our hearts and our lives. In this Lenten season, may we live into the healing that is so desperately needed. We trust in your holy hope as we remember our mortality. As we venture deeper into the wilderness, help us know that your transforming presence will guide us through to the joy of the resurrection with new found wholeness. Amen.

Fasting from Jokes. . . . !!