

ASH Wednesday 2020

Lord, grant us simplicity of faith, and a yearning to share it. Amen

As I was standing outside our own church this morning, I couldn't help but think how Ash Wednesday is **not** a significant day in the life of most people, not even most Christians. A lot of folks have no clue that this day even exists. Some have said that it is because no one wants to think about our mortality and our sinfulness. The concept of sin today just is not popular. And many feels remembering that 'we are dust and to dust we shall return' is frankly depressing. I just think that we are missing the point.

Yes, the ashes on our foreheads do remind us that "we are dust, and to dust we shall return." We come into the world with nothing and we leave with nothing. Those are the facts. All our stuff, that we accumulate throughout our lives, will go to someone else when we die. The ashes also remind us of the debt of sin that we owe and the fact that we can never repay that debt to God. While that can be a depressing, facing the reality of sin and mortality can bring us to a decision point, a creative crisis. The more we recognize the depth of our spiritual indebtedness, the more we begin to realize the incredible gift that God has given us in Jesus, who releases us from it through his sacrifice on our behalf. Our debt has been stamped "Paid in Full" in his own blood. When we sign off on that with our own signature of acceptance, we can begin to see the "new creation" breaking in all around us. We may start and end as dust, but what counts is what we do in between.

What did we hear from Isaiah tonight?

"Is not this the fast that I choose:

to loose the bonds of injustice,

to undo the thongs of the yoke,

to let the oppressed, go free,

and to break every yoke?

Is it not to share your bread with the hungry?

and bring the homeless poor into your house;

when you see the naked, to cover them,

and not to hide yourself from your own kin?

8 Then your light shall break forth like the dawn,

and your healing shall spring up quickly..."

We have come, again, to the season of Lent, seeking repentance and forgiveness, from God.

We seek reconciliation in our relationship with God and each other. Only the love of Jesus can fix the ills and injustices that we are seeing in society today.

In our Litany of Penance tonight, we will pray;

--Accept our repentance, Lord, for the wrongs we have done:

for our blindness to human need and suffering, and our indifference to injustice and cruelty.

--For all false judgments, for uncharitable thoughts toward our neighbors, and for our prejudice and contempt toward those who differ from us.

-For our waste and pollution of your creation, and our lack of concern for those who come after us.

There is much to do and much that we are responsible for as Christians. Maybe because it is an election year, I feel a more urgent need to become involved in helping where I can. Vicki Hesse sent an article today from the Detroit News. Headline read: 19 separated immigrant children placed in Michigan; more expected. These children range in age between 4 and 17. These are immigrant children who have been placed on our doorstep. They will need help.

When we talk about asylum seekers and refugees; victims of domestic violence and sex trafficking; climate change, poverty, human suffering, or food insecurity; it can seem overwhelming. But there are things we can all do to help. We can volunteer at soup kitchens, Habitat for Humanity, Hospice of Lenawee, Neighbors of Hope, Share the Warmth, Kiwanis, Civitan, or other organizations that serve the community. This may involve only helping out when one is able.

It is our job to let others know just how much God loves them and the time is now.

Consider during this season of Lent, setting aside some time for daily prayer; serving one hour somewhere in the community; and spending 20 minutes a week reading Holy Scripture. It is a commitment, I know that. I also know that it will be difficult for some to do. We need to start somewhere. And this is a good time to begin. AMEN!