

Repent and Believe in the Gospel!

We solemnly started the season of Lent last Wednesday with the Ash Wednesday Mass. Even though some of us were not able to receive the ashes as we used to because of the Covid 19 restrictions; however, in different spiritual and symbolic ways we started this year's season of Lent, a special time of spiritual renewal and awakening. The three-cardinal works (Prayer, Fasting, and Almsgiving) we undertake are meant to cleanse and renew us just as the flood renewed God's creation in Genesis as we read in the first reading. Also, Peter in the second reading reminds us of the renewal brought about by the death and resurrection of Christ. Thus, the invitation to repent (change of heart) and believe in the Gospel Jesus gives us in Mark's Gospel we have read today is simple for us to look closely into ourselves and see things that need to be changed and to live the life of the gospel, the life of Christ.

The three-cardinal works (Prayer, Fasting, and Almsgiving) we are called to undertake are all grounded in the life of Christ. Jesus' earthly life was replete with moments of prayer; he prayed without ceasing and prayed in season and out of season. Like his disciples, we can ask him to teach us how to pray. Fasting- (abstinence, self-denial, and penance) gives us spiritual strength to overcome temptations that assail us. Life of self-denial disposes us to a life of charity, which is almsgiving. Also, it helps us to look beyond ourselves and be sensitive to the pains of others, especially the poor and the less privileged. Hence, the three cardinal works are connected to each other, we cannot practice one without being connected to others.

We have to remember; the holy season of Lent is not all about what we abstain or fast from but the virtuous acts those fasting and abstinence lead us to. For instance, we know as our Catholic tradition we don't eat meat on Fridays of Lent, but the question is: What virtue does this abstinence help me to acquire? Are we doing it because is the ritual or doing it to grow in the life of Christ within us? Does it make us overcome our day-to-day temptations in words, thoughts, and actions? Does it make us more patient with one another? Does it make us more sensitive to the pains and complaints of others? Does it open my eyes to see the sufferings in the world so that I can pray more for God's intervention or do something within my power to bring a change? Let us ask the good Lord that all the works we undertake this season of Lent will help us to acquire good habits, which is the life of the gospel, the life of Christ. Amen.