

FEBRUARY 17, 2021
Ash Wednesday
Matthew 6: 1-6, 16-18

“DOING GOOD THINGS FOR GOD.”

“A young man had just hiked across a long, barren stretch of land. Reporters asked what he found hardest about it. “Was it the loneliness of the hike?” “No,” he replied. “Was it the hot sun beating down on you?” “No”, he replied. “Was it the dangerous nights by the roadside?” “No”, he replied. “Well then, what was it?” “The sand in my shoes,” he said. That is often the case in everyday life. It is not the big things that get us down, more often, it’s the tiny irritations! May be, accepting the tiny irritations with family, friends, colleagues, office workers, that come our way each day, could be a good way to start our Lent!”¹

My brothers and sisters, we start again the Season of Lent with this yearly Ash Wednesday wherein in the imposition of ashes in the forehead, now the sprinkling of ashes in the crown of our head, we are being reminded by the formula of imposition: “Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return.” We know that we are nothing at the end of our lives, no money, no treasure, no position, no titles, and only dust from where we started and belong. And in this Lent, we are always given opportunity to look at our selves, examine, and reflect on our lives, and do something to make our life better. We will achieve this moving forward for the better through the three pillars of this season: Prayer, Fasting, and Almsgiving. “Why did Jesus single out prayer, fasting, and almsgiving for his disciples? The Jews considered these three as the cardinal works of the religious life. These were seen as the key signs of a pious (godly) person, the three great pillars on which the good life was based. Jesus pointed to the heart of the matter. Why do you pray, fast, and give alms? To draw attention to yourself so that others may notice and think highly of you? Or to give glory to God? The Lord warns his disciples of self-seeking glory - the

¹ www.stories4homilies.co

preoccupation with looking good and seeking praise from others. True piety is something more than feeling good or looking holy. True piety is loving devotion to God. It is an attitude of awe, reverence, worship, and obedience. It is a gift and working of the Holy Spirit that enables us to devote our lives to God with a holy desire to please him in all things (Isaiah 11:1-2).”²

My brothers and sisters let us give more time to prayer. If we can spend a lot of time watching tv, movies, social media which sometimes until late evening or morning the following day, what about spending it in our prayer. May we devote our time to pray and be in communion with the Lord. About fasting there are only two official fast days in the whole season of Lent: Ash Wednesday and Good Friday, and for some they include their devotional all Fridays fasting and abstinence. We avoid eating meat and foods what we like not because we want to become thinner or sexy but more on the discipline of the body and soul, a way to be one with the Lord’s suffering and death. Let us let go of things we like and give it to others who need it more than ourselves which is almsgiving. So, fasting does not end with avoiding or letting go of things we like, but giving the things we don’t spend for others, or sharing of what we have with those who are in need. My brothers and sisters, let us take the money that would be spent on a fancy and expensive meal we decided to give up and give it to those who do not know where their next meal is coming from or donate it to St. Vincent de Paul or Feed the Hungry program of the diocese? Let the money we saved be diverted to those in need, those who do not have job, homeless, and those in difficulty. And the gospel emphasises the value of doing all these things, prayer, fasting, and almsgiving silently, quietly and without flamboyance. No other people must even know we are prayerful, disciplining ourselves, and sharing more. Don’t draw attention to ourselves as we do these things because the real purpose of all this discipline is to bring us closer to God and His ways, especially imitating the Lord in His suffering, death, and resurrection. So, pray, fast and be generous to become closer to God.

² www.dailyscripture.net