

**March 2 2022**

**Ash Wednesday**

**Psalm 103: 8-14**

**Matthew 6: 1-6, 16-21**

***Matthew 6:1-6,16-21***

*Jesus said, "Beware of practicing your piety before others in order to be seen by them; for then you have no reward from your Father in heaven.*

*"So whenever you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be praised by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your alms may be done in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.*

*"And whenever you pray, do not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, so that they may be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But whenever you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.*

*"And whenever you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces so as to show others that they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that your fasting may be seen not by others but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.*

*"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."*

*In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

Lent can be seen as a heavy, somber, even burdensome season, full of musts, requirements, penance.

As usual, we humans can take a gift, like Lent, and make it into a grim obligation, dominated by the giving up of something we enjoy like chocolate, alcohol, or our phone.

However, in a few minutes, just before the imposition of ashes, I will offer the words in the Ash Wednesday liturgy: “I invite you therefore, in the name of the Church, to the observance of a holy Lent.”

Lent is not a season of musts, burdens, requirements. No Lent is a season of invitation.

We are invited, not forced, to the observance of a holy Lent.

An invitation is an offer, a possibility, and if we observe Ash Wednesday we must then consider, am I going to accept this invitation? Receiving ashes on ones forehead is part of accepting the invitation, an outward sign, but so much more significant, as always, is our inward acceptance of the invitation.

Accepting the invitation to a holy Lent, inwardly, asks us, are we done yet?

**Are we all we will be in this lifetime?**

**So often these days we hear folks say: “This is who I am, and I’m too old to change now.”**

**Take a moment to consider what you might be referring to if you made this declaration.**

**“This is who I am, and I’m too old to change now.”**

**We may say this, and we may believe this, whether we are 30 years old, or 90 years old!**

**But God does not say this about any of us.**

**God does not say: “Megan is too old to change.”**

**God does not say: “Frans is too old to change.”**

**God invites us, invites us to a season of self-examination, to a season of sorrow and repentance, and onward to a season of forgiveness, resurrection and new life.**

**There is still beauty to discover in us; there are still sins to finally acknowledge; there are still things done and left undone; there are still undiscovered facets of ourselves.**

**We are all invited to the feast. Will we accept the invitation?**

**Amen.**

---