

## HOMILY ASH WEDNESDAY

February 17, 2021

Today is the first day of Lent. The word Lent comes from an Old English word for “Springtime.” It is hard to think of springtime with all of this snow and frigid cold weather. But I have noticed that the days are getting longer. It is getting light earlier in the morning and staying light later in the evening. I think we have more than an hour increase in daylight, so that makes me hopeful. I think we also have to look at Lent as a time of new beginnings. Hopefully we can make some permanent positive changes in our lives this Lent. The three pillars of Lent are prayer, fasting and almsgiving. Historically, we looked at Lent as a time of suffering and deprivation, a time to give up something and then go back to where we were on Easter. This year I would like you to look at Lent as a time for spiritual growth and change.

Our theme for Lent is “Let go and Follow Jesus.” I think we have a lot to let go of this year. You can use the three pillars to let go and follow Jesus. Maybe you did something that you regret during the past year. Maybe you did something you wish you had not done. Maybe it is time to let that go. Jesus does not want you to get stuck in the past. He wants us to learn from our mistakes and move forward. The first step is to take it to prayer. Tell Jesus all about it. Ask him for forgiveness and healing. Ask him what you need to do so that you can let it go. Next comes the almsgiving, doing whatever you need to do so you can let it go. Remember that you cannot change the past. This may be forgiving, asking for forgiveness, making reparations, praying for the people you may have hurt. You will decide what that may be with Jesus. Then comes the fasting. You are going to fast from that behavior in the future.

I think prayer is the most important pillar of Lent as it can lead to the most spiritual growth and change. Prayer is about having a relationship with God. Having a close relationship with God is like having a close relationship with people. You

have to tell God what is going on in your life and you have to be open and honest. That is the basis of a close relationship. But you cannot do all of the talking. You need to have some quiet time with God so that he can respond. You probably will not hear voices, but sometimes you will have a moment of clarity in the silence. You also should try and imagine what God would tell you based upon what you know about him. Just like you frequently know what your best friend is going to tell you before they say anything. You also have to spend time alone with God on a regular basis. That is the only way you can have a close relationship with God or with another person.