



SAINT ANDREW'S ANGLICAN CHURCH

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March 2011

Dear Friends,

The 40 days of Lent begin on Ash Wednesday. The sign of the cross, traced on the forehead of the faithful in today's service is accompanied with the words "Remember O man that thou art dust, and to dust thou shalt return." These words, which bring to mind our mortality, simultaneously are the occasion for faith. For though today is a reminder of our mortality (death being the penalty for Adam's sin, in which we all have a share), One greater than Adam has come among us - the Lord Jesus Christ. Death did not defeat Him. The grave could not hold Him. All mankind, by being heirs of Adam are but "dust" and shall return to dust and yet - as we confess in today's liturgy: "Turn thou us, O good Lord, and so shall we be turned." There is hope. God grants, by His grace, the good and life-giving gift of repentance. Though Adam fell and we fell with him, all is not lost. Thus writes St. Paul, when he said: "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive" (1 Corinthians 15:22). By virtue of being united (through faith) to the Risen Lord Jesus, we have the hope of life everlasting. Ash Wednesday, though a stark and clear encounter with the reality of our mortality is yet a day of great joy for the Church, as we rejoice in the gift of faith and repentance - the gift of new and unending Life. Even though we die, yet shall we live.

The season of Lent is a time especially devoted to the three-fold works enjoined upon us by our Lord, namely: fasting, prayer and almsgiving (see Matthew 6:1-18). As we heard in the Epistle on the last Sunday before Lent (1 Corinthians 13), none such things have any value in God's sight apart from charity, thus we must give heed not only to the outward works of faithfulness, but also to the inner life of love for God and neighbor from which they are meant to spring.

Thus the inner life is a subject for contemplation and examination during Lent. As we (God willing) cut out extra things from our daily schedules (be it TV or frivolous reading or video games or some other unnecessary diversion with which we sometimes fill our days) - we should "fill" that space with something intended to be spiritually profitable - the discipline of quiet before God, saying the Daily Office and or Family Prayers, reading Scripture or attending a weekday service for which we do not usually make time (like the Stations of the Cross, etc.).

All Christians whose health or age does not exempt them should submit to the Lenten fast. Traditionally, each day in Lent is a day of abstinence, typically from meat and dairy. Additionally, each Wednesday and Friday of the week (most especially Ash Wednesday and Good Friday) are strict fasts. Sundays, on the other hand, are never fast days - they are weekly feasts of Christ's resurrection.

Fasting from food makes us hungry. Our bodies need to eat and our flesh protests when it doesn't get the food to which we are accustomed. It is profitable for us to feel hungry, though many of us thoughtlessly avoid it at almost any cost. We thoughtlessly assume that hunger is an evil always to be avoided and so we chase it away with snacks and sodas and distractions. And so at meal time we over eat, indulging ourselves and our every want. What little self denial we exert is often times to some superficial or self-centered end: we want to be thinner than we are, or to be more "fashionable" or we do not order dessert so that he or she (whomever that may be) does not see us eating it. Though it is good to show restraint at the table for the sake of health (in fact this is an aspect of being a good steward of the life that God has given to us), fasting is not a remedy to improve your health or social acceptability. Fasting is for the good of your soul. We need to learn to say "no" to ourselves - to our cravings and affections and desires. Fasting is a means to that end. In fasting we subject ourselves to training - we deny ourselves something that we want to eat (or that we would normally eat) for the sake of the strengthening of our wills. Learning to say "no" at the table is preparation for saying "no" to other (presumably more dangerous) temptations.

As already mentioned, the disciplines of Lent are threefold, thus there is more involved in the keeping of a holy Lent than fasting. By skipping a meal, we have "extra" time - time that we might not have had otherwise. Plan to use this time in a spiritually profitable manner. Spend some time in prayer (even if it is only 10 minutes). Or simply be quiet before God, seeking to resist the manifold distractions that will inevitably assail you. Read the Scriptures more than you might otherwise. Look up the texts appointed for the day and read them slowly - perhaps even more than once. Think about their meaning and write down thoughts that occur to you. Memorize a verse or a passage and later

recall and meditate upon it.

Fasting and Prayer - those are the first 2 disciplines of Lent. The 3rd is almsgiving. It is to be expected that you will spend less money on yourself during Lent than at other times of the year. Lent is not a time for self-indulgence or parties. Additionally, you will be eating less often and less extravagantly. Meat is expensive and to cut it out will put a bit of extra cash in your pocket. Instead of spending this on yourself or on something frivolous, why not give this to God as well? Normally you would have spent this money to feed yourself, but now these funds are available for you to give away for someone else's benefit. Give them (secretly, if possible) to someone in need. If you really cannot think of anyone to whom to give your alms, give them to your church or to your priest to be used in some good work. This is the third discipline of Lent - almsgiving.

Seek the Lord during these 40 days. Seek to die to yourself and to grow in love for God and neighbor. Find time to keep silent vigil before the Lord. Pray. Fast. Give alms. Attend the services which the Church offers for your spiritual health and prepare yourself in advance for them. May this Lenten season be a time of great spiritual growth for us, as we pray for the gift of repentance and seek to humble ourselves before the Lord in order that, in His good time He may lift us up to Himself. Let us pray that God would give us His grace such that we might keep a holy Lent, to His glory and to the good of our souls.

BRIEFLY NOTED

Children's Church. In the weeks leading up to Easter, children will be learning about the events leading up to Jesus' death upon the Cross. Parents are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the Biblical Stations of the Cross so as to be able to reinforce these lessons at home. Read or download the Stations by visiting our website.

ON THE CALENDAR

- You can view each month's **Lay Serving Schedule** on the website.
- **Stations of the Cross** - each Friday in Lent at 6 pm. The Stations are posted on our website, either for reading online or for downloading as a booklet.
- **The Story of the Cross** - Beginning on Wednesday, March 23rd join us (6-8pm, dinner included) for a 6 week study of *The Story of the Cross* (a devotional study of St. Matthew's Gospel, chapters 26-28). This will be very informal! Children welcome (childcare is provided). Visit the "Upcoming Events" section of the church's website to read a description of each weeks topic.
- Looking ahead:
 - The 4th Sunday in Lent (April 3rd) - a visit from the Right Reverend Jackton Lugumira, Anglican bishop of the Diocese of Lweru (Tanzania)
 - Passion Sunday, April 10th - Holy Communion 5pm.
 - Palm Sunday, April 17th - Procession of Palms and Holy Communion, 5pm.
 - Maundy Thursday, April 21st - Joint service of Holy Communion & the Stripping of the Altar (Pastor Kraft, preaching; Fr. Patterson, celebrating)
 - Good Friday, April 22nd - The Litany and Scriptural Meditation upon the Passion & Death of Christ, 3 pm.
 - Holy Saturday (Easter Even), April 23rd - The Easter Vigil, 8:30 pm.
 - Easter Sunday, April 24th - Holy Communion, 8:30 am.

THANKS!

- Many thanks to Jeni Martin for coming to give us that excellent update on ministry opportunities in Asheboro. Please think and pray about how you would like to be involved!
- Thanks to Nick for his faithful service at the altar and for his work to get sermons posted on the website.
- We are grateful to Pastor Brown and the people of Dogwood Acres Presbyterian Church for being such kind and considerate hosts to us.
- Thanks also to Pastor Ralph and the people of St. Johns for their kind reception of us!

In Christ,
