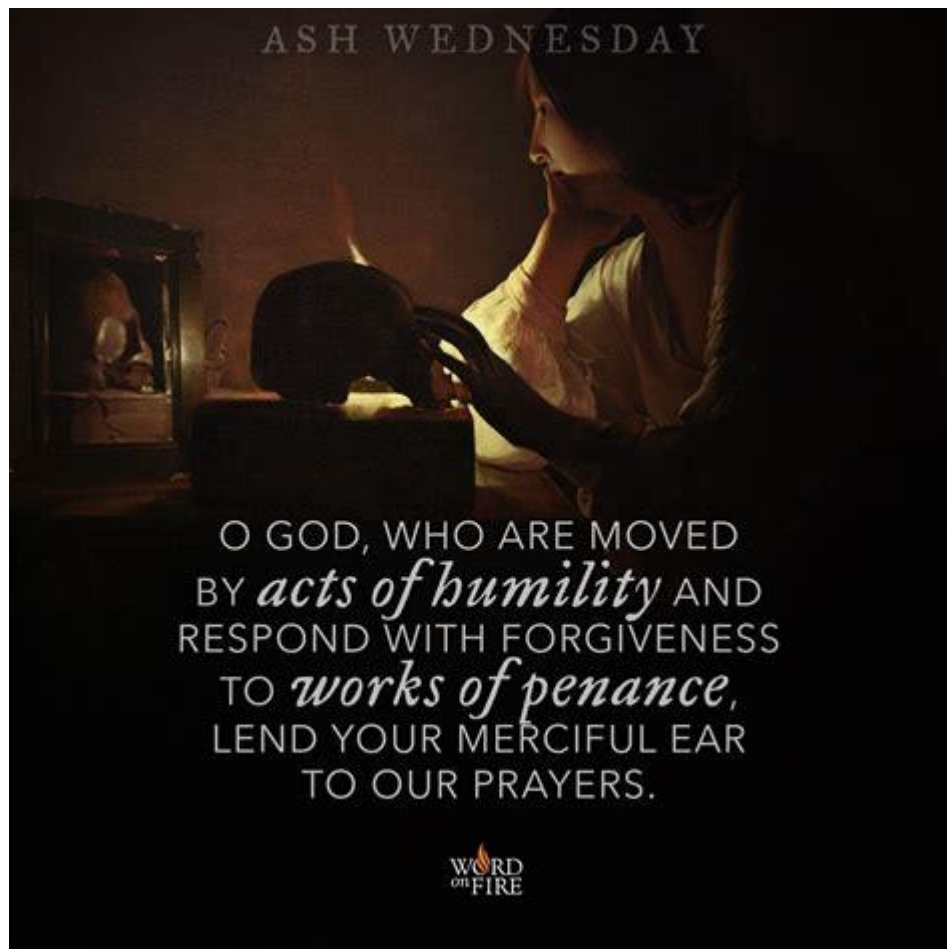


FROM FATHER JOHN: " *Have mercy on me, O God, in your goodness; in the greatness of your compassion wipe out my offense. Thoroughly wash me from my guilt and of my sin cleanse me. For I acknowledge my offense, and my sin is before me always: "Against you only have I sinned, and done what is evil in your sight."* A clean heart create for me, O God, and a steadfast spirit renew within me. Cast me not out from your presence, and your Holy Spirit take not from me. Give me back the joy of your salvation, and a willing spirit sustain in me. O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth shall proclaim your praise. " ~ Psalm 51

Be merciful, O Lord, for we have sinned!



Today is Ash Wednesday and the beginning of the Season of Lent. Lent is an important time in the life of the Church and in the life of every baptized Catholic. Lent gives us the opportunity for spiritual and interior renewal. We are invited, by God and the Church, to train ourselves spiritually in order to grow in love for the Lord and in love for one another.

The Venerable Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen said this about Lent.

"We can think of Lent as a time to eradicate evil or cultivate virtue, a time to pull up weeds or to plant good seeds. Which is better is clear, for the Christian ideal is always positive rather than negative. A person is great not by the ferocity of his hatred of evil, but by the intensity of his love for God. Asceticism and mortification are not the ends of a Christian life; they are only the means. The end is charity. Penance merely makes an opening in our ego in which the Light of God can pour. As we deflate ourselves, God fills us. And it is GOD's arrival that is the important event."

Lent can be challenging. In fact, it should be challenging for the simple fact that change is always challenging. When we repent of our sins it necessitates that we amend our lives and open our hearts, minds and souls to conversion. This brings about spiritual renewal and spiritual growth which allow us to truly become disciples of our Lord Jesus, to give witness to God's love and mercy to a world that is desperate for love and mercy.

During Lent, we make a deliberate effort to pray, fast and give alms in order to grow in love, in order to grow in faith, in order to be made whole in the image and likeness of God, in order to attach ourselves to the Lord Jesus, and in order to reach out in love to the poor, the downtrodden and the vulnerable.

Lent can be challenging, even difficult at times, but as we look toward Easter, as we look to the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus, we find the strength to continue our Lenten journey; to continue to give alms, to make sacrifices, and to spend more time in prayer.

May God bless you and all those who love the Lord.



Let today be the
day you give up
who you've been
for you who can
become.

—
Blessed Ash Wednesday