



Ash Wednesday

February 18, 2015

Readings

Joel 2:12-18

2 Corinthians 5:20—6:2

Matthew 6:1-6,16-18

Calendar

February 17: Mardi Gras

February 18: Ash Wednesday. Beginning of Lent

February 19: Chinese New Year

February 20: World Day for Social Justice <http://www.un.org/en/events/socialjusticeday/>

Quotes

Indifference to our neighbor and to God also represents a real temptation for us Christians. Each year during Lent we need to hear once more the voice of the prophets who cry out and trouble our conscience.

Pope Francis, 2015 Message for Lent

The Christian message does not inhibit men and women from building up the world, or make them disinterested in the welfare of their fellow human beings: on the contrary it obliges them more fully to do these very things.

Vatican II, Gaudium et Spes, 34

We must reject the temptation to offer a privatized and individualistic spirituality.

John Paul II, Message for Lent at the End of the Jubilee Year

In the face of the terrible challenge of poverty afflicting so much of the world's population, indifference and self-centered isolation stand in stark contrast to the "gaze" of Christ.

Benedict XVI, Message for Lent 2006

Fasting is an aid to open our eyes to the situation in which so many of our brothers and sisters live. Voluntary fasting enables us to grow in the spirit of the Good Samaritan, who bends low and goes to the help of his suffering brother.

Benedict XVI, Message for Lent 2009

In imitation of our Master, we Christians are called to confront the poverty of our brothers and sisters, to touch it, to make it our own and to take practical steps to alleviate it.

Pope Francis, Message for Lent 2014

Reading the Bible with the eyes of the poor is a different thing from reading it with a full belly. If it is read in the light of the experience and the hopes of the oppressed, the Bible's revolutionary themes - promise, exodus, resurrection and spirit - come alive.

Jürgen Moltmann, The Church in the Power of the Spirit

Thoughts for your consideration

The prophet Joel calls for an assembly of all the people.

*Blow the trumpet in Zion!
proclaim a fast,
call an assembly;
Gather the people,
notify the congregation;
Assemble the elders,
gather the children
and the infants at the breast;*

We are more than individuals looking out for ourselves.

Reform in any age is a call for the community to come together for the common good.

What reform does your local community need this season? Are you being called to address issues around racial diversity or justice for immigrants or economic inequality or quality education for children or hunger and homelessness or religious persecution?

What reform does our global community need to address this Lent?

In our day we must come together to address the challenges of global climate change, an over-dependence on fossil fuels, the destructive mining of limited resources, the lack of a commitment to develop renewable sources of energy, and the need for responsible sharing of what we have for the common good.

In our day we must come together to address the challenges of peace between and within nations and ethnic groups, the tendency to try to resolve disputes by war rather than reconciliation, the use of so many valuable resources to produce more weapons of war instead of addressing human needs, and the culture of violence that pervades our world.

In our day in the United States, we must come together to renew our dysfunctional political system, to create a government less controlled by people with money and influence and to address the needs of all the people and the common good.

In our day we must come together to address the needs of the poor, whether it be the poor in our nation or in the whole as a whole or the billions who have to try to live on less than two dollars a day. We must come together to resolve the problem of income inequality in our

American society and in the world as a whole, and to create a world of economic justice for all.

In our day we must come together to make sure that all people enjoy basic human rights, an end to racial and ethnic discrimination, protection from torture, unjust imprisonment and oppression, an end to slavery and trafficking, and the right to free speech and economic opportunity.

In our day we must address again the issues about religious freedom for there are so many Christians who are persecuted, so many Muslims who are wrongly judged to be terrorists, so many Jews who are victims of anti-Semitism, so many minorities who are left out and denied freedoms.

In our day we must come together to put into practice the radical loving vision of Jesus Christ.

More thoughts for your consideration

Lent is a time to make faith real in practices which are a source of growth, life and even joy. Growth and new life are possible. It is possible to move beyond earning religious credits or spiritual merit badges to freedom, joy, justice, peace and new life. It is possible to move beyond a spirituality of showing off to a spirituality of awareness and new life for the whole community. It is possible for the whole community to be renewed with a spirit committed to the common good of all God's people – a spirit dedicated to justice and peace. It is possible to live a spirituality which is in touch with the real world and its problems – especially the poor. The prophet Joel calls the whole community to renewal and writes: “Even now, says the Lord, return to me with your whole heart...”

It is possible to move from “a superficial sort of prayer” or “a show off type of religious practice” to something that is genuine and life giving and transforming. Prayer can be connected to life. Prayer can be rooted in an awareness of oneself and the world as it is. Prayer can move us toward concern for others. Prayer can move us toward a concern for justice and peace. Contact with those who are poor or need can nourish this prayer.

It is possible to move from fasting as a “burden” or “painful giving up” to a religious exercise that makes us aware and alive. Fasting can move us to solidarity with the poor and the hungry and can also put us in touch with our own self and our own desires. Our Christian spirituality reminds us that from “awareness without judgment” can come freedom and life – a whole new way of looking at things – a way of looking at things that is less self-absorbed and more sensitive to others, especially the poor.

It is possible to move from a “painless almsgiving out of our surplus” or a “showing-off kind of almsgiving” or an “almsgiving that make us feel superior to others” to a practice that makes us aware of the needs of others and leads us to a deep and real solidarity with those who are otherwise separate from ourselves. It might even to be possible to move through acts of charity toward acts for justice in solidarity with those who experience injustice.

For Reflection in your Faith Sharing Group

What kind of fasting will help you get your values in order this Lent?

What kind of prayer will help you be more aware of those in need?

What kind of almsgiving and good works will help you move away from selfishness?

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In May of 2000, John Paul II said, “Solidarity is learned through ‘contact’ rather than through ‘concepts,’ and should permeate the sphere of being before that of acting.” What events have helped you to have contact with those in need? What events during this Lenten season will help you have a healthy contact with those who are in need? What during this Lenten season will help you get in touch with the needs of the world?

Story

Jock, the painter, often would thin his paint so it would go further. So when the Church decided to do some deferred maintenance, Jock was able to put in the low bid, and got the job. As always, he thinned his paint way down with turpentine.

One day while he was up on the scaffolding -- the job almost finished -- he heard a horrendous clap of thunder, and the sky opened.

The downpour washed the thinned paint off the church and knocked Jock off his scaffold and onto the lawn among the gravestones and puddles of thinned and worthless paint.

Jock knew this was a warning from the Almighty, so he got on his knees and cried: “Oh, God! Forgive me! What should I do?”

And from the thunder, a mighty voice: “REPAINT! REPAINT! AND THIN NO MORE!”

From: <http://www.frtommylane.com/stories/jokes/repaint.htm>

Actions - Links

Message of Pope Francis for Lent 2015

Find the message at:

http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/lent/documents/papa-francesco_20141004_messaggio-quaresima2015.html

Usually, when we are healthy and comfortable, we forget about others (something God the Father never does): we are unconcerned with their problems, their sufferings and the injustices they endure... Our heart grows cold. As long as I am relatively healthy and comfortable, I don't think about those less well off. Today, this selfish attitude of indifference has taken on global proportions, to the extent that we can speak of a globalization of indifference. It is a problem which we, as Christians, need to confront.

Igniting Our Values, Lent 2015

The Jesuits of the United States will be making a daily retreat through the season of Lent and Easter and they would like to invite you to join them. They will be using the internet to connect us in mind, heart, and prayer through these great seasons of the Church. You can sign up for regular emails using the link below, and giving yourself a some time each day to reconnect consciously with God. Even a few minutes a day can be enriching, and with more intention, commitment, and grace, you may even experience transformation.

Please go to the following link and register for daily prayer resources:

<http://jesuits.org/story?TN=PROJECT-20140619032505>

Renewing the Face of the Earth

This coming year, Pope Francis will release a much anticipated encyclical on care for creation. In preparation for the encyclical and Easter, the Ignatian Solidarity Network is offering a series of daily Lenten reflections.

You can sign up at: <http://ignatiansolidarity.net/lent/>

“I was a stranger.”

Find forty days of scripture about welcoming immigrants.

<http://evangelicalimmigrationtable.com/iwasastranger/>

Urge the Senate to protect immigrant families

<http://capwiz.com/jesuit/issues/alert/?alertid=64051616>

“Crazy Facts”

Oxfam reports that in Asia, an estimated 500 million people remain trapped in extreme poverty, most of them women and girls. http://www.oxfam.org/en/research/asia-crossroads?utm_source=oxf.am&utm_medium=Z5du&utm_content=redirect

Bread for the World’s Hunger Report for 2015 reports that 13.5 percent of the population in developing countries is undernourished (hungry). About 805 million people are estimated to be chronically hungry in 2012–2014. <http://hungerreport.org/2015/full-report/>

Syria's war 'killed 76,021' in 2014 - Monitoring group says nearly half of those killed in the conflict last year were civilians. <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2015/01/syria-war-killed-76021-2014-20151113333115377.html>

Prayers of Intercession

Response: Lord, help us return to your way of life.

For the grace to focus on the common good before our personal needs and perspectives, we pray....

For an end to our selfishness and greed, we pray....

For an end to all those policies that promote war, violence, torture, and the denial of human rights, we pray....

For an end to our policies and practices that deny people good employment, a healthy diet, and quality health care, we pray....

For an end to our misplaced priorities that result in a world where not everyone has enough to eat and a decent place to live, we pray....

For an end to all our practices that result in the abuse of our planet, we pray....

For an end to all hunger and malnutrition, we pray....

For policies and practices that give every person an equal opportunity to participate in our society and its resources, we pray....

For a new vision and a new set of behaviors that promote hope, dignity and life for all, we pray....

Prayer - Meditation

O God, who out of nothing brought everything that is,
out of what I am bring more of what I dream but haven't dared;
direct my power and passion to creating life where there is death,
to putting flesh of action on bare-boned intentions,
to lighting fires against the midnight of indifference,
to throwing bridges of care across canyons of loneliness;
so that I can look on creation, together with you,
and, behold, call it very good;
through Jesus Christ My Lord.

From "Bring More of What I Dream" by Ted Loder In Guerrillas of Grace

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JRS: Praying with Refugees

“Confronted by the conflict, slaughter, and seemingly endless anguish in so many other places in our world, we wonder how God can allow such things to happen. The Old Testament describes how the people of Israel suffered war, violence, famine, persecution, and exile, and how they tried to find the presence of the loving God of the covenant in all those harsh realities. This section of the website offers readers an opportunity to reflect and pray on the good and evil which happens. As we meet and work with refugees who have confronted evil and suffering, it is important to remind them and ourselves as well to keep in touch with God, the source of all good and love. This is the only way to withstand evil.”

<http://jrsusa.org/prayers>

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For all hungry and Malnourished

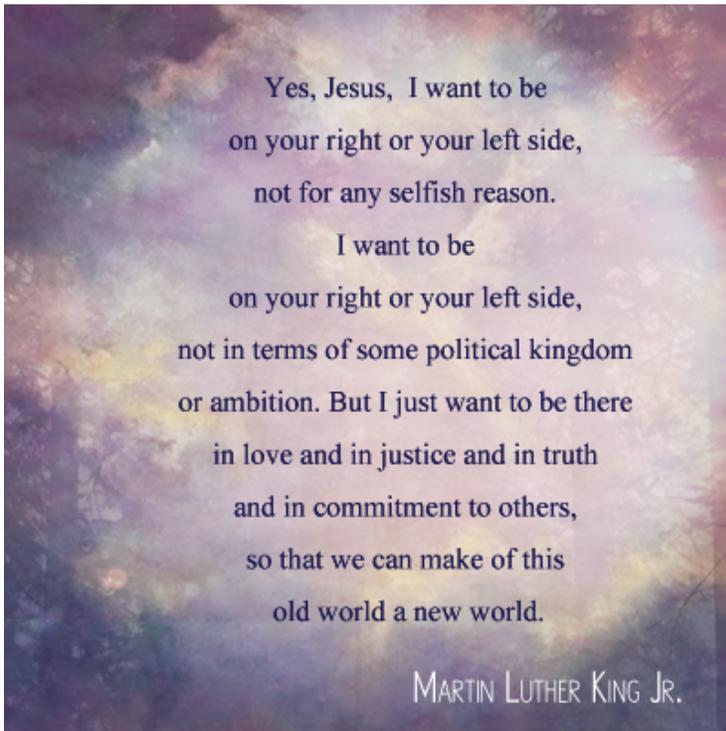
All: We pray for the growing numbers of American families now living in poverty and choosing between housing and meals; heating or eating; medicine or nutrition. We pray for all efforts to secure stable sources of food for all families and households. We pray for all farmers, and farm workers. May they receive just recompense for their labors and harvests. For all operating soup kitchens and food pantries. We pray for millions of third world families despairing of the next meal and watching their loved ones die of starvation. We ask this through Our Lord Jesus Christ your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God forever and ever, Amen.

<http://www.usccb.org/about/justice-peace-and-human-development/upload/Lenten-Prayers.pdf>

Images



<http://thecharityofchrist.com/2011/05/09/during-lent-encounter-the-poor/>



<http://ignatiansolidarity.net/justlent/>

