

March 1, 2017, Ash Wednesday, *Joel 2:12-18*, by r.j.tusky

“Rend your hearts, not your garments”

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Once upon a time, after leaving church following the Ash Wed Service, a little boy asked:

“Mommy, why do we put those dirty, old ashes on our foreheads?”

Do you know what the mother said to her little boy? She said:

Well, I am glad you asked that question!

*We put ashes, dirty or otherwise, on our foreheads for **two** reasons:*

1st, ashes are a sign of **repentance**, i. e., they indicate, publicly, that we are sorry for our sins and are willing to do penance for them during Lent.

This explains why the minister of ashes has the option to say:

“Repent and believe in the Gospel.”

2nd, ashes are a sign of our **mortality**. They indicate that we realize that we will die **SOME**day & be accountable for our actions. So, the minister has this option to say when administering them:

“Remember man, thou art dust and unto dust thou shalt return.”

*Consequently, young children, who understand neither mortality/sin, ought **NOT** receive ashes!*

*This brings us to what we will **‘do’** for Lent.*

For openers, anyone 14 years of age or over, the Church prescribes that they abstain from meat on all Fridays of Lent. As for Ash Wednesday and Good Friday, those with ages between 18 thru 59, are to fast—i.e., eat only one full meal and two half-meals that would equal only one meal between the two. So, that’s **one full meal** and **two ½ half meals**... Ash Wed. & Good Friday. Of course, anyone with a medical condition is excused from all the above, regardless of age, if such might harm them physically.

Now, that is what the **Church** prescribes as a bare minimum for our spiritual growth during this Lenten time. We are expected to freely/voluntarily choose whatever **else** we might do.

For example: we could commit to attending Mass & receive Holy Com. daily.

~~**For example**: we could commit to attending Mass on Wed. nights at 6:30 pm & receive Comm.~~

For example: we could commit to attend Stations & Benediction on Fridays at 7 pm.

For example: we could decide to deprive ourselves of something we value...snacks, TV/computer, smart phone

For example: we could use extra time to do spiritual reading, perhaps the life of one of the saints.

For example: we could commit, weekly, to visit or write friends or relatives that miss us.

For example: we are free to do anything as a sign of our desire to **ACT** out of love for our God!

I now close with these words from the Mass, Preface II of Lent:

“...for you have given your children a sacred time for renewing and purifying their hearts, that, freed from disordered affections, they may so deal with the things of this passing world, as to hold rather to the things that eternally endure.”

*I pray that you will continue to grow in the Lord, especially on our Lenten Journey, & that your relationship with our God will intensify. May our Abba bless you—
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

(Read my bulletin artls. on our website!)