

+ LENT

LENT IS SUCH A STRANGE CHURCH SEASON. ASH WEDNESDAY IS THE FIRST DAY OF THE PENITENTIAL SEASON OF LENT. ITS TRUE NAME IS ACTUALLY NOT "ASH WEDNESDAY" BUT "THE DAY OF ASHES." WHICHEVER NAME IS USED, THE REFERENCE TO ASHES COMES FROM THE CEREMONY OF PLACING ASHES ON THE FOREHEAD IN THE SHAPE OF THE CROSS AS A SIGN OF PENITENCE. THIS CUSTOM WAS INTRODUCED BY POPE GREGORY I, WHO WAS BISHOP OF ROME FROM 590 A.D. TO 604 A.D. IT WAS ENACTED AS A UNIVERSAL PRACTICE IN ALL OF WESTERN CHRISTENDOM IN 1091 A.D.

BUT SURELY THE SEASON OF LENT IS MORE THAN JUST GIVING UP THINGS LIKE CIGARETTES OR CHOCOLATE OR SWEETS.

LENT IS A TIME OF TAKING UP AS WELL AS A TIME OF GIVING UP. TAKE UP GIVING THANKS. BE THANKFUL. GIVE UP MOANING, GROANING AND COMPLAINING. TAKE UP PRAYER. BEGIN YOUR DAY SPEAKING TO GOD. GIVE UP 15 MINUTES MORE IN BED. USE THAT TIME PRAYING. TAKE UP SEEING THE BEST IN PEOPLE. GIVE UP LOOKING FOR PEOPLE'S FAULTS. EVERYBODY PERSON IS MADE IN THE IMAGE OF GOD. TAKE UP SPEAKING ONLY KIND AND GENEROUS WORDS. GIVE UP CRITICIZING AND START COMPLIMENTING. PUT A REIN ON YOUR TONGUE. THINK BEFORE YOU SPEAK.

TAKE UP LEARNING TO LOVE ONE ANOTHER. GIVE UP HATRED, HOSTILITY AND ANGER. TAKE UP TRUSTING IN GOD. GIVE UP WORRY AND ANXIETY. GOD'S GRACE IS SUFFICIENT FOR THE DAY. TAKE UP GIVING UP YOUR TIME. VISIT SOMEONE WHO CAN'T GET OUT AND ABOUT. GET OUT AND SHARE YOURSELF.

TAKE UP SHARING YOUR TIME, TALENTS AND TREASURES. DONATE TIME, USE YOUR GIFTS, GIVE OF YOUR MONEY, TO FURTHER THE GOOD WORK OF GOD'S CHURCH. TAKE UP MAKING A

DIFFERENCE IN PEOPLE'S LIVES.

THE SEASON OF LENT IS ABOUT A SCHEDULED INTERRUPTION OF OUR LIVES SO THAT WE TAKE TIME TO REMEMBER THE DISCIPLINES OF THE SPIRITUAL LIFE. AS A FOLLOWER AND DISCIPLE OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST WE FOCUS ON THINGS LIKE THE DISCIPLINE OF GIVING MONEY, PRAYER, AND FASTING.

WHENEVER YOU GIVE MONEY TO THE CHURCH OR TO A CHARITY, DO NOT MAKE A BIG SONG AND DANCE ABOUT IT. DON'T TELL ANYONE HOW MUCH OR HOW OFTEN YOU GIVE MONEY, JUST GIVE IT AND BE CONTENT KNOWING GOD KNOWS.

AND WHEN YOU PRAY, DON'T MAKE A BIG FANCY SHOW OF IT, JUST PRAY. FORGET THE BIG FANCY WORDS AND LONG DRAWN-OUT PRAYERS - JUST WITHDRAW TO SOME QUIET PLACE AND HAVE A REAL CONVERSATION WITH YOUR HEAVENLY FATHER.

AND WHEN YOU FAST, DON'T TELL EVERYONE YOU HAVE GIVEN UP CIGARETTES OR CHOCOLATE FOR LENT, AND WALK AROUND FOR SIX WEEKS WITH A LONG, SAD FACE, INSTEAD, TAKE UP SOMETHING FOR LENT, BE THANKFUL, PRAY, SEE THE BEST IN PEOPLE, SPEAK KIND WORDS, LOVE OTHERS, TRUST IN GOD, GIVE OF YOUR TIME, SHARE YOUR TIME, TALENTS AND TREASURE. SPEAKING OF TREASURES, JESUS ALSO TELLS US:

DO NOT STORE UP FOR YOURSELVES TREASURES ON EARTH, WHERE MOTH AND RUST CONSUME AND WHERE THIEVES BREAK IN AND STEAL; BUT STORE UP FOR YOURSELVES TREASURES IN HEAVEN, WHERE NEITHER MOTH NOR RUST CONSUMES AND WHERE THIEVES DO NOT BREAK IN AND STEAL. FOR WHERE YOUR TREASURE IS, THERE YOUR HEART WILL BE ALSO.

I INVITE YOU THEREFORE, TO OBSERVE A HOLY LENT, BY SELF-EXAMINATION AND REPENTANCE; BY PRAYER, FASTING, AND SELF-DENIAL; AND BY READING AND MEDITATING ON GOD'S HOLY WORD.