Ash Wednesday
February 25, 2009

Scripture: Joel 2:12-18; Psalm 51:3-6, 12-14, 17; Second Corinthians 5:20--6:2; Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18

Reflection: In an acceptable time I hear you.
And on the day of salvation I helped you.
Behold, now is a very acceptable time:
Behold, now is the time of salvation. - 2 Cor 6:1-2

As I begin this holy season of Lent, I am mindful of another year of time that may or may not lie before me. If God so wills it for me, I wish to prepare for my homecoming and my eternal life that awaits me.

Through the years different passages from scripture or quotes from the saints have inspired me with various ways of reminding me of how I may ready myself for “this day of salvation.” I would like to share a thought of St. Anthony Mary Zaccaria and hope they will help you in your preparation as they have for me. “The spiritual life consists in this: that one keeps one’s eyes on God all the time, long for nothing but for God, keep nothing in mind but God, begin every single action in the Lord’s name, and direct it to Him.”

Suggested Action: Choose for yourself a meaningful quote that brings to mind that life is short and “the day of salvation” is near.

Sister M. Barbara Dumont, IHM
Scranton, Pennsylvania
Thursday After Ash Wednesday
February 26, 2009


Reflection: Today’s Gospel reading: “If anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me” and the first reading, “Choose life, then, that you and your descendants may live, by loving the Lord, your God, heeding his voice, and holding fast to him,” call us to examine who we really are and call us to become true to ourselves.

God’s message is rather more direct and precise than mere religious verbiage. Can you follow me, so you can have life? What do those words mean? To me, God is asking, “Who am I to you? Where are you with your faith? How authentically are you living and practicing your faith in your daily activities with yourself, with colleagues, with friends and with strangers?” Living in the twenty-first century, with and without our choice, we become very busy with many daily activities. We run and fight for time, but, without any true meaning to our activity, we find ourselves bored and discontent. How can this be? A busy life does not truly measure the inner quality of Christianity, and what we do is not really who we are. So I ask myself, what is life for me? What role do I want the Lord to play in my life; a main player or a supporting character?

Our call to choose life may sound so simple and so right, but when trying to live an active and authentic Christian life, we can switch between those inconsistent roles of the prodigal son and the obedient son. It is such a relief for us to know that the Father is always waiting for our safe arrival home as long as we keep walking toward him with humble and grateful hearts. Let us choose life today and live as authentically as we can.

Suggested Action: When we meet people today, especially strangers, let us greet them with a smile and warm words, and, at the same time, silently pray for blessings on them.

Sister Angela Kim, IHM
Silver Spring, Maryland
Friday After Ash Wednesday
February 27, 2009

Scripture: Isaiah 58:1-9; Psalm 51:3-6, 18-19; Matthew 9:14-15

Reflection: There is a question of fasting by John’s disciples in the Gospel reading. In the passage from Isaiah, he defines fasting as abstaining from food and comments on this practice. Neither the Old Testament reading nor Matthew’s Gospel lends support to such action alone.

For the record, abstaining from food is a powerful, non-violent exercise that has been utilized by many spiritual and political leaders. Gandhi, for example accomplished many good changes for the less fortunate in his country through fasting from food and by working tirelessly for justice for all people.

Perhaps we need to read further into Webster’s definition of “fast.” Fast is also defined as “to adhere to” or to “fix firmly to.” Jesus projects that his disciples will “fast” after he is taken away. In other words, his disciples will have to “adhere to” Jesus’ teachings and to practice the ways in which Jesus lived. What should be “fixed firmly” in our minds is that our Lord provided nourishment for those who hungered, attended to the ill, spent time with the oppressed and the social outcasts and worked to free those who were bound unjustly.

God is not interested in our outward appearance. God is interested in our hearts and our actions given from our attitudes. Giving out of our own need and doing what we can is our “fast”.

Suggested Action: Let us pray, by name, for all of the people we interact with today whether they are students, patients, persons we correspond with, or those who take care of us in a myriad of ways. Only God knows what this prayer will do for these persons but we should “adhere to” the truth that it will be for their good.

Missy Ahearn Wayne
Elmira, New York
Saturday After Ash Wednesday  
February 28, 2009


Reflection: “Levi was sitting at the customs post when Jesus said, ‘Follow me.’ Leaving everything behind he got up and followed him.” As we enter into this Lenten season we get in touch with our deep desire to “follow Jesus.” What does that mean for me, for us? How does this translate into action? The prophet Isaiah in the first reading tells us how to please the Lord, to follow God’s way:
- remove oppression, false accusation and malicious speech from your midst
- bestow your bread on the hungry, satisfy the afflicted
- call the Sabbath a delight and the Lord’s day honorable, not following your ways, seeking your own interests or speaking with malice

The Way is to be other-centered: God and neighbor. And what does God promise the “followers,” what gifts to be given:
- light in the darkness
- guidance
- plenty (“even on parched land”)
- strength
- refreshment (“like a watered garden”)

As we consider our journey as followers of Jesus, we can take delight in a verse from the Psalm for today: “For you, O Lord, are good and forgiving abounding in kindness to all who call upon you.” We can also be consoled by the words of Jesus who knows us and loves us as we are: “I have not come to call the righteous to repentance but sinners.”

Suggested Action: Reflect on “Leaving everything behind, he got up and followed him.” What do I need to leave behind in my day-to-day following of Jesus?

Sister Francis Xavier Grieb, IHM  
Cresco, Pennsylvania
First Sunday of Lent  
March 1, 2009

Scripture: Genesis 9:8-15; Psalm 25:4-9; First Peter 3:18-22; Mark 1:12-15

Reflection: As we begin our journey through Lent, the scriptures remind us of the covenant our Lord established with us. “I will recall the covenant I have made between me, you and all living things.” Added to this gift we are encouraged by the baptism in Noah’s time which prefigured our own being “saved through water.”

He gives us these forty days to contemplate how these two bonds of love can rescue us sinners, give us hope, and save us. Lent gives us an opportunity to step back and evaluate our ministry and caring in the light of his crucifixion strength.

Suggested Action: Pray the responsorial psalm today. During this Lenten waiting, repent and ask God to abide with you and all souls. He will stay.

“Your ways, O Lord are love and truth to those who keep your covenant.”

Sister Patricia O’Brien, IHM  
Scranton, Pennsylvania
Monday of the First Week of Lent  
March 2, 2009

**Scripture:** Leviticus 19:1-2, 11-18; Psalm 19:8-10, 15; Matthew 25:1-46

**Reflection:** Through the eyes of a teacher or parent, today’s readings together form a comprehensive lesson on the kinds of behavior God expects of us in this world. God begins by communicating to Moses in the Old Testament examples of “what not to do,” how not to treat those within our environment. Then, Matthew’s Gospel gives some clear examples of “what to do,” good behaviors that demonstrate direct care for another. God too provides rationale for these behaviors: “Be holy, for I, the Lord, your God, am holy.” “Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” What a complete lesson to review with the students - and myself, as I have not mastered this lesson!

Behaviors and actions are the result of our presence in a particular context or environment of people. There are some contexts in which I find it completely natural to love and care for others, restoring people’s integrity with respect and kindness. In other contexts, God’s grace may give me an inkling of how to caringly respond to others, but then I hesitate and hesitate—and then the chance to love is lost. Still, there are environments in which I struggle to love “the least”—those with whom I struggle the most to show that I care—because of an underlying fear or resistance.

When, however, I am able to risk following God’s example and overcome what impedes me from loving others, my soul is refreshed, my eyes enlightened, and I have reason for rejoicing!

**Suggested Action:** Today, pray for the grace to risk loving “the least” - those with whom you struggle the most to show that you care.

Sister Lisa Perkowski, IHM Novice  
Scranton, Pennsylvania