

Homily – Ash Wednesday **17th February 2021, Sooeey**

Today we begin once again the holy season of Lent with this celebration of Ash Wednesday.

Well, Lent has been described in many ways. It is a time of spiritual retreat, it is a journey of faith, it reminds us of the 40 days Jesus spent in the desert, and it is surely an opportunity for special grace and blessing.

In his message for Lent 2021, Pope Francis says that Lent is a time for believing, for welcoming God into our lives and allowing Him to “make His dwelling” among us (cf. Jn 14:23). The Holy Father reminds the faithful that the Lenten practices of fasting, almsgiving and prayer make it possible for us to live lives of sincere faith, living hope and effective charity, thereby sharing in Jesus' mission of the salvation of the world. According to him, ‘Lent is a time of spiritual renewal for the whole church, for each community and for every believer’.

Saint Teresa of Calcutta was once asked: “so what has to change?” And she looked at the one who asked her that question with love and then very serenely answered him in 3 words: “you and I”. Yes! We have to change.

And that's the special invitation given to us in this Sacred Season of Lent. In our Holy Faith we call it conversion.

Well, on this day, we are reminded that we are dust and unto dust we shall return. Yes! It is a reality that one day, all of us will have to face death and on that day, we are to be prepared to meet the Lord so that we may live with Him in the Kingdom of Heaven forever. So, this sacred season invites us to participate anew in that ongoing call to conversion, to radical transformation on all levels of human living and tells us that we need to turn away from sin and be faithful to the Gospel.

And the Lenten disciplines of prayer, fasting and almsgiving which always should be part of our life, help us, on how to be faithful to the Gospel.

In prayer we recognize the Lord as the source of all gifts and our utter dependence on Him every day. In fasting, we leave behind the temporary escapes the world offers, those things that easily clutter our lives. And in our almsgiving, we find the true purpose of our fasting, leading us to the generous sharing of our gifts and resources with those crying out for help.

Well, dear brothers and sisters, lent is a journey. It is a journey that takes us from winter to spring, from sin to grace, from death to life. As Pope Francis would say, ‘It is also a time of grace, a favourable time for letting Christ serve us, so that we may in turn, become more like Him.’ And remember, ashes are a sign of our faith in Christ, a sign that we are willing to make this journey from winter to spring and from death to life. And ashes are also a sign that we are ready to open our door to Christ to let Him serve us.

Let us not travel alone during this lent. Instead, let us ask our Blessed Mother to intercede for us and call upon the Divine assistance of her Son so that with God’s grace, we will turn away from sin and be faithful to the Gospel in order that we may live with the Lord now and forever, **Amen.**