

St. Louis Catholic Church

Friday After Ash Wednesday

Two days ago we began the Penitential Season of Lent. Many of us really plan to "give up" something that we enjoy. It is a way to discipline our lives and an opportunity to experience what it means to sacrifice. It can be tough! Christ told us to take up our cross and follow Him. Giving up that favorite food, drink, habit or hobby is a form of fasting. We were called to fast, pray and give alms on Ash Wednesday.

In today's reading at Mass from Isaiah (58:1-9) the people of Israel are chided for their fasting. What more can we do? Why isn't God pleased? God through Isaiah says you are not changing. The call to penance and fasting is to change. "On your fast day you carry out your own pursuits. Your fast ends in quarreling and fighting."

The fasting the Lord wishes is to change our behaviors, release those bound unjustly, set free the oppressed, share your bread with the hungry, shelter the homeless, clothe the naked. Then your light will shine and you will be healed. (Read Matthew 25:31-46--this passage will be Monday's Gospel and it indicates the way that we will be judged.)

Fasting and sacrifice must be combined with prayer. If we try to pray without fasting our prayers may be weak, lacking the fervor, concentration and contrition that are pleasing to God. If we try to fast without prayer, we may become proud, thinking that we are better than others. We can be filled with false pride because we have endured 40 Days or lost weight or accomplished something on our own.

Keep on keeping on with your resolutions. Pray about what you are doing and why. At the end of each day, week and 40 Days of Lent, we should hope and pray to be kinder and more merciful to others. Interiorly we are called to be changed. We are to die to self and rise to live as Christ called us in baptism.

God Bless,
Msgr. John McArthur

If you seek to pick a time for 40 Days for Life or want information:
www.40daysforlife.com/Memphis or call Libby Parks at 355-8546.