

Depending on the day you get this paper, it either is or was Ash Wednesday. Ash Wednesday is: 46 days from Easter; the beginning of the season of Lent; the day to have a smudge of ashes in the shape of the cross put on your forehead; perhaps the day to begin a fast from something you will miss having and a time to pray and repent from sin. So, this is a lot. Why do we do these things?

Jesus was tempted in the wilderness for 40 days, a time of deprivation and prayer. We know Christians have honored the season of Lent since the fourth century to remember Christ's suffering and to prepare to celebrate receiving the gift of his forgiveness of our sins. We are called to use this time to focus our hearts and lives in response to the gift we have been given.

Lent can be a time of fasting but it can also be a time of adding something. Perhaps adding a time of prayer and thanksgiving, silence and solitude, special attention to persons or causes. The one thing we cannot do is earn God's grace and salvation. We can prepare for it. We can recognize and give thanks for it. We can open our hearts intentionally to receive His love. We can make space for God's love to fill us and to change us, from the inside.

Father Richard Rohr, author and teacher, writes "You were probably taught that God loves you IF and WHEN you change. In fact, God loves you so that you CAN change." When you turn to God to receive His love and forgiveness, you are repentant. Lent is a time for this.

As we go through this season we can be thoughtful, we can own and regret the things about our lives that may need to be changed. We can give up chocolate and remember every time we want some that God loves and cares for us. We can listen to different music, watch something with more meaning, watch nothing and read...

We can be reminded that, like Jesus we are but dust and like Jesus we have life everlasting. Looking forward to a glorious Easter morning.

Rev. Virginia Yochem

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