

Lenten Reflection

Friday after Ash Wednesday March 3, 2017



By Associate Sylvia Resha

“What did you give up for Lent?” I cannot count the times I have heard this “personal” question during the Lenten seasons of my lifetime. At some point it was very evident to me that the outward declaration of the desire to please God through fasting from things one loves to eat could not have been what Jesus meant! No pun intended, but that “fasting” had no meat to it.

In today’s reading Isaiah, in the words of the Lord, pummels us with the reality that trivial fasting may bring us some discomfort which we believe shows God (and ourselves) our self-control and piety, but actually misses the mark completely as it does not bring us any closer to God because it doesn’t change our hearts! Instead he urges the sharing of our bread with the hungry, sheltering the homeless, releasing those unjustly bound, setting free the oppressed, clothing the naked, and not turning our backs on our own. Of course, our fasting and abstinence during Lent is good discipline for us. In addition to that, with the wisdom of God’s challenge in Isaiah, it can heighten our awareness of how we are called by God to change our hearts, our attitudes, and our relationships, that we may act more justly, lovingly, and compassionately during and beyond these six weeks of Lent.

These actions beg the questions from each of us: From what must I “fast” (give up within myself) that my light shall “break forth like the dawn...”? Do I become so inwardly focused on my own personal repentance that I fail to see the needs of those God has placed in my path? I believe this type of fasting during Lent can be validated when we can recognize letting go of what holds us bound and keeps us from our own spiritual heights and depths: “Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your wound shall be quickly healed. Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer, you shall cry for help, and he will say: Here I am!”

