

Church of the Good Shepherd
and
St. John the Evangelist

Ash Wednesday 2008
February 6, 2008
Fr. Bill McGinty

“REPENT!”

We begin our season of Lent today knowing it is a time of prayer and reflection. Lent brings us to reflect that Jesus Christ our Savior chose to live and die that we may inherit everlasting life.

Tonight we step forward to have the Cross of Christ, the symbol of our redemption, marked on our foreheads. It tells us that we are mortal, dust of the earth and one day we will return to dust.

The palms that we received and carried on Palm Sunday have now been turned into the ashes that remind us to repent, seek forgiveness and embrace Christ as our Savior.

In tonight's service, I am sure you will want to unite with all of the ladies of the Altar Guild in praying for Betty Stark who died this morning February 6, 2008.

Betty has been in and out of hospital five or six times in the last year. She suffered from leukemia from which she was receiving treatment. She passed in her sleep.

Forty years ago when Sally and Sandy first came to the parish, Betty was already here and already working tirelessly for the Altar Guild in the service of the church and her Lord Jesus Christ. It was a service she continued until just a few weeks ago.

Tonight Betty receives her eternal reward surrounded by her family and friends and received by Jesus her Savior. I wonder what he will say to her. Surely, it will be: “Come my dear old friend. You cared for me and my sanctuary for so many years, come receive the reward of eternal life in the Kingdom I have prepared for you.”

The ashes we receive tonight do not just speak to us of death; they also speak to us of Resurrection. They tell us that Christ defeated the death and dirt of the grave to bring us hope of salvation.

In our 1st reading the prophet Joel tells his people: “ Repent, return to the Lord, Repent for the day of the Lord is near.

Paul also calls for us to be reconciled with God. “ Be reconciled and seek forgiveness that you may embrace a new quality of life because Christ your Lord has taken your sins upon himself. Rejoice therefore, because we have not been killed as we deserved.

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As we move into Lent we are asked to die to the things that separate us from God and instead embrace the good.

Embrace sacrifice, embrace generously, embrace: doing things for others. Embrace a spirit of Christ in this holy season.

Then we can all celebrate on that Easter Vigil Night and declare with Ashlee Johanna White our faith in Jesus the Lord.

Amen+

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