



+ Ash Wednesday 2017 +

God's grace and peace be with you as we gather this Ash Wednesday and begin our Lenten journey together. Please know that you are in my prayers. My hope is that in this season of Lent we all are drawn closer to our Lord Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit and know that Jesus is with us, leading us, and guiding us.

Most of us will be marked with a cross of ash and be reminded that, "you are dust and to dust you shall return". In this rite of the church we hear the law of our own mortality, and are pointed to the gospel of the life we have in Jesus.

The law tells us we are mortal. Our lives last only for a time. If left to our own all we could expect beyond death is the return of our bodies to the ground and dust from which God made us. The ashes and the words spoken to us remind us of the stark reality that without God we are nothing.

These ashes, this reminder of our mortality are placed on us in the sign of the cross. We are reminded in our baptism we were marked and sealed with the sign of the cross forever. In baptism we are united to the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Jesus himself tells us, "this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day" (John 6:39).

In the ash cross we remember that even dust and ashes like us receive salvation in Jesus Christ our Lord. We are dust, but the Lord who made heaven and earth has come into the mud of our existence to pull us into his eternal life.

While we are comforted by this gift of salvation in Christ, these ashes come to us in the shape of the cross. The cross was the implement of our Lord's suffering, and the place where he sacrificed his body and his blood to save us.

Lent, then, invites us to remember the great love Jesus has for us. It invites us to examine our own lives. Are we being the people that this savior calls us to be? The answer will be, 'No'.

But the good news is even though we may not be what even we think we should be, Jesus is still calling, claiming, and working on us. Christ Jesus is alive and moving and calling dust and ashes like us to turn and follow him.

May God bless you in this season of Lent.

+Bishop Michael



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