

Lent - How Are You Doing?

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Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of the Lenten Season. The BAS contains a gentle exhortation, describing the disciplines practiced in this Penitential Season –

I invite you therefore, in the Name of the Lord, to observe a holy Lent by self-examination, penitence, prayer, fasting and almsgiving, and by reading and meditating on the Word of God... (Pp. 282. BAS)

Self-examination: For centuries, Christians have considered their lives in juxtaposition with the Scriptures. I have a devotional book given to my grandfather when he was confirmed. Therein the reader is invited to consider his/her life against the 10 Commandments! The questions take the reader into a sobering assessment of one's life, how we fall short, and need the grace & mercy of God operative in our lives!

Penitence: Specific action issuing from a sense of regret. For the Christian that is seeking God's forgiveness with amendment/change of life. True and deep penitence commonly leads to a significant change in lifestyle... and an attitude of gratitude for God's goodness!

Prayer: Penitential seasons are a call to deepen in our walk with the Lord. Prayer is our lifeline to a vital relationship with God just as good communication is the basis of a strong marriage. To further the analogy – just as a marriage is strengthened by a listening heart, so is our intimacy with our Heavenly Father is enhanced through listening prayer.

Fasting: The suppression of bodily appetites (not just food!) can enhance the spiritual component of our lives. It also points to areas in which we are in bondage. Fasting is a discipline that enhances our relationship with Jesus.

Almsgiving: We are called to look beyond ourselves, consider the needs of others and respond in tangible and practical ways. As the Lord has loved us, so we are called to share His love with others in word AND deed.

Reading & Meditating on the Word of God: Rather than an afterthought, the second 'and' in this exhortation is a call to a core discipline in our tradition – reading & reflection on Holy Scripture.

More Resources:

There are many good resources online that help believers understand and practice these disciplines. While there is a plethora of good sites generated by a simple Google search, there are some crazy ones as well. How does one navigate this? I generally look to reputable leaders and consider their recommendations.

If you want to find some sites on prayer, try looking at my personal website and my recommendations at www.PleromaInternational.ca

BTW, Pleroma is the NT Greek word for "fullness." This concept of knowing the Lord in His fullness has always captivated my interest just as in the Eucharistic prayer we ask that we may obtain remission (removal) of sin, AND all other benefits of his passion! (Pp. 83. BCP – 1962)

What are these benefits? There are many – often unknown and unexplored by the believer! However, the Ash Wednesday exhortation calls us to explore some of the core disciplines of the Faith. How are you doing?