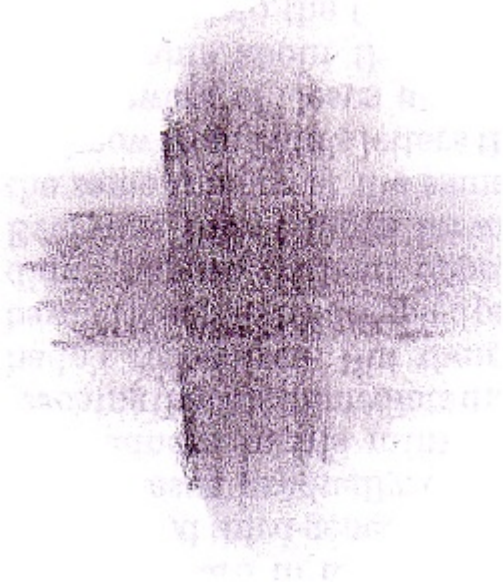
Spirituality
Pencil Preaching





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“Your Father who sees what is hidden will repay you” (Matt 6:18).

Ash Wednesday

Jl 2:12-18; 2 Cor 5:20—6:2; Mt 6:1-6, 16-18

The war in Ukraine gives urgent focus to our prayer, fasting and almsgiving this year. We join together to make true the words of the song, “Let there be peace on earth, and let it begin with me.”

Lent comes for some of us like an oasis in a desert of overactivity, distraction and dissonance. The ancient practices of prayer, fasting and almsgiving encouraged by every religion offer us the chance to catch up with ourselves, calm down, reassert priorities. Just to know who we really are is to rediscover God, our source and destination.

Even if we have completely ignored this inner Abba, as Jesus named God, the divine presence surrounds us, has never left us. Jesus urged his disciples to reclaim the hidden recesses of the self, where the Father knows us, sees us constantly, loves us. Now is the time to clear the lifelines of whatever blocks or slows the steady flow of grace that is our most important relationship.

Fasting makes space in the soul by challenging our addictions, which clamor constantly to be fed, a surfeit of self-satisfaction that only increases that craving but leads to stupor. Fasting is about clarity, simplicity, traveling light, purification. It is its own reward, but also overflows into an awareness of others. Giving away our surplus

to those in need rebalances everyone.

Still, Lent is less self-help than a journey. Every disciple sets out on the road to Jerusalem because Jesus wants us to be with him when he accomplishes his mission. He will fulfill the Law and the Prophets by emptying himself, accepting the full burden of human failure and its consequences in order to lift up the world in glory. Lent is the school of love that enables us to follow him, imitate him, share this mission.

So, we are signed with ashes, the sign of the cross that says to the world we are signed up for the journey. For some it is a continuation, for others a crash course. Blessed are those who begin, and even more blessed those who complete this journey to Easter.

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