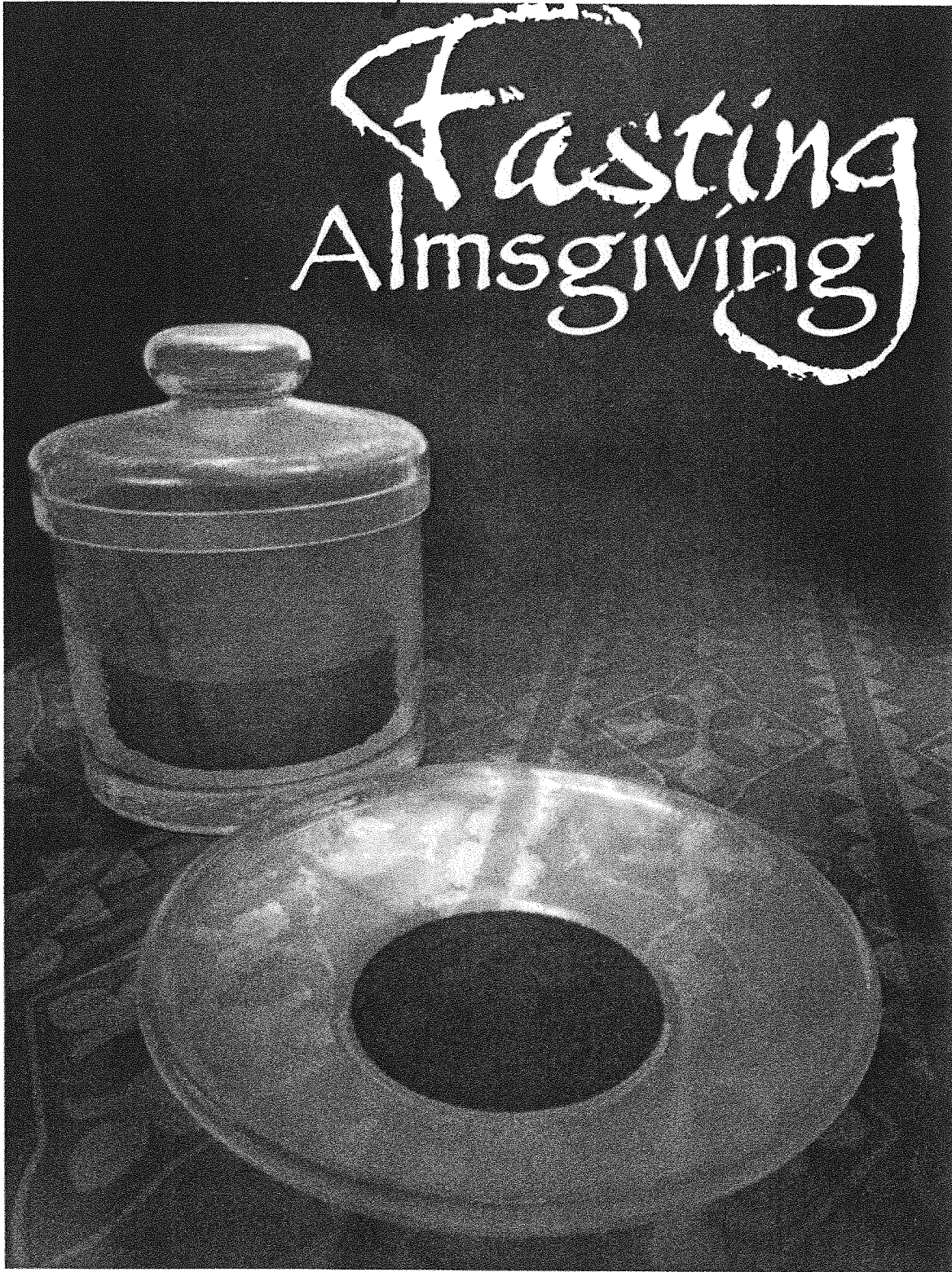


Prayer



Season of Lent
February 22, 2012 – April 4, 2012

Lenten Daily Prayer

Watch over me today, O Lord,
and have mercy on me.

Kyrie, eleison.

My Way, my Truth, my Life,
help me follow you.

Christe, eleison

In your great love for me,
lead me home to heaven.

Kyrie, eleison.

Table Prayer for the Season of Lent

Bless the Lord, O my soul!

May we remain faithful to you,
O God,
who gives us these Lenten days.

Bless the Lord, O my soul!

May our fasting help us hunger
to see your justice done
in the world.

Bless the Lord, O my soul!

May our increased charity
reflect your abundant goodness.

Bless the Lord, O my soul!

May we walk steadfastly with Christ
to his passion, death,
and resurrection.

Bless the Lord, O my soul!

Bless us who pray, bless this meal
during these grace-filled days.

Bless the Lord, O my soul!

A Lenten Litany

Let my fasting
turn me to the needs of others,
and not my own hungers.
Have mercy, O Lord.

Let my charity
be a sign of your generosity,
not an occasion for sinful pride.
Have mercy, O Lord.

Let my prayer
make me a witness to your grace,
leading me to acts of justice.
Have mercy, O Lord.

Let my sufferings
make me one with Christ,
who suffered for our salvation.
Have mercy, O Lord.

Let my good deeds
not be merely for show,
but for helping your kingdom come.
Have mercy, O Lord.

Let my broken relationships
be healed in reconciliation,
leading me beyond my isolation.
Have mercy, O Lord.

Let my very life
be consecrated to your will,
as this Lent leads to Easter's new life.
Have mercy, O Lord.

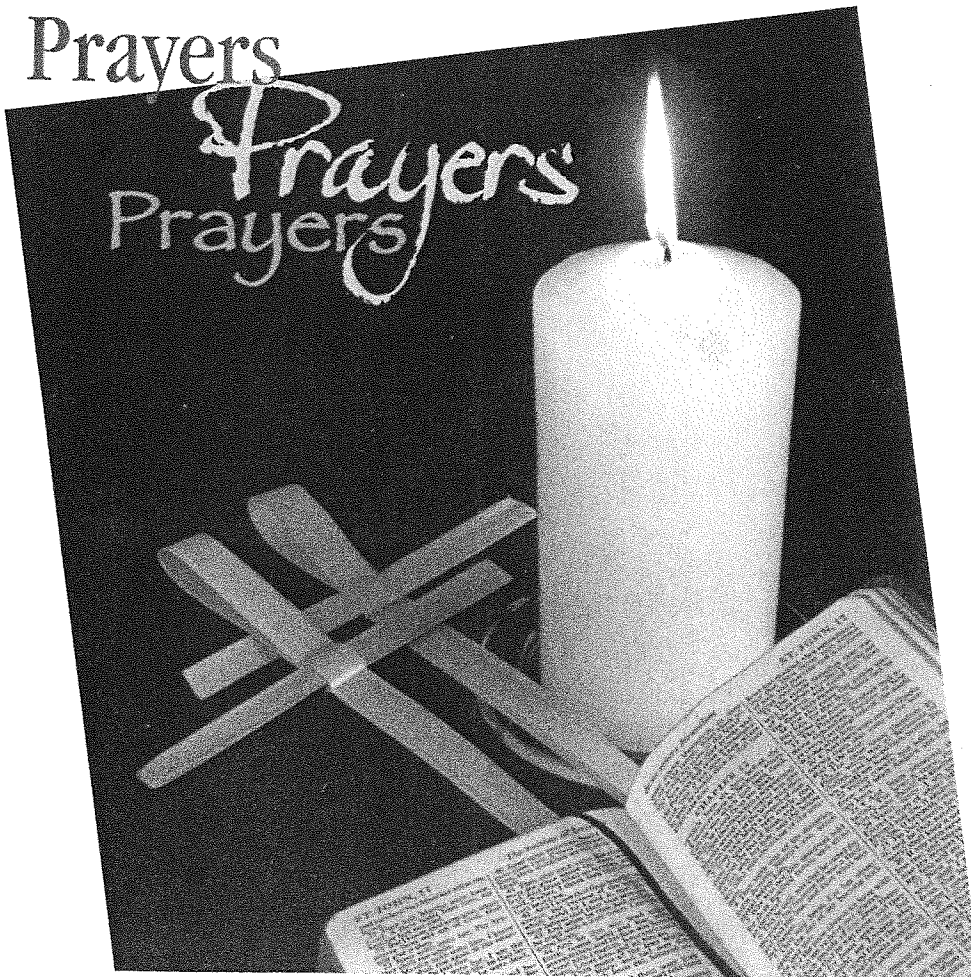
Have mercy, O Lord!
Let my every
thought, word, and deed
during these Lenten days
be a sign of my love for you,
and of your love for the world.
Amen.

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In accordance with c. 827, since this work has
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permission to publish has been granted by the
Very Reverend John F. Canary, Vicar General of
the Archdiocese of Chicago, on October 25, 2011.

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Prayers

Prayers Prayers

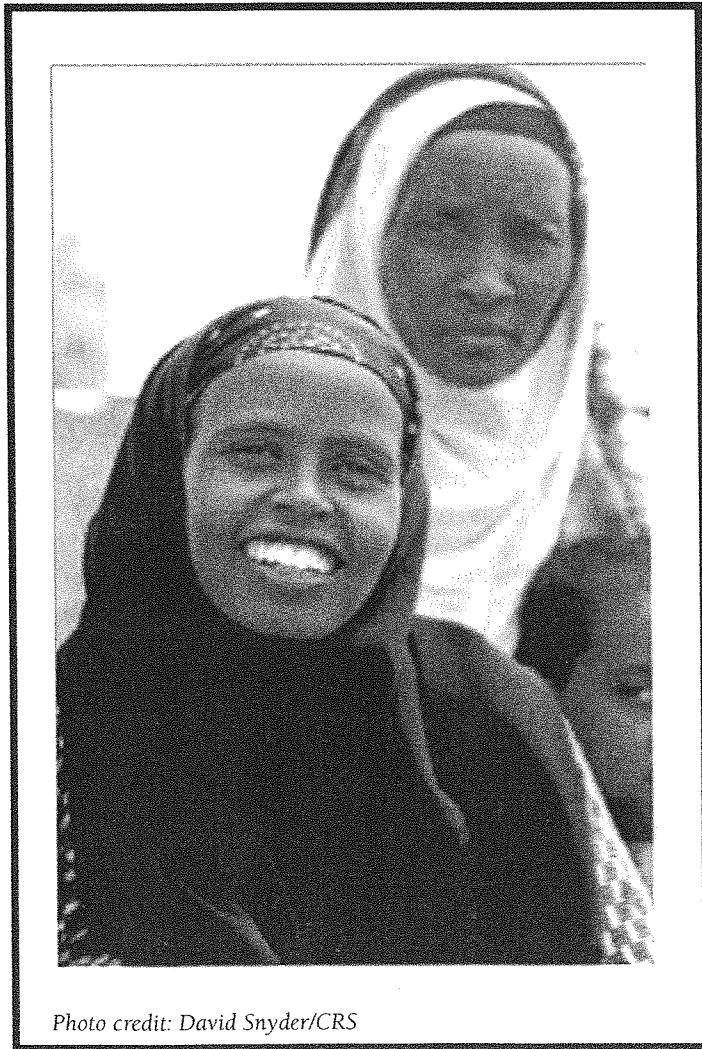


Lent: A Season for Justice

Water Project Brings Relief

For the women of Rhoka, a village of 2,100 residents on the plains surrounding the Tana River in Kenya, life has changed dramatically thanks to Catholic Relief Services (CRS). Working in partnership with the Catholic Diocese of Garissa, CRS built two shallow wells in 2009 to complement an existing sand dam and hand pump built the previous year.

The additional water came at a critical time after more than three years of drought. Instead of a dependency on the increasingly fickle seasonal rains of East Africa, the villagers of Rhoka see the clean water close at hand year-round as a blessing for all.



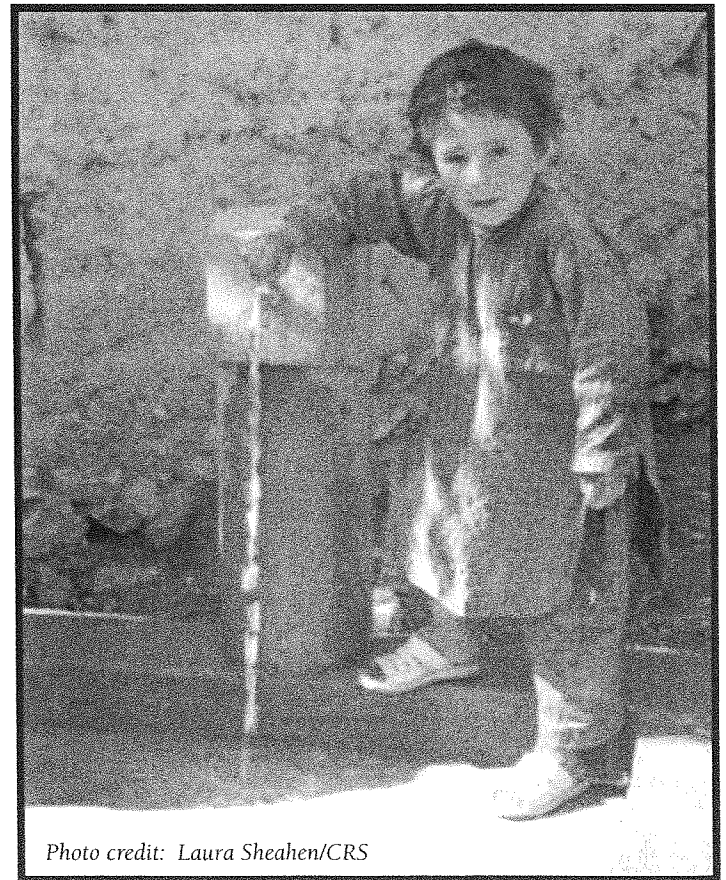
Bringing Water to Afghanistan's Villages

Looking at one of his village's new water spigot stands, the Afghan man smiled. His life—and his neighbors' lives—had been transformed by the installation of a pipe system that provided clean, drinkable water to hundreds of people.

In the remote province of Ghor in Afghanistan, villagers must work hard to get clean water, especially in the summer. Women in small villages like Akhtakhana Bala must walk down to a valley to get water, carrying it back up in vessels on their heads.

So when a CRS project funded by USAID brought pipelines and tap stands to Akhtakhana Bala's 560 residents, the villagers rejoiced. "Now we have sweet, drinkable water. Every day I pray for CRS."

Catholic Relief Services is the official international humanitarian agency of the Catholic community in the United States. For more information please visit crs.org.



Fasting for Spiritual Athletes

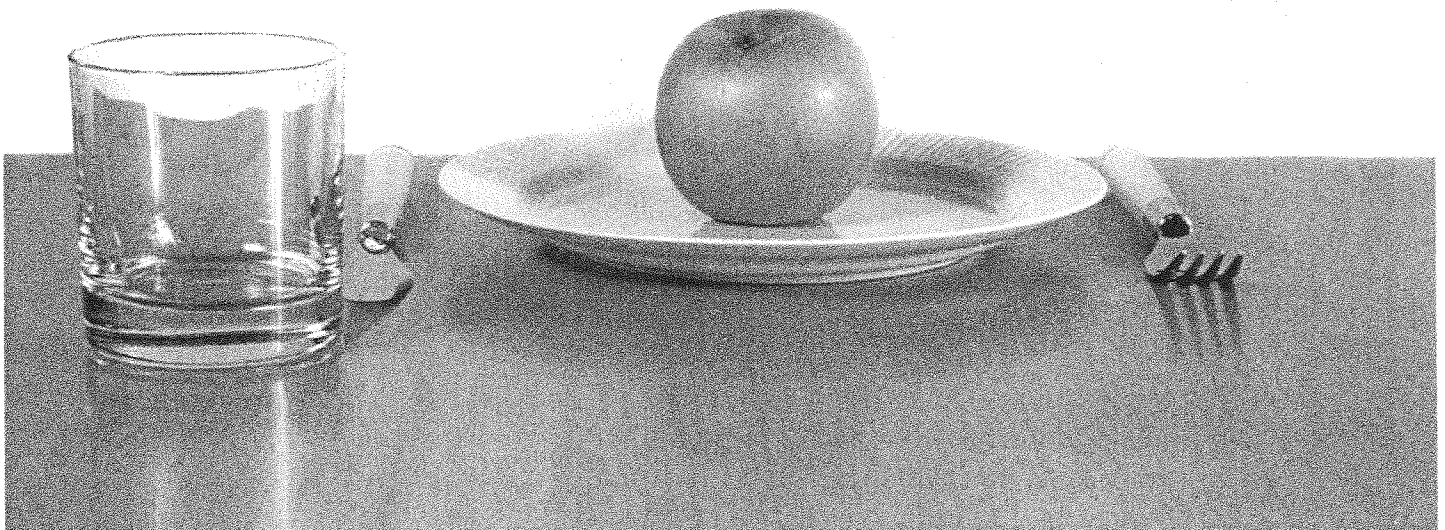
Asceticism, the practice of spiritual self-discipline, can sometimes bring to our minds today a disagreeable or sour-faced outlook on life. One important part of this self-discipline is our fasting, modeled on Christ, who fasted in the desert before beginning his public ministry.

The word *ascesis* means “training” and comes from the Greek training of Olympic athletes. As Olympic athletes train their bodies to excel, so asceticism trains our souls to excel. Asceticism trains the muscles of the soul just as exercises train the muscles of the body. Athletes excel at bodily activities, such as swimming, running, and gymnastics. What do spiritual athletes excel at? The saints are our spiritual athletes and they excel at love, prayer, generosity, and faith.

As you build up your spiritual muscles by fasting this Lent, set aside a little time to nourish yourself by reading the lives of these spiritual athletes. They were flawed but still knew they were wonderfully graced. Let their stories comfort and inspire you.

The stories of the saints provide models for living holy and courageous lives. There are many books about saints suited to varying audiences, from children to adults. Perhaps your parish has a resource library, or the parish school (or the one at a neighboring parish) will have titles to suggest. There are biographies of holy men and women who lived in more recent times: Archbishop Oscar Romero, Mother Teresa, and Dorothy Day are but a few. The lives of these three bring into sharp focus the Lenten habits of fasting, charity, and prayer—habits that energized them to pursue lives that helped the poor and oppressed.

Make sure, as you read about saints, to ask questions, especially if reading these stories to children. Reflect on how the story relates to daily living, and how the saint shows you a healthy relationship with God. If reading together as a household, end your time together with a brief prayer and maybe a song. There are many songs about the saints, or you could conclude with one verse of a favorite Lenten hymn or song.



Going into the Desert

During Lent we go with Jesus into the desert to fast and pray. Our desert is most likely not a geographical location but a spiritual reality. It is a place of silence where we battle the noise in our heads and the constant clamoring of our selfishness. The desert is a place of encounter. It is where God led the chosen people into freedom from slavery, where the Spirit led the Son of God to prepare for his saving mission, and where we go to hear God's voice in our hearts. To enter this desert during Lent we will need to take time, choose silence, and make a place for prayer.

Taking time may mean getting up early each morning for spiritual reading and meditation, going to daily Mass, saying the rosary before going to bed at night, or taking a shorter lunch and visiting the Blessed Sacrament at a church near the office. It might mean scheduling some desert days this Lent in the form of days of recollection or a retreat at a local retreat house or monastery. Try to schedule both personal time and household prayer time—watch what happens!

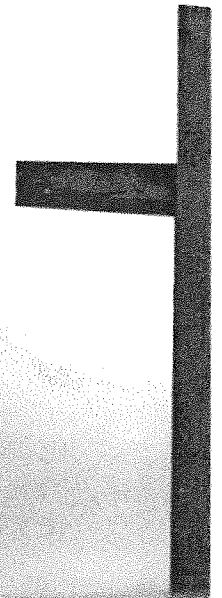
Choosing silence can be difficult in our noisy world, but silence can be healing, opening us up to the presence of God in our lives. Try turning off the TV after a certain hour or one whole night each week. Turn off the radio on your way to work. Have one meal a week in silence.

Making a place for prayer in our home can help us do what the Gospel tells us, to go into an "inner room" to pray (Matthew 6:6). Make your prayer place as quiet, uncluttered, and "desert-like" as possible. It can be the corner of a room or any unused space. Furnish your prayer place with a Bible, prayer books, cross, rosary, icons, and a candle. Encourage family members to use the prayer place for personal as well as family prayer. You can bless your place of prayer, saying:

*Come, Holy God. Dwell in this place of prayer,
and bless it with your peace and presence.*

Bless all who seek you here.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.



Lenten Giving

We think of Christmas as the time for gift-giving as we celebrate our Savior's birth. Most of us think of Lent as a time to give something up. We give up our bad habits and things we don't really need, learning to live with greater simplicity, freedom, and joy. But Lent is also a season of giving. Almsgiving is one of the three important disciplines of Lent (along with prayer and fasting). In giving to others we imitate our Lord, who has given so much to us. This Lent, plan on spending some time to reflect on or discuss how you can give this Lent.

There are many worthwhile almsgiving traditions. Get the household together before the beginning of Lent to talk about how you can make this a season of giving. Encourage everyone to do some research and find out about almsgiving activities in your parish or school. Brainstorm and decide on some ways to become givers this Lent. Here are some possibilities:

Operation Rice Bowl

This is an almsgiving Lenten program of Catholic Relief Services (CRS). Families pray for the needy of the world while collecting change in a small bowl. This money is used by CRS to feed the hungry. To participate, contact your parish or school or CRS at 1-866-608-5978 or orb.crs.org. Check out their Operation Rice Bowl Prayer and daily reflections (in English and Spanish).



Heifer International's Read to Feed Program

This is a reading incentive program that can foster both a love of reading and a desire to help others. Children get sponsors who make a donation for every book the child reads. Heifer International uses donations to give animals (such as cows, chickens, bees, oxen) to people struggling with hunger and poverty. These people are trained to care for the animal so that they can use it as an ongoing source of income and food. Recipients of these animals agree to share offspring of that animal, as well as new-found knowledge and skill with others. Learn more by calling 1-800-422-0474 or go to heifer.org.



Jesuit Refugee Service

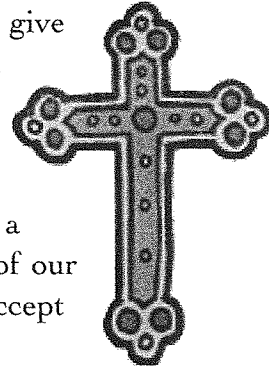
Call 1-202-462-0400 or go to jrsusa.org to find out how you can help people driven from their homes by conflict, natural disaster, economic injustice, or violation of other human rights.



You might also choose a time each week to talk about your experience of giving. Is it easy? Does it get easier? What do you learn by giving? Read and reflect on what Jesus has to say about giving (Matthew 6:1-4; Mark 12:41-44).

ASH WEDNESDAY - FEBRUARY 22, 2012

Repent! Re-open your eyes! Reform your ways! This is the invitation delivered at the doorstep of our hearts today. We are called to give new vision and new direction to our lives. How will we respond to the invitation? Will we "RSVP" or not? More importantly, where will we go to seek and find this vision, this new direction for our lives that have strayed and gone out of focus? It's a new start for us today, as it is every Ash Wednesday. Lent is a marvelous time to refresh and revitalize our lives and the life of our community by new commitment to live what we believe. Let us accept the invitation. Let us begin.



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