

Called to Pray

Lent and Easter
with the Revised Roman Missal

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NOVALIS




Ash Wednesday

Collect

Grant, O Lord, that we may begin with holy fasting
this campaign of Christian service,
so that, as we take up battle against spiritual evils,
we may be armed with weapons of self-restraint.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18





It can be a battle to bring the healing presence of Christ into a wounded world. We can so easily in our daily encounters slip into dismissing or cutting down others. So it takes self-restraint to wage this campaign of Christian service. Holy fasting is a spiritual practice that helps arm us with self-restraint – but not by making us invulnerable. Rather, fasting engenders a certain kind of vulnerability. As soon as we resolve to fast from sweets or alcohol, we are bombarded by temptation and pride, uncovering a place of deeper weakness, even chaos, where only God can truly work to bring about new life. So we are invited in fasting to recognize our utter dependence on God.

Jesus, in the gospel, challenges us to an even more profound level of self-restraint, not for its own sake, but for the reward of a deeper, more intimate relationship with the God who sees in secret and is in secret. By not parading or trumpeting our prayer and fasting, we share something with God alone. There is no one else in the room. It is like sharing something very special with a spouse, lover or friend, as a sign of trust and fidelity. Only in strengthening our love relationship with God are we truly armed for spiritual battle.

Greta DeLonghi





Fifth Sunday of Lent

National Collection for Development and Peace

Collect

By your help, we beseech you, Lord our God,
may we walk eagerly in that same charity
with which, out of love for the world,
your Son handed himself over to death.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

John 12:20-33

“**M**ay we walk eagerly in charity”. That sounds simple enough, and perhaps what we good Christian people think we want in life. To walk in charity, and maybe even to do so eagerly, with some enthusiasm and zeal. Yet in this collect we do not pray to walk in just any sort of charity, any sort of love – and certainly not the many counterfeits for love peddled in our world. Rather, we ask for “that same charity with which, out of love for the world, your Son handed himself over to death.” Are we so eager now? Eager for a love that may call us to hand ourselves over to death? Was Jesus himself so eager, after all? Even in John’s gospel, as we read today, his soul is troubled. And yet, his desire, his “love for the world,” is deep and constant: for the grain of wheat to die so that it may become far more than a single grain but bear much fruit. That is the eagerness we seek – not for suffering and death in themselves, but as expressions of that self-sacrificing love that alone will bear much fruit in the healing of a broken world.

Robin Koning, S.J.

Prayer (Easter Vigil)

O God, who make this most sacred night radiant with the glory of the Lord's Resurrection, stir up in your Church a spirit of adoption, so that, renewed in body and mind, we may render you undivided service. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Mark 16:1-8

It is like this in so many cultures, in so many events of world history: it is women, moved by love and compassion, who discover in that love and compassion the courage to confront the death-dealing powers of the world and “render undivided service.” Think of the Mothers of the Disappeared in Argentina, standing up to military dictatorship; think of the grandmothers of sub-Saharan Africa, raising their AIDS-orphaned grandchildren and creating a worldwide network of grandmother-activists against AIDS. But here, the women receive a surprise: Jesus is alive and the night is radiant with the glory of his Resurrection. God has received Jesus’ offering of love and overturns the sentence pronounced by the power of sin and death against him. That gift of new life, of being renewed in body and mind beyond death, spills over to us as Jesus’ brothers and sisters. The “spirit of adoption” that we pray for disposes us to accept this gift and share it with all people.

Gilles Mongeau, S.J.