

Ash Wednesday



PREPARE:

We invite you to find a comfortable position as you read this reflection. Light a candle if you wish and become aware of your breathing. When you are ready, slowly read the reflection, pause when you are drawn to stop and reflection on what you have read. Write down your thought and feeling to ponder on these later.

REFLECTION:

The 'renewal' Season of Lent begins on this day, and it goes on for about 40 days. It is a prime preparation time for the Triptych Celebration of the Paschal Mystery at Easter. The word Lent comes from a mixture of old English and Dutch, meaning 'Springtime.' For us Down Under in Australia, it's really moving into Autumn. However, this does not matter, what is important, is what we should do to be more wholesome followers of Jesus.

In short, for us and all Christians, Lent is a time of personal and communal renewal. To put it in modern day terms, it's our 'Fitness First' within our spirituality. Crowds of people are hooked on 'fitness' and that is incredibly good; this is the time to be hooked on interior renewal, through personal reflection and spiritual exercises.

The treadmill is walking along with the Lord, while listening to his invitations for 'change' in us. Our desire to exercise will make the way for us to respond to Jesus through his Word. Any type of exercise only happens if we want to do it! Reading about it won't make the 'change.' We must be *people of action* in this renewal process.

Our fitness first will be nourished by our Care and outreach to those who need sustenance. It is also energized by our alertness in looking for the Saving hand of God in Daily living. It all has the 'power' to change us and become more insightful to God's presence around us. Hence, we will need to make time for our personal appraisal, meditation, and prayer.

That's the hard bit!

Our fitness first will be strengthened by our Fasting! Fasting from food? Personal self-denial? Maybe!

Let's conclude with what Pope Francis suggests.

Do you want to fast this Lent?

- in the words of Pope Francis -

- Fast from hurting words *and say kind words.*
- Fast from sadness *and be filled with gratitude.*
- Fast from anger *and be filled with patience.*
- Fast from pessimism *and be filled with hope.*
- Fast from worries *and have trust in God.*
- Fast from complaints *and contemplate simplicity.*
- Fast from selfishness *and be compassionate to others.*
- Fast from grudges *and be reconciled.*
- Fast from words *and be silent so you can listen.*

Reflection written by Fr Kevin Walsh lives in Sydney and was formed in the Passionist Tradition. Over the years he has been a Teacher in Secondary Schools, Retreats and Parish Missions as well as Parish work. He is presently Chaplain to Mackillop House at Baulkham Hills and Ministers to the Aged, the Dying and the Bereaved.



PAUSE:

What do I want to fast from?

What do I want to 'change' and be a person of action in this renewal process?