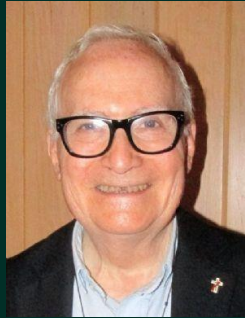


DEACON RICHARD BLAKE 2019 ASH WEDNESDAY HOMILY
HOLY CROSS CATHOLIC CHURCH VERO BEACH, FLORIDA



Ash Wed 19

Today we begin our threefold discipline of prayer, fasting and almsgiving, or good-works to prepare for that great celebration of the Pascal Mystery, the Passion Death and Resurrection of the Lord.

This practice goes back to the early church. It was as early as the 4th century that Lent was established for 40 days modeling the 40 years the Israelite people of God spent wandering in the desert and the 40 days Jesus spent in the desert prior to His ministry. We too must enter that desert, the place where there is nothing but emptiness and dryness, the absence of life. It is here that we must learn to depend on nothing but God. Jesus taught His disciples to do all their disciplines of prayer, fasting and good works without showing off. He taught us to disregard any appearances, any ways of making ourselves look good in front of others. It is time for sackcloth and ashes.

Ashes do something to us that turn us beyond ourselves. They remind us of our mortality. They help us realize we have the capacity for eternity. Ashes put us in touch with the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. They are the opposite of Make-up. Make-up is something that makes us look good. We use make-up to hide our flaws and make us look better than we are. Ashes do the opposite, they expose us to who we really are. And that's good, for it brings us closer to the truth, goodness, and God. And that's the purpose of Lent, to bring us closer to God, truth and goodness. Lent is a time for truth rather than Make-Up. Jesus says, "be on guard against performing religious acts for people to see." Abandon all self-seeking and self-promotion and come to God as you really are with all your fragility, pain, ashes and flaws without any make-up, and give yourself to God. Let God see who you really are! Amen