

In Nomine Jesu

Prayer: Lord God, Heavenly Father, You sent Your Son to die for all. The Cross was His goal and wrought our redemption. The nails, the thirst, the thorns, the lance, speak of Your eternal love for the lost. In this most holy solemn season, may we so repent of our sins and cling to our Redeemer that our lives henceforth will reflect to others the greatness and depth of our Savior's love. Hear us, Father, in the Name of Your Son who died for us. Amen.

The Text

"Your heart will be where your treasure is." St. Matthew 16:21

The Sermon

We had a dismissive phrase in New York – and elsewhere: "Forget it, baby!" It implies that the cause is hopeless – or the subject is preposterous – or the project is outrageous. "Forget it, baby! Put it right out of your mind! It is a rude suggestion to change the subject or abandon the quest.

But this is the day when we can't say: forget it. This is the day when we remember it. **It** – is the need to say sorry to God. Sorry for having neglected Him – sorry for not having taken the trouble or the time to go to worship Him – or to listen to what we know He is telling us in His Word or through the lives of people who really love Him and can't help but bring their goodness and their standards among the muddle and the mess of our own existence.

Sorry to God – for having flown in the face of what we know He wants from us: truth – generosity – humility – obedience. This is the day when we remember it. It is the day when we take a good hard look in the mirror of God's holy Law.

The trouble is – that we have skated along the thin edge between truth and half-truth and untruth **so adeptly** that we can hardly

recognize ourselves for what we are anymore. But Ash Wednesday is the day – when with lesser or greater accuracy – we catch sight of ourselves and resolve to do something about it.

Not in order to make ourselves **feel good** – but in hopes of having our relationship with God renewed and restored – to where we know – uncomfortably if uncertainly – it should be. And what we can see of ourselves in the mirror of God’s Law isn’t reassuring.

We are curiously **fat** – **fat** from too much self-indulgence – **fat** from too much self-will – **fat** from too much self-assurance. And our looks have faded into indifference – into compromise with our lesser selves – and lower standards – into settling for second best in the way we deal with ourselves and with others and with our God. Our faces have fallen into unworthy despair and acquiescence in situations – that – in our better moments – we would **never** have allowed ourselves to accept.

We have settled for easy options – in order to avoid effort – or unpleasantness – and difficult situations. We face a sorry image in the mirror of God’s Law. Facing all this – we don’t think of **forgetting it** – on Ash Wednesday. We face it Which is why you are here.

You realize – that as the words of Scripture say: *“Listen – **now** is God’s acceptable time! **Now** is the day of salvation!”* (2 Cor 6:2) *““Even now” – declares the Lord – “return to Me with **all** your heart – with fasting – crying – and mourning.””* (Joel 2:12) **Now** is the time for the Holy Spirit to restore us into the image of God.

He offers His forgiveness – the gift of Himself – right there in His consecrated Body and Blood. He offers to be at our elbow as we make that dangerous turn on the thin ice – skating to truth – from between half truth and untruth. That turn – that dangerous turn on thin ice – is called **metanoia** in Greek – repentance – when you change the way you think and you change the way you act – and turn to the Lord to be saved.

Now – as you sit here – renew your act of repentance. Say you're sorry. Ask for God's help – on that turn from untruth of truth. Ask for His arm on your elbow. Make the turn. Do it now. Not next week. Not 40 days from now. Now. Tell Him you're sorry. Change the way you think – and change the way you act.

Ask His help. Turn. And then you can say: "Forget it, baby!" But not before. I'll tell you why. St. Paul says so. After **he** made the turn – he said: *"This is what I do: I don't look back. I lengthen my stride – and I run – straight toward the goal – to win the prize that God's Heavenly call offers in Christ Jesus."* (Phil 3:13-14) For – as Jesus says: ***"Your heart will be – where your treasure is."*** (Mt 6:21)

In the Name of the Father and of the +Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria!