

LENT

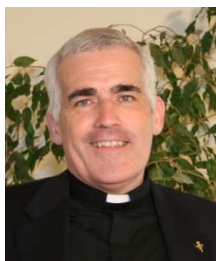
“But now, now – it is the Lord who speaks—
come back to me with your whole heart.” Joel 2:12

LENT



“Jesus I Trust in You.”

MICHAEL RAMOS, C.F.C.



The season of Lent begins with these words from the Prophet Joel and for good reason. The Church wants us to deepen our relationship with Jesus during this season – a time of preparation for the great feast of Easter. How do I deepen my relationship with Jesus during this season? As a child this was always the season of deciding what to give up for Lent. Would it be ice cream or cookies or some other treat? As important as the discipline of sacrificing something during Lent is, I believe that God now calls me to use this season of Lent for something more.

The prophet Joel tells us that the Lord wants each of us to come back to God with our **whole** heart. What does it mean to come back to God with my **whole** heart? I think for me this is a call to trust God, to trust that God knows better than I do and to wholeheartedly surrender my will to the will of God – the adventure of a lifetime not to be accomplished this Lent but this Lent is a good time to begin.

What does it mean to trust? A definition of trust found in *The Oxford American Dictionary* is to hope earnestly. St. Augustine of Hippo defines hope as the virtue which believes that God’s will be done. The season of Lent calls me to have trust, to believe that God’s will be done, not in some abstract way but in my life and in my time.

One of the components of my ministry at Saint Matthias Parish in Ridgewood, NY is working in the parish food pantry. As I hand out bags of groceries to people I say, “God bless you.” “Mary” recently responded to me, “I hope so. I pray to Jesus all the time. I hope that He will forgive me. I’ve done some bad things but thank God I never killed anyone or had an abortion.” I replied “God will forgive you if you ask God to forgive you. God is a forgiving God. God is merciful.” As she continued on her way she kept repeating, “I hope so; I hope so.” I continue to think about “Mary” and to pray for her. What prevents her from trusting that God will forgive her? Are there others like her who cannot trust that God will forgive their offenses? Do I fully trust that God forgives me? Do I trust God?

To emphasize once again God’s great mercy, Jesus appeared to a young Polish religious, Sister Faustina Kowalska, during the 1930’s. He asked her to promote devotion to The Divine Mercy. Saint Faustina was asked to have an image created of Jesus as he appeared to her. She was instructed to have “Jesus I Trust in You.” written under the image. Clearly the message of God’s mercy can only be accepted when we trust in Jesus; trust in God’s revealed Word and trust that God’s will for me is better than my own will.

This Lent, I may give something up but more importantly I will pray to grow in trust and in hope, to believe that God’s will be done in me. I will pray for “Mary” and those like her who can’t accept God’s limitless mercy. I will pray that I and they will be able to say wholeheartedly, “Jesus I Trust in You.”

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