

# ASH WEDNESDAY

February 14, 2024

## Gospel: (Matthew 6: 1-6, 16-18)

Jesus said to his disciples: *“Be on guard against performing religious acts for people to see. When you give alms, for example, do not blow a horn before you in synagogues and streets like hypocrites looking for applause...Keep your deeds of mercy secret, and your Father who sees in secret will repay you. When you are praying, do not behave like the hypocrites...Whenever you pray, go to your room, close the door, and pray to your Father in private. Then your Father, who sees what no man sees, will repay you. When you fast, you are not to look glum as the hypocrites do...When you fast, see to it that you groom your hair and wash your face. In that way no one can see you are fasting but your Father who is hidden; and your Father who sees what is hidden will repay you.”*

## Reflection:

In the gospel we hear Jesus direct his disciples to surrender their money in alms, their bodies in fasting, and their spirits in prayers. May Jesus gift us with his presence this Lent, so that we can be a gift to others in carrying out our service as we:

Fast from judging others; to feast on the Christ dwelling in them.

Fast from unrelenting pressures; to feast on unceasing prayer.

Fast from self-concern; to feast on compassion for others.

## Vincentian Meditation:

“I should not judge the poor peasants, men or women, by their exterior nor by their apparent mental capacities. All the more is this so since very frequently they scarcely seem to have the appearance or intelligence of reasonable beings...But turn the medal, and you will see by the light of faith that the Son of God, whose will it was to be poor, is represented to us by these people.” St. Vincent de Paul (McKenna, *Praying with Vincent*, p. 59)

## Discussion: (Share your thoughts on the readings after a moment of silence)

**Recall your last encounter with a poor person. Was it an occasion during which you saw below the surface-you turned the medal- and caught a glimpse of God’s presence?**

## Closing Prayer:

Lent is the acceptable time for renewing our desire to serve as Jesus served, so we pray:

When we walk with those caught in the cycle of poverty,

**Help us to see your face, O God!**

When we look into the wondering eyes of a child,

**Help us to see your face, O God!**

When we reach out to the homeless,

**Help us to see your face, O God!**

When we listen to the fading voice of the aged,

**Help us to see your face, O God! Amen**

