

## Reflection for Ash Wednesday 2023

As we gather on this first day of Lent to observe this ancient ritual, the Imposition of Ashes, made from the ashes we created yesterday, what is it that is on your heart this day?

As I have said on various occasions, I like the idea of entering Lent with the echo of God's words on the Mount of Transfiguration, ringing in my ears. Yesterday, in my homily, I reflected on the significance the question "What does the Lord require of you" has become over the last few weeks, and I think that is a question which I will be grappling with during Lent.

Whether we give something up or take something on, during this period, the important thing is that we do it for a reason – not for our own self-gratification, but to bring us closer to God.

To make space for God in the clutter which our lives so often become; to be come intentional about listening to what God through Jesus is trying to say to us. To, as the second of our four strategies of the current diocesan Vision and Strategy statement says: to learn more about Jesus, in order to become more like him.

The fourth strategy is:

Being Salt and Light in the places and among the people God has placed us (in our communities)<sup>1</sup>

Which fits in with being "the salt of the earth" and "light of the world" which Jesus calls us to be.

The whole point of spending time with God during Lent, of deepening our faith, is so that we can reflect that Christ-like quality to bring hope to a world suffering along the lines the prophet Joel described.

A few years ago there was a quote, attributed to Pope Francis, going around. A slightly different type of fast:

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 pressures and be prayerful.  
Fast from bitterness and fill your hearts with joy.  
Fast from selfishness and be compassionate to others.  
Fast from grudges and be reconciled.  
Fast from words and be silent so you can listen. <sup>2</sup>

And so, however we "Fast" this Lent, I pray that God will speak into our hearts and minds and make this time transformative in our lives.

Let us pray:

Loving and gracious God, who sees and knows the depths of our hearts even more clearly than we do,  
open our eyes to how loved we are by you.  
Open our minds to see where we are unfree,  
and in need of space and fasting from hidden tastes that hold us back from loving.  
Open our hearts and hands to take the first steps to which your Spirit guides us. Amen.<sup>3</sup>

Rev'd Sally Buckley tssf  
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### Acknowledgments:

1. Anglican Diocese of Bunbury Vision and Strategy
2. Posted on Facebook in 2018 by [pietrafitness.com](http://pietrafitness.com) St Christopher's Catholic Church
3. Maeve Louise Heaney VDMF from *Light from within*.