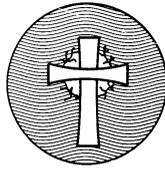


Lent...

What's it about?



What's it really all about? What are we living for? Are my values Godly values? Is the way I spend my precious, finite minutes of life really the best? And what does God want from me, anyway?

Ash Wednesday asks and answers all these questions. Specifically the part of Ash Wednesday when the pastor makes two swipes of a dirty thumb across my forehead and says, "Remember, human, that you are dust, and to dust you shall return."

The gesture and the words express our lowly condition: Time will destroy us despite the defensive ramparts and barricades we construct with our money, our fame, our beauty, our power, and so on. Since death and dust are inevitable, Ash Wednesday asks us, why do we human beings build our silly defenses AS IF they will protect us? Why put up barriers when instead we can use our time, our wealth, our creativity and power to live free, abundant lives for God's purposes?

Ash Wednesday declares us guilty of the great sins of failing to love the Lord Our God with all our being and failing to love our neighbor as ourselves. Lent calls us to repentance and self examination. And exactly this is the meaning of repentance — to turn away from sin and towards God.

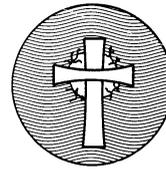
How we use our lives and what we are living for — these are, ultimately, issues of stewardship. Ash Wednesday dramatically condemns us, all of us, for being poor stewards of the bountiful lives that God gives us. Ash Wednesday reminds us that we are "dead people walking" and sets the tone for our Lenten self examination.

Of course, Ash Wednesday isn't the end of the story. But for now, meditate on these words: "Remember, human, that you are dust, and to dust you shall return!"

Gleaned from Stewardship of Life, Rev. Robert Blezard

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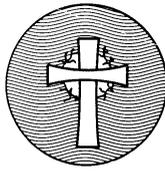
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