



Archdiocese of San Antonio
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Homily – Ash Wednesday
at
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“Return to me with your whole heart!” The Lord says to each of us today: Return to me! Why? Perhaps we have not **totally** turned our backs on God. But are we truly walking in his ways? Can we truthfully and honestly say that we have not sinned at all? No, I think not. In the penitential rite we acknowledge that we sin by what we do and by what we fail to do. So, we need to listen very attentively to God’s words today and respond appropriately: “Return to me with your whole heart!”

In his message for Lent this year, Pope Francis addresses a worldwide problem in which we all share:

the globalization of indifference. Indifference to our neighbor and to God represents a real temptation for us Christians. Each year during Lent we need to hear once more the voice of the prophets who cry

out and trouble our conscience. God is not indifferent to our world; he so loves it that he gave his Son for our salvation.

The Holy Father also prescribes a remedy: forming our hearts after the model of the Sacred Heart of Jesus:

A merciful heart does not mean a weak heart. Anyone who wishes to be merciful must have a strong and steadfast heart, closed to the tempter but open to God. A heart which lets itself be pierced by the Spirit so as to bring love along the roads that lead to our brothers and sisters. And, ultimately, a poor heart, one which realizes its own poverty and gives itself freely for others.

In order to form a merciful, strong, open, poor heart, the Church calls us to do three things during Lent:

Pray. Prayer reminds us that our lives are ultimately in God's hands, and we need God's help in our daily lives.

Fast and abstain. Fasting – giving up something – reminds us of the deepest hunger of our hearts – which is for God.

Almsgiving. Aware of God's goodness and blessings in our life and wishing to overcome indifference to others – we share our gifts with others.

These three Lenten practices will change our lives and form our hearts. God tells us today: "Rend your hearts, not your garments."