

Homily
March 2, 2022
Ash Wednesday
21:23-28:18

What is the first thing we do when we come into the church here? (response: Sit down.) Even before sitting down. (response: Be quiet.) Well, that's a good thing. Yes? (response: Pray) Yes. (response: Come in the door!) Yes. - But you're IN the Church now. What's the first thing you do? (response: Get holy water.) Yes. And what do you do with the holy water? Yes, but what is that? What do we call that? All right. Who can help me? (response: "Father, Son and Holy Spirit.") And what do we call that? Yes? (response: The "Sign of the Cross.") Took a long time to get there, didn't it?

The Sign of the Cross. The Cross, which reminds us of Jesus dying for us so that our sins were forgiven. But also, the Cross that reminds us that Jesus rose from the dead and gave the gift to us of salvation. So, every time we make this sign (+), we remember, yes, the Father, the Son and the Spirit, our God, but we also remember what the Lord has done for us in his Son, Jesus Christ.

He made of himself a sacrifice that others might live. And then he showed us that beyond this life where we live and breathe and play on the playground...(Is that your favorite part of school? – Yup. Thought so.) Beyond that we get to share in the resurrection. And in between we get to live it. Today we begin to recall the full gift, but we're really working on the first part – the sacrificial love. The Gospel tells us how we might do that: with prayer, with fasting and with alms-giving. And in this 40-day season – actually it's a little longer than 40 days – we take up extra prayer. We set aside something. Today: meat and we don't eat three full meals. But we also through the season try to set something aside that we really like, or that is a bad habit and we sacrifice that in the spirit of Jesus Christ. And we sacrifice maybe our time, maybe some money, that others might live better.

Aren't you doing the Rice Bowls this year? Have they received their Rice Bowls? - Today? Today. Very good.

Now. I want to invite all of us who were first signed with the Sign of the Cross by our parents at our baptism (you don't remember this) - but you were signed with that Sign of God's sacrifice and God's life and the resurrection. And today you are going to be signed with ashes, which will help you remember throughout the day, when you see it, what Jesus has done for us.

But here's what I want to invite you to do. When you do prayer during this season, whether it's with the community, or on your own, or with your family, be sure to seal it with the Sign of the Cross. Connect it to the ashes today.

Fast. When you let go of something – when you see that piece of candy that you're not going to eat – when you see it and you go, "Oh. I'd really like that," make the Sign of the Cross. And remember the fullness of the gift. When you don't act out that bad habit and you know you didn't because you said, "No," make the Sign of the Cross. And when you sacrifice in the Rice Bowl, or some extra time you put in to help someone, however you're going to do that, make the Sign of the Cross and remember what you're doing, why you're giving. Can we do that? Adults, can we do that?

Don't let this season slip away in its goodness, in the wonder of the wholeness of it. If you and I intentionally make that sign whenever we're doing one of these three things -- prayer, fasting or alms-giving -- and we think about it, we will be connected to the gift that we have in Christ