

NOW IS THE ACCEPTABLE TIME

How quickly time passes. It doesn't seem that long ago that we were celebrating the Incarnation of the Word in the joys and blessings of Christmas with family and friends. And yet, this week Lent begins; a season that prompts us to develop a discipline that will encourage our conscience to reflect on ways that we can improve our behavior.

The Ash Wednesday liturgy reminds us of our mortal nature. Saint Paul, in the second reading, tells us that "now is the acceptable time" to further orient our lives to God. At the distribution of ashes, we often hear "Remember, man, you are dust and to dust you will return".

These words tell us that we have been created by God from nothing more than dust. We come into this world with nothing, and we leave with nothing. All that happens in between, all that we become, all that we acquire, all that we experience, are gifts presented to us in love from God.

Lent itself, is a wonderful gift. It calls us to pause and reflect and to be reminded that we live because God created us, that He abundantly provides for us to carry out His work on earth, and that His son Jesus Christ died that we might enjoy eternal life.

Our natural response to this infinite grace should be gratitude, particularly reflected in an overwhelming desire to be obedient to God's purpose for us.

A concrete way in which we can demonstrate our gratitude for all that we are and all that we have is to devote the first of our time, talent and treasure to the building of the Kingdom of God. In a real and practical way we can put God first. We can give back to God by the way we live as engaged, focused and purposed disciples of Jesus Christ.

As the season of Lent begins, let's be mindful that it is indeed "the acceptable time" to re-examine our commitments of time, talent and treasure in service to God and one another. Are we being good stewards of all God's gifts to us? Are we giving back to God in realistic proportion to all that He has given us?

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