

Lent Course 2026 St Andrew's with St Mary's Stoke Newington

Ash Wednesday & Lent
Lent 1 | Session 1 25/02/26

READ

In this video, Dr. Pitre gives insight into the Biblical foundation for Ash Wednesday, as well as the rationale and purpose of the season of Lent. He addresses questions such as:

- Why do we use ashes?
- Why are we asked of the Church to increase our fasting, prayer, and almsgiving during Lent?
- Is Lent just about abstaining from a favourite food, or is there something more to it?

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[*The Temptations of Jesus & the Fall of Adam: A Desert of Victory & a Garden of Defeat*](#)

Transcript:

After the Feast of Christmas, one of the most popular days of the year for Catholics to attend mass — even Catholics who don't frequently go to mass — is Ash Wednesday, which is the first day of the Season of Lent. And yet, at the same time, despite its popularity and high attendance rates, it's also one of the most puzzling days of the year because it's one where Catholics do things that are very strange.

So first of all, we have ashes put on our foreheads in the shape of a cross, and lots of people wonder: what is the meaning of the ashes? Why do Catholics get ashes put on their foreheads? And then, other people will even often challenge us and say, "Why do you Catholics put ashes on your forehead to show everyone that you're fasting when Jesus explicitly says in the gospels that whenever you fast, you shouldn't let anyone know, you should wash your face, and anoint your head with oil, and don't let anyone know that you're fasting and do it in secret." Doesn't Ash Wednesday contradict (in that sense) the teaching

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of Jesus in the gospel itself? And so, what I want to do in this video is try to answer some questions about Ash Wednesday, some common questions that people have by looking at two things:

1. First, I want to look at the Jewish roots of the ashes. In other words, what would the use of ashes have meant in a 1st Century Jewish setting? Because like many things in Catholicism that are often, at first glance, strange or confusing, this is one of those things where the Catholic Church has a tradition that goes back to Judaism, goes back to the Old Testament. And if you put it in its Jewish context it will show us the true meaning of what we're supposed to be doing on Ash Wednesday.
2. The second thing I want to do is look at a couple of the readings for Ash Wednesday from the lectionary so you can see why the Church has picked particular passages from the Bible to explain what we're actually supposed to be doing not just on Ash Wednesday, but actually a key to the entire season of Lent. So if you've ever wondered about the meaning of Ash Wednesday, or if you've ever wondered, "What am I supposed to be doing this lent? How can I get ready for Lent?", then this video is for you.

So I'm going to begin here by going back, first and foremost, to the Jewish roots of the symbol of ashes. What did ashes represent in the Old Testament period, and we'll start there. The first thing we want to look at is, if you do a study of ashes in the Bible, especially ashes in the Old Testament, you're going to see a few consistent themes that point out the symbolism of ashes. So just to give you a first example, first of all, in the book of Genesis 3:19, God says to Adam (after he falls, after he commits a sin), "You are dust and to dust you shall return." So this verse is one of the actual verses quoted during the Ash Wednesday service. So the first symbol that we're going to use for dust and ashes — if you say someone is dust and ashes — is that it's a symbol of mortality. It's a symbol of the fact that after the fall, after the commission of the first sin, we are subject not just to suffering, but to suffering and death. So every human being is mortal and we go back (after our death) to a state of being dust and ashes. So that's the first text.

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A second text that I would highlight is from the book of Job, the book of Job 42:6; this one gets a little more to the heart of what we're doing during Lent. As Job is standing before the lord, he says this: "therefore I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes." So now we have another layer of meaning. Not only does dust symbolize mortality, but ashes and dust symbolize mortality and repentance from sin. Repentance is the second meaning of the symbol of ashes. We'll see that elsewhere in the book of Daniel, for example in Daniel 9:3, Daniel is praying and interceding for his people. And even though Daniel himself is a righteous man, he does penance for the sins of his people. And the way he expresses that penance is through fasting, sackcloth and ashes. So this is what it says (chapter 9, verse 3): "I, Daniel, turned my face to the Lord, seeking him by prayer and supplications with fasting and sackcloth and ashes." So one of the things that ancient Jews would do is when they were entering into a particularly intense period of prayer, penitence for sin, and supplication, they would wear sackcloth, which was a (kind of) rough cloth that would actually be uncomfortable, it would scratch the skin, it would irritate the skin, so it would cause suffering, and it would be a kind of penance. They would also fast (so that would cause a kind of suffering), abstaining from food, abstaining from drink, and so they would suffer in that way. And then they would also cover themselves in ashes as a sign of their mortality and as a sign of repentance. So all these things together were common practice in the Old Testament during intense periods of fasting and prayer.

But we also see the same thing in the book of Maccabees. This is interesting. In 1 Maccabees 3:47 (in fact, this is more than interesting, this is very significant), although it's not in the Protestant Old Testament, it's only in the Catholic Old Testament, it gives us this image, and it gives us the origin of ashes not just anywhere on the body but on the head in particular. It says when the Maccabees were interceding and entering into this time of prayer, "They fasted that day, and they put on sackcloth and sprinkled ashes on their heads, and rent their clothes." So the tearing of clothes is also a sign of penance and mourning, but in this case notice they don't just fast and pray, they put the ashes on their heads. Again, in the Catholic Church, one of the things we're going to do is we're going to take the ashes that are a symbol of repentance from sin and we're going to place them on the forehead in particular.

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And then finally, one of my favourite Old Testament roots of the practice of ashes is from the book of Esther. In Esther 14:1-3, we see that Esther, who is married to the King (the pagan king) who is going to kill all of the Jews unless she intercedes for them and gets him to save them, she enters into a time of intense prayer and fasting and supplication for her people. And this is how she does it (watch what she does). Chapter 14:1-3 says this:

Esther the queen, seized with deathly anxiety, fled to the Lord. She took off her splendid apparel and put on the garments of distress and mourning, and instead of costly perfumes she covered her head with ashes and dung, and she utterly humbled her body; and every part that she loved to adorn she covered with her tangled hair. And she prayed to the Lord, the God of Israel...

So notice what Esther is doing. Esther herself is very beautiful, she's a queen, she ordinarily adorns herself in precious garments and beautiful jewels, but in this case she takes off all those garments of joy and instead she puts on humbling clothes and she takes away her perfumes and she covers her head with ashes and dung. This is radical penance. Why? Because she's entering into an intense period of prayer for the salvation of her people. If she doesn't save them, they're all going to be massacred by the pagan king. Now, thankfully, the Church (in her wisdom) has only chosen the symbol of ashes for Ash Wednesday and for the season of Lent. I think that's probably a good idea because "Dung Wednesday" probably wouldn't be as popular as Ash Wednesday, so we're thankful for that selective process in the Church's tradition. But obviously, all this goes to show that by the time you got to the 1st Century AD, any first century Jew would have recognized that when a person put ashes on their forehead, what were they doing? They were recognizing their mortality (like Adam), they were repenting for sin (like Job), and they were interceding for others (like Daniel or like Esther). That's why in the Gospel of Matthew (and some people might say, "Oh that's in the Catholic Old Testament, that's not in the Protestant bible) even Jesus says this. In Matthew 11:21, we can see that the Jews did this because he actually says in one of his woes against the cities of Galilee that rejected him, he says, "Woe to you, Chora'zin! Woe to you, Beth-sa'ida! For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes." Even Jesus recognizes this practice of ashes as an outward sign of inward repentance.

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The first and most important point we want to make here about Ash Wednesday is that when the Church inculcates the tradition of putting ashes on our forehead, this is an ancient, ancient, biblical sign of remembering our mortality, repenting for our sin, and also (very importantly) of interceding for others and of uniting our intense time of prayer to a period of fasting and supplication to God, drawing closer to God by detaching ourselves from the pleasures of this world, in particular food and drink as well as the pleasure of an appearance that is well-adorned and beautified with oils and that kind of thing.

That's the meaning of the ashes: repentance from sin. Now when we turn to Ash Wednesday and we look not just at the symbolism of the day, but at the scriptural readings for the day it gets even more interesting and even more powerful. For this Wednesday of the year, the first reading (the Old Testament reading) is from the book of Joel 2:12-18. If you turn with me to the book of Joel, every year on Ash Wednesday the Church will read these verses and this is a proclamation from the prophet Joel to the people of Israel. This is what he says:

"Even now," says the Lord, "return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; and rend your hearts and not your garments." Return to the Lord, your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and repents of evil. Who knows whether he will not turn and repent, and leave a blessing behind him, a cereal offering and a drink offering for the Lord, your God? So blow the trumpet in Zion; sanctify a fast; call a solemn assembly; gather the people. Sanctify the congregation; assemble the elders; gather the children, even nursing infants. Let the bridegroom leave his room, and the bride her chamber. Between the vestibule and the altar let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep and say, "Spare thy people, O Lord, and make not thy heritage a reproach, a byword among the nations. Why should they say among the people, 'Where is their God?'" Then the Lord became jealous for his land, and had pity on his people.

Why is that the reading that we hear every year at Lent? Well, this is so important, the primary reason is because the description that Joel is giving us here in this passage is of a public fast, of a public day of fasting. In other words, of an official fast day where the priests and the prophets of Israel would call all of the people to unite together in solidarity, in

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communion with one another in a collective fast so that all of the people would fast, would put on sackcloth and ashes as a corporate community sign of repentance for their own sin, but also of supplication for the sins of others so that God might have mercy on a sinful people. And you can see there that already in the book of Joel God's making very clear to his people that the ultimate reason for fasting (and this kind of prayer) is so that people will come back to God.

Notice what he says in the beginning, "Return to me with all of your heart; with fasting, and weeping and mourning." That's what God is doing at the time of Joel and also that's what the Church is calling us to every single Lent. See, Lent is a great time for people to come back to God. It's a great time for people who maybe have been away from the Church for a long time, maybe haven't gone to mass for a long time, maybe they've been going to mass and they've been caught in a sin (a habitual sin). What the Church does at the beginning of Lent is she takes the words of the prophet Joel, puts them on her lips and says to all of the people in the Church, "Come back to me, return to me," with weeping and with fasting and mourning on this great, solemn day of a fast.

And although the Church calls us to an outward sign, ultimately though what does she inwardly want? What does she want? She wants not just the external sign, but the interior penitence. And that's why we have this verse here, this powerful verse, "Rend your hearts, not your garments". That doesn't mean that God doesn't want the people to do the external sign, you can see, in context, he just commanded them to do fasting, and sackcloth and mourning. But what it does mean is that in addition to the external sign what God really wants is for them to tear open their hearts. He wants them to open their hearts in repentance from their sin, to turn away from their lives of sin and to come back to him and love him with all their heart, with all their soul, with all their mind and all their strength. And in order to do that, one of the things we have to do is use our bodies to help focus our souls on God, because the reality is we're not angels, we are body and soul composites. So fasting is a very powerful way to get your mind off of pleasing the body with food and drink and get your mind on repentance for sin and focusing it on God.

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And this is very simple. If you've ever fasted, you'll know this (especially if you're not used to fasting). Once you start fasting, once you abstain from food and drink (like say, for half a day) and you're used to eating all the time, your body is going to become very quickly aware of the fact that you're not feeding it like you normally do and it's going to start shouting at you, "Hey, feed me. Give me something to drink", and so what it does is it puts you into a sense, a state of alertness. Now if you know why you're fasting (I'm fasting because it's Ash Wednesday, I'm fasting because the Church has called for a public fast), then guess what happens? All day long you're thinking about what season it is. All day long now you're thinking about the Church. You're thinking about the requirement that's been given to you and it is a perpetual reminder to you that you're now starting a new season of the year. You're starting a season of penance, a season of fasting. And so it helps you to pray. It helps you to focus. It helps you to stay in a prayerful state, a state of alertness (of spiritual alertness) that you wouldn't have if you were just going about the ordinary day (eating breakfast, then getting a snack, and then getting lunch and then getting supper, whatever). So fasting is a very powerful way to unite your soul and your body in the time of prayer (of intense prayer) that the Church is calling us to.

And the Jews did this (by the way), not just in the book of Joel but they did this every year. Every year they had a public day of fasting, it was called *Yom Kippur*: it was the Day of Atonement. And on that day, every single Jewish person was called to deny themselves (Leviticus 16 says), and they would abstain from food, from drink, from bathing, from any anointing and they would even abstain from marital relations in order to completely devote themselves to prayer and to penance for that day. So this is a totally Jewish thing. The idea of having this one day where everybody fasts and you have a (kind of) public assembly, a public fast that is visible to everyone else. That's what Ash Wednesday is. It is kind of like a New Testament equivalent of the Day of Atonement. That's the first reading for the day. And that reading explains the public nature of our fast. If people want to know, "why are you telling everybody that you're fasting?" It's because, just like the Jews did in the Old Testament, when you have a public day of fasting, it's something that's outward and visible so that everybody can unite in doing it.

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However, that's not all Ash Wednesday is about. Ash Wednesday, although it is a day of public fasting, is also the beginning of the season of Lent. And Lent is not going to be an entire season of public fasting, it's now going to be a season of private fasting, of secret fasting, of secret prayer, and of secret almsgiving. So in addition to the Old Testament reading on the public fast, the Church also wants to make sure that throughout the season of Lent we're doing our prayers and pious practices quietly and secretly as well, so she gives us another passage. And this is from the Sermon on the Mount. The gospel for this day is Matthew 6:1-6 and Matthew 6:16-18. So let's read this gospel and ask ourselves, "Why does the Church give us this on Ash Wednesday?" And you'll find there's a really interesting answer to the question. So, Jesus says in the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 6:

"Beware of practicing your piety before men in order to be seen by them; then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven."

Stop there. Notice this: I'll never forget the first time I realized this. I remember I had one of my non-Catholic friends attack me, well not attack but criticize me, "Why do you Catholics contradict the words of Jesus by putting ashes on your foreheads so that everybody can see when he said to do it in secret? Don't you know what the Bible says?" And then I went to the Ash Wednesday service and I realized, not only does the Church not hide from that passage in the Bible, she actually makes sure we read that passage on Ash Wednesday, precisely because we're going to enter into a season of Lent and she doesn't want us to tell everybody about what our penances are, but she wants us to do them quietly and in secret. So I just laughed, "We don't actually hide from that, this is the reading Ash Wednesday." But let's keep going, because watch what Jesus says. He's going to give three spiritual practices here and he's going to tell us how to do them. Verse two:

"Thus, when you give alms, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by men. And then I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your alms may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

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Second discipline:

"And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by men. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you."

Now, it skips down to verse 16 (third discipline):

"And when you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by men. Truly, I say to you, they have their reward. But when you fast, anoint your head, wash your face, that your fasting may not be seen by men but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you."

Alright, end of the Gospel. So why does the Church pick this gospel for Ash Wednesday? Let me give you a few key points. Number 1, as I already said (I'm going to say it again): Ash Wednesday is the beginning of the Season of Lent. One of the things we'll be doing during the Lenten season is private acts of repentance. The Church makes clear to remind us of Jesus' exhortation here: not to "do righteousness", that's the actual Greek. He says, "Don't do righteousness in order to be seen by other people." One of the temptations of engaging in pious practices like prayer and fasting is that we can get spiritually prideful and we can want to tell other people about what we're doing so that we can seem holy or pious or venerable to others. Jesus knows that's a temptation to spiritual pride, so he wants to cut that off at the knees and say, "Make sure that when you do these, don't do them in order to be seen by somebody else." So how do we do them? He says, "I want you to do them in secret." Now notice this, this is important. Although Jesus tells us not to do them in order to be seen by men, he doesn't tell us not to do them. He still tells us to do them. In fact, these are the only three spiritual disciplines (spiritual practice) that he explicitly commands in the Sermon on the Mount, so let's look at them very carefully.

First, he talks about almsgiving. Notice this, he says, "When you give alms", not "if" you give alms. That's very important. So what is almsgiving? Almsgiving is giving money or clothing or possessions of some sort to the poor, to the needy, or to the Church. So you could give alms

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to the Temple (in the 1st Century) or you could give it to the poor. So Jesus expects (this is the key point) his disciples to be regular almsgivers. He expects his disciples to be people who give to the poor, not occasionally but regularly. And his command to them is that when you do this, "Do it in secret...do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing" so that your reward will be from your Father in heaven and not from the praise of others.

Second, prayer; notice this: Jesus does not say "if" you pray, he says "when" you pray. So he expects his disciples to be regular prayers, not occasional prayers, but regular prayers. It's so tempting in our day and time for people to say, "Oh I believe in Jesus" – "Oh that's great. How often do you pray?" "Oh you know, every now and then". No, no, no, no. A disciple of Jesus is supposed to be a person who regularly prays. And what Jesus is saying here is, "Don't just do that in public (like at mass), you should be praying in secret; in your home, in private." Go into your inner room (that's the literal Greek there) and pray to your father who's in secret and when he sees in secret he'll reward you; so, prayer.

And then third and finally, and this is really important in our day and time, because fasting has fallen on hard times: Jesus says "when you fast" not "if" you fast. So Jesus expects his disciples to fast regularly. What does that mean? Well, what is fasting? Man, we could do a whole video just on that. Fasting is a biblical practice. You'll see it all throughout the Old Testament and you'll see it in the New Testament as well. The basic meaning of fasting, just to kind of sum it all up, is to abstain from either all food or to abstain from food and drink. It takes different forms. Sometimes it's abstinence from food and drink, sometimes it's just abstinence from food, but in the tradition of the Church (like in the rule of St. Benedict, you look at the history of the Church) the ordinary meaning of fasting would be to abstain from food and drink until the evening. So it'd be one meal per day, and usually a very simple meal. So that the monks (like the monks of St. Benedict) would go throughout the entirety of the day without food or without food and drink until the evening. And then in the evening they would break their fast with a small meal.

And Jews in the first century practiced this. We know from the gospels that Jesus talks about the Scribes and the Pharisees fasting twice a week. We also know that the disciples of John the Baptist were known for fasting. In fact, it was so common a practice that when people saw

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Jesus' disciples not fasting on one occasion, they said "Hey, why aren't your disciples fasting like the Pharisees and John's does?" And he gives a reason for it. He says that, "As long as the bridegroom is with them, they don't fast. But the days are coming when the bridegroom is taken away from them (meaning himself) and then they will fast on that day." Or "they will fast in those days". So Jesus anticipates that after his passion and death his disciples will be men of fasting. And in the early Church it became traditional for Christians to fast twice a week. Normally they would do it, the most ancient reverence, was on Wednesdays and Fridays (those were the traditional days of fasting). So Jesus expects his disciples to fast and he says, "When you do this private, regular fasting (which by the way is different from a public day of fasting, like the Day of Atonement, or like with us for Ash Wednesday or Good Friday) when you engage in your private fasting, don't let anybody know you're doing it. Keep it secret. Wash your head, anoint your face with oil, and don't let your fasting be seen by others so that your Father who sees in secret will reward you in secret.

Alright, so, why does the Church give us this gospel? Well, two key things. First (and this is probably the most important of all), it tells us that Lent is not (hear me), Lent is not just about abstinence. In our day and time, most people have reduced Lent to a season of abstinence. What does abstinence mean? Abstinence means to give up either meat or milk products, or even just to give up something that you like. So, "I'm going to give up chocolate. I'm going to abstain from chocolate. I'm going to give up coffee." These are pretty regular things. Or, "I'm going to give up sweets or ice cream", whatever it is. So I'm going to abstain from that for 40 days during the Lenten season. And that's great. Two thumbs up. Good job. Those things can be real sacrifices that are important and powerful, but we don't want to reduce the season of Lent to just the spiritual practice of abstinence. That's never been the tradition of the Church. This passage from the Sermon on the Mount was (for centuries) associated with Lent because Lent was always a season of three spiritual disciplines. Not just abstinence, but fasting, prayer and almsgiving. The idea was that during the Lenten season you would increase your regular prayer, intensify your regular fasting and intensify your regular practice of almsgiving so that it would be a particularly intense spiritual season of purification, of repentance from sin, and sacrifice (of offering sacrifice), little sacrifices of love to God.

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And the reason we do this during Lent is because Jesus did it during Lent (so-to-speak). When? You might be thinking, "What are you talking about?" Well, I'm talking about the story of Jesus in the desert. If you go back to the Gospel of Matthew 4, Jesus goes out into the desert and the devil tempts him with these three temptations: to turn stone into bread, to possess all the kingdoms of the world, and then to also publicly show that he's the Messiah by jumping off of the temple and the angels carrying him up. Now I don't have time to get into this in a lot of detail, but what I've shown elsewhere in other presentations and other videos is that what Jesus' doing there is that he's undoing the three temptations of the fall. If we go back to the book of Genesis it said that Adam and Eve took the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge because it was good for food (which St. John calls the lust of the flesh, it was pleasurable), it was a delight to the eyes (what St. John calls the lust of the eyes, the desire to possess it), and then finally it was desirable to make one wise (what St. John calls in his letter 1 John 2 "the pride of life"). So these three temptations that we all face: pleasure, possessions and pride. Some people call it "The Unholy Trinity" (money, sex and power). These three temptations lay at the root of all human sinfulness. And what Jesus does is he goes out into the desert for 40 days and 40 nights and he does battle with those three temptations, the temptation to pleasure, the temptation to possessions (think about his hunger, like with pleasure), to possess all the kingdoms of the world and the temptation to pride or vanity, to prove that he's the son of God. And unlike Adam who falls to each one of the temptations, Jesus overcomes the lust of the flesh, Jesus overcomes the lust of the eyes and Jesus overcomes the temptation to pride with humility.

And so what he calls us to do during Lent is basically to fight those same three struggles and overcome those same three temptations. So for 40 days, what is the Church doing? She calls us to fast. Why? To overcome our disordered attachment to physical pleasure. For 40 days, the Church calls us to intensify our giving of alms. Why? To overcome our disordered attachment to possessions, to money, to things. And then finally, for 40 days, the Church calls us to intensify our prayer. Why? To overcome our disordered self-love, our vanity, our pride, and to put into place of that pride the growing gift in the virtue of humility. So these three spiritual disciplines are at the essence of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. And so what we're doing on Ash Wednesday is we should be making our plan, making our program. How during this Lent am I going to pray more, fast more, and give alms to the poor, so that I

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can grow in overcoming the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the pride of life, the triple concupiscence that we all struggle with and that we all deal with? And when we do that, what you're going to find is that the Lenten season becomes so much more meaningful, so much more powerful, so much more filled with grace than just, "I'm going to try and lose some weight this year, so I'll give up ice cream." Or, "I'm going to exercise a little more this year." Or, "I'm going to give up drinking alcohol", whatever it might be. Those are all important and they can be part of the fasting, but regular fasting, regular almsgiving and regular prayer, intensifying all three of those is really what Lent is all about and that's why the Church gives us this gospel. Those are all very Jewish, very biblical concepts.

So in closing then, I'd just like to end with the second reading for Ash Wednesday. It's from 2nd Corinthians 5:20: "We beseech you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God." And then it goes on to say "Behold, now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation." Why does the Church read this on the first day of Lent? Well because she's saying, "Don't wait to repent." If you've been waiting for years to come back to the Church – when is the time? Now is the time. If you haven't been to confession in a long time, if you haven't been to confession this year, if you haven't been to confession in 10 years, when is the time to go to confession? Now is the time. Now is the day of salvation. Now is the day to be reconciled to God. In fact, in the Catechism of the Catholic Church, paragraph 2042, it actually tells us, one of the laws of the Church is that we should go to confession at the very least at least once a year. So if you haven't been to confession and it's Ash Wednesday, now is the time. Go to confession, be reconciled to God and begin to prepare yourself for this time and this season of prayer, fasting and almsgiving, when we will enter into the mystery of Jesus in the desert and over the course of these 40 days and 40 nights, struggle with him at our side (and with his grace), so that we can grow in holiness, so we can grow in loving God and so that our Father, who sees in secret (sees what we do in secret), will also reward us with a great gift of eternal life and of the resurrection that we'll be celebrating on Easter Sunday.