

In the name of the Father and of the ✝ Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Paul writes to the Corinthians,
“For our sake [God] made [Christ] to be sin who knew no sin,
so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”¹

That’s what Easter is all about.
Good Friday, of course,
is the day of the death of Jesus of Nazareth on the Cross,
and in his death,
Jesus took upon himself the sins of the world
as one final sacrifice for all times.
However,
it is his resurrection on Easter morning
that gives us the real promise—
the promise of the resurrection
and life everlasting in the presence of God Almighty.

Today,
as we begin the forty day trek known as Lent,
we begin our annual journey to Easter.
Of course,
every Sunday is a “little Easter,”
and we should always be focused
on the work of God in our lives to make us righteous before Him,
but in Lent,
we have a time of special focus and dedication of our attention.
During Lent,
we often make changes in our lives—
some give up favorite things,
others take on new obligation—
but that is not necessary in order to mark a holy Lent.
In fact,

¹ 2 Corinthians 5:21 (NRSV)

if we make a big deal
about what we do or don't do during Lent,
we are missing the whole point of the season.
You see,
it's not about what we do or don't do
that makes us righteous before God.
It is what God has done for us that makes us righteous.

God doesn't give a plug nickel
about what you do in an effort to get His attention.
Nope,
not a single care in the universe is offered up,
whether you fast on water and bread alone for forty days,
give up meat,
begin an exercise program,
or anything else.
Quite frankly,
God doesn't care what you do.
Why doesn't God care?
Because there is nothing
that any one of us can do
in order to be more righteous before God
or more loved by Him.
Everything necessary for our salvation and righteousness
has already been done!
God sent His only begotten Son into the world
as an innocent baby boy,
watched him grow up and become a leader and teacher,
and then saw His Son betrayed,
arrested, convicted, and executed.
God even told some members of Jesus' following
exactly who Jesus was—
not once, but at least twice!
God even saw that His Son
would rise from the grave

in a final victory over death and the devil,
just as his death on the Cross
was one final sacrifice to redeem us from all our sins.

Again,
I cannot stress it enough.
It is not about us and what we do.
It is all about God and what God has done for us.

In our Gospel for Ash Wednesday,
we hear Jesus tell his disciples that when they pray,
fast, or give alms,
they should do so quietly
and not draw attention to their actions.
Note that Jesus doesn't tell them **not** to do these things,
but to do these things quietly.
So, then,
if what we do has no bearing on God's love for us,
why does Jesus tell his disciples to do these things quietly,
instead of telling them they don't have to do them at all?

Because we are called to pray, fast,
and give alms
as ways of showing our gratitude to God
for all that God has first given us.
We do these things,
and indeed,
all good works,
as a sign of our gratitude to God
for His great gift and generosity to us—
the gift of being made righteous
and saved of our sins through His Son,
Jesus Christ.

So,
as we begin this holy season,
I urge you to reflect on all God has done for you,
all that God has given to you,
In response to that reflection,
respond in kind,
and respond generously.
There are many ways
in which you can give thanks to God
for the many blessings you have received,
and I encourage you to be generous in your response—
regardless of how you might do that.

It is not about what you do,
but about what God did for you
without any expectation of response or repayment from you.
How do you respond to God's graciousness and love?
This holy Lent, reflect,
and respond accordingly.
Amen.