

**ASH WEDNESDAY 2015**  
**HOMILY-SAINT JOSEPH PARISH**  
**FATHER CRAIG LOONEY**  
**JOEL 2.12 ST. MATTHEW 6.16**



What do we see when we look in a mirror...do we like what we see...do we hate what we see...should we care?

Paul tells us in his First Letter to the Corinthians...which we heard read at Mass last Sunday...what we see in the mirror is a dim image...quickly forgotten.

When we look at ourselves in the mirror...what we see is not the real us...it is a reflection without any heart or soul. We do not see ourselves as we really are...as God sees us...as his children...children he created. God sees beyond the reflection in the mirror directly into our hearts and souls.

Sometimes we like our reflection a lot and decide our lives are in order...no adjustment needed. Congratulations...we have just said we don't need God. Sometimes we hate our reflection and decide our lives are a hopeless mess...no adjustment possible...God can't help us anyway. Both are forms of pride.

Lent is about looking at the reflection in the mirror and understanding God created us in his image. God pronounced what he has created good...that means there is never a point in our lives...no matter how messy they get...we are beyond God's reach or help or mercy. We do have to start with taking a good hard look at what we see in the mirror...like it or not.

Eight hundred years before the birth of Jesus, the prophet Jonah went to Ninevah, the capital of the great kingdom of Assyria, and told the people to go take a look at themselves in the mirror. They didn't like what they saw. Jonah told them to turn away from sinful behavior. Everyone...even the king...listened to Jonah...they repented...told God they were sorry...and to show they were serious...they put on rough burlap clothing and covered themselves with dirt.

Lent is about "fessing up"...admitting to ourselves...and to God...we have not always done the things we should...we have done things we should not have done. The guilt we feel...God wants to take it away...so it does not weigh us down. Repentance is the act of saying we are sorry for our sins and receiving from God...as the Collect says...his perfect remission and forgiveness. It all starts when we take a look at our reflection in the mirror and decide to make some changes...for the better.

The ashes are placed on our foreheads in the shape of the cross...we should be thinking about our own mortality...and what comes after. When we die our bodies will return to the earth from which God created them...that is not the end. The ashes are in the shape of the cross to remind us that our deaths do not mean extinction. Christianity is about light and life...the light that is Jesus...the eternal life he bought for us with his death on the cross.

Let's also make time for Lent. Lent should be a time of serious personal introspection and prayer. Consistent attendance at Sunday Mass, our Wednesday Lenten Study...our liturgical acting out in words and hymns the drama of Holy Week...help make Lent what it should be...a Penitential Season of positive change in our lives...our preparation for the joyful celebration of Easter.

Change...for the better...begins with confronting our reflection in the mirror...and deciding to do something...to take action...now.

