

SALT & LIGHT

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ASH WEDNESDAY WORDS

From an early age, Catholics are trained to examine our consciences in light of personal sin—how many times we lied or cheated, gossiped or fell prey to sexual sins. Avoiding personal sin shapes our character, and may help us grow into faithful, honest, loving people. Our attention has been drawn less often, however, to the social sins that plague our world, usually with our complicity. These are the sins that have brought the crisis of climate change and environmental devastation, the still-existing scandal of human slavery and exploitation, the tolerance that allows abysmal poverty and oppression to coexist with opulent wealth, the blinders towards human suffering that keep us from seeing the suffering of migrants, victims of war, children—those not yet born and those brought into a world of poverty and hopelessness. It's overwhelming, but this Lent, Pope Francis calls us to examine our lives in light of our complicity.

"...when we fail to live as children of God, we often behave in a destructive way towards our neighbours and other creatures – and ourselves as well – since we begin to think more or less consciously that we can use them as we will. Intemperance then takes the upper hand: we start to live a life that exceeds those limits imposed by our human condition and nature itself.

...Sin leads man to consider himself the god of creation, to see himself as its absolute master and to use it, not for the purpose willed by the Creator but for his own interests, to the detriment of other creatures.

Once God's law, the law of love, is forsaken, then the law of the strong over the weak takes over. The sin that lurks in the human heart (cf. Mk 7:20-23) takes the shape of greed and unbridled pursuit of comfort, lack of concern for the good of others and even of oneself. It leads to the exploitation of creation, both persons and the environment, due to that insatiable covetousness which sees every desire as a right and sooner or later destroys all those in its grip.

...[Lent] invites Christians to embody the paschal mystery more deeply and concretely in their personal, family and social lives, above all by fasting, prayer and almsgiving.

Fasting, that is, learning to change our attitude towards others and all of creation, turning away from the temp-

tation to "devour" everything to satisfy our voracity and being ready to suffer for love, which can fill the emptiness of our hearts. Prayer, which teaches us to abandon idolatry and the self-sufficiency of our ego, and to acknowledge our need of the Lord and his mercy. Almsgiving, whereby we escape from the insanity of hoarding everything for ourselves in the illusory belief that we can secure a future that does not belong to us. And thus to rediscover the joy of God's plan for creation and for each of us, which is to love him, our brothers and sisters, and the entire world, and to find in this love our true happiness."

"Let us not allow this season of grace to pass in vain! Let us ask God to help us set out on a path of true conversion. Let us leave behind our selfishness and self-absorption, and turn to Jesus' Pasch. Let us stand beside our brothers and sisters in need, sharing our spiritual and material goods with them. In this way, by concretely welcoming Christ's victory over sin and death into our lives, we will also radiate its transforming power to all of creation.

Pope Francis' Message for Lent 2019

INTERFAITH CLIMATE SUMMIT

How can faith communities help us move towards a more sustainable world that cares for and respects the gift of creation? All are invited to the first annual Rochester Interfaith Climate Summit on Sunday May 19, 2:00—5:00 at the Greece Baptist Church, 1230 Long Pond Rd., Rochester 14626. Share in interfaith prayers for Creation and learn ways your faith community can protect Creation through workshops on food/recycling, facilities, gardens/landscaping, education/motivation, advocacy, and more. Watch for a flyer next week with registration information.

SOCIAL MINISTRY CONFERENCE

Don't miss this year's Parish Social Ministry Conference on Thursday, May 2, 10:30 am—5:00 pm, at Notre Dame Retreat Center in Canandaigua. More information coming.

Green Tip

Clothes dryers are the third-biggest energy gobblers in our houses, after the furnace and hot water heater. Using two to four dryer balls can reduce drying time by 30-50% without using the chemicals found in dryer sheets. They are usually made of felted wool, and are about the size of tennis balls. Go online to purchase then or to find directions to make them.