

Grace Notes in Miniature

Friday, February 5th, 2021

Dear friends,



Friday was the Memorial of St Agatha and Saturday that of St Paul Miki and Companions, all martyrs for their Christian faith. Although the readings for Friday took us back to the story of the beheading of John the Baptist, Saturday's Gospel was Jesus' invitation to his apostles to "come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while." (See Mark 6:30-34). If ever we needed reminding of our need for rest and healing from the stresses and demands of our daily lives it is now, when the pace of life, rather than being slowed down by the restrictions of Covid-19, seems to have intensified for many of us because of the increased complexity of doing our work. This Thursday we observe the World Day of the Sick, also the feast of Our Lady of Lourdes and several of the Gospels this week reference Jesus' healing ministry.

The first readings are a crash course in the first part of the book of Genesis, taking us through both creation accounts and from God's joy in creation to the breaking of the relationship between humanity and God that Jesus came to heal and restore. We may need to be reminded that God is walking with each one of us and offering healing even when we aren't aware of that presence. Jesus called the disciples to come away to a quiet place; each of us needs to do that regularly. You may find this meditation helpful: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r2I9hGil70Q>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EPiwmbPTQDw>

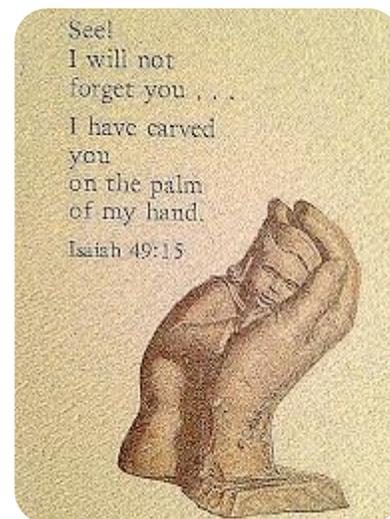
In the Hands of God

More than ever I find myself in the hands of God.
This is what I have wanted all my life from my youth.

But now there is a difference;
the initiative is entirely with God.

It is indeed a profound spiritual experience
to know and feel myself so totally in God's hands.

- Pedro Arrupe, S.J.¹



¹ <https://www.xavier.edu/jesuitresource/online-resources/prayer-index/prayers-for-healing>

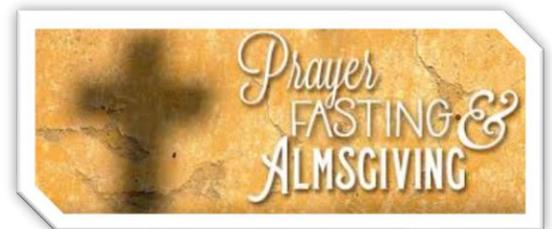


It seems impossible that we are now well into February and anticipating the arrival of Lent on February 17th as we observe Ash Wednesday.² This year will feel quite different as we keep this day without our usual imposition of ashes. It is of interest that, while we take for granted the marking on our foreheads

with the granular ash of last year's palms consumed by fire, in many countries the ashes are not visible on one's head (unless one happens to be completely bald) as they are sprinkled on the crown, rather than marked on the forehead. It has become our custom to allow the smear of ashes to be visible all day; however, this year we may be responding more directly to the instruction of the gospel for Ash Wednesday which tells us,

"And whenever you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces so as to show others that they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that your fasting may be seen not by others but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you."³

At this time, you may be planning for Lenten activities which help us to grow in our love with and for Jesus as we fast, pray and give alms. One of the ways we can do this is by joining in the 24-hour fast for the Halton Catholic Children's Foundation which supports HCDSB students and families in need. This year, more than ever, we need to take care of each other, and this is one of the ways we can do so. Fasting to meet this challenge on March 30-31 does not necessarily have to be from food – although that is one option. One might also choose to abstain from social media or watching television or playing video games or some other activity for twenty-four hours, or choose a goal to accomplish. You are asked to seek pledges from those who agree to support you in this and can do so as a team. Last



² <https://www.episcopalrelief.org/stories/ash-wednesday-god-loves-us-even-in-our-dustiness/>

³ Matthew 6:16-18 NRSVCE from <https://www.biblegateway.com/>

year's campaign was very successful; we hope to surpass that this year. You can find information at <https://www.hccf.ca/24-hour-fast/>

More suggestions for Lent will be shared as it comes closer.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zz87OtFhYFc>

With every blessing,

Gillian