

Discovering Our True Direction

16 February 2021

Ash Wednesday

Reading: Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

A friend of mine was scuba diving for the first time. Everything was going fine, until he entered an area which was especially deep and dark. There was so much silt and mud that he couldn't see his hand in front of his face. He started to panic; he didn't know which way to go. He didn't even know which way was up. You can imagine the dreadful feeling. Just at that moment the instructor came alongside and guided him to safety. On returning to the surface, he asked the instructor what should I have done?

“Feel the bubbles” the instructor told him, “When you are lost or need direction you stop a while, you reach up and feel the bubbles, they always float to the surface. You can't always trust your judgement or your feelings, but you can always trust the bubbles.”

Lent is set aside by the church for us to find our way. To get our bearings again. It's all too easy in life to get disoriented; it's all too easy in life to find ourselves drifting aimlessly in no particular direction.

Lent is the time when we follow the example of Jesus and spend 40 days and 40 nights in the desert. We find ways of setting aside time for prayer, for fasting and for charitable giving. We do this in order to pause and find which way the bubbles are going, which way the Spirit of God is leading us.

Lent began as the preparation time for those being baptised at Easter. So helpful was this time that pretty soon the whole church joined in.

For all of us there is a gap between the person we want to be and the person we are. Jesus uses the word hypocrite three times. A hypocrite in the Greek world was an actor who put on a mask to be someone else. Lent is the

time we examine the mask that we wear. To live without a mask and to be truly who God calls us to be is to live a life of integrity. Jesus lived just such a life. When people watched him, they saw not a mask but a person living totally the love of God.

Let us take the time to stop, to float, to allow God to direct us again. Let us re-evaluate the masks we wear and ask for the grace to live lives of integrity.

Repentance is simply realising the gap between who we want to be and who are and saying sorry for it.

If we are in a deep dark place or even if we aren't, we still need to rest awhile to float in God's grace, and then the bubbles of the Spirit will show us the way home. Then we will find direction and meaning for our lives.

Take a moment each day this Lent to rest a while and ask God to guide you. Learn to trust the bubbles. These will always guide you home, these will always bring you to God.

Let us pray:

Faithful God

We have come to another Lent.

We want to live lives of integrity.

Therefore, we ask for your grace,

The grace to be guided by you,

To rest awhile in your arms and to trust the bubbles of your Spirit which rise up from within to bring us to our friend and brother Jesus Christ our Saviour.

Amen