MIDWEEK MISSIVE – 02/13/18

Lent is upon us…it begins with Ash Wednesday, which is tomorrow. Lent is a time when many Christians prepare for Easter by observing a period of fasting, repentance, moderation and spiritual discipline. Ash Wednesday begins the season by emphasizing our sinfulness toward God, and our human mortality. Ash Wednesday helps us to realize that both of those things have been overcome through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The rest of the season can be focused on many things, but at the heart of it all is a desire to look deep inside ourselves, and using prayer and other spiritual disciplines, seek ways to change so that we might become closer and closer to God, and to the people God would have us be.

This is no easy task, but it is helped along by the practice of fasting. In our fasting, we deprive ourselves and in some very, very small way, mimic the sacrifice that Jesus endured for us. In our deprivation, we turn our attention and our prayers toward God and God's presence. As the Lenten season progresses, we hope to become better and better at enduring our chosen sacrifice, and fill our time with more and more productive time with God.

But this year at Candleberry Chapel, I would like for us to focus on another kind of fasting. Instead of fasting from red meat, or sweets or alcohol for the short term, I would like us to consider fasting from things that hold us back, harm us, or keep us away from God. In short, I would like us to focus on giving up something bad for Lent. And our stated goal should be to give it up forever, not just for Lent. Certainly this may be a habit: smoking or overeating come quickly to mind. But it might just as well be an attitude, or a feeling, or an action that takes us away from God.

It is hard enough to temporarily give up something we like, and completely giving up something that harms us or our relationship with God may prove to be even harder. That is why our Fasting must be combined with Feasting. That is, fasting from things that are bad for us, and feasting on things that are good for us. Fasting from things that harm us and feasting on things that heal us. Fasting from things that tear down and feasting on things that build up. Fasting on things that push us away from God and feasting on things that bring us even closer to God.

As a way to get the conversation started, here is something I came across several years ago from the Episcopal Church's "Education for Ministry" program.

True Lenten Disciplines

Fast from judging others: Feast on Christ dwelling in them.
Fast from fear of illness: Feast on the healing power of God.
Fast from words that pollute: Feast on speech that purifies.
Fast from discontent: Feast on gratitude
Fast from anger: Feast on patience
Fast from pessimism: Feast on optimism.
Fast from negatives: Feast on affirmatives.
Fast from bitterness: Feast on forgiveness.
Fast from self-concern: Feast on compassion
Fast from suspicion: Feast on truth.
Fast from gossip: Feast on purposeful silence.
Fast from problems that overwhelm: Feast on prayer that sustains.
Fast from worry: Feast in faith.

Keep these disciplines in mind as we meet this weekend and begin our Lenten journey together.

I hope you can make it to the February "Evensong" service tonight at 7:00 in the chapel, as a way to kick off your Lenten season. If you are looking for an Ash Wednesday, there are several churches near the chapel with services tomorrow, including:

LaSalette Shrine Church
947 Park St.
Attleboro
Masses at 12:10 p.m and 6:30 p.m.

All Saints Episcopal Church
121 North Main St.
Attleboro
Service at 6:00 p.m.

Centenary United Methodist Church
15 Sanford St.
Attleboro
Service at 7:00

Hope to see you tonight at Evensong! And remember, it's Fat Tuesday….just something to think about for after the service!

Be peaceful,
Rev. Brad
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"Preach the Gospel at all times. If necessary, use words." - Francis of Assisi