



...An Invitation

"Come unto me, you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble of heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light. - Jesus (Matt. 11:28-30NIV)

Today is Ash Wednesday, the beginning of Lent. This is a day to recognize our humanity – to be realistic about our limitations. "From dust you come – to dust you will return." (Genesis 3:19) A common burial prayer often goes like this: ashes to ashes, dust to dust... When our earthly life is over, our bodies go back to dust – we are the original biodegradable container!

As we begin this time of solemn reflection known as Lent, the forty days leading up to Holy Week and Easter, we reflect on our finiteness – our temporal existence on earth, our human limitations, our utter dependence on God. Fortunately we do not do this as people without hope. We know the end of the story. Our earthly life is but a drop in the bucket compared to our eternal future with Jesus, the resurrected Lord of Easter.

Many people give up something for Lent – like coffee or chocolate or meat. The value in this is that it highlights our dependence on things that don't matter. Every time we crave or desire that which we have stepped away from, we are reminded that we are weak and have no strength of our own. Our minds and hearts are

drawn to the one we can depend upon – the only one who can satisfy and grant us the soul rest we long for. This subtraction from something relatively insignificant has the effect of opening us up to deeper communion and reflection, creating space to accept and live into Jesus' invitation of the easy yoke.

Rest for you souls – that is what his invitation is today and always. Our prayer is that you know and experience for yourself the easy yoke as you learn from and lean on his gentle and humble heart.

For further reflection...

- Take an hour in the next day or two to slow down and have a conversation with Jesus. Enjoy being in his presence. Make your time free of distractions – go for a walk, look out the window, just rest. What is it that the Lord might be asking you to let go of or forego these next 40 days?
- Read or recite Psalm 23 each night as you climb into bed. Close your eyes and imagine yourself laying in a field of green grass, overlooking a pool of water, or sitting at a glorious banquet table. Drift off to sleep in the peacefulness of the presence of the Shepherd.
- Margins are the white space around the edge of a paper – they keep written words from running off the page. Margins in life keep us from running from one thing to the next with no room to breathe. Examine your life – do you have enough margin to a live healthy, unhurried life? How could you create more margin in your life? Remember, "No," is a complete sentence!