

Fr. Anthony's Reflection

HOMOLY GIVEN ON ASH WEDNESDAY, 18TH, FEBRUARY 2026. by FR. ANTHONY ONOKO
MATTHEW 6:1-6, 16-18.

This week we begin the holy season of Lent with the Ash Wednesday liturgy. Lent is a special season of fasting/penance, prayer and almsgiving.

All the readings of today focus on these Lenten practices and what God expects of us. I shall not explore this today because we shall have time over the next few weeks to examine each of the Lenten practices more closely.

Today, I would like to focus on the words of the priest or minister as they impose ashes on us. As the priest or minister imposes ashes on us, they say one of the following two statements:

"Remember that you are dust and unto dust, you shall return" (Genesis 3:19).

Or

"Repent and believe in the Gospel" (Mark 1:15).

Today, I want to reflect on the words "Repent and believe in the Gospel." Lent is a season to reflect, repent and reconnect with God.

Our first question is: "Lord, what are you calling me to repent from? What are you calling me to change in my life?" We can only get answers to these questions through sincere self-examination and openness to the Holy Spirit.

Perhaps this Lent God is calling us to repent from putting Him by the side and making other things the center of our lives. Perhaps He is calling us to repent from loving other things and persons more than Him. Let's think about the sin of spiritual laziness or waste of time, prioritizing other things above our relationship/ communion with Him. We could think about how we treat other people, our self-control in words, temper, desire for pleasure etc.

God's call to repentance is not to be seen as a threat. It is a call of love. God is saying, "My son, my daughter, don't waste your life in what fails to satisfy; don't feed on the wrong things. Don't live as a slave to sin and your passions. You don't have to go down the path of sorrow and regret. Turn to me and experience greater joy, satisfaction, freedom and delight."

And then we say "Believe the Gospel." What is the Gospel that I am called to believe? The summary is this:

God loves you so much, that He gave His only Begotten Son to die for our sins. Through faith in Him, we receive forgiveness of our sins; we are reconciled with God; we receive adoption, which gives us access to God and makes us coheirs with Jesus; we receive justification instead of condemnation and the hope of an eternal life of peace and joy.

Fr. Anthony's Office Hours

If anyone wants to meet with Fr. Anthony please call to set up an appointment. He could be available at St. Sebastian on Wednesdays from 10:30 AM until 3:00 PM. He is available at Epiphany of Our Lord, (724-684-7661) Tuesdays and is at St. John the Baptist, (724-736-4442) Mondays. Please call first.

PLEASE NOTE:

If you plan to invite any guest speaker to a church event, please first contact Adelle Slebodnik at 724-244-9434 or aslebodnik@dioceseofgreensburg.org. The Diocese requires all guest speakers to be vetted and have the required clearances. Thank you for your cooperation.

