



Ash Wednesday begins Lent and takes us back to the condemnation of death spoken to our first parents and all people in the words: **“for you are dust, and to dust you shall return” Genesis 3:19b.** Those words struck our first parents hard as an announcement of judgment. Now humanity, once perfect, is subjected to death and the evil of this world. Since that time, all people are conceived and born in sin from which none can free themselves. Yet, God also gives His promise in **Genesis 3:15 “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.”**

Lent teaches us how often we have stifled God's will in our lives by giving in to every pleasure and every desire. Even though we give in to temptation and yield to our desires, God's Word is with us, guilt drives the joy of sinning away. God's Word calls us in Lent to confess how we often yield to our desires and the ways of the culture around us. Through Lenten hymns, the reading of Christ's Passion Account, through the subdued services of Lent and the emphasis on Confession, we are drawn back to God's Word; God's sending His Son our Savior, to seek and save the lost.

In God's Word of promise found in **Genesis 3:15**, the Lord would take our first parents forward by grace and giving faith that looked ahead to a better day. They waited patiently for the promise to come forth not knowing what God's timing would be; yet in great expectation were carried along in faith until death. God's promise was carried forward throughout the Sacred Scripture; through Old Testament and delivered in the New Testament in the person and work of Christ.

As it is during Advent, so also during Lent, the church teaches us that this is a season of repentance. A heart with humility is one ready to hear God's Word and see the Savior's sacrifice for us. We hear the Word of admonition and reflect on our lives. We hear the Word with a heart of repentance and receive strengthening of faith. God's grace renews and encourages us through His Word and Sacrament while we are lifted up knowing our Savior has already conquered the grave and our every enemy. Faith looks to its Savior, Jesus knowing He has paid the price for our sin, fulfilled the Law for us and offers His grace and mercy freely, the very promise made in **Genesis 3:15**. This promise reminds us again and again, especially during Lent, that God delivered on this promise and that Christ has come. Lent while subdued, is tempered with joy. Nothing more needs to be accomplished for our salvation, Christ has done it all.

Lent points us to the cross, the suffering, death and to the resurrection, for the cross is useless without the empty tomb. Lent also makes very clear it is Christ who died and rose for us, that we are justified before God. The Catechism makes this clear, **Q. 206 (2017 edition) “God declares sinners righteous for Christ's sake; that is, our sins have been imputed or charged to Christ, the Savior, and Christ's righteousness has been imputed or credited to us.”** The Scripture makes this clear in the words of St. Paul, writing under the inspiration of God, The Holy Spirit; **“For our sake He [God] made Him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in Him [Christ] we might become the righteousness of God” 2 Corinthians 5:21.** The catechism states further noting; “When our sins were charged to Christ, He suffered the full penalty for them in our place. He rose again and now lives to all eternity in order to give us His righteousness. Both the passive and active obedience of Christ have been credited to us and are received through faith” (2017 edition, p.209).

When we are troubled by our sin, weighed down by the burdens of the day or the time we live in, when we are overwhelmed with sorrow and heartache; we only need to look to Christ who knows our needs. If Lent seems like a harsh reminder of the sinful world we live in, remember Christ has already paid the price; His victory is our victory, His death gives us life. We can draw great encouragement from the season of Lent in the church year as we hear the Word, the promises of God made, delivered as our Savior and continues to bring to us His Word and Sacrament for our forgiveness and great comfort.

**If my sins give me alarm
And my conscience grieve me,
Let Thy cross my fear disarm,
Peace of conscience give me.
Grant That I may trust in Thee
And Thy holy Passion.
If His Son so loveth me,
God must have compassion.**

TLH 140, “Jesus I Will Ponder Now” stanza 5

In Christ, Pastor Ahrendt