

Faithful Friar Message

In these early weeks of 2024, we wonder how this calendar year will unfold for us. Will it be a good year? Or not? Will my health be good? Or not? Will my family be alright? Or not? To these questions, we just don't know the answers. We have hopes and desires – that can't be denied. But we just can't be certain. Hopes and desires are not evidentially true – until of course they happen in my personal history. When they do happen, for example, when it's not a good year, when my health is not good, when my family is not alright, what comes next? Conversely, if it is a good year, if my health is fine and my family is alright, what comes then?

Whether good or ill, I am always undertaking a pilgrimage of faith – a Catholic faith. Faith offers me a perspective, an outlook which is founded on God and His providential care for me. That faith offers me joy and gratitude, but also consolation and perseverance. Alternate portions of all of them – joy and gratitude and consolation and perseverance – make for a full life, that is, a full life in Christ. Being in the company of Christ, I can then accept whatever comes my way and use that to deepen my union with Christ, the Lord of Lords, the King of Kings.

It's when I refuse to acknowledge the lordship and kingship of Christ that I get myself in trouble. Not as I would get in trouble in school or with my boss, but I put my soul in jeopardy; that is, I flirt with sin and I consent to a different kind of lordship and kingship – my own. I **am** the Lord. I **am** the King. These assertions I make in and through my sinfulness.

And, so, it is fitting that we undertake a journey to the Cross. Every year, we call that journey a Lenten observance and it starts on Ash Wednesday. The imposition of ashes is a solemn reminder to return the lordship and kingship to Christ to Whom it belongs permanently. By my sin, I brazenly pilfer the lordship and kingship of Christ and claim them for myself. Conversion is the time to return that lordship and kingship to Christ. Lent is intended by the Church as a time for us to undergo conversion. Lightly and sweetly but also roughly and painfully too.

Let us use this Lenten observance beginning on February 14th to return to Christ with all our hearts according to the urging of the Scriptures. But let us not forget our minds and our wills too. Let us accept the course correction humbly that we might rejoice in the Lord's mercy at Easter.

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