

Tuesday February 23, 2010

As we begin Lent, the time of penitence and repentance, we are given encouragement by all three of the readings this morning. The psalm tells us that the Lord ransoms the life of his servants and that none will be punished who trust in him. Isaiah says that the Lord practically begs us to turn to the Lord that he may have mercy on us, for he will abundantly pardon us. Matthew reports that Jesus tells us if you forgive others their trespasses, God will also forgive you.

What does the Lord ask of us—to turn to God; to trust in God; and to practice forgiveness. And God's promise to us is that God will have mercy on us and abundantly pardon us.

Turning toward God to me requires me to be aware of those things in myself that take me away from God. My desire for acquiring things. My willingness to fill my time with trivia and overtaken by distractions. My failures to be generous or kind. My eagerness to excuse my own faults. My readiness to be satisfied with less than God.

Turning toward God means I need to do those things that will foster my relationship with God. Prayer, reading scripture and letting it seep into me, participating in the life of our community.

Trusting in God requires me to learn to depend less on myself and more on God. I need to understand in my heart the difference between me and God—that I am not God and not in charge. I need to turn my anxiety and fears over to God, put them in God's hands and let go of them. It means trying to listen to God in the ways that God communicates to me. And then responding to what I think God is saying to me.

God also asks us to practice forgiveness. This is easier for me than trusting in God. Probably because it is more concrete. Opportunities to forgive and be forgiven in return unfortunately abound in the normal course of life among other human beings.

I believe that one of the graces that God has given me is that I do not get hurt easily. And more importantly I can often see the image of Christ in others. With those gifts from God, it is not so difficult to forgive.

I like the movement of these calls from God. To turn away from those things that are not of God and move toward God. To deepen my life with God by learning to trust in God's love for me and mercy toward me. And to use that deepened life with God to move out into community in love and forgiveness—those things that make me God's hands and feet in the world.

Dick Dowd  
St Columba's