

February 25, 2009—7am
Ash Wednesday
Father David Lawrence

Lent is a time to make sacrifices, a time to give up something. We renew our dedication to the traditional practices of prayer, fasting and almsgiving. And this year our world's economic situation has forced us to embrace this kind of discipline, willingly or unwillingly. Most of us are having to make do with less and are trying to lend a helping hand to those of our family and friends who are sorely afflicted by the recession. But we can't help everybody and some times the needs of our immediate family are beyond our means. We're losing jobs and giving up houses, bigger sacrifices than we've ever had to make before. It's tougher than giving up a few meals on Ash Wednesday.

But if we are not careful, this forced discipline can lead to bitterness and depression. The sacrifices of Lent do not have value in and of themselves. Our Lord warned us of this in today's gospel. All of our disciplines of Lent are means to an end. The end of being reconciled with God.

So the prophet Joel announces loud and clear, "Even now, says the Lord, return to me with your whole heart." Right now, 2009, is the time to return to the Lord. He is our rock of salvation. He stands forever firm and we must repent of our relying more on worldly things than on him.

The ashes that we wear today remind us vividly of the futility of earthly things. Apart from the Lord everything withers and fails. So let us turn to him anew that this Lent, with all of its discipline and sacrifice, may truly be a springtime for our faith.