

Ash Wednesday 2009

In our second reading today we heard the words St. Paul wrote, “For our sake he made him to be sin who did not know sin.” (2 Corinthians 5:21) To not understand this is to lose sight of the core of what it means to be a Christian. To avoid this we need to grasp the following truths.

Jesus did not know sin.

He was without sin.

But he was made to be sin.

Jesus suffered what our sins deserved.

Because we sinned Jesus had to die.

Because Jesus died, our sins do not have to mean, that we will face eternal death.

This is the great exchange of Christianity. Jesus takes our sin and our death upon himself, so that we can receive a share in his unending life in return.

Lent is a time to prepare to celebrate this great gift. We are now moving towards Good Friday, when Christ’s death will be set before us.

We are moving towards Easter when his resurrection will be set before us.

Jesus died and rose, so that united to him, we could die to our sins and rise to a share in his life.

Lent serves no other purpose than tearing us away from our sins, so that Christ can take these sins upon himself, so that we can enter into eternal life united to him.

If this Lent helps us to move closer towards this, then this season of penance will be for us a source of great joy.

If our observance of Lent and Ash Wednesday is about anything but this, well, then we're just wasting our time.

In our Gospel today Jesus showed us the uselessness of going through external religious actions which do not reflect what we truly believe. So may our actions this Ash Wednesday reflect a true and deep repentance, a repentance which tears us away from our sins, so that we might be saved by the one who knew no sin but was made to be sin.