

*These forty days of Lent, O Lord;
With you we fast and pray.
Teach us to overcome our sins;
And close by you to stay.*

So goes the old hymn. And here we are, on the Friday after Ash Wednesday.

Happy Lent!

Lent brings with it memories of giving up sweets, or TV, or comic books. Fish sticks, tartar sauce, and french fries.

And of course the three gifts of Lent: Fasting, Prayer, and Almsgiving.

All of these things can be nostalgic ... sometimes we handle them like a competition ... other times we bear them like a burden of sorts.

In both of today's readings, we hear about fasting.

The important thing to remember is that as we heard in the Prophet Isaiah:

*This, rather, is the fasting that I wish:
releasing those bound unjustly,
untying the thongs of the yoke;
Setting free the oppressed,
breaking every yoke;
Sharing your bread with the hungry,
sheltering the oppressed and the homeless;
Clothing the naked when you see them,
and not turning your back on your own.*

If our prayer, fasting, and almsgiving doesn't create a space in us for God's grace in order to transform us into worthy vessels to serve as God's hands and feet to those among us - then our prayer, fasting, and almsgiving are empty actions.

Let us pray that we may be transformed into vessels of God's mercy - so that as we move through the remaining 40-some days of Lent, we might be transformed into worthy disciples of Jesus Christ, so that:

*[our] light shall break forth like the dawn ...
and the glory of the LORD shall be [our] rear guard.*