



A Glimpse of Grace at a Fish Fry
II Corinthians 5:20b-6:10

Ash Wednesday, March 6th, 2019
First Federated Church of Peoria, Illinois
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A few weeks ago I attended a neighborhood fish fry. Now one of the things that you need to know about my neighborhood is that the overwhelming majority of people that go to church are Roman Catholic since “St. Phil’s” is within walking distance. Early in the evening I noticed that one of my neighbors was holding a glass of red wine. Now, I have never seen this neighbor hold anything other than a bottle of beer - not a can, but a bottle. I jokingly said something to him and as he looked at his glass his wife volunteered, “Oh, he loves red wine. Besides, he’s giving up beer for Lent!” Everyone, including myself, laughed.

Later, though, I got to thinking; it seems that whenever someone talks about giving something up for Lent they usually give up something that is not “healthy” for them - beer, wine, dessert, chocolate, and the like, only to resume them after Easter. Where’s the penance in that?!

If we insist on giving something up why don’t we give up things that are hurtful and mean: gossip, slander, hostility, prejudice, vengeance, for example. Or, better yet, instead of giving something up, why don’t we begin something new? Generosity, praise, forgiveness, tolerance; things like that.

On Ash Wednesday we are asked to remember that we are passing shadows on the face of this planet. We came from dust and to dust we shall return. We are encouraged to take a moral and spiritual inventory in the hope of discovering or recovering the purpose that God gave and gives to us. The communion table around which we will gather reminds us that God is with us on our journey, encouraging us to become better selves.

In this Lent may we dedicate ourselves to glorifying God through our words and actions as we attempt to make this a truly holy Lent.