



Daily Reflections

February 26, 2020

Scripture

Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18

Jesus said to his disciples:

“Take care not to perform righteous deeds
in order that people may see them;
otherwise, you will have no recompense from your heavenly Father.

When you give alms,
do not blow a trumpet before you,
as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets
to win the praise of others.

Amen, I say to you,
they have received their reward.

But when you give alms,
do not let your left hand know what your right is doing,
so that your almsgiving may be secret.

And your Father who sees in secret will repay you.

“When you pray,
do not be like the hypocrites,
who love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on street corners
so that others may see them.

Amen, I say to you,
they have received their reward.

But when you pray, go to your inner room,
close the door, and pray to your Father in secret.
And your Father who sees in secret will repay you.

“When you fast,
do not look gloomy like the hypocrites.

They neglect their appearance,
so that they may appear to others to be fasting.

Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward.

But when you fast,
anoint your head and wash your face,
so that you may not appear to be fasting,
except to your Father who is hidden.
And your Father who sees what is hidden will repay you.”

Our Scripture Reflection

Today we begin the Holy season of Lent with Ash Wednesday. Lent is a period of forty days during which time we are called to “Turn away from sin and be faithful to the Gospel.” Jesus used hyperbole (exaggerated speech in order to make an important point) to call His disciples to holiness while taking the religious leaders to task for their game-playing hypocrisy. Jesus wanted people to know that there is no place for show-offs, braggarts, game-players or the prideful on the road to conversion. Only humble and sincere candidates need apply.

Food for your Journey

“I would rather be ashes than dust! I would rather that my spark should burn out in a brilliant blaze than it should be stifled by dry rot. I would rather be a superb meteor, every atom of me in magnificent glow, than a sleepy and permanent planet. The function of man is to live, not to exist. I shall not waste my days trying to prolong them. I shall use my time.”

So wrote novelist Jack London, author of *Call of the Wild*, *White Fang*, and a host of other stories about frontier days in Alaska. London truly lived his life as a “superb meteor”: Before he was 17 years old, he had worked in a cannery and also as a sailor, an oyster pirate and a fish patroller. He also spent time as a hobo, riding trains. During a national economic crisis, he joined a march of unemployed workers. He was arrested and spent a month in jail for vagrancy. London didn’t much care for jail, so when he got out, he got himself a high-school equivalency diploma and enrolled at the University of California at Berkeley. He immersed himself in books, and became a radical socialist. A year later, in 1897, he dropped out of college to join the Alaska gold rush. London never did strike it rich, but he did discover enough material to become a successful writer. He published his first book at age 24, and over the next 16 years, he wrote a total of 50 books. He also became an alcoholic. At the age of 40, he drank himself to death. Jack London’s life is a classic example of burnout. He went up like a skyrocket, and came down like a fluttering cascade of gray ash. “I would rather be ashes than dust!” He was true to his word.

In the end, though, Jack London didn’t get his way. He may have burned himself out through hard living, but in the end he became dust — just as surely as anyone else. For such is the fate of every human being.

A Prayer from the Heart

Gracious God, Today begins a period of inner reflection and examination. The days stretch before me and invite me inward to that silent, holy space that holds Your Spirit. This special time beckons me to see my life through Christ's eyes and the truth and reality of Your love incarnate. Give me the Grace to enter the space of these days with anticipation of our meeting. And, when

I open my soul to Your sacred Presence, let Your loving kindness flow over me and seep into the pockets of my heart. I ask this for the sake of Your love. Amen