

REFLECTION WEDNESDAY OF FIRST WEEK OF LENT 2021

Jonah 3:1-10 Luke 11:29-32

Today's scripture readings deal with one of the great themes of Lent, namely, repentance.

Lent is a time for doing penance. What is the purpose of penance?

The first thing we are doing when we undertake penance is acknowledging that we are sinners, sinners who need God's mercy.

The second thing we are doing is expressing the desire and will to change our lives. The whole object of penance is to reform a sinful way of life.

Penance is an exercise in saying 'no' to ourselves. It is intended to show that we are capable of better things, and that we sincerely want those things. We want to reform our lives, but we know we cannot do so without the grace of God.

When people prune a fruit tree, they are not doing it to hurt the tree, but to make it more fruitful. So our penances have as their goal to lead us to a new and better life.

We see a fine example of this in the 1st reading. At the preaching of Jonah the people of Nineveh fasted, put on sackcloth, and prayed earnestly to God. But they didn't leave it at that. Their King urged them to go further. He said, 'Let everyone renounce his evil behaviour and the wicked things he has done'

It is a lot easier to undertake penances, even severe ones than to try to change sinful attitudes, habits, etc. For our penance to bear fruit it must result in a sincere effort to change our lives.

Generally speaking, we will change everything but what counts in our lives. We will adjust, but not too much. We will change only if the changes do not discomfort us or cost us too dearly

What is the main thing, or the area of my life, that I most need to change?

May the Lord give us the humility and the courage to acknowledge what needs to be changed in our lives, and for the will to do something about it.

Fr Patrick