

WEEKLY REFLECTIONS

ASH WEDNESDAY



Joel 2:12-18 | 2 Cor 5:20-6:2 | Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18

Now is a wonderful word. It can also be challenging. Last year, during the lockdown when many people were working from home, there were jokes about the ‘four horsemen of procrastination.’ These were snacks, napping, social media and minor chores. Supposedly, they were time fillers that stopped us doing what we needed to do.

Lent begins with a great sense of *now*. It is a season of opportunity; it even has a flavour of urgency. Today, Ash Wednesday, we hear St Paul say that ‘now is the favourable time’. The reading from the prophet Joel says, ‘Now, now, it is the Lord who speaks, come back to me with all your heart.’ Jesus tells us, when we pray, to go to our private room so that our experience of God is one of intimacy and true connection, not just of routine. There is no sense in which Jesus is suggesting this can wait until tomorrow.

Lent calls us to respond to God and to others *now*. During Lent, Project Compassion will present us with inspiring stories from Caritas Australia about real people entering into partnership with us in real ways. The theme for Project Compassion this year comes from one of the great *now* moments in the whole of scripture. After the flood has receded in the Book of Genesis, God puts a rainbow in the sky as a sign that the earth will never again suffer in such a way. God makes a covenant with the human family and the whole of creation ‘for all future generations.’ It is an expression of hope, something we might relate to after the unsettling experiences of the last two years. For some people, this will be the first Easter we can come together since 2019. The ashes we wear today are an invitation to rebuild from wherever we happen to be on life’s journey. The hope we share starts *now*.

Today’s Psalm includes the line ‘Give me again the joy of your help.’ We know that God will reach into our lives this Lent. We are called to reach into the lives of others so that they might know the joy of true partnership.