

Ash Wednesday (ABC)

Every Saint has a past, and every sinner a future! St Augustine. Think carefully about this when it comes to God what is your past? And have you chosen your future with or without Jesus Christ?

Jesus is reminding us of a **tough lesson**.

He tells us to **stop being hypocrites**, to stop looking like Christians on the **outside** while being self-centered, arrogant, and egotistical on the **inside**.

- The word "hypocrite" comes from the Greek word for "actor".
- Actors **pretend** to be someone they're not. That's OK on **stage**, but not in **real life**.
- Jesus is encouraging us to **take off our masks**, to stop pretending, to once again be true to our **true selves**.

That is a hard lesson for us, for two reasons.

- First, we don't like to **admit** that we sometimes act like hypocrites. But the fact is, we do. We try to deceive, to wheedle, to give the right impression, even if it's false. We try to hide our motives. We are all hypocrites in some way.
- Second, we are afraid that if we take off our mask, God may **reject** us. And no one wants to be rejected.

But Jesus gives us a reason to trust him enough to accept this hard lesson.

The reason is that he **already** knows us **through and through**, and even so, he loves us.

He repeats this **three times**, when he says that the Father sees what we do **in secret**.

- That means he has seen all of the most selfish, vitriolic, and morose chapters of our ongoing interior monologues. Everything. He knows it all.
- And yet, he **still loves us** with the tender love of the perfect Father, the perfect friend. He still wants us to live close to him - closer and closer, actually.

- That's why he keeps telling us to give alms and pray and fast "**in secret**". He wants us to stay **close** to him, to live our lives in **intimate friendship** with him.

Now is the accepted time! Now is the hour of salvation! Put Christ in your heart. Put Christ in your life! Return to a life of heartfelt prayer. Return to his worship on the day he has appointed. Live out your life in him each and every day. This day may be your first. It may be your only. It may be your last. The cross is before you! Eternity is offered! Come home!