



## From Pope Francis' Ash Wednesday Mass

**Lent** is the time to rediscover the direction of life. Because in life's journey, what really matters is not to lose sight the goal.

During a journey, if we are distracted we will not get far. Ask yourselves whether you are seeking the way forward in the journey of life or whether they are satisfied with living in the moment and thinking only of feeling good, solving some problems and having fun.

What is the path? Is it the search for health, which many today say comes first but which eventually passes? Could it be possessions and wellbeing? The Gospel proposes three steps that are to be undertaken without hypocrisy and pretence: almsgiving, prayer, fasting. Prayer reunites us to God; charity, to our neighbour; fasting, to ourselves.

"God, my neighbour, my life" are the realities that do not fade away and in which we must invest.

Focus first of all on the Almighty, in prayer, which frees us from that horizontal and mundane life where we find time for self but forget God. It then invites us to focus on others, with the charity that frees us from the vanity of acquiring and of thinking that things are only good if they are good for me. Finally, Lent invites us to look inside our heart, with fasting, which frees us from attachment to things and from the worldliness that numbs the heart. Prayer, charity, fasting: three investments for a treasure that endures.

Lent is a time of grace that liberates the heart from vanity. It is a time of healing from addictions that seduce us. It is a time to fix our gaze on what abides. I invite you Christians to fix your gaze upon the Crucified one. Jesus on the cross is life's compass, which directs us to heaven.

From the cross, Jesus teaches us the great courage involved in renunciation. Free yourselves from the clutches of consumerism and the snares of selfishness, from always wanting more, from never being satisfied, and from a heart closed to the needs of the poor. If we take the path of love, then we will embrace the life that never ends. And we will be full of joy.