

**Ash Wednesday 2014**

**Recently I received a call from a reporter with the Detroit Free Press. The woman was seeking information about the identity of the person who has been giving large amounts of money to help those in need. This person who has been assisting those in need since around 2010 has their name anonymous. In fact, there was a rumor that Oprah was the person. But the reporter has at least found out that the person is a man.**

**The reporter would like to write an article extolling the man for his charitable giving, but without his name and background, she is stymied. I began asking the same question as this reporter. Why is this man who has given millions to help those in need so secretive? As we begin this Lenten season together, the first few words of the Gospel may give us a hint.**

**We read, "Take care not to perform good deeds in order that people may see them. Otherwise you will have no recompense from your heavenly Father." Jesus goes on to explain:**

- If you give funds to help the poor, do not blow a trumpet before you in the synagogues and streets. People who do this already have their reward.
- When you pray, do not stand in synagogues and on street corners so that others may see them. They have already received their reward.
- When you fast from food do not look gloomy like the hypocrites. They neglect their appearance so that others may know they are fasting. They have their reward.

Here we have a clue of why the man giving the money to those in need does it so secretly. His purpose is not to blow his horn and be noticed: The whole purpose of his generosity is to grow in intimacy with God. My brothers and sisters, the whole purpose of this Lenten season is to grow in intimacy with God. The whole reason for this season of prayer, fasting and giving to those in need is to grow closer to God. It does not matter that you may come today feeling that you are:

- the worst sinner in the world
- or a person struggling to be holy
- or someone who wants even greater intimacy with God.

**Jesus invites us to intimacy with God. The whole purpose of Jesus' life on earth was to bring us closer to the one he called Father. "Father, may that be one even as I am with you and you with me. May they be one with us so that the world may believe you have sent me.**

**This year our Lenten theme is: "Dispel the darkness; be the light." (say that to each other). And how do we dispel the darkness in our life and be the light?...by growing in intimacy with God through prayer, fasting and giving to those in need. The many opportunities our parish offers to pray, fast and give to those in need is all for one purpose: that we may grow in intimacy with God.**

**Let me end this reflection with the same question I began it. Why does the man who gives so generously to others want to keep his identity secret? Just as a mother develops that intimate bond between herself and her child by secretly feeding, changing and serving the needs of her child, so do we come closer to our God through quietly investing ourselves into this Lenten season of prayer, fasting and giving to those in need. I believe it is he wants to grow in intimacy with God. And I believe we are here today to enter into that same journey of intimacy with God. As we receive the ashes which physically mark the beginning of this Lenten season, mark us a people**

**on our journey to union with God. Let us DISPELL THE DARKNESS;  
AND BE THE LIGHT.**