

## Homily – Ash Wednesday

Every vehicle has a maintenance schedule, either in the glove compartment or online. Having your oil changed, your tires rotated and balanced, and the rest of the engine checked keeps your vehicle in excellent shape.

We have annual tests, a regular eye exam and we should go to the dentist to have our teeth cleaned. Preventative health will keep us in great shape and could be the way that serious health issues are detected.

Lent is a time of self-examination. We need to look at ourselves very carefully. As I spoke about last Sunday, Lent is the time to be vulnerable to open ourselves to growth as disciples.

Our goal is to reach heaven. Is there a sin, an inordinate attachment or an addiction that could prevent you from living the way you are called to live now and in the life to come?

Many disasters could have been prevented if the warning signs were not ignored.

If a particular bridge was inspected the way it should have been, perhaps it would not have collapsed during rush hour traffic.

Maybe many marriages could have been saved if there was proper examination, detection and resolution.

Maybe many priestly vocations could have been saved with proper formation and support.

Perhaps many of the terrible scandals in the Catholic Church could have been avoided if the signs and the reports were not ignored by leaders.

There is a pervasive and characteristic weakness within our modern culture - we don't want to examine and resolve problems. Do you remember the television series Hogan's Heroes? We are faced with the Shultz Syndrome. - I see nothing.

One of the opening lines I hear often in confession. "I am here with the same sins, Father." Usually our sins, tendencies, attitudes and weaknesses will be easy to detect. We know who we are and we know what we need to do.

Today/tonight, the ashes on our forehead remind us of the human condition: Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return. Remember, however, you will have to go deep and discover inner attitudes that may be the root of your sinful behaviour. Sometimes you will need a what I call a spiritual colonoscopy.

Lent is a Catholic colonoscopy. We need to go deep into ourselves and look at ourselves very closely. The process starts with ashes today/tonight. Then we undertake prayer, fasting and almsgiving, in whatever measure we choose, to open ourselves to God and let in the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We open ourselves to how we can love God, our neighbour and ourselves

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better. That is the goal of Lent; to be more faithful disciples at Easter than we were at we begin the journey.

Let us open our minds and hearts to the heart this Lent to be renewed by the power of His love. Let the work begin!