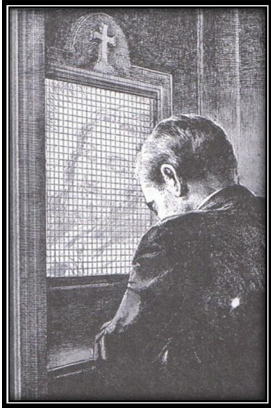




## ✠ A MESSAGE FROM THE PASTOR ✠



# RETURN TO ME WITH YOUR WHOLE HEART



Once again, the annual celebration of Ash Wednesday at Our Holy Redeemer (as in other places) netted an astonishing amount of fish! They *came home* and they genuflected, bowed, knelt, sat, stood up, and one by one approached the Altar and were challenged to *repent and believe in the Gospel* remembering with help from blessed ashes that *they are dust and unto dust they*

*shall return*. It was a day when “the majority” and “the minority” were one (cf. Saint John XVII: 20-21), and the world knew who they were (cf. Saint Mark 1:24).

The presence of so many people should be seen as an invitation for each and every one of us (the minority) who returned to the Lord today/the First Sunday of Lent to “put out into deep water and lower (our) nets for a catch” (Saint Luke V:4). And yes, like Simon in last Sunday’s Gospel we can say to the Lord that *we’ve worked hard all night*; asking, inviting, begging, pleading, even threatening and bribing husbands/daughters/brothers/friends/co-workers/neighbours/etc. for years and *caught nothing* (cf. Saint Luke V:5); but if the presence of so many fish on Ash Wednesday (like Palm Sunday, Easter, Christmas, and the Sunday after 9/11) reveals anything, it is at least this: there are a lot of fish out there and they can be caught! The question for us to answer is: “what bait can be used to catch them?” And the answer that I would like to suggest is not “ashes on Sunday” but “Mercy”.

Pope Francis, in his Homily for the IV Sunday of Lent 2015 said: “I am confident that the whole Church, which is in such need of mercy for we are sinners, will be able to find in this Jubilee the joy of rediscovering (*come home* for “Discovering Christ” on 10 March) and rendering fruitful God’s mercy, with which we are all called to give comfort to every man and every woman of our time.” To every man and every woman of our time, the Lord says (as “the minority” and “the majority” heard on Ash Wednesday): “return to Me with all your heart!



“Return to Me with your whole heart” if you haven’t been to Sunday Mass in a while and I will forgive you!

“Return to Me with your whole heart” if you have taken the Lord’s Name in vain and I will forgive you!

“Return to Me with your whole heart” if you have worshipped false gods and I will forgive you!

“Return to Me with your whole heart” if you have had an abortion and I will forgive you!

“Return to Me with your whole heart” if you have committed adultery and I will forgive you!

“Return to Me with your whole heart” if you have failed to feed the hungry and I will forgive you!

“Return to Me with your whole heart” if you’ve betrayed Me and I will forgive you!

“Return to Me with your whole heart” if you’ve denied Me three times and I will forgive you!

“Return to Me with your whole heart” if you’ve abandoned Me in My need and I will forgive you!

As painful as it was/As painful as it is, Jesus never tired/tires of forgiving, so let us never tire of asking for forgiveness. And ... as painful as it is, let us never tire of “going fishing” for people to return to the Lord!