



Take, O take me as I am.

Ash Wednesday, 18 February 2015

Kathy and I attended the Ash Wednesday liturgy at the Parish of the Ascension in Mount Pearl this morning. It was the first time in many years that we were able to sit together in the congregation. The clergy of the parish used the liturgy from the Book of Alternative Services that included the imposition of ashes with the words: "Remember you are dust, and to dust you shall return." But before that there were scripture readings, a homily by Canon David Burrows, and prayers of confession. The service ended with the celebration of Holy Eucharist led by the Rev. Lynn Courage.

For me, it was a familiar and comfortable service. Indeed, I had led this service myself dozens of times over the past 30 years. But there was one part that was new to me today and I admit not quite so comfortable. It happened when Canon David asked us all to stand for an action song. Now, action songs are nothing new for me; I've done hundreds of those. But I've never done an action song on Ash Wednesday. Then again I never took part in an Ash Wednesday liturgy with David Burrows before!

The song he asked us to sing with movements was from the Iona Community and called, **Take, O take me as I am**. The few words which we repeated went as follows: "*Take, O take me as I am; summon out what I shall be; set your seal upon my heart and live in me.*" It was easy to sing and the actions hardly strenuous but it has been in my head ever since. The more I have reflected upon it the more I realize that it gave me the most wonderful starting point for my Lenten journey. I have always known that God meets us right where we are in life, but that doesn't mean we stay right where we are. For in that meeting is the potential for change as we travel with God. New things are summoned from all of us by the journey.

I am grateful for the new beginnings of my life, even those that have been painful at the time. New beginnings in life have all enabled me to grow as a person and to grow in my relationship with God. The capacity to change in good ways is part of what it means to be human for me.

The fresh start of Ash Wednesday invites us to examine our hearts and motives and bring them before God as people with some brokenness to be healed, and much potential to be realized. Our church gives us the season of Lent so that we might examine our lives and become more of the people God calls us to be. And it's pretty wonderful that God meets us right where we are every Ash Wednesday. I end with the traditional collect for this day, one that we are invited to pray throughout our Lenten journey:

Almighty and everlasting God, you despise nothing you have made and forgive the sins of all who are penitent: Create and make in us new and contrite hearts, that we, worthily

lamenting our sins and acknowledging our brokenness, may obtain of you, the God of all mercy, perfect remission and forgiveness; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Now you know why I will never forget such a moment.

Blessings,

+Geoff