



Networking Cedara



Volume 28 Number 27 23-29 October 17

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Monday, 12 February: First day of Lectures- First term of the academic year 2018 begins

Tuesday, 13 February: NO Institute Liturgy

Wednesday, 14 February: Ash Wednesday- Lent begins

Monday, 19 February: Institute Free Day- NO LECTURES

Tuesday, 20 February: Institute Liturgy (5 pm, Paul Decock OMI presiding)

Friday 23, February: Special Day of fasting and prayer for peace in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Sudan

Tuesday, 27 February - 1 March: Pauline Book sale in the Hall.

A WORD OF WELCOME

The editorial team would like to welcome all new students and staff to SJTI. We wish you a very fruitful time at the Institute. A word of welcome also to all returning students and staff. Have blessed and successful academic year.

SPECIAL DAY OF FASTING AND PRAYER

Pope Francis has called for a special day of fasting and prayer for peace in the Democratic Republic of Congo and South Sudan. Both countries are experiencing severe violence and in South Sudan, civil war.

WELCOME NEW STUDENTS!



BOOK SALE

The Pauline Books & Media will be hosting a Book Exhibition from 27 February 2018 to 1 March 2018 at Cedara in our Hall

ST JOSEPHINE BAKHITA—FORMER SLAVE AND SAINT Sr Sue Rakoczy IHM

The opening liturgy of this 2018 academic year was celebrated on 8 February, the feast day of St Josephine Bakhita (1868-1947). St Josephine was a Sudanese woman who was a slave for many years and then, after becoming a Catholic, entered the Canossian Sisters in Italy.

Slavery is not an ancient terrible evil but a reality today, now, in South Africa and across Africa and the other continents. South Africa is both a major transit point and destination for girls, young boys and women who are trafficked from Asia and other African countries. We recall the kidnapping and disappearance of over 200 young women in Nigeria by the Boko Haram, who sold the girls into slavery. Hundreds of thousands of women, possibly millions, are trafficked each year.

The Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference established the Counter Trafficking in Persons Office a few years ago. The director, Melanie O'Connor HF, is tireless in her travels around the country giving workshops and other programmes to raise awareness about 21st century sexual slavery. One of her initiatives is to train truck drivers to be alert to the presence of traffickers at truck stops. Her efforts are linked with those of other sisters in Africa who are also working to end this evil and to help women escape their bondage.

Her book *The Church and Human Trafficking* was published by Cluster Publications and is available from the book case in the entrance of the Institute.

St Josephine Bakhita, pray for all those who are trafficked and enslaved and for those who are working to end sexual slavery.

ASH WEDNESDAY KELVIN BANDA, OP

Ash Wednesday is an important day as it begins the Season of Lent. It is a day that comes every year to remind us that we will not live forever. The days of Lent that follow Ash Wednesday help us to reflect on how we intend to live the life we have been given. Ash Wednesday is not only a day to remind us that, we are dust; and to

dust we will return,” (Genesis 3:19). It is a day of renewal, repentance and return to God.

Ash Wednesday is a journey; it is a day of spiritual reflection and renewal to deepen our faith. It is a day of preparing of new members to full members of the body of Christ – through Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist, the Sacraments of Initiation. It is a day we need to remember our birth and death [mortality]. The central theme for Ash Wednesday is prayer, fasting and abstinence – following Christ in the desert; a day to choose something that has a real impact on us, such as almsgiving; and rely ever more fully on Christ. For Father Leo Edgar, OP, part of the challenge of Ash Wednesday, and the whole of the Lenten season, is to take stock of our lives as followers of Christ, and to examine the depth of our commitment to living our lives as Christ lived.

Ash Wednesday helps us remember the life and death stakes in our own stories, preparing us, in the words of Eugene Peterson, “for a kind of death that our cultures know nothing about . . . making room for the dance of resurrection.” Thus, as fasting is associated with Ash Wednesday [Isaiah 58:6], the fasting God wants is to oppose injustice and the oppression of others. Ash Wednesday does not only usher us into the Lenten Season into which humanity need to give up some portion of food or liquor; it is a time for one to evaluate oneself before God and be able to be sorry for one’s mistakes – and consider the true riches of life that Jesus urges us to embrace after repentance – a return to God.

Ash Wednesday guides our faith in Jesus Christ; it opens our lives to humility, prayer, fasting, and attending to the needs of others. It is a day to be aware of how simple disciplines such as prayer, alms-giving and fasting can enhance our sense of humility and joy as followers of Christ. For Pope Francis, the liturgy of Ash Wednesday invites us to an experience quite similar to that of the rich man and Lazarus. The rich man failed to help the poor man, Lazarus; the rich man only recognizes Lazarus during the torments of his afterlife on earth. The rich man wants the poor Lazarus to ease his suffering with a drop of water. What he asks of Lazarus is similar to what he himself could have done; but failed to do.

Ash Wednesday is a day of returning to the root of all our ills that cause us to *fail to heed the word of God*. The ills that prevent us from loving God, that also prevent us from not seeing the suffering of others, that cause us to despise our neighbours. Ash Wednesday is a favorable day to recognize our ills to renew our encounter with Christ, to start living in his word, in the Sacraments and in our neighbours. Through recognition of our ills, Ash Wednesday becomes a true journey of conversion into the Lenten Season. We can rediscover the word of God as a gift to us, be purified of our selfishness that blinds us, and serve Christ present in our brothers and sisters in need. Ash Wednesday revives our spiritual renewal in God and for our neighbours –to be able to look at the suffering of the innocent and uplift them so that they too can share in the victory of Christ that dawns at Easter time. This can be done only when hu-

manity opens the doors of their hearts [homes/communities] to the weak, orphans, widows and the poor.

Lastly, Ash Wednesday is not solely about fasting from food or liquor; our negative attitudes towards others need to be purified. Humanity needs to fast from selfishness, anger, jealousy, envy, from being oppressive, from being power hungry, from being lovers of money to lovers of humanity in an authentic way – Christ’s love. Ash Wednesday needs to usher us into the Lenten Season that we may become instruments of service for doing good and showing solidarity towards others. We must not allow ourselves to be lured by money and worldly objects that can chain us and the entire world to a selfish logic that leaves no room for love and hinders us in bringing peace to ourselves and others. Ash Wednesday must remind us that we are merely mortals. We should not be corrupted by the love of riches that can only blind us from seeing the needs of the poor in our communities, those who are starving, hurting and lying at our doors.



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