

The Tennessee Tribune

Volume 22, No. 9, 3 Sections

THURSDAY, March 3-9 2011

\$1.00

Remembering Ash Wednesday as we Prepare for the Season of Lent

A Commentary by Jason Curry



The Reverend Dr. Jason Richard Curry is Dean of the Fisk Memorial Chapel at Fisk University. He can be reached at jcurry@fisk.edu or www.fiskmemorialchapel.com.

Many students are looking forward to Spring Break, and they are equally excited about spending it in New Orleans. The music, food and carnival associated with Mardi Gras are legendary, and the students of today are as interested in experiencing this cultural event with the same enthusiasm and excitement of previous generation. As a University Chaplain, I've expressed my reservations about their decision to attend the event, but, given the magnetic pull that the festival has on creative imaginations, my ten minute conversations with them are primarily limited to safely issue and the religious significance of the event. The Carnival Season will end on March 8th, and Ash Wednesday will begin on Wednesday, March 9, 2011. In previous years, I've heard people say: "Yeah, Reverend I'm going to have as much fun as I can because Lent is right around the corner,

and I won't be able to do anything." I reminded him that it was possible to have fun and refrain from sin, but more importantly, I was please to see that he remembered that Ash Wednesday was a scared day because it marks the beginning of a new Christian season in preparation for remembering that blessed Easter morning.

Many churches continue to recognize the significance of Ash Wednesday by holding morning or evening worship services. Several years ago, I remember attending a worship service during which the pastor the church used ashes to paint a cross on my forehead. Historically, the ashes were made from the unused and burnt palms from the previous Palm Sunday. Ash Wednesday denotes a time of penance in which we ask forgiveness from God for the sins that we have committed by omission or commission. As the first day in the

season of Lent, it marks the beginning of a spiritual season of fasting, praying and reflecting on the meaning of Easter for our daily lives. Ash Wednesday unites us with church all over the world, and it affords us the opportunity to become closer to Christ by placing the symbol of the cross on our foreheads. I agree with Paul who said in Romans 1:16, Paul says: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek." As we prepare to enter the season of Lent, let us remember the historical and spiritual significance of Ash Wednesday. If our schedules will not afford us the opportunity to have a cross of ashes painted on our foreheads, let us hold fast to the cross of redemption in our hearts and we pause to consider the great price that Jesus paid for us. Amen.