

Ash Wednesday  
2/17/2021

## HOT DOGS

Hot Dogs, they aren't just a type of food we don't eat on Ash Wednesday but a way of acting that we try to avoid every day. The expression, "hot dog" often used in terms of sports, refers to someone who is a show off, not a team player. It includes people whose goal is to draw attention to themselves. Just as there can be hot dogs in sports, there can be spiritual hot dogs, people who, by their apparent acts of piety, call attention to themselves. This can even happen during the celebration of Mass. It is easy to fall into the trap of being a hot dog and, there have been times when I have done it myself.

We've entered into the season of Lent, a time when through prayer, fasting and almsgiving, we seek to grow in love of God and love of neighbor. These three traditional tools of prayer, fasting and almsgiving are based on Jewish acts of piety.

What we do is important. How we do it is also important but why we do it is even more important. These are three important practices but there is a danger of our becoming proud as we do them. In the gospel Jesus points out this danger and warns, in so many words, against being spiritual hot dogs. Those people he says already have their reward.

The point isn't to grow in pride, and Lent isn't just some sort of self improvement plan—although that can be good. We measure Lent not by how much weight we lose, but by how we grow in love of God and love of neighbor. The twentieth century social activist, Dorothy Day, once wrote: *If you love, you want to give yourself away.*

Our Lenten practices are to be ways we seek to give ourselves away in love. Lent leads us to grow in self-gift just as, here in the Eucharist, Jesus continues to gift himself to us as we, with lives of intentional faith, seek to gift ourselves to him.

This Lent may we grow in giving ourselves away by growing in love of God and love of neighbor. *If you love, you want to give yourself away.* May we avoid eating hot dogs today and avoid being hot dogs every day.