

Remarks offered by The Rev. Charles Rowins at St. Christopher-by-the-Sea, Gibson Island, Maryland, on Ash Wednesday, March 6, 2019.

The Church Year is made up of Seasons. So far, this Church Year, we have observed the Seasons of Advent, Christmas and Epiphany. Otherwise known as Wait, Celebrate and Share. We come now to the Season of Lent. Otherwise known as Take Stock.

We waited for the Savior. When the Savior arrived, we celebrated. And after celebrating, we looked for ways to share the Good News. Now, in this new Season, the Season of Lent, we take time to consider just how well we are doing. We get out the map to make sure that we are headed in the right direction, and, if not, we make a correction. We get back on track.

The beginning of this annual exercise in taking stock is Ash Wednesday. Think about the hikes you have taken and those times on those hikes when something doesn't feel right. You stop. You look around. You check your bearings. You consult the map. Is there an adjustment that you need to make? Are you on the right path, or have you, without realizing it, taken a wrong turn?

This kind of self-assessment is crucial to any successful journey. And we want to be successful. We want to make sure that our wait, our celebration and our sharing still make good sense to us and to others.

And typically what we discover when we take the time to check our bearings is that we have strayed, maybe not far off the appointed route, but far enough to give us pause and suggest that we need get ourselves back on track. Our welfare is at stake, as is the welfare of those we love and care about and for whom we want the best.

The Season of Lent is another leg on a long journey. The word "Lent" actually means "long." Forty days. It's a time for self-reflection and rededication. It's a serious time, to be sure, but not without some humor. After all, when we're hiking and discover that we have taken a wrong turn, we say things like, "Nice job, Columbus." Jesus spent forty days in the wilderness. I wonder if there might have been some self-deprecating smiles during those challenging days and nights.

There are five Sundays in Lent, leading to Palm Sunday and Holy Week and Easter. These five Sundays are active, but we begin with a quiet Wednesday, the symbol of which is ash. For us, the ashes are not a sign of destruction, but a reminder of how important taking stock is to our goal of staying on task. The Lord wants our help. The Lord will die for us and rise for us, but he won't do all the heavy lifting. He will leave some of that for you and me. And that will require nourishment, including being together tonight.

Amen.