

**HOMILY for ASH WEDNESDAY 2011  
Bishop Anthony Basil Taylor**



The most important part of a car is its motor. If the motor is bad, the car is worthless. No matter how nice it looks on the outside, it can't take you where you want to go. The most important part of decision making is our motives, the inner motor that moves us to action -- and indeed, the words 'motive' and 'motor' mean the same thing: *that which causes movement*. In today's Gospel Jesus says that if our motives are bad, our good deeds are worthless. No matter how nice they look on the outside, they can't take us where we want to go in our relationship with God. So if our charitable giving, public prayer and fasting are done...for the purpose of impressing others..., their approval will be our only reward. Why should God reward us for putting others ahead of him?

And how do we keep our car in good shape? By regular maintenance and timely repair, especially when we begin to detect ominous changes in the sound of the engine -- otherwise a mechanical breakdown might leave us stranded out in the middle of nowhere! Well our spiritual motor needs regular maintenance and timely repair too, especially when we begin to detect ominous changes in our motives -- otherwise a spiritual breakdown might leave us stranded spiritually.

Ash Wednesday is the day our spiritual "Check Engine" light comes on...except that the repairs needed are not the sort we can pay others to do, nor will one day's effort be enough to set things right. Lent is a 40-day tune up that *only you* can do; a time to adjust your timing -- are you putting God first in the way you use your time? Is your idle set too low? You need to check the fuel/oxygen mixture -- too much food and too little prayer? Prayer and fasting can adjust that! Does your spiritual motor keep getting flooded with too many *things*, too many material distractions? Charitable giving can help free your soul from the burden of greed and lead to a higher quality standard of living more pleasing to God. Less can be more when it comes to the spiritual life and Lent's a great time to make the necessary adjustments!

One day you and I will be called before the judgment seat of God to render an account not so much about what we have done or not done, but rather regarding why we did or did not do these things -- our motives! If our motives were good, we will be invited in to receive our eternal reward...but if our motives were bad -- if we put other things and the approval of others ahead of God -- then we risk losing eternal reward. Your "Check Engine" light has just come on! Remember that you are dust and to dust you shall return!