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18 February 2024 + First Sunday of Lent

I saw an interview early in the morning of Ash Wednesday, by the two actors who are spearheading the *Hallow* prayer app, which has become the number one prayer app in the world. The actors are Mark Wahlberg (Fr. Stu) and Johnathan Roumie (*Jesus in the Chosen* series). These actors are not simply hired promoters of the app but are involved in the production and use of the app itself. You might have seen their advertisement during the Super Bowl. Appearing on the interview, they just returned from Ash Wednesday Mass at St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York. Each had a very visible cross of ashes on their forehead. Both of them spoke about the incredible popularity of the *Hallow* app and the responses of people who are making prayer a daily part of their life. There have been some very powerful testimonies of people's reconnection with Jesus and the impact that he is making in their lives. It is so good to see how modern media can be a great source of evangelization and spiritual help when it is used properly, and how the Gospel of Jesus Christ and his presence enter the mainstream of modern life.

I have been seeing interviews with professional sports teams and individuals who are saying that visible Christian faith is coming forward in their lives as well. Prayer and bible study among teammates, especially in professional football, is on the rise. All of these trends are truly Good News! The greatest part in all of this is a growing religious force in a younger generation. More and more are returning to church and the sacraments because of these influences. People are turning toward the Light in times of darkness.

As I mentioned in my homily last weekend, Lent is a time of great grace. Invite others back to church. Help them to seek reconciliation through Jesus Christ. Lent is a time when God the Father wants to gather his children back to him. Check out the *Hallow* app and share it with others. Continue to use our parish FORMED website during this season of Lent to help you, your family, and others grow closer to the Lord!

Blessings for a holy and powerful Lent,