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## *“It Is Complete”*

**A Lenten Reflection from the *Cathedral Times*  
by Canon Wallace Marsh**

We have buried a number of amazing parishioners this past year. Many of them were near and dear to our hearts. They blessed us by living full lives.

The season of Lent begins on Ash Wednesday with the words, “You are dust and to dust you shall return.” And, the last words of this season occur on the cross, “It is finished” (John 19:30). Another way to translate Jesus’ words, “It is complete.”

Lent forces us to recognize the inevitability of death, “You are dust and to dust you shall return.” And when we acknowledge the fragility of life and the inevitability of death, we must account for what is *complete* and *incomplete* in our lives.

Jesus died in his thirties. By our standards, his life was cut short and might seem *incomplete*. Yet, on the cross Jesus utters the words, “It is finished,” indicating that even in his thirties life was *complete*.

Do you feel as though your life is complete? Or, are there places where you are incomplete? Before answering, recognize there is a distinction between “complete” and “perfect.” Quite often, we confuse these two categories, but they are different.

When the illusion of perfection is shattered, whether it be in a relationship, parenting, or a career, we create a false self (to perpetuate the illusion of perfection), or we search for something deeper—what it means to live a complete life.

While abstinence might do me some good, I have no desire to give up bourbon, chocolate, coffee or wine this Lent. There is a one year-old and a three year-old in my house, which means my life is full of trials, tribulations, and the daily realization of an utter dependence upon God.

Instead, I am approaching this Lent impacted by the deaths of so many faithful parishioners, and moved by their ability to live lives that were *complete*. They are saints whose blessing and witness have left an impact on many of us. So, my Lenten discipline will involve following their example. With the help of spiritual writers like Ignatius of Loyola and Richard Rohr, I want to examine the places where my life is *complete* and *incomplete*.

Ash Wednesday reminds us that at any moment life can be “finished” and we are returned to dust, but “life in the Spirit” (Romans 8), according to St. Paul, is a life that is complete. When we live complete lives, we do not fear death, because our lives are “changed from glory to glory” (Hymn 657) and “strength to strength in the life of perfect service in God’s heavenly kingdom” (BCP, Burial).