

PASTORAL LETTER MARCH 2021

We started a Lenten Journey on the 17th February 2021. When we had Ash Wednesday, many people were worried whether the churches would be opened for the Lenten services and especially for Ash Wednesday. I don't have to remind you how difficult last and this year have been. The second wave of Covid 19 variant, had caused many deaths and more people contracting the virus. Ash Wednesday brought hope because it was a day when the vaccine was administered. We enter the season of Lent with hope and determination; hope that God's grace may touch us and determination to engage seriously in the work of moral and spiritual renewal.

We thank all the health care workers who have worked so tirelessly throughout the time of this pandemic for their hard work and dedication. May God continue to bless them.

I think it will be appropriate also to congratulate the class of 2020 who did their utmost best under difficult circumstances to achieve a 76.5% in the matric results. They did well when you come to think that many of them did not have all the resources for on-line teaching. Teachers and parents need a special mention as they had to learn how to teach on line and parents who had to spend more on data. Well done!

As we begin our journey of Lent, 40 days turning back to God, this time of re-examining our lives through the lens of our faith, days of pushing. Lent is never about adding to the difficulty of what we are experiencing, far from it – rather, Lent presents us with the most powerful reminder that, in the face of turmoil and pain, the tremendous suffering of this world, the Lord is with us. By His Cross we have been healed, by His Cross we have been saved and by His Cross we have hope. The risen Lord walks with us and calls us to rediscover and share with others the grace and joy of life, lived with Him.

This is the time of choosing, a time of our choosing, a time to choose what matters and what passes away, a time to separate what is necessary from what is not. The past year and the beginning of this year has taught us an awful lot about right and wrong; about getting our life back on track, if it is about returning to God with all our heart, I ask you, what might that mean to you in real and concrete ways this Lent, what choices are you being called to.

This Lent I invite you to really think about what meaningful choices you might make around prayer, fasting and giving. Let them be choices that allow God and others into your life. Let them be choices that will deepen the hope and strengthen that comes from our faith alone, a hope and strength that we are called to share in solitary with the whole world in this time of pandemic.

The difficult realities we face can threaten to overwhelm us but they can also be a reminder to us of how much we need God.

As followers of Jesus, we are called to bear witness to truth, mercy and love. Lent is always a good time to begin again on that journey. This year, amidst all the suffering, anxiety and pain of so many, I invite you, wherever you may be, in terms of

our own journey, to take up that ever-present invitation; to turn around and walk with Christ, that in the words of today's Gospel acclamation, he may enlighten the eyes of our mind so that we can see what hope his call holds for us (cf Eph 1 : 17-18)

Pope Francis said these words on fast which I shared from Bishop Arthur Lichtenberger last year

Fast from hurting words and say kind words
Fast from sadness and be filled with gratitude
Fast from anger and be filled with patience
Fast from pessimism and be filled with hope
Fast from worries and have trust in God
Fast from complaints, contemplate simplicity
Fast from pressures and be prayerful
Fast from bitterness; fill your hearts with joy
Fast from selfishness and be compassionate
Fast from grudges and be reconciled
Fast from words: be silent and listen

+Charles

NB The Province has produced a Bible study on GBV, which we encourage you to reflect upon as we continue to fight the evil of Gender Based Violence. You may have heard the stats from the Minister of Police on crime in the country.

Re the Bible Study – Clergy must be the people leading this to help people to have a theological understanding. We will be expecting a report back from the congregations for feedback to the Province.

I would like to recommend a book by Robert Spitzer S.J PhD. "*The Light Shines on in The Darkness*". This is about transforming Suffering through Faith – A good read especially at this time of the pandemic.
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