



OFFICE OF THE BISHOP / BUREAU DE L'ÉVÊQUE
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March 3, 2019

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Lent begins this coming Wednesday.

The ashes we receive at the beginning of our Lenten journey are an austere and symbolic gesture of death. What makes us reflect on the meaning and direction of our life more than the prospect of our death? *"Remember you are dust and unto dust you will return"* says the priest as he marks our foreheads. As a reminder of our own mortality, ashes invite us to make changes in our life; changes that will make us more loving, kinder, more honest, and more forgiving. We all have something to forgive and something that we need forgiven. And so the priest may offer an alternate prayer as he distributes the ashes, *"Turn away from sin and be faithful to the Gospel"*.

Repentance is really a gift, a grace from God that enables us to make the changes in our life that will draw us closer in love to each other and to God. Responding to the grace of repentance involves more than thinking; it requires action: **prayer, almsgiving and fasting**. These spiritual exercises engage our mind and heart to review our relationship with God, with others and with the world. They guide us on our journey through life and into the Paschal Mystery of Jesus' death and resurrection.

While at **prayer**, the proverb, "Be still and know that I am God" is worth remembering. Often quiet, stillness, and silence evokes the interior voice of conscience where God reveals the healing power and strength of the Holy Spirit. The Sacraments, especially Eucharist and Penance are prayerful encounters with Christ whose mercy and love for us is unending.

Our **fasting** may not feed hungry people but will motivate us to see them, to know their plight and to understand our obligation to reach out to them. Moreover, fasting too, like silence in prayer helps us to get in touch with ourselves and to evaluate the authenticity of our life and our relationships.

Regarding **alms** we have many opportunities to give generously. Your contribution on Ash Wednesday in your parish will assist ministry to the Provincial Correctional Centre, ministry to the homeless for women and men. The remainder of the Ash Wednesday collection will supplement the funds raised in our parishes that are sponsoring refugees. Ash Wednesday alms are directed towards those who are most in need locally. Solidarity Sunday, April 7 invites us to Share Lent by generously donating to the Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace and the Latin American Mission Program. This year the CCODP focuses on assistance to 68.5 million men women and children who are displaced persons, homeless people, living in migrant camps or worse. Through L.A.M.P our Diocese also reaches out to the Dominican Republic by supporting Mr. Ryan MacRae, a lay missionary.

I invite you to the observance of these Forty Days by self-examination and repentance; by prayer, fasting and almsgiving and by fervent reception of the Sacraments.

Sincerely yours in Christ

+ *Richard Grecco*

Bishop of Charlottetown