

Lent 2018

“You are merciful to all O Lord,”

As we begin this holy season in our Church’s liturgical year, we are reminded that prayer, fasting and remembering the poor, are the hallmarks of this season for us as Catholics. We are asked to increase our prayer in order that we strengthen our relationship with the Lord. We are asked to experience some fasting or suffering, to acknowledge our sinfulness and our weakness, and we are to reach out in generosity and concern to those who are suffering, especially our sisters and brothers at home and abroad.

Pope Francis in his lenten message to the Church and to the world has challenged us with the theme: ‘Because of the increase in iniquity, the love of many may grow cold’. Taken from the Gospel of St. Matthew chapter 24, verse 12. The Holy Father warns us about falling prey to what he calls ‘false prophets’ or those temptations of the world that can lead us away from God and from goodness. He warns us of being ‘mesmerized by monetary pleasures,’ of the allurements of drugs that promise happiness, and of the temptation of ‘disposable relationships’, which lead to a loss of dignity, freedom and the ability to truly love.

Pope Francis goes on to say that charity is destroyed by greed for money, and when charity dies, then hearts become cold. Even the earth itself suffers from our greed and consumerism, with the pollution that is evident both on land and at sea. The season of Lent is a time for us to look at ourselves and those things that direct our lives. We are to examine our priorities and see if what we seek is merely for self interest and pleasure, or do we realize we have a responsibility to mankind and to the earth in our life’s journey. What are we to do?

By devoting more time to prayer, we can enable our hearts to root out those temptations that attack charity and love. By sharing and almsgiving, especially to our sisters and brothers in need, in our neighbourhood, and in our world, particularly through Development and Peace; we can imitate the generosity first seen in the early church, when everyone shared all for the good of the community. Finally, if we fast, and experience some sacrifice in our lives, then we grow in tenderness and awareness of the needs of our brothers and sisters, and it helps us to see our hunger for goodness and grace from God.

As humble sinners, we are aware of the mercy God has shown us and we use the season of Lent to seek a conversion in our hearts, and to grow more in the image of Jesus. May our prayers, our sacrifices and our generous outreach to others, help us to better understand the Paschal Mystery in which we believe and live, and as Pope Francis says, let us become a ‘new fire of goodness’ in a world where we can see much darkness.

We journey together during this holy time, in order that we might share in the glory of new life in Christ on the great feast of Easter.

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