

Lent 2019

The season of Lent comes to us in a rather dramatic fashion each year. We see this in the celebration of Ash Wednesday and the wearing of ashes on our foreheads as a sign of repentance and mortality. We see the dramatic changes in our churches with the use of the colour purple and the sparse decorations in the church. We also note that the Lenten liturgies are more somber and even the music at church seems less joyful. Truly these forty days come to us in a dramatic way. I believe the church does this for two special reasons.

Firstly, this dramatic preparation time emphasizes the importance of the end of Lent, which is the celebration of the death and resurrection of Jesus, our salvation event. This is the most important celebration of our church year, so it demands a dramatic introduction. Also, the church gives us this season and time because as humans, we need to take time to reflect and examine our life journey. We need to see what is working correctly for us and what needs to change in order to better our lives and to see how we are following our baptismal call.

Our lives are so busy today, and people are so preoccupied with family, work, schooling and other responsibilities, that our time is taken up with the many everyday events and issues with which we must cope. Lent can be a time when we pause, if even so briefly, to look at this hectic journey and maybe make a few important changes. For our spiritual life it might only be a little thing like a daily prayer or more frequent Mass attendance, or the reception of the sacrament of penance. It could also mean the sacrifice of some type of food, or entertainment or screen time or just some gesture that will help us take better control of our daily lives.

Our holy father Pope Francis in his Lenten message to the church has used the theme: "For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God" (Rom 8:19)". He notes especially our need to respect all of creation. He goes on to say: "The "lenten" period of forty days spent by the Son of God in the desert of creation had the goal of making it once more that garden of communion with God that it was before original sin (cf. Mk 1:12-13; Is 51:3). May our Lent this year be a journey along that same path, bringing the hope of Christ also to creation, so that it may be "set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God" (Rom 8:21). Let us not allow this season of grace to pass in vain."

Pope Francis urges us to make this Lent a time of reflection, readjustment and respect for all so that our celebration of the Easter mysteries will be as joyful for us as possible.

Bishop Fred Colli