

## Lent 2020

### “Be reconciled with God”

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. We seek some reconciliation with God and with one another.

Pope Francis in his lenten message to the Church this year, has used this theme as the basis for his message: he said “We implore you, on behalf of Christ to be reconciled to God.” This comes from St. Paul’s second letter to the Corinthians, chapter 5. What does it mean to be reconciled? We talk a lot about reconciliation today. We had the Truth and Reconciliation Commission to help us understand our relationship with our Indigenous peoples. We speak of reconciliation in the sacrament of Penance, seeking forgiveness for our sins, and opening our hearts to the grace of God’s mercy. We also speak of reconciliation with one another, seeking to forgive past hurts and to rebuild or restore relationships, especially in families. Reconciliation is an important part of our faith life as Catholics.

Pope Francis in his letter states: “In this Lent of 2020, I would like to share with every Christian what I wrote to young people in the Apostolic Exhortation *Christus Vivit*: “Keep your eyes fixed on the outstretched arms of Christ crucified, let yourself be saved over and over again. And when you go to confess your sins, believe firmly in his mercy which frees you of your guilt. Contemplate his blood poured out with such great love, and let yourself be cleansed by it. In this way, you can be reborn ever anew” (No. 123). Pope Francis wants us to restore our relationship with the Lord, and to strengthen it through prayer, confession and penance, and to be renewed again and again with the mercy and grace of Jesus.

Lent is a good time to act on this reconciliation. It is a season of prayer, set aside by the Church to prepare us for the Easter mysteries. During these forty days, can we take some steps, even some small steps, to be reconciled with the Lord and with each other? If we have not been to confession for awhile, maybe this Lent is our time; if we have not been to Mass regularly, maybe this Lent is a time to change our habits; if we hold some grudge against our brother or sister, maybe this Lent is the time to rectify that relationship. Lent is the time and the season for these changes.

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 as goodness and grace from God.

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. Let us share together now, in this important journey.

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