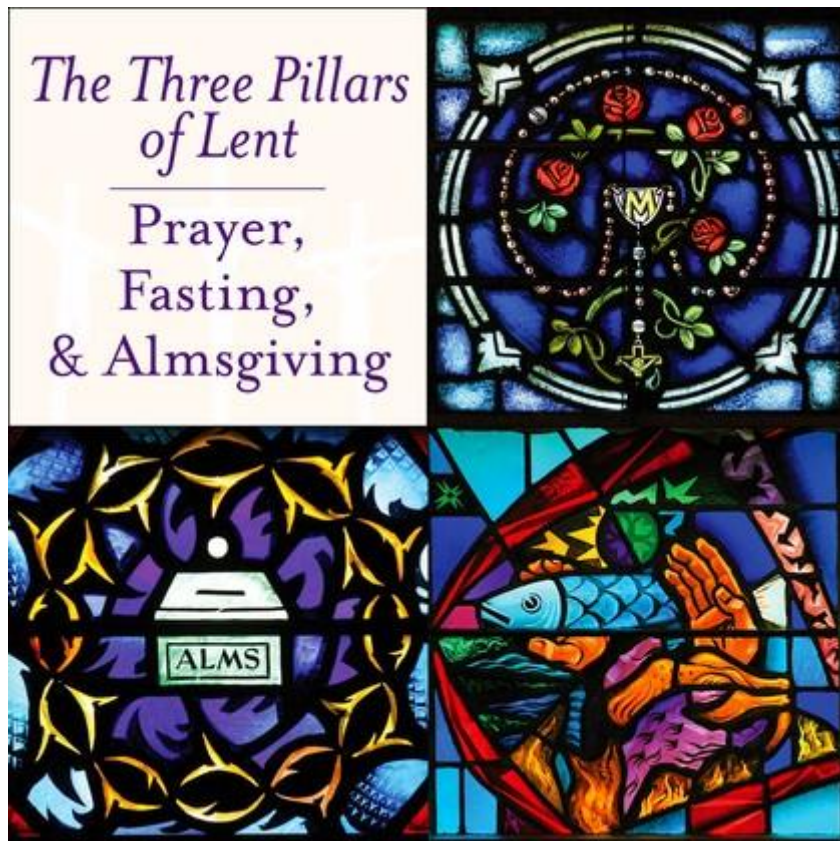




The Newsletter of the Catholic Commission for Social Justice Issue 39, February 2021

***MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
FOR LENT 2021***

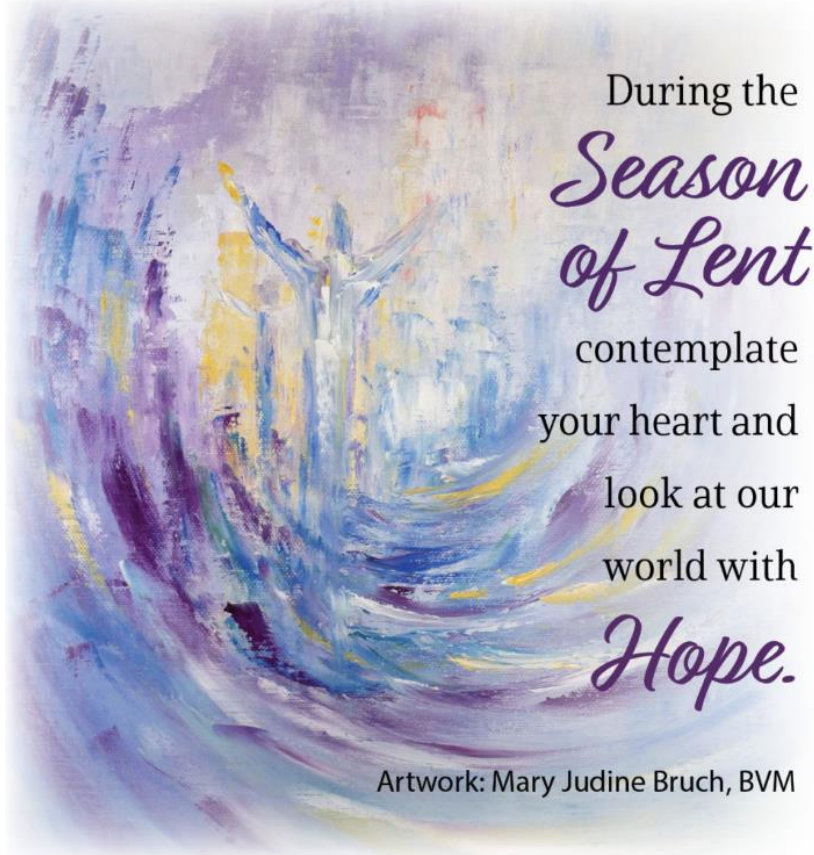
***“Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem” (Mt20:18)
Lent: A Time for Renewing Faith, Hope and Love***



Gospel: Mk. 7:1-13

How do you prepare
yourself for the season of
fasting, abstinence and
almsgiving?

"The call to experience Lent as a journey of conversion, prayer and sharing of our goods, helps us – as communities and as individuals – to revive the faith that comes from the living Christ, the hope inspired by the breath of the Holy Spirit and the love flowing from the merciful heart of the Father" (Pope Francis).



Artwork: Mary Judine Bruch, BVM

Introduction by Leela Ramdeen, Chair, CCSJ: My dear brothers and sisters in Christ, in this issue of our Newsletter, CCSJ shares with you Pope Francis' Lenten Message for 2021 entitled: *"Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem" (Mt 20:18) Lent: a Time for Renewing Faith, Hope and Love*".

The Holy Father reminds us that "Lent is a time for deeper dialogue with God through prayer, for renewed gratitude for God's mercy and for increased compassion for people whose lives are under attack."

As he focuses on these three theological virtues, he invites the faithful to "renew our faith, draw from the living waters of hope, and receive with open hearts the love of God."

Catholic News Agency reported that Cardinal Peter Turkson, Prefect of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, said that "Pope Francis weaved together the traditional Lenten practices of fasting, prayer, and almsgiving with the three theological virtues, revealing their interconnectedness."

Cardinal Turkson said that it was particularly important during the pandemic to be rooted in the practice of prayer to cultivate the theological virtue of hope, which can give one a sense of "vision" when confronted with the world's problems."

The Holy Father encourages us to practice charity in Lent this year by caring for those affected by COVID-19. " In our charity, may we speak words of reassurance and help others to realise that God loves them as sons and daughters." He reminds us that even a small amount of almsgiving when offered with "joy and simplicity" can multiply, as did "the loaves blessed, broken and given by Jesus to the disciples to distribute to the crowd."

As we embark on this "journey of conversion", let this be an opportunity for us to deepen our faith and renew our resolve to be true witnesses to Christ. Let us open our hearts to truly demonstrate our love for God, neighbour, creation and self. Pope Francis tells us that "Love is a gift that gives meaning to our lives. It enables us to view those in need as members of our own family, as friends, brothers or sisters."

Think about what more you and I could do during Lent to see those in need through the lens of Christ. The Pope says that one can give hope to others by being kind, sharing the "gift of a smile" or speaking a word of encouragement. "In Lent, may we be increasingly concerned with speaking words of comfort, strength, consolation and encouragement, and not words that demean, sadden, anger or show scorn."

There is too much anger in our country. Too much gossiping and back-biting. During these 40 days, let us turn from our wicked ways and reconcile ourselves to the Lord. Pope Francis asks us to "experience Lent with love," which "rejoices in seeing others grow. Hence it suffers when others are anguished, lonely, sick, homeless, despised or in need."

Lent is the season of hope. Pope Francis reminds us that it is a time "when we turn back to God who patiently continues to care for his creation which we have often mistreated." We only have to look around in TT to see how we are mistreating God's creation. During Lent, let us commit to promote integral ecology - even if we take small steps such as: switching off lights and appliances that are not in use, practising the 4 'Rs' - reuse items whenever possible, reduce consumption to reduce waste, try and purchase only items that can be recycled, and restore items where possible.

In January last year, Newsday reported that Experts warned that we in TT need to change our attitude to the environment: "The UN Environmental Programme estimates by 2050 over 12 billion tonnes of plastic waste will enter the natural environment. The 'throwaway culture' of consumers towards single-use plastics has worsened the plastic pollution problem. Though single-use plastic bags, bottles, forks and straws are convenient for a few minutes, they are non-biodegradable when discarded... they decompose into smaller fragments known as microplastics which stay in the environment for thousands of years." Scientists show that these affect marine organisms, habitats and ecosystems, as well as the health and well-being of people.

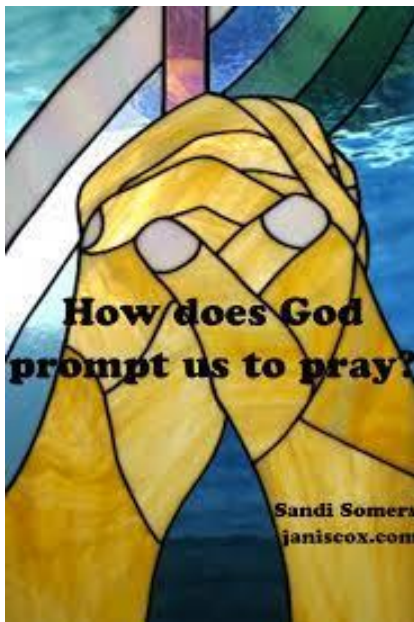
If we "welcome God into our lives" and allow Him to " 'make His dwelling' in us", we will do His will. "in our Lenten journey towards Easter, let's remember the One who 'humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross' (Phil 2:8)...This Lenten journey, like the entire pilgrimage of the Christian life, is even now illumined by the light of the resurrection, which inspires the thoughts, attitudes and decisions of the followers of Christ".

***MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
FOR LENT 2021***

***“Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem” (Mt20:18)
Lent: A Time for Renewing Faith, Hope and Love***

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Jesus revealed to his disciples the deepest meaning of his mission when he told them of his passion, death and resurrection, in fulfilment of the Father’s will. He then called the disciples to share in this mission for the salvation of the world.



In our Lenten journey towards Easter, let us remember the One who “humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross” (Phil 2:8). During this season of conversion, let us renew our *faith*, draw from the “living water” of *hope*, and receive with open hearts the *love* of God, who makes us brothers and sisters in Christ. At the Easter vigil, we will renew our baptismal

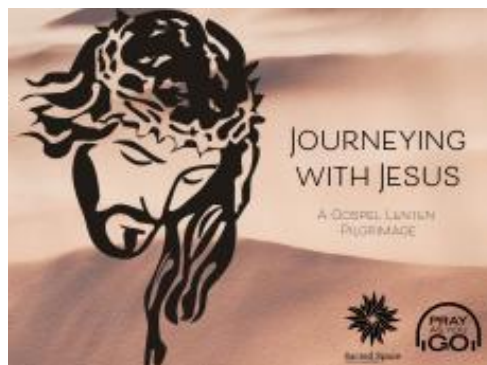
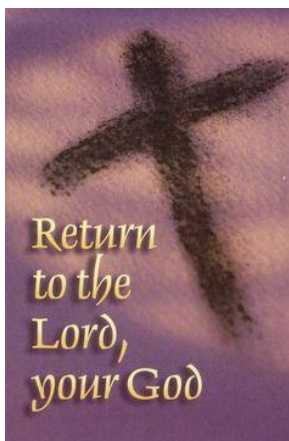
promises and experience rebirth as new men and women by the working of the Holy Spirit. This Lenten journey, like the entire pilgrimage of the Christian life, is even now illumined by the light of the resurrection, which inspires the thoughts, attitudes and decisions of the followers of Christ.

Fasting, prayer and almsgiving, as preached by Jesus (cf. *Mt 6:1-18*), enable and express our conversion. The path of poverty and self-denial (*fasting*), concern and loving care for the poor (*almsgiving*), and childlike dialogue with the Father (*prayer*) make it possible for us to live lives of sincere faith, living hope and effective charity.

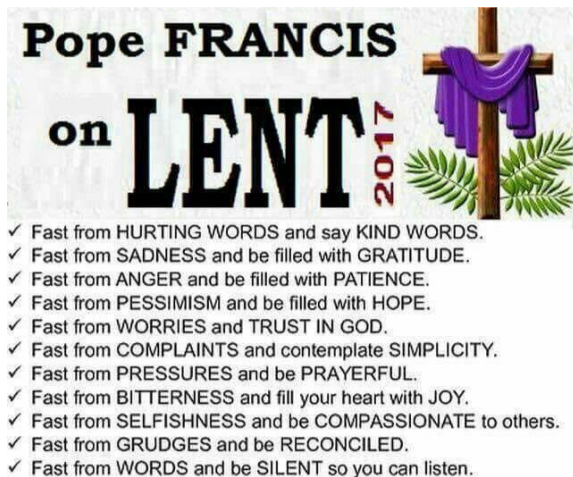


1. Faith calls us to accept the truth and testify to it before God and all our brothers and sisters.

In this Lenten season, *accepting and living the truth revealed in Christ* means, first of all, opening our hearts to God's word, which the Church passes on from generation to generation. This truth is not an abstract concept reserved for a chosen intelligent few. Instead, it is a message that all of us can receive and understand thanks to the wisdom of a heart open to the grandeur of God, who loves us even before we are aware of it. Christ himself is this truth. By taking on our humanity, even to its very limits, he has made himself the way – demanding, yet open to all – that leads to the fullness of life.



Fasting, experienced as a form of self-denial, helps those who undertake it in simplicity of heart to rediscover God’s gift and to recognize that, created in his image and likeness, we find our fulfilment in him. In embracing the experience of poverty, those who fast make themselves poor with the poor and accumulate the treasure of a love both received and shared. In this way, fasting helps us to love God and our neighbour, inasmuch as love, as Saint Thomas Aquinas teaches, is a movement outwards that focuses our attention on others and considers them as one with ourselves (cf. *Fratelli Tutti*, 93).

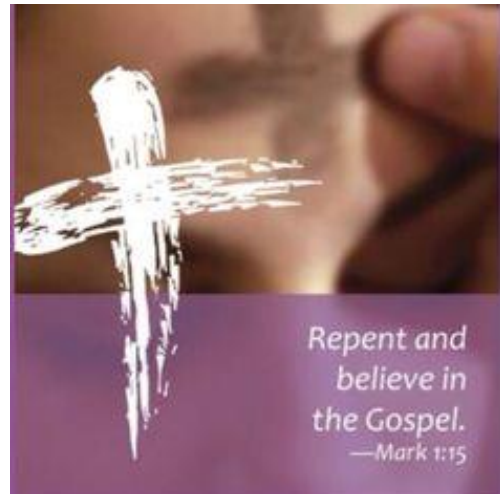


Lent is a time for believing, for welcoming God into our lives and allowing him to “make his dwelling” among us (cf. *Jn* 14:23). Fasting involves being freed from all that weighs us down – like consumerism or an excess of information, whether true or false – in order to open the doors of our hearts to the One who comes to us, poor in all things, yet “full of grace and truth” (*Jn* 1:14): the Son of God our Saviour.

2. Hope as “living water” enabling us to continue our journey.

The Samaritan woman at the well, whom Jesus asks for a drink, does not understand what he means when he says that he can offer her “living water” (*Jn* 4:10). Naturally, she thinks that he is referring to material water, but Jesus is speaking of the Holy Spirit whom he will give in abundance through the paschal mystery, bestowing a hope that does not disappoint. Jesus had already spoken of this hope when, in telling of his passion and death, he said that he would “be raised on the third day” (*Mt*20:19). Jesus was speaking of the future opened up by the Father’s mercy. Hoping with him and because of him means believing that history does not end with our mistakes, our violence and injustice, or the sin that crucifies Love. It means receiving from his open heart the Father’s forgiveness.

Father, help me to see this holy season of Lent as a time of spiritual renewal, rather than a time of deprivation. Motivate me to reach a new level of experiencing your grace.




Growing through God's Word

In these times of trouble, when everything seems fragile and uncertain, it may appear challenging to speak of hope. Yet Lent is precisely the season of hope, when we turn back to God who patiently continues to care for his creation which we have often mistreated (cf. *Laudato Si'*, 32-33; 43-44). Saint Paul urges us to place our hope in reconciliation: “Be reconciled to God” (2 Cor 5:20). By receiving forgiveness in the sacrament that lies at the heart of our process of conversion, we in turn can spread forgiveness to others. Having received forgiveness ourselves, we can offer it through our willingness to enter into attentive dialogue with others and to give comfort to those experiencing sorrow and pain. God’s forgiveness, offered also through our words and actions, enables us to experience an Easter of fraternity.

In Lent, may we be increasingly concerned with “speaking words of comfort, strength, consolation and encouragement, and not words that demean, sadden, anger or show scorn” (*Fratelli Tutti*, 223). In order to give hope to others, it is sometimes enough simply to be kind, to be “willing to set everything else aside in order to show interest, to give the gift of a smile, to speak a word of encouragement, to listen amid general indifference” (*ibid.*, 224).


LENTEN FEATURE

ASHES ON THE FOREHEAD



The act of applying ashes to our forehead symbolizes our mortality as well as our need for ongoing repentance.

Ashes are applied to our forehead in the sign of the cross as the words, "Remember, you are dust and to dust you shall return" are spoken to us. The other formula which is used, "Turn away from sin and be faithful to the Gospel" emphasizes our call to continual conversion and holiness of life.



facebook.com/catholicsknowtheanswerofficialpage

Paschal Candle



The Paschal candle represents **Jesus Christ, the Light of the World**. Made of **pure beeswax**, it represents the **sinless Christ** who incarnated in the womb of His Mother. The priest inscribes in the candle a **Cross**, the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet, **(1) Alpha** and **(2) Omega** 'the beginning and the end') and the current year.

Five grains of incense inserted into it in the form of a cross, recalling the **aromatic spices** used to anoint Our Lord's Body, and the **five wounds** in His hands, feet, and side.

Catholic Fortress

Through recollection and silent prayer, hope is given to us as inspiration and interior light, illuminating the challenges and choices we face in our mission. Hence the need to pray (cf. *Mt 6:6*) and, in secret, to encounter the Father of tender love.

Forgiveness
Acceptance
Self-Control
Truth
Integrity
Nourishment
Grace

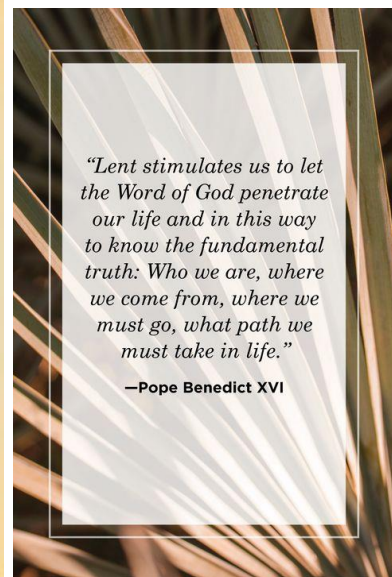
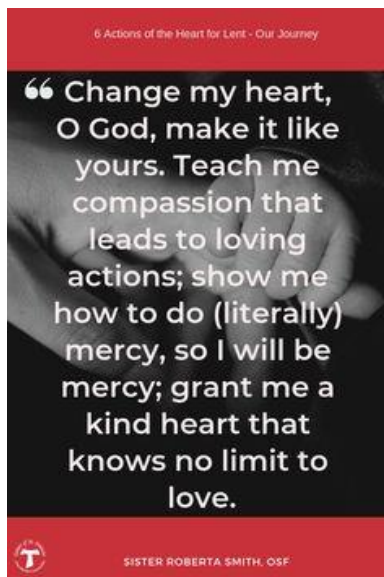
Fr. Slavko Barbaric O.F.M.

"Fasting is the soul of prayer, mercy is the lifeblood of fasting. So if you pray, fast; if you fast, show mercy; if you want your petition to be heard, hear the petition of others. If you do not close your ear to others, you open God's ear to yourself."

—St. Peter Chrysologus

More Jesus
Less Drama
 Less Selfishness
 Less Complaining
 Less Bitterness
 Less Gossip
 Less Pride
 Less Anger
 Less Me

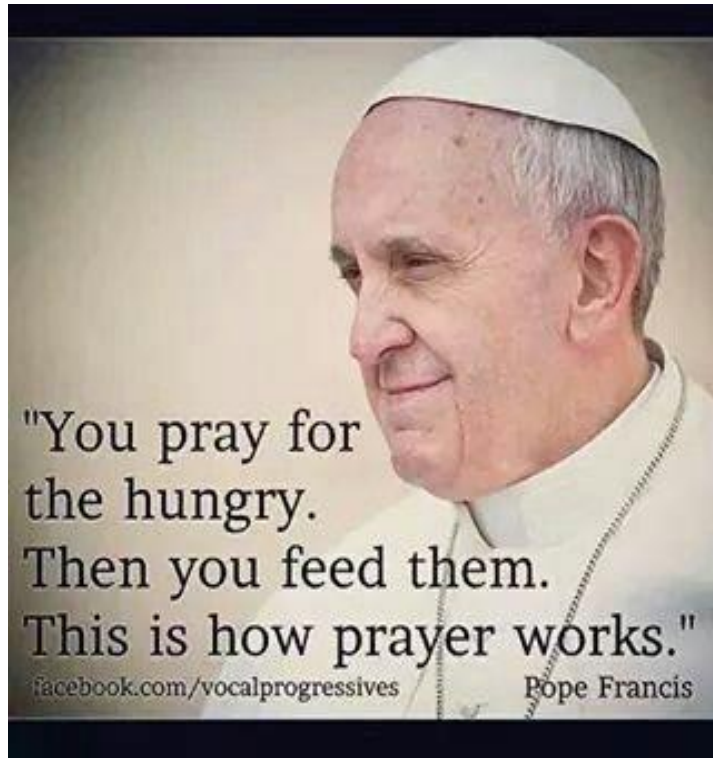
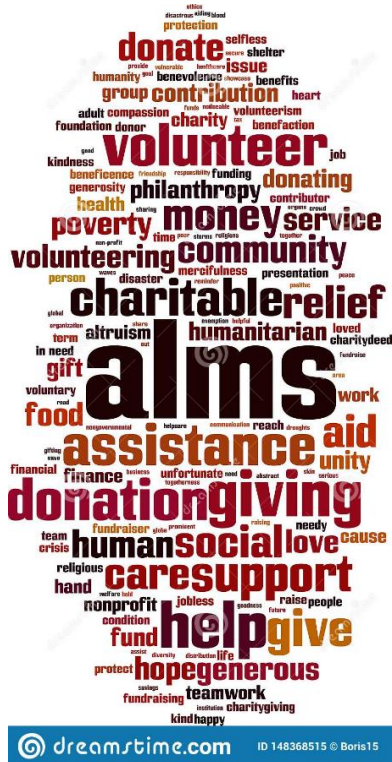
To experience Lent in hope entails growing in the realization that, in Jesus Christ, we are witnesses of new times, in which God is "making all things new" (cf. *Rev 21:1-6*). It means receiving the hope of Christ, who gave his life on the cross and was raised by God on the third day, and always being "prepared to make a defense to anyone who calls [us] to account for the hope that is in [us]" (*1 Pet 3:15*).



3. Love, following in the footsteps of Christ, in concern and compassion for all, is the highest expression of our faith and hope.

Love rejoices in seeing others grow. Hence it suffers when others are anguished, lonely, sick, homeless, despised or in need. Love is a leap of the heart; it brings us out of ourselves and creates bonds of sharing and communion.

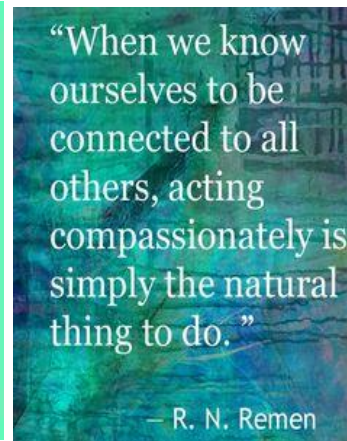
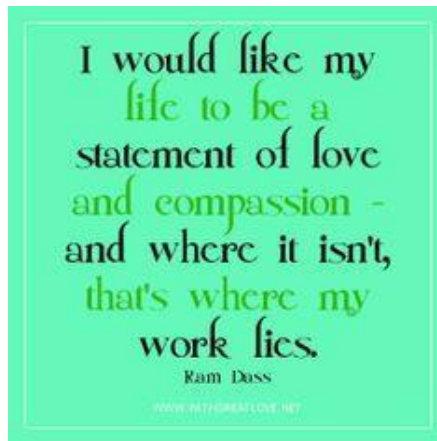
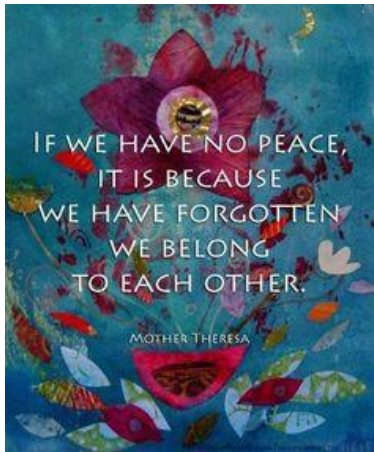
“‘Social love’ makes it possible to advance towards a civilization of love, to which all of us can feel called. With its impulse to universality, love is capable of building a new world. No mere sentiment, it is the best means of discovering effective paths of development for everyone” (*Fratelli Tutti*, 183).



Love is a gift that gives meaning to our lives. It enables us to view those in need as members of our own family, as friends, brothers or sisters. A small amount, if given with love, never ends, but becomes a source of life and happiness. Such was the case with the jar of meal and jug of oil of the widow of Zarephath, who offered a cake of bread to the prophet Elijah (cf. *1 Kings* 17:7-16); it was also the case with the loaves blessed, broken and given by Jesus to the disciples to distribute to the crowd (cf. *Mk* 6:30-44). Such is the case too with our almsgiving, whether small or large, when offered with joy and simplicity.

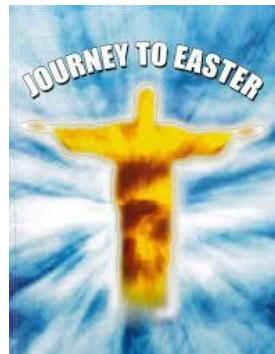
To experience Lent with love means caring for those who suffer or feel abandoned and fearful because of the Covid-19 pandemic. In these days of deep uncertainty about the future, let us keep in mind the Lord’s word to his Servant, “Fear not, for I have redeemed you” (*Is* 43:1). In our charity, may we speak words of reassurance and help others to realize that God loves them as sons and daughters.

“Only a gaze transformed by charity can enable the dignity of others to be recognized and, as a consequence, the poor to be acknowledged and valued in their dignity, respected in their identity and culture, and thus truly integrated into society” (*Fratelli Tutti*, 187).

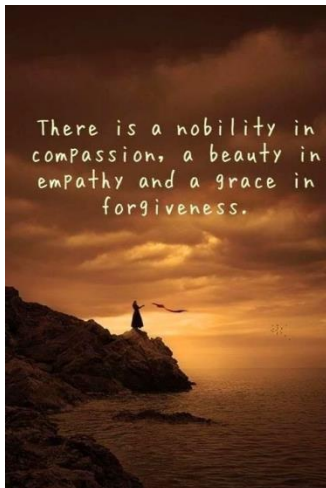
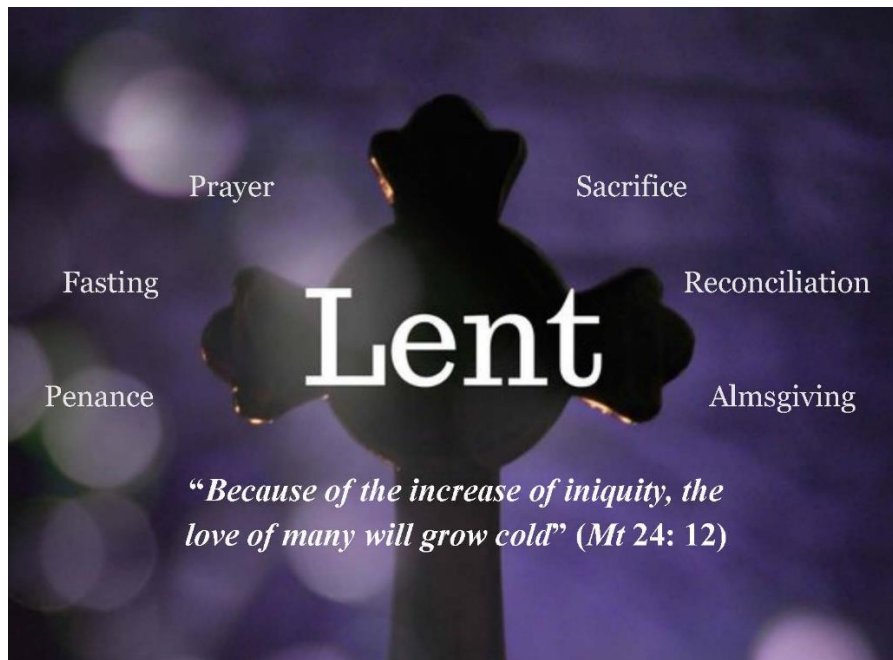


Dear brothers and sisters, every moment of our lives is a time for believing, hoping and loving. The call to experience Lent as a journey of conversion, prayer and sharing of our goods, helps us – as communities and as individuals – to revive the faith that comes from the living Christ, the hope inspired by the breath of the Holy Spirit and the love flowing from the merciful heart of the Father.

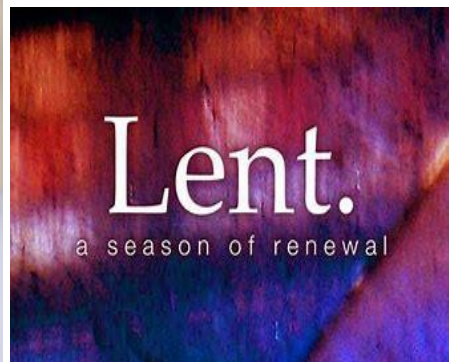
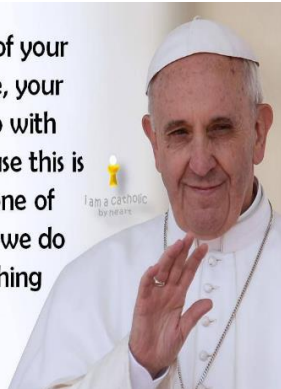
May Mary, Mother of the Saviour, ever faithful at the foot of the cross and in the heart of the Church, sustain us with her loving presence. May the blessing of the risen Lord accompany all of us on our journey towards the light of Easter.



Rome, Saint John Lateran, 11 November 2020, the Memorial of Saint Martin of Tours. FRANCISCUS © Copyright - Libreria Editrice Vaticana



Take care of your spiritual life, your relationship with God, because this is the backbone of everything we do and everything we are.
- Pope Francis



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