

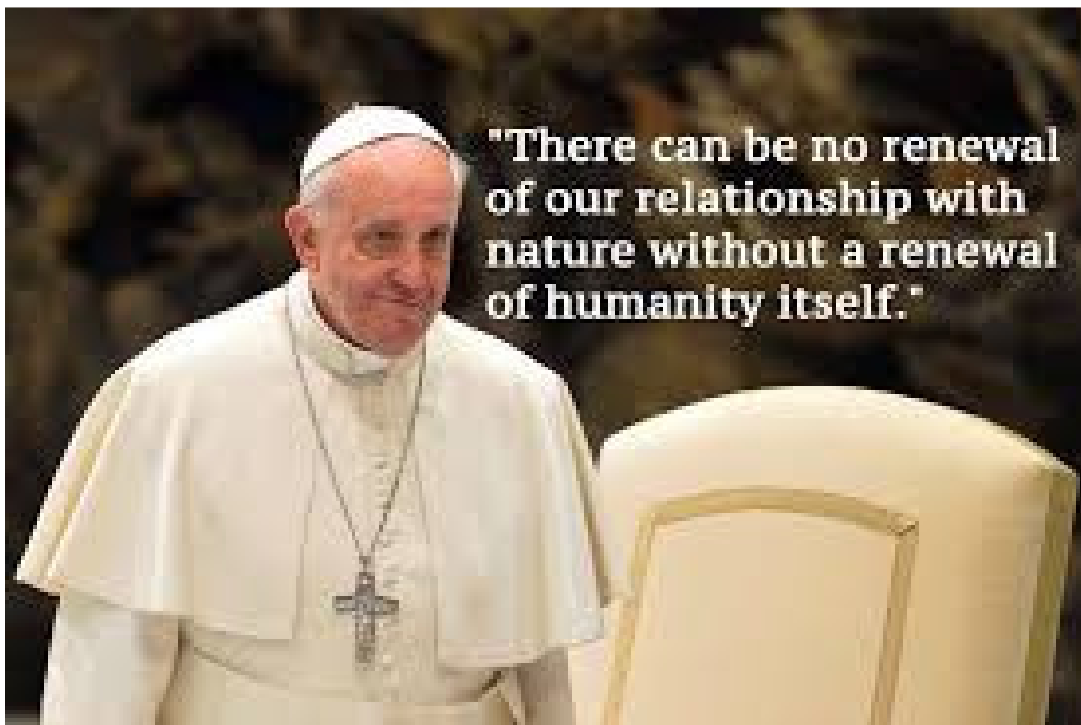
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The Newsletter of the Catholic Commission for Social Justice
Issue 30, March 2019

**MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
FOR LENT 2019**

*Theme: "For the creation waits with eager longing
for the revealing of the children of God" (Rm 8: 19)*



Introduction by Leela Ramdeen, Chair, CCSJ:

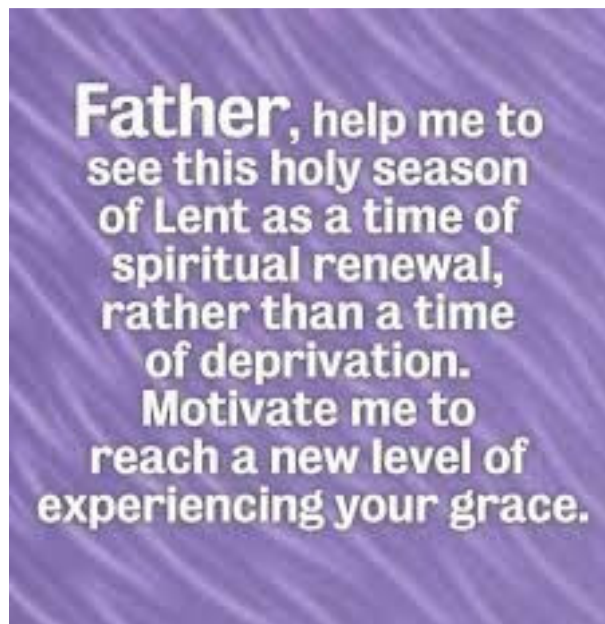
My dear brothers and sisters in Christ, in this issue of our Newsletter, CCSJ shares with you Pope Francis' Message for Lent 2019. This year Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, *6 March*, and will conclude on Holy Saturday, *20 April*, the day before Easter.

The title of his 1,200 word Lenten Message is: *Theme: "For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God"* (Rm 8: 19). It is dated October 4, 2018, the feast of Saint Francis of Assisi, and was made public by the Vatican on Tuesday 26 February.

It is divided into 3 Chapters: 1. The redemption of creation; 2. The destructive power of sin; and 3. The healing power of repentance and forgiveness.

He says that "When we live as children of God, *we also benefit creation* by cooperating in its redemption. That is why Saint Paul says that creation eagerly longs for the revelation of the children of God." Sin, he says, "has disrupted our communion with God, with others and with creation itself, to which we are linked in a particular way by our body."

"This rupture of communion with God likewise undermines our harmonious relationship with the environment in which we are called to live, so that the garden has become a wilderness. Sin leads man to consider himself the god of creation, to see himself as its absolute master and to use it, not for the purpose willed by the Creator but for his own interests, to the detriment of other creatures."



Sadly, there is truth in his words that the sin that lurks in the human heart “leads to the exploitation of creation, both persons and the environment, due to that insatiable covetousness which sees every desire as a right and sooner or later destroys all those in its grip.”

Read what he says about the fact that Lenten devotions of fasting, prayer, and almsgiving, each has an ecological dimension. He urges: “Let us leave behind our selfishness and self-absorption, and turn to Jesus’ Pasch. Let us stand beside our brothers and sisters in need, sharing our spiritual and material goods with them”. He concludes by stating that by welcoming Christ’s victory over sin and death into our lives, “we will also radiate its transforming power to all of creation.”

As we read his Message, let us reflect on whether or not we have become more ecologically aware since his 2015 encyclical “On Care for Our Common Home (Laudato Si)”. In it he had reminded us that “Every effort to protect and improve our world entails profound changes in lifestyles, models of production and consumption, and the established structures of power which today govern societies.” May we truly celebrate the paschal mystery with mind and heart renewed; let us “renew our faces and hearts as Christians through repentance, conversion and forgiveness.”

Leela



**MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
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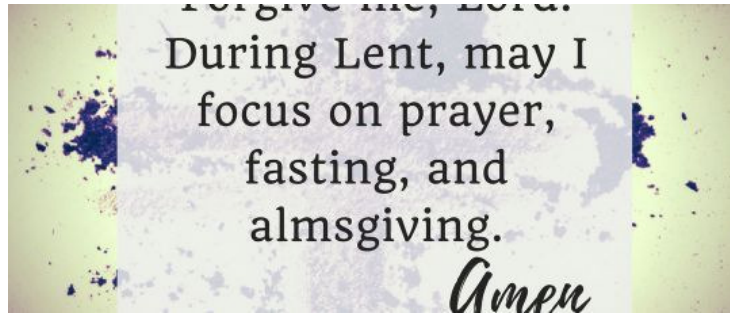
Theme:

***“For the creation waits with eager longing
for the revealing of the children of God” (Rm 8: 19)***



Dear Brothers and Sisters

Each year, through Mother Church, God “gives us this joyful season when we prepare to celebrate the paschal mystery with mind and heart renewed... as we recall the great events that gave us new life in Christ” (*Preface of Lent I*). We can thus journey from Easter to Easter towards the fulfilment of the salvation we have already received as a result of Christ’s paschal mystery – “for in hope we were saved” (*Rom 8:24*). This mystery of salvation, already at work in us during our earthly lives, is a dynamic process that also embraces history and all of creation. As Saint Paul says, “the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God” (*Rom 8:19*). In this perspective, I would like to offer a few reflections to accompany our journey of conversion this coming Lent.



1. *The redemption of creation*

The celebration of the Paschal Triduum of Christ's passion, death and resurrection, the culmination of the liturgical year, calls us yearly to undertake a journey of preparation, in the knowledge that our being conformed to Christ (cf. *Rom 8:29*) is a priceless gift of God's mercy.

When we live as children of God, redeemed, led by the Holy Spirit (cf. *Rom 8:14*) and capable of acknowledging and obeying God's law, beginning with the law written on our hearts and in nature, *we also benefit creation* by cooperating in its redemption. That is why Saint Paul says that creation eagerly longs for the revelation of the children of God; in other words, that all those who enjoy the grace of Jesus' paschal mystery may experience its fulfilment in the redemption of the human body itself.

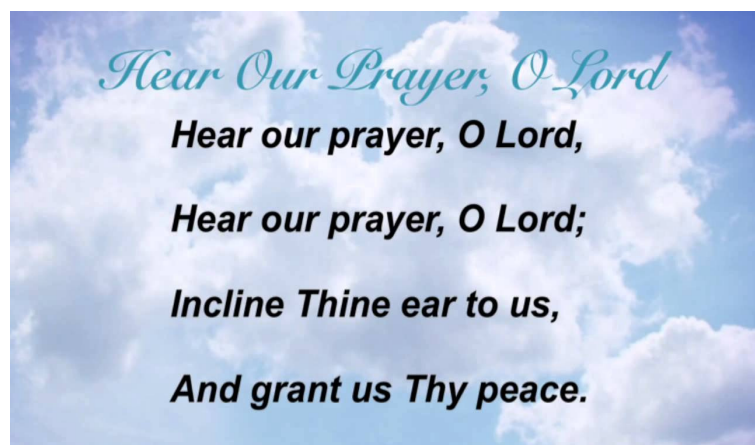
When the love of Christ transfigures the lives of the saints in spirit, body and soul, they give praise to God. Through prayer, contemplation and art, they also include other creatures in that praise, as we see admirably expressed in the "Canticle of the Creatures" by Saint Francis of Assisi (cf. [*Laudato Si'*](#), 87). Yet in this world, the harmony generated by redemption is constantly threatened by the negative power of sin and death.

2. The destructive power of sin

Indeed, when we fail to live as children of God, we often behave in a destructive way towards our neighbours and other creatures – and ourselves as well – since we begin to think more or less consciously that we can use them as we will. Intemperance then takes the upper hand: we start to live a life that exceeds those limits imposed by our human condition and nature itself. We yield to those untrammelled desires that the Book of Wisdom sees as typical of the ungodly, those who act without thought for God or hope for the future (cf. 2:1-11). Unless we tend constantly towards Easter, towards the horizon of the Resurrection, the mentality expressed in the slogans “*I want it all and I want it now!*” and “*Too much is never enough*”, gains the upper hand.



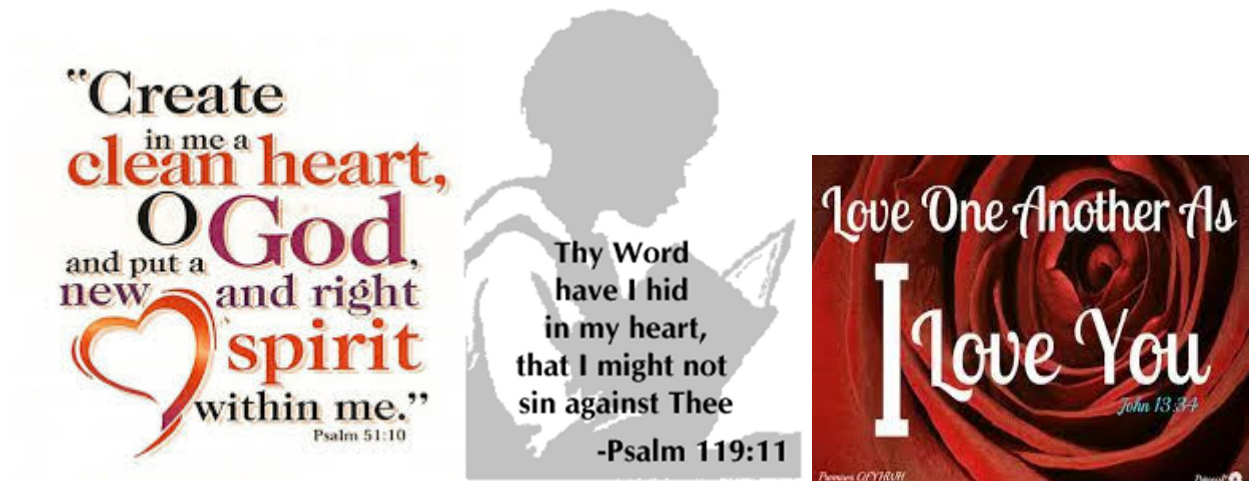
Heavenly Father,
during this Lenten season,
give me a new and
expanded vision for my
life. Help me to live full of
faith. Teach me to find hope
in the face of adversity.



Hear Our Prayer, O Lord
Hear our prayer, O Lord,
Hear our prayer, O Lord;
Incline Thine ear to us,
And grant us Thy peace.

The root of all evil, as we know, is sin, which from its first appearance has disrupted our communion with God, with others and with creation itself, to which we are linked in a particular way by our body. This rupture of communion with God likewise undermines our harmonious relationship with the environment in which we are called to live, so that the garden has become a wilderness (cf. *Gen 3:17-18*). Sin leads man to consider himself the god of creation, to see himself as its absolute master and to use it, not for the purpose willed by the Creator but for his own interests, to the detriment of other creatures.

Once God's law, the law of love, is forsaken, then the law of the strong over the weak takes over. The sin that lurks in the human heart (cf. *Mk 7:20-23*) takes the shape of greed and unbridled pursuit of comfort, lack of concern for the good of others and even of oneself. It leads to the exploitation of creation, both persons and the environment, due to that insatiable covetousness which sees every desire as a right and sooner or later destroys all those in its grip.



3. The healing power of repentance and forgiveness

Creation urgently needs the revelation of the children of God, who have been made "a new creation". For "if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away; behold, the new has come" (2 *Cor 5:17*). Indeed, by virtue of their being revealed, *creation itself can celebrate a Pasch*, opening itself to a new heaven and a new earth (cf. *Rev 21:1*). The path to Easter demands that we renew our faces and hearts as Christians through repentance, conversion and forgiveness, so as to live fully the abundant grace of the paschal mystery.

This "eager longing", this expectation of all creation, will be fulfilled in the revelation of the children of God, that is, when Christians and all people enter decisively into the "travail" that conversion entails. All creation is called, with us,

to go forth “from its bondage to decay and obtain the glorious liberty of the

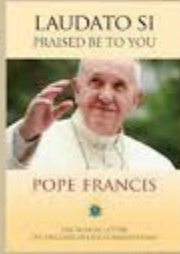


children of God” (*Rom 8:21*). Lent is a sacramental sign of this conversion. It invites Christians to embody the paschal mystery more deeply and concretely in their personal, family and social lives, above all by fasting, prayer and almsgiving. **Fasting**, that is, learning to change our attitude towards others and all of creation, turning away from the temptation to “devour” everything to satisfy our voracity and being ready to suffer for love, which can fill the emptiness of our hearts. **Prayer**, which teaches us to abandon idolatry and the self-sufficiency of our ego, and to acknowledge our need of the Lord and his mercy. **Almsgiving**, whereby we escape from the insanity of hoarding everything for ourselves in the illusory belief that we can secure a future that does not belong to us. And thus to rediscover the joy of God’s plan for creation and for each of us, which is to love him, our brothers and sisters, and the entire world, and to find in this love our true happiness.



(75) A spirituality which forgets God as all-powerful and Creator is not acceptable.

That is how we end up worshipping earthly powers, or ourselves usurping the place of God....



" The mindset which leaves no room for sincere concern for the environment is the same mindset which lacks concern for the inclusion of the most vulnerable members of society. "

Pope Francis (Laudato si')

Dear brothers and sisters, 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! Let us ask God to help us set out on a path of true conversion. Let us leave behind our selfishness and self-absorption, and turn to Jesus’ Pasch. Let us stand beside our brothers and sisters in need, sharing our spiritual and material goods with them. In this way, by concretely welcoming Christ’s victory over sin and death into our lives, we will also radiate its transforming power to all of creation.

From the Vatican, 4 October 2018

Feast of Saint Francis of Assisi

Francis

A prayer for our earth

by Pope Francis – in his Encyclical, Laudato Si

All-powerful God, you are present in the whole universe and in the smallest of your creatures.

You embrace with your tenderness all that exists.

Pour out upon us the power of your love,
that we may protect life and beauty.

Fill us with peace, that we may live
as brothers and sisters, harming no one.

O God of the poor,
help us to rescue the abandoned and forgotten of this earth, so
precious in your eyes.

Bring healing to our lives,
that we may protect the world and not prey on it,
that we may sow beauty, not pollution and destruction. Touch the
hearts

of those who look only for gain
at the expense of the poor and the earth.

Teach us to discover the worth of each thing,
to be filled with awe and contemplation,
to recognize that we are profoundly united
with every creature as we journey towards your infinite light.

We thank you for being with us each day.

Encourage us, we pray, in our struggle
for justice, love and peace.

LENTEN REFLECTIONS FROM POPE FRANCIS

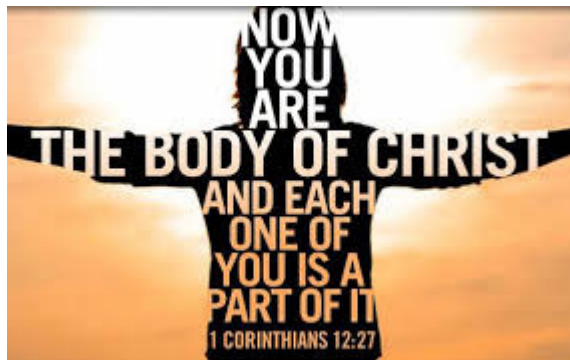
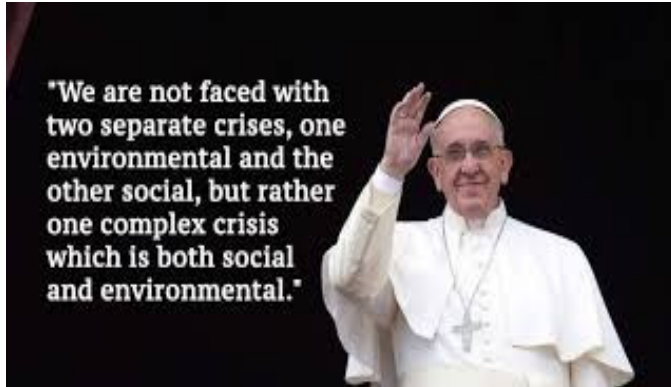
Solidarity in Christ: In the “Message of His Holiness Pope Francis for Lent 2015,” Pope Francis encourages us to reflect upon 1 Corinthians 12:26. He writes “Lent is a favourable time for letting Christ serve us so that we in turn may become more like him. This happens whenever we hear the word of God and receive the sacraments, especially the Eucharist. There we become what we receive: the Body of Christ. In this body there is no room for the indifference which so often seems to possess our hearts. For whoever is of Christ, belongs to one body, and in him we cannot be indifferent to one another. ‘If one part suffers, all the parts suffer with it; if one part is honoured, all the parts share its joy’ (1 Cor 12:26).”

Prayer and Caring for the Poor: In the same message, Pope Francis suggests meditating on Genesis 4:9. He writes “The Church’s “mission is to bear patient witness to the One who desires to draw all creation and every man and woman to the Father. Her mission is to bring to all a love which cannot remain silent. The Church follows Jesus Christ along the paths that lead to every man and woman, to the very ends of the earth (cf. Acts 1:8). In each of our neighbours, then, we must see a brother or sister for whom Christ died and rose again. What we ourselves have received, we have received for them as well. Similarly, all that our brothers and sisters possess is a gift for the Church and for all humanity.”

A Steadfast Heart: Finally, in the same message, Pope Francis proposes that we reflect upon James 5:8. He writes “As a way of overcoming indifference and our pretensions to self-sufficiency, I would invite everyone to live this Lent as an opportunity for engaging in what Benedict XVI called a formation of the heart (cf. *Deus Caritas Est*, 31). A merciful heart does not mean a weak heart. Anyone who wishes to be merciful must have a strong and steadfast heart, closed to the tempter but open to God. A heart which lets itself be pierced by the Spirit so as to bring love along the roads that lead to our brothers and sisters. And, ultimately, a poor heart, one which realizes its own poverty and gives itself freely for others.”

Christ’s Grace

In “Lenten Message of Our Holy Father Francis 2014,” Pope Francis asks us to ponder the words of St. Paul “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that by His poverty you might become rich (2 Corinthians 8:9).” Pope Francis writes “So what is this poverty by which Christ frees us and enriches us? It is his way of loving us, his way of being our neighbour, just as the Good Samaritan was neighbour to the man left half dead by the side of the road (cf. *Lk 10:25ff*). What gives us true freedom, true salvation and true happiness is the compassion, tenderness and solidarity of his love. Christ’s poverty which enriches us is his taking flesh and bearing our weaknesses and sins as an expression of God’s infinite mercy to us. (<https://www.beliefnet.com/faiths/catholic/lenten-reflections-from-pope-francis.aspx?p=4#FMbQLsuKzsU3JpeS.99>)



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