



## ARCHBISHOP'S LETTER FOR LENT 2018

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

St. Caesarius of Arles (470-542) described the perennial challenge of Lent: "Devoting ourselves to God out of love for eternal life, during these days let us with all solicitude strive to repair and compose in the little ship of our soul whatever throughout the year has been broken or destroyed or damaged or ruined by many storms, that is, by the waves of sin."

Ash Wednesday's gospel reading highlights prayer, fasting, and almsgiving as some dependable practices of Lent to help us in this renewal (see Matthew 6.1-6, 16-18).

The Church encourages Catholics to make the entire Lenten season a period of discipline with attention to personal prayer, participation in Mass, and the observance of fasting (only one full meal that day) and abstinence (not eating meat that day).

During Lent, there is obligatory fasting and abstinence on Ash Wednesday (February 14) and Good Friday (March 30), and abstinence on the other Fridays. These are the basics for everyone and I recommend that you observe these traditional practices.

A little self-denial is healthy in many ways. It gives you a tiny insight into Jesus' agony on the cross for you. It gives you a hint of the suffering of the needy who do not share your life of abundance. It also asserts that not every appetite controls you. The opposite, unbroken self-indulgence, is a form of idolatry: "Their end is destruction; their god is the belly." (Philippians 3.19)

You might wish to join me in my weekly Monday abstinence from social media and the internet. Although these are not evil, they tend to close us in on ourselves and impede communication with family members, work associates, and others.

Disconnecting for a time could help you experience Jesus' forty days in the desert. Unplug from the noise that surrounds you to concentrate on what is important. Quiet and solitude will help you to become still and find time for family interaction, prayer, and listening to God's Word in the Scriptures.

Additional traditional acts of “giving up” sweets, alcohol, tobacco or other pleasures during Lent could help you personalize your spirit of Lenten sacrifice—a desire to “turn from sin and believe the Good News.”

Almsgiving flows naturally from the money you will save by making these sacrifices. I urge you to be particularly caring for the needy by supporting the Diocesan Works appeal on the first Sunday of Lent (February 18). Please also contribute to the Lenten campaign for the poor of the world conducted by Development and Peace, the social justice charity promoted by the Bishops of Canada (on Share Lent Sunday, March 18).

In your quest for renewal, make a good Lenten confession. The Church mandates that Catholics conscious of serious sin make an annual confession during the Easter Season (Ash Wednesday to Divine Mercy Sunday). Wise Catholics recognize that this practice of confession is vital to spiritual growth.

This Lent, receive the ashes on Ash Wednesday in your parish church and journey with Jesus to Easter by reading the Scriptures on your own and with others.

The gospels of the first two Sundays focus on Our Lord’s temptation and transfiguration. They will remind you of the struggle against sin—individual and social—for which you do penance, and of the glory of Christ that awaits you in overcoming temptation and sin.

The third, fourth, and fifth Sundays of Lent offer selections from John’s gospel telling of Christ’s glorification through his cross and resurrection.

Passion Sunday recalls Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem and his sufferings as recounted in the Gospel of Mark. The Passion Narrative brings Lent to a climax and leads into the Sacred Triduum (from Holy Thursday to the Vespers on Easter Sunday).

May the Lord bless you and all in the Archdiocese as we set out to celebrate the Easter mystery “with the joy of minds made pure” (Lenten Preface 1).

Sincerely yours in Christ,



✠Terrence Prendergast, S.J.  
Archbishop of Ottawa