

2021 Lenten Message from our Bishop

Ash Wednesday Homely
(given at the Sacred Heart Cathedral in Bathurst)

We are already in Lent, a time that is dear to us as believers because this time allows us to deepen our faith and to prepare ourselves well for the beautiful feast of Easter, the feast of the Resurrection of Christ but also, and we should not forget it, the promise of our own resurrection. This Easter feast is truly at the heart of our faith, the source of our joy and our hope as Christians.

This year, we will live Lent once again under the influence of the pandemic. Who would have thought last March that we would still be in the same situation. This pandemic unfortunately disrupts and handicaps our relationships with our loved ones, our friends and our neighbors in addition to preventing us from coming together normally in Church to live our sacraments as brothers and sisters. It is a pain for us pastors as it is for you.

With the pandemic comes all the health measures, movement restrictions, quarantines that have the effect of distancing us from each other (much more than a meter or two) and consequently, of promoting a retreat into one's self. This is a shame because Christ came to bring us together, to break down our barriers, to abolish distances, to put us in communion, in relation, with God his Father and among us as brothers and sisters.

This season of Lent is therefore an opportunity that is offered to us in order to precisely counter this retreat into one's self and to enter into the movement initiated by Christ. To stop turning in on ourselves and to open our hearts ever more to God and to our neighbor. Lent will thus become for us a privileged moment of discovery: rediscovering the presence of God in our life and in our world; rediscovering those around us, in particular the poorest, the underprivileged, those who need us to listen, who need our help, who need our care.

To do this, Christ offers us 3 means, which have existed for a long time in the Jewish tradition: fasting, prayer and alms.

The first, fasting, is important because it is precisely the one that allows us to shift our focus and then turn to God and our neighbor. There is of course fasting from food, but there are also other possible fasts. Fasting on everything that takes up our time and our energies (internet, TV, certain leisure activities, etc.) which then allows us to be free to rediscover, through prayer the presence of God in our life. In addition, this helps us to rediscover with the eyes and the heart of God the life of those who surround us: their joys and their projects, their sufferings and their needs. The last way, alms (or charity), will then come naturally to us. Because it is difficult to take care, to rescue a person if we do not know what he is going through, if we live in silos, in sealed and parallel worlds. You have to know the person first. Today, Ash Wednesday, beginning of Lent, let us receive a little ashes on our heads. A sign that we desire, by fasting then by prayer and finally by alms, to decenter ourselves, to rediscover the presence of God in our life and to rediscover what our brothers and sisters are living in order to better help them in the name of the Gospel.

"Yes, today, do not close your heart, but listen to the voice of the Lord, as well as the voice of your brothers and sisters who are near you. "

Joyous Lent.

+ Daniel Jodoin, your Bishop