



Archbishop's Lenten Letter 2017

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

This Lent, I invite you to join me in renewing our journey as Catholic Christians on the path to holiness.

Holiness means being perfect (mature or complete) like the heavenly Father, who gives generously to bad and good alike (Matthew 5.45-48). Holiness means being lovingly obedient like Jesus; it means to live, guided by the Holy Spirit.

St. Francis de Sales said the path to holiness is different according to one's state in life. It is exercised differently by the investment broker, scientist, farmer, by the minimum wage worker; by the politician and teacher; by those widowed, by young people, parents of young children and the clergy. The quest for holiness needs to be adapted to the strength, activities, and duties of each person.

The season of Lent traditionally offers three ways to draw near to God: prayer, fasting and almsgiving.

The best prayer is the Eucharist. We should strive to make Sunday Mass the centre of our life of faith. Weekday Mass or meditation on the daily Scripture readings helps this faith life to deepen. Devotions such as Eucharistic adoration where available, the Rosary, Chaplet of Divine Mercy and Stations of the Cross help us grow closer to the Lord and one another.

Fast and abstinence are an important aspect of a Catholic's devotional life. Catholics are to abstain from meat on Ash Wednesday and the Fridays of Lent and to fast (eat only one full meal) on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. This expresses our desire for personal renewal at the start of Lent (Ash Wednesday) and gratitude for the Lord Jesus' gift of his life for us (Fridays, especially Good Friday).

Other traditional acts of "giving up" sweets, alcohol, tobacco or other pleasures during Lent help individuals personalize their spirit of sacrifice—a desire to "turn from sin and believe the Good News".

Almsgiving flows from saving money by these sacrifices. We should care especially for the needy near and far, participating in our parish's social outreach and in the Lenten campaign for the poor of the world conducted by Development and Peace, founded fifty years ago by the Bishops of Canada to promote social justice in the Global South.

Finally, I commend to all the place of the Sacrament of Reconciliation in our quest for holiness. Wise interpreters of the spiritual life know that this practice of confession is a help to all who wish to grow spiritually.

May the Lord bless all of in the Archdiocese as we prepare to celebrate the Easter mystery "with the joy of minds made pure" (1st Lenten Preface).

Sincerely in Christ,

✠ Terrence Prendergast, S.J.
Archbishop of Ottawa