



**Diocese of Worcester**  
**Office of the Bishop**  
49 Elm Street  
Worcester, Massachusetts 01609

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Lent comes late this year. Late though it may be, most of us are not immediately eager for the austerities of Lent. Though perhaps not ready for it, we all nonetheless need Lent. We need Lent because we are sinners called to repentance. We need it because we are Christ's disciples called to holiness and we need Lent because the demands, distractions and allures of modern life can imperceptibly skew our priorities and dampen the spiritual joys that rightly belong to those whose faith is fervent.

For forty days Lent calls us to re-prioritize our lives that they may be centered on Jesus Christ and His Gospel. We do this through deepened prayer, more frequent penances and more generous almsgiving. We undertake these practices not to revert to old ways six weeks later. We undertake them that, through conversion of life, we may know Christ better and share more deeply in the joy of His Easter triumph throughout the whole of our lives.

The Lenten season is austere in its observances, reserved in its liturgies and sacrificial in its call for generosity. But because its practices draw us closer to Christ, Lent is also renewing, inspiring and exciting. So often we let things come between us and the radical call to take up the Cross and follow Christ with a selfless love of God and neighbor. Lent gives us the incentive, framework and communal support to acknowledge the primacy of God in our lives and to seek our consolations by putting God first. When we do that, we realize that the security, happiness and peace for which we daily strive come not from the acquisition of things, the esteem of others or the experience of pleasures. Rather, they are found in drawing close to God, experiencing His love and being confident in His promises. That continuing discovery can make our lives simpler, happier and more meaningful. What we "give up" is more than compensated by what we gain.

We all have so much to gain this Lent. I urge you to reflect on Christ's love and mercy. Examine your life, confess your sins and draw close to God through your prayer and acts of penance, regular celebration of the sacraments and sacrifice for those in need.

Lent may start late this year but it is also just in time. May we embrace its opportunities that we may reap its rewards --- Christian joy, not only at Easter, but throughout our lives on earth and forever in Heaven.

With every prayerful best wish, I remain

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Robert J. McManus  
Bishop of Worcester

March 2019