



A message to the faithful of the archdiocese from Archbishop Michael Jackels

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Using Lent to prepare for Easter renewal

On certain occasions, married couples renew their marriage vows, priests renew the promises made at their ordination, and Religious renew the vows by which they were consecrated to God.

This is a good practice on account of how easily we can forget what we committed ourselves to, or lose focus, or grow weak in observance.

For the same reasons, we have the season of Lent: to prepare for the renewal at Easter of our profession of faith and our Baptism, which represents the moment when we responded to the invitation of Jesus: repent and believe in the Gospel.

As a process of renewal, the Church recommends certain traditional practices during Lent, especially prayer, fasting, and almsgiving.

Prayer. We are encouraged to establish the practice of prayer, or spend more time in prayer, or to go deeper in prayer, beyond reciting words written by others to expressing what's in our own mind and heart.

This is an expression of our personal relationship with Jesus. Like any friendship, for it to survive and thrive demands a commitment of time, sharing, listening, and self-revelation.

Among the many prayer practices, pride of place should be given to a full, conscious and active participation at Mass, a humble celebration of Confession, a prayerful reading of Scripture, Eucharistic Adoration, and meditation on the mysteries of the Rosary.

Almsgiving. Sharing what we have with the poor and in support of the mission of the Church is a way of life that flows from our understanding of biblical stewardship.

We do not own anything; all is on loan from God, to be used according to God's purpose, which is for us to meet our needs and those of the people dependent on us, but also to share with the poor and in support of the Church's mission.

God is not ignorant or indifferent to the poor of the world. But God provides for them by providing us with more than we need, so that we can be distributors to the poor on God's behalf.

Fasting. Going without some food, drink, or purchase that we could otherwise enjoy if we chose, has a number of positive effects, for example:

- A means to quiet desires, so we are not slaves to appetite.
- Quiets greed, which can become as a god for us, and is the root of evil.
- Forestalls the violence used against anyone seen as a threat to personal comfort, like an unborn child, someone frail from sickness or old age, an immigrant.
- Gives us a taste of what the poor experience.
- Opens us up to spiritual hunger and thirst, which only God can satisfy.

It can easily happen in the observance of our faith and Baptism that we forget what we committed ourselves to, or lose focus, or grow weak. Therefore, I pray we use this season of Lent well, with prayer, almsgiving, and fasting, to prepare for the renewal at Easter of our life in Christ. Happy Lent!

Archbishop Michael Jackels

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