



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

Lent 2021

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

This year's Lenten journey to Holy Week and Easter will again be different. But COVID notwithstanding, the reasons for, and the fruits of, this annual holy season of prayer, penance and almsgiving remain the same.

Strive as we do, we sin. Strive as we may, sanctity, the goal of us all, can always be more fully embodied. In both our striving and our shortcomings we should never be discouraged. God's grace abounds.

We should always welcome this penitential but joy-filled season to narrow our focus on what is most important. For when, through deepened prayer, greater penances and more generous alms-giving, we turn from sin to grow in holiness, our greater awareness and receptivity to God's mercy, love and grace prepare us to share in and celebrate ever more joyfully Christ's Easter triumphs.

In these COVID times our personal circumstances may not allow us to gather in great crowds at church for Masses, weekly Stations, Bible classes or even the liturgies of Holy Week. We might worry that this may lead to a diminished Lent. But God will not be denied. He will not deny us an abundance of graces for a good Lent if we do not deny Him or forego a vigorous season of repentance as our circumstances allow.

On the way to the first Holy Week much of what the Apostles thought necessary seemed lacking and events did not play out as they hoped. Peter sought to deter Christ from the Cross. James and John wanted to call down fire from heaven to consume those who did not receive Jesus. Andrew wondered aloud what good five loaves and two fish were among so many. On Good Friday all seemed lost. But Christ rose and triumphed over all for all.

This Lent, our parishes and diocese will again be creative so that the Word will be preached, the Sacraments celebrated and the good works carried on. Together with those public liturgical gatherings that your prudent decisions allow you to attend, your deep private prayer and penances, pondering of Scripture, examination of conscience, and acts of charity will give glory to God and draw you closer to Him.

Let us then, like Christ led into the desert by the Holy Spirit for forty days of prayer and fasting, embark upon this Holy Season to repent of our sin, grow in holiness and draw closer to Christ. For it is only in Him, by the way of the Cross, that we will find and forever share in the deepest longing of our hearts, the love of the Trinity which triumphed at Easter.

With every prayerful best wish for a fruitful Lent, I remain

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Robert J. McManus
Bishop of Worcester