

February 16, 2021

## **MESSAGE FROM THE BISHOP**

### **Lent: a time to fall back in love with God!**

**Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,**

It's resolution time! At least, that's what most people think of doing when Lent begins. There are signs that remind us of the importance of making new resolutions and keeping them: our pants have become too small; our waist is too round; the mirror seems to be distorting us a bit. It's time to eat healthy, we say... which also allows us to eat a little more, perhaps!

But for Christ, there is nothing truly "holy" about this kind of resolution. Lent is a time to renew our loving relationship with Christ and with our brothers and sisters around the world. Through the beautiful texts that will be offered to us throughout Lent, God will invite us to renew our Christian commitment by nourishing our faith in his Word and reminding us that "we do not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God." (Mt 4:4) Attentive listening to the Word of God, lived each day in the silence of our hearts, is the primary attitude that will enable us to undertake a true spiritual turning point or change in our lives, which can so easily become anemic or lukewarm as we follow the currents of the world.

You might say, "I don't really need to change anything in my life. I have been a good Christian for a long time. I don't commit any serious sins." But consider the great apostle Paul: he wasn't a great sinner either. On the contrary, according to Jewish law, he claimed to be a man without fault. But when Jesus challenged him one day, this personal encounter with Jesus completely overwhelmed Paul and he became a man whose heart burned with love for God and for his neighbor.

Prayer, fasting and sharing. These are the three magic words that define the time of Lent. To live a "holy" forty days that will surely lead us to participate in the glorious resurrection of Jesus at Easter, I propose to you a different kind of fasting. A fast that will give a true place to God in your heart and that will consume you with love for your neighbor:

- Fasting from food a few times a week, or reducing its quantity, will lead me to stand in solidarity with the 3 million people who die of hunger every year all over the world.
- Fasting from electronic games, television, or worldly readings or activities that do not elevate the soul in any way. This fasting will allow me to devote more time to intimate prayer, a heart-to-heart conversation with God.
- Fasting from unnecessary shopping or extravagant spending.
- Fasting that pushes me to share certain goods or talents with the most needy.

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– Fasting from certain leisure activities, allowing me to do some volunteer work that will bring me in solidarity with those who suffer from chronic or terminal illnesses, or who are desperately waiting for the presence of someone who will know how to chase away their morbid loneliness.

– Fasting that takes the form of a thousand and one small renunciations of my own will, renunciations offered to God to relieve or save souls, especially those who are still waiting for their deliverance from purgatory.

I wish each and every one of you a “holy” Lent. Let us take advantage of this sacred time that God gives us to fall in love with God again; to become more supportive and compassionate towards our brothers and sisters who unfortunately stopped “bothering” us a long time ago. Imagine, for a moment, how transfigured and radiant the Earth would be if we all decided to live this Lent by making more effort to love one another sincerely, as Christ has shown and taught us by his example and words? We would already be in paradise, I am sure! As Lent begins, let us choose to embellish and transfigure our world by devoting more of our time to God and to our neighbor.

Sincerely yours in Christ our Redeemer,

+ Guy Desrochers, C.Ss.R.