



*Remain in my love
Jn 15:9*

Lent 2018

The year 2018 is well and truly underway. January flew by and February is racing away. February 14 put us into the Season of Lent and Easter Sunday will be celebrated very early on 1 April. The Supermarkets have been anticipating Easter where Hot Cross Buns have been on display for quite some time.

May we remember that Lent is a time of prayer, fasting and conversion when we perform acts of charity in preparation for the great feast of Easter. Yes a time of Penance but one when we can give practical witness as we turn away from sin and seek to be faithful to the Gospel.

In the liturgy we notice some changes: purple vestments are worn, the Gloria which we joyfully sung at Christmas is omitted at Mass, as is the Alleluia verse. Some of the Gospel readings will deal with the Temptations of Jesus, the Transfiguration, Jesus as God's only Son sent into the world. May we enter into the Sunday celebrations of the liturgy in this special season as the Lord calls us back to Him.

On Ash Wednesday when ashes were placed on our foreheads, the following words were said "Repent and believe in the Gospel", or "Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return". Pope Francis in his homily last Ash Wednesday said:

Lent is the time to start breathing again. It is the time to open our hearts to the breath of the One capable of turning our dust into humanity. It is not the time to rend our garments before the evil all around us, but instead to make room in our life for all the good we are able to do. It is a time to set aside everything that isolates us, encloses us and paralyses us. Lent is a time of compassion, when, with the Psalmist, we can say: "Restore to us the joy of your salvation, sustain in us a willing spirit", so that by our lives we may declare your praise (cf. Ps 51:12.15), and our dust – by the power of your breath of life - may become a "dust of love".

As we reflect on what the Lord has done for us and his mercy to us, may we grasp those opportunities to live a life that truly gives witness to the Gospel.

Prayer, fasting, some self-denial and works of charity are ways in which we enter into the spirit of Lent. Pope Francis is setting a wonderful example for us in thinking firstly of the poor and those who are disadvantaged.

In the areas of fasting and self-denial Project Compassion is a wonderful and practical way that will also show that our concern is not directed towards ourselves but gives prior consideration to the other. Caritas Australia wisely handles the projects that will benefit from our contributions. Each week in Lent Caritas will show the worthwhile projects being sponsored here in Australia and overseas. <http://www.caritas.org.au/projectcompassion>

Setting aside some special time for quiet prayer is a wonderful way to do this. It may also be possible for each parish church to arrange an hour of Adoration before the Blessed Sacrament each week. Join in one of the Lenten Programs that may be running in your parish.

I pray for those who have been victims of sexual abuse and for those who have come forward and spoken. I would ask you to pray for those in Queensland who still struggle with drought. We also pray for peace in the many troubled parts of the world. Please also pray for vocations to the priesthood and other religious vocations.

May we be open to the promptings of the Holy Spirit as we make this Lenten journey thoughtfully and together so as to joyfully celebrate the Resurrection of the Lord.

Bishop Robert McGuckin
Bishop of Toowoomba
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