



Priests of the Toowoomba Diocese with Bishop Robert McGuckin and Bishop Bill Morris enjoyed their annual retreat at the James Byrne Centre in early January.

By the time this issue of “Horizons” comes out, we will well and truly be into 2021. Schools are back, and in fact, Term 1 is almost over. Lent began on 17th February, and 4th April is Easter Sunday.

During this COVID 19 pandemic, we have been fortunate in our part of the world, especially in our diocese. We may think that some of the restrictions with which we have to abide are somewhat burdensome. We are part of a larger community and need to consider the well-being of everyone. I hope we are able to see these things in the light of the common good, where we are members of a common family, where we are all brothers and sisters.

Pope Francis, in his recent encyclical letter “Fratelli Tutti”, on fraternity and social friendship, invites everyone to renewed hope. The Pope quoting from a speech he gave to young people in Cuba in 2015 said, “Hope speaks to us of something deeply rooted in every human heart, independently of our circumstances and historical condition... Hope is bold, it can look beyond personal convenience, the

petty securities and compensations which limit our horizon, it can open us up to grand ideals that make life more beautiful and worthwhile” (FT#55)

The Pope, in his message for Lent, continues this theme. He has titled his message “Lent: a Time for Renewing Faith, Hope and Love”.

We might ask ourselves what we should we do during Lent? Perhaps in the past, certain practices were more clearly laid out before us. Lent, as we know, is a time of fasting, prayer and almsgiving. As to how each of us manages, that is left to individual choice.

We mostly live very busy lives, where our every hour in the day is occupied. We need to reflect on and evaluate what we regard as essential. If our value systems are not distorted, I would think we will find that we can make some time for what is important during Lent: prayer, fasting and almsgiving.

You may wish to participate in a Lenten program, either “Look to Jesus” from the Archdiocese of

Brisbane (available as a podcast) evangelisationbrisbane.org.au/lenten-program/ or “Comfort” from the Diocese of Wollongong www.dow.org.au/shop/.

Project Compassion is a way where we can reach out and show our solidarity with those in need. Contact www.caritas.org.au or call 1800 024 413.

Pope Francis, in his Lenten Message, encourages us:

“Dear brothers and sisters, every moment of our lives is a time for believing, hoping and loving. The call to experience Lent as a journey of conversion, prayer and sharing of our goods, helps us – as communities and as individuals – to revive the faith that comes from the living Christ, the hope inspired by the breath of the Holy Spirit and the love flowing from the merciful heart of the Father.”

May this be a hope filled Lent and a joy filled Easter.

Bishop Robert McGuckin
Bishop of Toowoomba
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