



LENTEN PENANCE LETTER 2023

The Season of Lent is a most important time of preparation for the celebration of Easter. It is an annual pilgrimage of grace whereby we are drawn more deeply into the mystery of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

The Fathers of the Second Vatican Council taught that the Lenten liturgy has a twofold means of preparation. By remembering their own Baptism and undertaking penance, the liturgy assists in the renewal and ongoing formation of the faithful (cf. Sacrosanctum Concilium 109). The formation of catechumens via the various stages of the Order of Christian Initiation of Adults is equally an important part of Lent (cf. GIRM 27).

For both the local community of the faithful and the elect, Lent is a time of grace and mercy whereby the Holy Spirit greets and renews those who seek to live as disciples of the Lord Jesus, who is our light and our salvation (cf. Psalm 27).

The Season of Lent commences on Ash Wednesday. Given the continued challenges of the past few years, Lent 2023 will once again be a particularly useful time to reconnect with our brothers and sisters in the Body of Christ; to reflect upon our spiritual pilgrimage both as individuals and as one community of disciples.

In our Catholic tradition, Lent is commemorated as a time for conversion, repentance, and renewal. Marking our foreheads with ashes in the sign of the cross on Ash Wednesday is an outward sign of internal conversion. It is also an invitation to "Turn away from sin and believe the good news". In this annual invitation, we acknowledge our human vulnerability, and we pray to be strengthened by God's grace, mercy, and love. In imitation of Jesus our teacher and master, we also fast (cf. Matthew 4: 1-11). Like Our Lord, we will journey into the desert places of our life. Where the Lord has gone, we hope to follow, and so we must expect some challenges and temptations because the Gospel reminds us that this too was the plight of Jesus. Christians are people of hope, so during these moments of vulnerability, let us take shelter in God's mercy and compassion.

DAYS OF PENANCE

On Ash Wednesday and Good Friday, abstinence from meat is to be observed by those who have completed their fourteenth year of age. Those who are aged between 18 and 60 are to fast on these days. Priests should encourage those under their pastoral care to embrace the spirit of abstinence and fasting. This Lenten practice is not to be a burden upon those who have health issues or special needs. Clergy as pastors of souls, are asked to be particularly vigilant in encouraging the faithful to undertake the disciplines of Lent with moderation and care.

On all other Fridays of the year the law of the common practice of penance is fulfilled by performing any one of the following:

- I. Prayer - for example, Mass attendance; family prayer; a visit to a church or chapel; reading the Bible; making the Stations of the Cross; praying the Rosary, or in other ways;

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2. Self-denial - for example, not eating meat; not eating sweets or deserts; giving up entertainment to spend time with the family; limiting food and drink so as to give to the poor in one's own country and elsewhere; limiting screen time on social media; or in other ways;
3. Helping others - for example, special attention to someone who is poor, sick, elderly, lonely or overburdened or feeling isolated from our Church community; or in other ways.

Lent is from **Ash Wednesday** (22 February 2023) until the **Mass of the Lord's Supper** (6 April 2023) inclusive. Fasting is also observed on **Good Friday** and if possible, on **Holy Saturday** until the Easter Vigil.

PASCHAL PRECEPT

Each of the faithful is obliged to receive Holy Communion at least once a year. This is done between **Ash Wednesday** and **Trinity Sunday** (4 June 2023), unless for a good reason it is done at another time during the year.

All the faithful who have reached the age of discretion (seven years old) are obliged to confess their grave sins at least once a year. Priests in the Diocese of Broken Bay are encouraged to make available to the faithful not only the first form of the Rite of Penance, but also the second form.

I encourage you to read the Scriptures in your homes, individually and as a family. Likewise, you may take the opportunity to be part of a Lenten prayer or discussion group, face to face or online. For this purpose, I offer to you the 2023 Diocesan Lenten resource; **Jesus, Our Light and Our Life. Becoming One in Christ**, as prepared by Evangelisation Broken Bay.

The Paschal mystery is the heart of the Eucharist. Personal private prayer before the Blessed Sacrament is a wonderful way to probe the mystery of faith. Our churches are regularly open outside of Mass times to assist the faithful in making a visit for prayer, contemplation, and adoration. Stations of the Cross are also a splendid spiritual devotion in our tradition, providing us with the occasion to walk the way to Calvary with Christ. While individuals can follow the Via Crucis on any day of Lent, the Stations are particularly meaningful on the Fridays of Lent and Good Friday. The Stations of the Cross resources developed by Evangelisation Broken Bay in 2022, are a wonderful way of engaging with this meaningful prayer tradition.

My dear sisters and brothers in Christ, I pray in these weeks ahead that our community of the Church of Broken Bay will be open to encounter new life in Christ. This Lent, may we humbly confess our sins, prayerfully perform our penance, and joyfully proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ through words and deeds of charity, mercy, and compassion.

Most Rev Anthony Randazzo DD JCL
Bishop of Broken Bay
15 February 2023