



ARCHDIOCESE OF BALTIMORE

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OFFICE OF THE ARCHBISHOP

March 4, 2025

Dear Friends in Christ,

We may think of Lent as a dreary season, but it is really a season of joy and mercy, a grace-filled 40-day period when we can experience a new springtime in our spiritual lives. Lent is a time for us to be cleansed of sin, renewed in faith, and deepened in our love for the Lord, for his Church, and for the poor.

There are three time-honored ways to participate in this season of grace: prayer, fasting, and almsgiving.

Let's focus first on prayer. In prayer, Christ encounters us, and we encounter Christ. As we open our hearts more widely to the Lord's loving gaze, we grow in our capacity to offer the Lord thanks and praise and adoration. As we listen to the voice of the Lord, Jesus lovingly "reveals us to ourselves," helping us to see ourselves as we really are, showing what it is we must overcome in his grace. Prayer is essential, not only for turning away from our sins but also in becoming true disciples of the Lord, those who reflect his goodness, truth, and love, those who generously love God and neighbor. What is the quality of our prayer life? Do we regularly go to Mass on Sunday, the Lord's Day? Do we regularly receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation? Do we habitually set time each day to read Scripture and to converse with the Lord? Lent is a time to "ramp up" our prayer life, not merely for 40 days but for the rest of our lives!

What about fasting? Many may think of fasting as a way to lose weight but not as a spiritual discipline. Yet, in the Gospels, we see the Lord fasting and praying. Through the centuries, holy men and women have fasted. And why? Fasting is a proven way to starve our vices. It is a way of being emptied of that self-centeredness that ensnares us in sin, hinders us in our relationship with the Lord and with others. When we overindulge our appetites, we become self-centered. We become focused on satisfying our own appetites. Fasting helps us to avoid being focused on *our* wants and instead turns our gaze to the Lord's sacrifice of love and on the needs of others. By fasting, we develop empathy with those who are poor, including the millions of people who experience hunger and even starvation.

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What about almsgiving? Almsgiving is a companion to prayer and fasting. When we pray, our eyes are opened to the needs of others. When we fast, we are emptied of self-centeredness. Those who humbly give of what they have to others develop a loving, generous heart. Almsgiving means that we give of ourselves and of means to those who experience poverty or other forms of deprivation. It means that we are generous, just as the Lord is generous to us. Almsgiving takes many forms. It includes direct service to the poor, for example, volunteering at Our Daily Bread or the Franciscan Center. It involves financial generosity on our part. By this spiritual practice, the Lord in his love for us enables us to develop a heart for the poor. During Lent, let's remember that whatever we do for those in need, we do for Jesus.

What happens when we become more invested in our prayer life, when we fast, when we are generous to the poor, and when we make a good, unburdening confession of our sins? We do, indeed, experience a new springtime in our lives. Our souls become that fertile ground in which the seed of God's Word will not only begin to grow but also flourish. We grow in discipleship. We grow in our desire and ability to share the faith with others.

If we are faithful to these Lenten disciples, we will experience a new depth of joy when we solemnly celebrate of the Lord's Death and Resurrection. It will be a joy that is deeply personal but also a joy we share as a community of faith, and a joy we will want to share with others. May you and your families experience a truly blessed Lent!

Faithfully in Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "William E. Lori". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small cross at the beginning.

Most Reverend William E. Lori
Archbishop of Baltimore