

# DIOCESE OF NORTHAMPTON



## PASTORAL LETTER FOR LENT 2019

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Our lives are busy. Our access to digital platforms distracts us. And, of course, we are surrounded by political uncertainty and by worries about what lies ahead. So, the Opening Prayer of today's Mass comes from the heart - "Grant us, O Lord, we pray, that the course of our world may be directed by your peaceful rule, and that your Church may rejoice, untroubled in her devotion."

That prayer prompts two questions for me. Is my life directed by God's peaceful rule? ... and ... Am I untroubled in my devotion? What is it at the core of my being, what directs me – my health, my work, my family, making money, enjoying myself, or is it God's peaceful rule?

For disciples of Jesus, Jesus is the centre of our lives. He is our core strength. Without Jesus, we cannot be at peace and we cannot be untroubled in our prayer and devotion. Without Jesus, we lose our direction. Like the blind leading the blind in today's Gospel, we get lost.

That is why the season of Lent is a special time for us. Beginning this Wednesday with the imposition of ashes, we are reminded that we are dust and to dust we shall return. And we are called to repent, and believe in the Gospel.

Lent is a new beginning, a path leading to the certain goal of Easter, to Christ's victory over sin and death. This season urgently calls us to conversion. We are asked to return to God with all our hearts, to refuse to settle for mediocrity in our lives, and to grow in friendship with Our Lord.

Remember, Jesus is our faithful friend who never abandons us. Even when we sin, he patiently awaits our return, showing us his readiness to forgive.

Lent is the favourable season for opening ourselves to the grace of God through fasting, prayer and almsgiving. I am praying that as individuals, as families, in our parishes and in our schools, we will grasp this time positively, not only for our own conversion, but for the Church and for our world. Let us meet together in groups to pray and to support one another.

Thinking of the forty days of Lent, a friend of mine is looking at praising God for forty seconds each day, collecting forty coins for Lenten alms, and doing forty extra good deeds for neighbours and friends.

Let Lent be a time of genuine repentance and reconciliation as we reflect on the sufferings of Christ in the Stations of the Cross, and may each of us seek reconciliation in the Sacrament of Penance as we prepare for Holy Week and Easter.

There are prompts for us on the way, days of fasting and abstinence on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday, Lenten devotions in the parish, and 24 hours for the Lord, celebrated in a number of parishes this Lent on 28/29 March.

I just want to encourage you to open your heart to Our Lord and to grow in grace especially in relationships with others, to see people as a gift, not as a nuisance but a summons to conversion and change.

May the Holy Spirit lead us on a true journey of conversion, so that we can rediscover God speaking to us in his Word, be purified of the sin that binds us, and serve Christ present in our brothers and sisters in need. Then we will be able to experience and share the full joy of Easter.

Finally, be sure of my prayers during the holy season of Lent, and please pray for me.

With every blessing,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "+ Peter". The plus sign is on the left, and the name "Peter" is written in a cursive style to its right.

Bishop of Northampton

*To be read and/or made available at all Masses  
of the 8<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Sunday of the Year, 2-3 March 2019*