



THE SUNDAYS AND FRIDAYS OF LENT 2015

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

As Lent approaches, many Catholics ask, “What are you *doing* for Lent? What are you *giving up*?” This year, ask not what you can *do* for Lent; ask what Lent can *do* for you! The graces of Lent are God’s doing. You need only open yourself to them.

The gospel of Ash Wednesday highlights some well-known practices for Lent: prayer, fasting, and almsgiving (see Matthew 6.1–6, 16–18). These good habits move us to love our neighbour more deeply. Pope Francis recently challenged us to be islands of compassion in a world of indifference to the poor.

Through our Masses and prayer, by what we give up and what we give away, we come to know, love, and serve the Lord Jesus better. Through our sacrifices and donations, especially to the national collection for Development and Peace on the Fifth Sunday of Lent (March 22) or to other deserving charities, we die to ourselves so that others may rise to greater dignity.

The Church encourages Catholics to make the entire Lenten season a period of discipline, with attention to personal prayer, participation in Mass, and the observance of fasting (only one meal that day) and abstinence (not eating meat).

In Lent, fasting and abstinence on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday are obligatory, and abstinence is obligatory on the other Fridays. These are the basics for everyone. Please observe these traditions.

Build on these to deepen your faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ—the Paschal Mystery—and so strengthen your relationship with Him.

How can you make this year's Lent special? By building on the abstinence the Church requires on Lent's Fridays, you can make them meaningful penitential days of renewal. You can reserve the Sundays of Lent for significant family celebrations around meals that anticipate the joys of Easter.

On Lenten Fridays, by sacrificing meat and giving the money saved in alms, by more intense prayer, you will ready yourself for Easter with your heart renewed.

Our Archdiocese will hold our Day of Confessions on Friday, March 6. Make your Easter preparation that day or at one of the many other times confessors are available to receive you.

On Lenten Sundays, your families may grow spiritually by attending Mass and visiting elderly and ill loved ones. Make the Lord's Day an occasion for rest, family life, and the simple joys the Lord gives.

When we have finished with *our* doing something for Lent, we will discover at Easter that the *Lord of Lent* has done even more for *us*.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Terrence Prendergast, S.J.", written in a cursive style.

✠ Terrence Prendergast, S.J.
Archbishop of Ottawa