

Lenten Greetings to All the Sisters, Brothers, and Friends of the Ecumenical Catholic Communion!

The Holy Season of Lent has begun! This ancient Christian observance is the forty day period of time preceding Easter in which the People of God prepare for the celebration of the Paschal Mystery of Christ, His suffering, death, and resurrection, in the Liturgy of the Triduum during Holy Week. In this great mystery Christ offers Himself for the life of the World.

We are now invited to walk with Christ in the Lenten journey. The Gospels remind us that Jesus set his face toward the Holy City of Jerusalem to make the final journey of this life, a journey to His appointed encounter with death. In Lent We are invited to participate in this same journey of Christ. It is a journey of the Spirit. It is a journey that is not without it's own peculiar kind of suffering. It is a journey that culminates in that fateful encounter with the mystery of death.

Is death then, the final destination of our life's journey? It may seem to us that death is our final destiny but our faith in Jesus tells us otherwise. The Paschal Mystery of Christ tells us that there is something beyond the horizon of death. It is a new kind of life, a transformed life, an eternally abundant life with unending possibility. This is so because it is the divine life, the life that is in Christ. This superior kind of life has now become our life that is hidden in God in Christ. Lent reminds us that we are in Christ.

So now we carry within us, through God's grace, the dying of Jesus so that we may share in the rising of Jesus to that ever new and glorified life which is impossible for death to overcome. During the journey of Lent we are invited to embrace death, to wrestle with the angel of death in the desert of our lives. It is the death of our "self-life", the death of the egocentric life which ever seems to be our natural inclination. As we die to our selfishness, our self interests, our "rights" we experience the power of the dying of Jesus within us so that the abundant life of Jesus may also become manifest in us. This is not only true in the future day of our resurrection but it must be true even now in our present life. It is a realized eschatology. It is in the here and now of our lives that we are called to realize the manifestation of the uncreated light of Christ's life. Like the experience of Mount Tabor we are to be transfigured so that the light of Christ illuminates our world of the here and now, the extraordinary in the midst of the ordinary, the divine in the midst of that which is the essence of our humanity.

Therefore let us bear holy fruit as the evidence that we are with Christ on His journey to that great rendezvous with destiny, of the cross and the ultimate victory of the resurrection. Let us bear the fruit, in this Lenten Season, of love, joy, peace, patience, and self control. This is the fruit of the Holy Spirit. It is the fruit that bears the seed of this eternal life found in Jesus the Christ.

We cultivate this fruit of the Spirit in our deliberate and mindful observance of the Three Lenten Practices: prayer (both in personal devotion and in the communal celebration of the Liturgy), giving to the poor (the sharing of our gifts with others who cannot repay in kind), and fasting and abstinence ( a practice that strengthens the life of Christ within us).

We have begun this Lenten journey, on the day called Ash Wednesday, with the distribution of ashes marked as a cross upon our foreheads with the words "Remember that you are dust and to dust you shall return." This reminds us of our mortality, it reminds us of the death of Christ. It also reminds us of that blessed hope of our share in the resurrection of Christ to a new and glorified life.

May God bless you as we journey together with Christ and one another into the deeper life of God!

+Peter