



BISHOP'S MESSAGE – LENT 2021

'Behold we are going up to Jerusalem' Mt 20:18
Lent: a Time of Renewing Faith, Hope and Love

Dear Priest, Deacons, Religious, Brothers and Sisters,

I greet you warmly.

Pope Francis in his Lent message to the church quotes from the Gospel of St Matthew 'Behold we are going up to Jerusalem' that Jesus said to his disciples as he manifested the deepest meaning of his mission in his passion, death and resurrection in fulfilment of his Father's will. We are invited by Pope Francis to accompany Jesus in this season of Lent to Jerusalem. The intention being to die to our sins and to rise renewed in faith, hope and love.

We are about to embark on our Lenten Journey on Ash Wednesday the season and favourable time of God's grace, mercy and forgiving love as we turn back to his unconditional love as we repent of our sins.

The forty days of Lent with Jesus in the desert offers us an opportunity to reflect in the presence of God on the Word of God. The word that directs and guides us to the spiritual treasures of prayer, fasting and almsgiving that enables us to move out of ourselves close to the Lord and our care for our most needy brothers and sisters.

Covid-19 has highlighted how we are in need of one another. Pope Francis in his encyclical letter 'Fratelli Tutti' based on fraternity and social friendship speaks of us as a common human family sharing in our common home of God's creation. Pope Francis speaking on the virtue of faith says 'Faith calls us to accept the truth and testify to it before God and all our brothers and sisters.' Opening ourselves to God's Word which the church passes on from generation to generation.

Fasting-in this time of Lent for the purpose to rediscover God's love for us and sharing that love in action by helping the poor and needy.

Hope says Pope Francis is to be seen as 'living water' enabling us to continue our journey of faith begun at baptism. To return to our loving Father waiting to welcome us back in the sacrament of confession. Love says Pope Francis is 'following in the footsteps of Christ, in concern and compassion for all, is the highest expression of our faith and hope.'

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To experience Lent with love means caring for those who suffer or feel abandoned and fearful because of the Covid-19 pandemic. Knowing and believing in God's love perhaps has grown cold. The joy of our faith has become lukewarm.

We have not shared our joys and challenges with the Lord in Prayer. We have failed to spend time in reading God's Word in the Bible. We have focused only on ourselves not really concerned about others. Lent is an opportunity for a conversion and change of heart. To repent and believe in the Good News. To return to God who loves us dearly.

May we together in this time of Lent through the virtues of faith, hope and love rediscover the treasure of our relationship with God, through Christ and in the unity of the Holy Spirit. May we look forward with expectant joy to the feast of Easter the centre and foundation of our faith.

With prayers and blessings for a holy and fruitful Lent,

Yours sincerely in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P. Holiday'.

Bishop Peter Holiday