



## PATRIARCHATUS LATINUS - JERUSALEM

بطريركية القدس للاتين

Dear friends in Christ,

We are preparing to celebrate Lent, “a sacramental sign of our conversion.” I would like all of us, together, to return to the awareness that breathes life into the liturgy and the faith of Christians at this time. The expression “quadragesimale sacramentum”, *the Lenten sacrament* (the Lenten mystery) that the liturgy will use in these days is neither our work nor invention: in these days it will be Christ Himself Who enters our deserts, experiences our temptations, and joins us in His victory so that we may, again and again, participate with Him in His Paschal triumph over sin and death.

In these moments so difficult for the Church and for the world, when the test of our faith and our hope seems to be getting heavier, I feel, for me and our Diocese, the strong need to turn our gaze to the Lord, to renew my and your trust in His presence and action. If the Church did not hesitate to define Lent and Easter as “sacramentum”, it reminds us that now, here, Jesus himself, in the power of the Spirit and in the obedience of faith, stands beside us and goes with us on the desert road, until we arrive in the Easter garden, in front of His tomb and ours, finally emptied of all anguish and pain of death.

This is the gift and commitment of Lent: to brave the desert, to face the aridity of our lives and our activities, sometimes even pastoral, without yielding to the shortcuts of miracle, compromise, mistrust or, worse, sin, but sharing the trust and hope of Jesus in the love of the Father and in the beauty of the Kingdom. Christ in the desert, in temptation, in discouragement, in mistrust, has poured out the promised Spirit to whoever, like Him, trusts and entrusts himself to the Word of God. “It is written” also for us that God is faithful, that angels are also assigned to us to comfort our weariness and to support the journey (Mk 1:13), and that an Easter exodus from death to life, from slavery to freedom, from mistrust to hope also exists for us.

In this time, in our Church, in our communities, so tested, at times so similar to the Lenten desert, we can celebrate “in spirit and truth” the Lenten sacrament, if we again and again make time to listen to the Word of God, if we “fast” from selfishness, from individualism and mistrust, if we welcome the poor and the needy: in our lives, then, thus freed from any false security, become available to the gift and sharing, we can make flourish the fruitfulness of Easter, which is Life that is born from the offering of oneself.

“And since we are His co-workers, we exhort you not to receive the grace of God in vain” (2 Cor 6: 1): personally and in community, each of us, “in this favorable time” find opportunities to listen to the Word of God. We go back to pray in our parishes, we go back to listening to God before ourselves, celebrating with faith and conviction the sacrament of reconciliation; we go back to fasting in our life, that is to go back to renouncing what fills the belly but does not satisfy the heart, go back to the Eucharist, therefore, not as a ritual but as a school where learning that only love, received and shared, really satisfies our hunger for life and happiness; we return to donate, rather than to accumulate, as the Holy Father reminds us with ever greater force, because not “I” but others and their salvation are the reason for our existence and our actions as Christians and consecrated persons.

The Holy Spirit, Who pushes Christ and us into the desert of the world (Luke 4:1) because with our faith we transform it into a garden, Who enlightens us; accompanies us and open us to the newness of Easter life.

Our diocese has now reached almost the third year of this particular period. It is time, therefore, for the first budgets and the first revisions of what has been done and what remains to be done. I invite all of you to pray especially for our Church, for her pastors and for those who work in it.

I wish a good and holy Lent to everyone!

March 6, 2019



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