



The Bishop's
LENTEN MESSAGE FOR 2017
Ash Wednesday 1 March 2017

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Since we are beginning the season of Lent. I thought it would be good to send a letter to you, in the hope that it will help you think about the meaning of Lent.

Each year we enter Lent aiming to prepare ourselves for Easter. As each year comes and goes we think of what to do and what to give up, almost as if Lent is an exercise in holiness. I want to ask you a simple question: "Have your Lenten exercises made you into a better person?", because if they have, each Lent should build on the previous Lent in such a way that you are indeed becoming a better person.

We might give up chocolates in Lent only to splurge on Easter Sunday. We might pray more and read the bible in Lent, only to give up for the rest of the year. If this is the case, Lent has made no real impact on your life. I think that each Lent should be a step on our way to holiness, so that as the years progress, we change for the better.

Unlike Advent which asks us to focus on our giftedness, Lent asks us to focus on our weaknesses and failings. If you are like me, you would prefer not to look at your weaknesses. The paradox of life is this - God has given us our weaknesses so that through them we might achieve a real freedom and learn how to love. My weaknesses are mine, and God wants to break into my life through them. I must learn how to live in my frailty.

I suggest that we all look at ourselves and choose one weakness and, for the duration of Lent, try to counteract it. This is real penance. To give up something which I don't really enjoy and which is not really a problem for me can, in the full picture of life, be a waste of time. Just as to do something loving, which I enjoy doing, will not make me a better person. Lent asks us to work against our selfish instincts.

If you are a greedy person, fight the weakness and each day give up something which you want. If you are impatient, each day work against the impulse by giving a little time to someone you would normally avoid. If you are selfish with your time, live as if your time was not yours, and do things for others. I could give more examples. Spend a few days thinking about yourself and work out the ways in which you need to change, and then gently begin to counteract your weaknesses in Lent.

Don't try to do too much because you might fail in your resolve. Take it gently and as each Lent moves into Easter you will be a slightly better person, and as the years move on you will be on the path to holiness.

One last thing, add to your Lenten exercise time for prayer and reading the Gospel. Prayer and thoughtful reading of the Gospel will guide you.

Thank you for the wonderful welcome which you have given to me as your new bishop. Please pray for me. I am looking forward to meeting you as I travel around the diocese.

With my prayers and good wishes,

Bishop Greg Homeming OCD