



# THE PRECIOUS BLOOD OF OUR LORD & ALL SOULS



The Catholic parish of Chapelfields & Earlsdon  
Kingsland Avenue Coventry CV5 8DX

A parish of the Archdiocese of Birmingham in collaboration with the Ordinariate of Our Lady of Walsingham

**Email:** allsoulsco@gmail.com

**Twitter :** @allsoulsrccov

**Parish Priest:**

Father Paul Burch

**Tel:** 02476 674161

**www.allsoulscoventry.org.uk**

**Deacon:** Rev. Paul Rabvukwa **Tel:** 07584 668021 **Catechist:** Barbara McGowan **Tel:** 07528 644617

**Assistant priest of the Ordinariate:** Fr Tim Boniwell **Safeguarding Rep:** John Corroon 07826 570830



SUNDAY 14 FEBRUARY 2021

## 6<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

O God, who teach us that you abide in hearts that are just and true, grant that we may be so fashioned by your grace as to become a dwelling pleasing to you. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. Amen

### THE GOD WHO SPEAKS: CELEBRATING, LIVING & SHARING GOD'S WORD

#### The First Book of Samuel: The hand of God at work in the nation of Israel

**The message of this book** In tracing the development of Israel from the anarchy of the period of the Judges, from Samuel the prophet and kingmaker through to Saul, the people's choice, to David, God's chosen king - the hand of God is seen at work.

**Give us a king!** The people demanded a king from Judge Samuel. Samuel tried to change their minds, but they were determined to have a king, so that they could be like the other nations, with their own king to rule them and lead them and fight their battles. Samuel reluctantly agreed. Saul was chosen as their first king. But it was especially under King David and King Solomon that Israel became a mighty and powerful nation.

**A very well-known story** In a battle with the Philistines, the Israelites had lost many men. A great Philistine giant named Goliath mocked the Israelites and their God. King Saul and the Israelites were scared and did nothing when Goliath called them to fight. David, a young man, volunteered to go and fight with only five smooth stones and a sling. David had faith and trust in God. He put a stone in his sling and swung it at Goliath's head. He killed Goliath and Israel won the battle.

**Through this story of David and Goliath, the absolute sovereignty of God and the triumph of his righteousness are conveyed.**

### ✠ WORSHIP THIS WEEK ✠

<b>Sunday 14<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>SIXTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME</b> (Sunday before Lent)	<b>10.30am MASS</b>	<i>For the People of the Parish Mary McHugh RIP (Fr Tim)</i>
Monday 15 <sup>th</sup>	Feria in Ordinary Time	9.30am Mass	<i>Mollie, Pat &amp; Lyle Bennett RIP</i>
Tuesday 16 <sup>th</sup>	Feria in Ordinary Time	9.30am Mass	<i>Ruddy family, deceased</i>
Wednesday 17 <sup>th</sup>	<b>ASH WEDNESDAY</b> (Day of Fasting & Abstinence)	8.30am Morning Prayer (live stream only) <b>9.30am Mass</b>	<i>Rush &amp; Cross families, deceased Julia Walsh RIP (Fr Tim)</i>
Thursday 18 <sup>th</sup>	Thursday after Ash Wednesday	<b>7.30pm Mass</b> 8.30am Morning Prayer (live stream only)	<i>For the sick Fidelis Edem Zikpi RIP</i>
Friday 19 <sup>th</sup>	Friday after Ash Wednesday	7.30pm Mass 8.30am Morning Prayer (live stream only)	<i>Marcus Chojnowski (birthday)</i>
Sat 20 <sup>th</sup>	Saturday after Ash Wednesday	9.30am Mass 6.00pm Stations of the Cross (on Zoom)	<i>Derek McDonagh RIP</i>
<b>Sunday 21<sup>st</sup></b>	<b>FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT</b>	10.30-11.30am Confessions (Sacrament of Reconciliation) 9.15am Morning Prayer (live stream only) <b>10.30am MASS</b>	<i>For the People of the Parish Grant family, deceased (Fr Tim)</i>

**Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament** for half an hour before Mass Monday-Saturday

**Daily Morning Prayer (Lauds):** Sunday 9.15am; Monday-Saturday 8.30am (live stream only)

**Evening Prayer (Vespers)** on Zoom 6pm Sun, Mon, Wed, Thurs, Sat (email Fr Paul to receive log-in details)

Confession is also available before Mass and by arrangement

## PUBLIC WORSHIP AT ALL SOULS

A daily public Mass continues at All Souls during lockdown. Individuals must of course decide for themselves whether it is advisable to attend in person and how *frequently* they attend public worship in the week. **It is very important that people do not mingle with others in church or outside church before/during/after Mass.** Live streaming of Masses continues.

## ASH WEDNESDAY 17 February



As an anti-COVID precaution this year the ashes will be sprinkled on the top of people's heads rather than traced as a cross on the forehead. Please bow your head when you come forward for the Imposition of Ashes.

**WALK WITH ME BOOKLETS AND CALENDARS** for Lent are available in church. Suggested offering £1 booklet, 50p calendar.

### Echoes of God: Journeying with the word of God Week 4: Wisdom

This is a 7-week journey through the Bible by David McLoughlin. Hard copies of the materials are available in the exit porch. If you are reading this online, scroll down to the materials.

**THE RECENTLY DEPARTED** Of your charity pray for the repose of the souls of **Yvonne Bradford** and **Mary Flynn** whose funerals are on Mon 22 February and Mon 1 March respectively. Also for **Gerald McSawley**, recently departed.

### GROWING FAITH Week 14: Baptism & Confirmation

Follow the link, press play and enjoy the video: <https://www.sycamore.fm/videos/session-14-the-sacraments-of-baptism-and-confirmation/> Those receiving the link by email will find an attachment with some material for reflection.

**DAILY MORNING PRAYER IN LENT** will be livestreamed Sundays at 9.15am; Monday-Saturday 8.30am. The text will be emailed the previous day to those on the parish emailing list.

**STATIONS OF THE CROSS** will take the place of communal vespers on the Fridays of Lent on Zoom at 6pm.

**CHURCHES TOGETHER IN LENT** In place of communal vespers on the Tuesdays of Lent parishioners are encouraged to attend an ecumenical prayer service on Zoom at 7pm.

**REVEREND DWAYNE ENGH**, Interim Minister of St. Mary Magdalene's CE church, will be leaving Coventry in April to take up a post in the Diocese of Derby. We will miss Dwayne's contribution to the ecumenical life of our local Churches Together and pray for him as he prepares for his new ministry.

**DARE TO HOPE** The Commission for Interreligious Dialogue for the Archdiocese is hosting a second series of Zoom meetings exploring what gives hope to people of faith and how they cope with the challenges of the Covid-19 crisis. To register, email [interreligdialogue@rcaob.org.uk](mailto:interreligdialogue@rcaob.org.uk) Thurs 18 Feb, 7.30-8.45pm.

**HOLY WEEK VOICES FROM THE HOLY LAND – Poems and Reflections for Lent and Easter.** This 160 page fully illustrated book, designed for private and group prayer, brings together 15 poems written by a parish priest in a Catholic London parish during the lockdown of Holy Week 2020, with 15 reflections written by today's Christian voices from the Holy Land. With forewords by Cardinal Vincent Nichols and Archbishop Justin Welby, this book is also a practical support to Holy Land Christians through the Charity, Friends of the Holy Land. Copies of soft-back and e-book versions are available at £7.99 each through the FHL Shop [www.friendsoftheholylan.org.uk/lenten-book](http://www.friendsoftheholylan.org.uk/lenten-book), by emailing [office@friendsoftheholylan.org.uk](mailto:office@friendsoftheholylan.org.uk) or telephoning FHL 01926 512980.

## LENT 2021: PRAY, FAST, GIVE ALMS

Who could have imagined that we'd be facing a second Lent under the shadow of the pandemic. It's a horrible situation in many ways, but 'Lockdown Lent' does present us with a unique opportunity to grow in our relationship with God and kindle our faith. Many of us have more time at the moment to reflect upon our patterns of living, to pray more deeply, to sit with scripture, to reflect on the wrong that we've done and the good that we've failed to do, and to be generous to those in need. It's not a word of wisdom you'll find in the Bible, but *If life gives you lemons, make lemonade!* doesn't seem a bad way to tackle Lent 2021!

**PRAYER** Throughout the season of Lent, we are called to deepen our prayer life. For some of us, this means beginning a habit of daily prayer, setting aside time each day to share our hopes, joys, fears and frustrations with God. Praying first thing in the morning, while the house is still quiet, or talking to God during the day are simple ways to integrate prayer into everyday life. You could also attend an **extra Mass** in the week (in church or online), attend **Eucharistic Adoration** (again in person or online), pray the **Rosary** or the **Angelus**, read a particular **book of the Bible**. Another excellent way to "pray more" would be to join parishioners for **Evening Prayer** on Zoom at 6pm or to participate in **Morning Prayer** livestreamed from church each morning (Sun 9.15am, Mon-Sat 8.30am). There are some great apps available to help you pray the Daily Prayers of the Church on your phone: *Universalis*, *iBreviary*, *Divine Office*, *Laudate*. On Friday evenings at 6pm there'll be the opportunity to pray **Stations of the Cross** on Zoom too; and on Tuesday evenings of Lent at 7pm Christians of the local **churches together** will spend a short time in prayer on Zoom. Be sensible, be realistic in what you decide to do, but be honest and sincere and God will bless your efforts.

**FASTING** Every Ash Wednesday we hear from the prophet Joel: *"Yet even now, says the LORD, return to me with your whole heart, with fasting, weeping and mourning. Rend your hearts, not your garments, and return to the Lord, your God."*

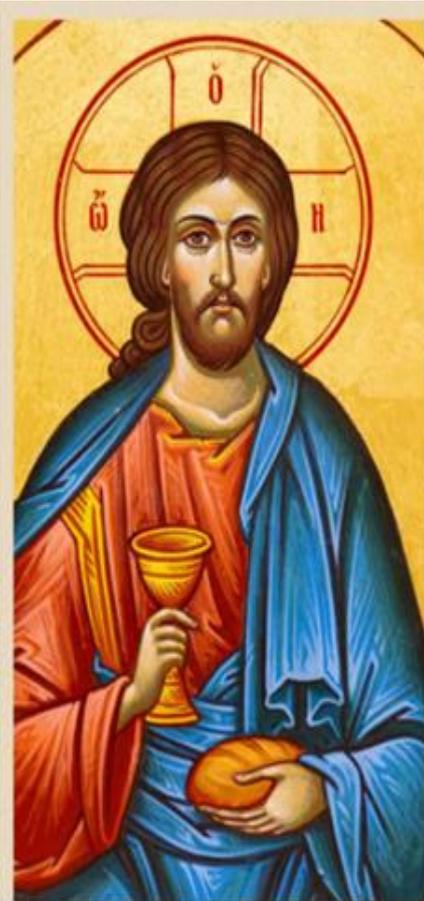
The purpose of fasting is not to become physically weak or lose weight but to create a hunger that only Christ can satisfy. In fasting *from the heart* we express our love for God and acknowledge our sinfulness. In the Western world, fasting from food is also a reminder of our abundance from God and a way to pause to remember those who face hunger daily. Lent is most certainly a time to fast from those things or habits that have become a roadblock to our relationship with Christ.

The Church's discipline of **abstinence** obliges those 14 years of age and older not to eat meat on the Fridays of Lent as well as on Ash Wednesday. The law of **fast** obliges all those from ages 18-59 to refrain from eating between meals and to limit their eating to one full meal and two lighter meals on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. You should always be mindful, however, of any medical conditions you have and your own health.

**CHARITY** Giving alms has always been an important part of Lent. For many people, it means giving money to some charity or good cause. But the concept of almsgiving goes much deeper. It is our response to the teachings of Jesus that encourage us to reach out to people in need - not just with our money, but with our time and our talents. Lent gives us the opportunity to cultivate a spirit of generosity.

**Remember: Lent is not the season for proving what we can do for God. It is, rather, the season for returning to God and opening ourselves to whatever God should want to do in us.**

## Prayers for Spiritual Communion



### Prayer for Spiritual Communion

My Jesus,  
I believe that You  
are present in the  
Most Holy Sacrament.  
I love You above all things,  
and I desire to receive  
You into my soul.  
Since I cannot at this  
moment receive You  
sacramentally, come at least  
spiritually into my heart.  
I embrace You as if You were  
already there and unite  
myself wholly to You.  
Never permit me to be  
separated from You.

Amen.

### Anima Christi

Soul of Christ, sanctify me  
Body of Christ, save me  
Blood of Christ, inebriate me  
Water from the side of Christ, wash me  
Passion of Christ, strengthen me  
O good Jesus, hear me  
Within thy wounds hide me  
Permit me not to be separated from thee  
From the wicked foe defend me  
At the hour of my death call me  
And bid me come to thee  
That with thy saints I may praise thee  
For ever and ever. Amen.

Lord Jesus Christ, you said to your disciples, 'I am with you always'. Be with me today as I offer myself to you. Hear my prayers for others and for myself, and keep us all in your care. Amen.

O God, help me to trust you, help me to

know that you are with me, help me to believe that nothing can separate me from your love revealed in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

### Prayer of General Thanksgiving

Almighty God, Father of all mercies, we your unworthy servants give you most humble and hearty thanks for all your goodness and loving kindness. We bless you for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life; but above all for your immeasurable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ, for the means of grace, and for the hope of glory. And give us, we pray, such a sense of all your mercies that our hearts may be unfeignedly thankful, and that we show forth your praise, not only with our lips but in our lives, by giving up ourselves to your service, and by walking before you in holiness and righteousness all our days; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be all honour and glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

*Conclude with the following:*

The Lord bless us, and preserve us from all evil, and keep us in eternal life. Amen.

## ECHOES OF GOD: JOURNEYING WITH THE WORD OF GOD

### Week Four: The Wisdom Texts

Eventually, after years of journeying with God to the Promised Land and through the times of the Kings and the times of exile and return, the people put together their memories and experiences in texts. Among these are collections of popular wisdom. Their writers collected the experiences, of mostly ordinary people, in the books of Proverbs, Ecclesiasticus or Ben Sirach, Ecclesiastes, the Song of Songs, Job and Wisdom. These writings helped the evolving communities to remain open to “the God” and faithful to the vocation of being “the God’s” liberated people. It’s a body of literature concerned with how to live well and wisely in all circumstances and at all times. Some of this collection comes in the forms of short sayings that even children can learn. Jesus uses these texts and their accessible language to fill out the wisdom of the streets. One of the most famous texts is the story of a just man who suffers for no apparent reason - it is the story of Job. It addresses the common question: why do the good suffer? And that is where we will take our text from now.

#### **Main Text: Job 29:1-17 - Anticipating the life and ministry of Jesus.**

*Compare Job with Jesus’ prayer in Gethsemane and his friends’ lack of understanding in Mark 14:32-40*

Job again took up his discourse and said: "O that I were as in the months of old, as in the days when God watched over me; when his lamp shone over my head, and by his light I walked through darkness; when I was in my prime, when the friendship of God was upon my tent; when the Almighty was still with me, when my children were around me; when my steps were washed with milk, and the rock poured out for me streams of oil! When I went out to the gate of the city, when I took my seat in the square, the young men saw me and withdrew, and the aged rose up and stood; the nobles refrained from talking, and laid their hands on their mouths; the voices of princes were hushed, and their tongues stuck to the roof of their mouths. When the ear heard, it commended me, and when the eye saw, it approved; because I delivered the poor who cried, and the orphan who had no helper. The blessing of the wretched came upon me, and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy. I put on righteousness, and it clothed me; my justice was like a robe and a turban. I was eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame. I was a father to the needy, and I championed the cause of the stranger. I broke the fangs of the unrighteous, and made them drop their prey from their teeth. (New Revised Standard Version)

All the great civilisations of the ancient Near East, Egypt, Assyria and Babylon, had their own Wisdom literature giving guidance on how to live well and act sensibly, but it wasn’t obviously religious literature. So the Hebrew people borrowed some of this literature from their neighbours. After all, they did inhabit the same world, and so a lot of practical wisdom was transferable. So for example, Proverbs 23:1-11 says:

When you sit down to eat with a ruler, observe carefully what is before you, and put a knife to your throat if you have a big appetite. Do not desire the ruler’s delicacies, for they are deceptive food. Do not wear yourself out to get rich; be wise enough to desist. When your eyes light upon it, it is gone; for suddenly it takes wings to itself, flying like an eagle toward heaven. Do not eat the bread of the stingy; do not desire their delicacies; for like a hair in the throat, so are they. "Eat and drink!" they say to you; but they do not mean it. You will vomit up the little you have eaten, and you will waste your pleasant words. Do not speak in the hearing of a fool, who will only despise the wisdom of your words. Do not remove an ancient landmark or encroach on the fields of orphans, for their redeemer is strong; he will plead their cause against you.

We can find very similar advice in the Egyptian Wisdom of Amenemope, written around 1300-1075 BC. But among the Hebrew people, the basic questions of all serious people about how to live and behave, how to act purposefully but not harmfully, how to find norms to organise their lives in a coherent and wholesome way, and how to pass this wisdom on to the next generation, all found a particular context in their being called by “the God” who called them from nobodies to be “the God’s” people.

Gradually, the best of the tried and tested popular sayings and proverbs were collected in the Book of Proverbs and in Ecclesiasticus, where there are proverbs on issues such as patience, charitable giving, the nature of friendship, freedom, how to relate to others and prudence. They are given a unique framework in the first nine chapters of Proverbs, and finally in the last great text, in the Book of Wisdom itself, collated in the century before the birth of Jesus. Here all wisdom has its origin in the Creator God and leads the one who truly seeks wisdom back to God.

Over time, the Hebrew people began to put all the pieces of their history together. They saw the divine wisdom underpinning the call of Abraham and Sarah, and shaping the covenant with Moses and the liberated slaves. This is expressed beautifully in Psalm 119 where the Law given to Moses and the new people, is seen as true wisdom which enables full, fruitful and joyful lives. So now, the people have a whole framework that could locate the particular wisdom of everyday domestic life within the grandeur of God’s creative, saving, and sustaining history.

This comes to a wonderful climax in the first chapter of St. John's Gospel, John 1:1-14, where the opening words evoke the beginning of Creation through God's word, and how in Jesus that Word of God has become flesh in our daily reality. Now at last, all that is real and tangible can become an expression of God's creative wisdom. The wisdom literature takes its place in the original divine plan in which God clearly desires to come ever closer to Creation, valuing and cherishing all that he has made.

Jesus will famously state this in popular form in a wisdom saying in Luke 12:6-7:

"Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? Yet not one of them is forgotten in God's sight. But even the hairs of your head are counted. Do not be afraid; you are of more value than many sparrows."

And so, the popular everyday phrases of the Wisdom Literature take their place in the plan of God's unfolding Creation. The Hebrew People gradually begin to understand their unique role in "the God's" wisdom "at play everywhere on his earth, delighting in the children of men." Proverbs 8:31.

Perhaps the crowning glory of the Wisdom Literature is the Book of Job told in the form of a dramatic story, where "the God" and his servant Satan, at this point a figure who tests people (a sort of quality control person), look down on the good earth and God gives thanks for the particular virtue of his servant Job. Satan asks permission to test Job and the rest of the drama is the unfolding of the terrible suffering of this good man while his friends and neighbours attempt to explain his suffering.

Job is all of us who ask the question: why do the innocent suffer? His three friends give him the traditional answers but in attempting to justify God, they are false to human experience (Job 13:7-8). This is a classic tension we will all meet eventually, between traditional answers and contemporary experience when these don't quite hold together. This is the tension between pious tradition and personal conscience, which none of us can escape, if we follow the journey of God's people.

The arguments put forward, were still in use at the time of Jesus. Suffering is a judgment of God on the sinner or the consequence of the sins of others e.g. the fathers or ancestors. Wealth was the reward of goodness, the poor must therefore, be sinners. Jesus would break this open by putting the sinners and the destitute at the heart of his teaching of God's Kingdom.

In his conscience, Job knows he is innocent so how can he come to terms with the prevailing tradition. Job's integrity and his simple plea to his friends for them to show his sin: "Tell me plainly, and I will listen in silence; show me where I have erred" (Job 6:24) blows away their empty arguments from tradition. Their answers just don't fit.

Having shown the weakness of human arguments Job challenges God, and God responds. Out of this wonderful argumentative encounter, there emerges a renewed sense of the mystery of divine wisdom throughout the Creation. Job and all of us are invited to enter that mystery for a real encounter with God, but we can never simplify or exhaust its meaning. The answer to innocent suffering is not clear but there is a new depth to the divine human relationship between Job and "the God":

"I knew you only by hearsay but now, my own eyes have seen you. I retract, and repent in dust and ashes." Job 42:5-6.

Job finds new peace by entering into the renewed mystery of "I am who I am" – who, just as Moses did, he has encountered in a fresh way. He does this by engaging with friends in honest debate: by holding to the reality of his own experience, and by calling on, and questioning, "the God" to whom he is so devoted.

Through this critical process, his own experience is affirmed, previous certainties are blown away and he is invited to walk daily in the presence of the God who comes close. This is a wisdom which has to be waited on and lived out of in hope. But what Job hoped for...

"I know that my redeemer lives and that at the last he will stand upon the earth, and after my skin has been thus destroyed then in my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see on my side, and my eyes shall behold, and not another. My heart faints within me." (Job 19:25-27) (New Revised Standard Version)

... this the Gospels bear witness to in Jesus, the Word of God made flesh, our Redeemer.

**Reflection** The Wisdom Literature often gives good simple advice for us on our journey through life. But it can also accompany us into the darker places where the tension between religious wisdom and our own experience is not so clear. It doesn't ask us to give up our own position of conscience but it does promise, that if we face the tensions with integrity, we will encounter the living God in the midst of the darkness and confusion. Can we think of such tensions at present? Can we make Job's prayer of trust in the text above into our own?



*Message of His Holiness Pope Francis  
for Lent 2021*

*“Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem” (Mt 20:18)  
Lent: a Time for Renewing Faith, Hope and Love*

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Jesus revealed to his disciples the deepest meaning of his mission when he told them of his passion, death and resurrection, in fulfilment of the Father’s will. He then called the disciples to share in this mission for the salvation of the world.

In our Lenten journey towards Easter, let us remember the One who “humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross” (*Phil 2:8*). During this season of conversion, let us renew our *faith*, draw from the “living water” of *hope*, and receive with open hearts the *love* of God, who makes us brothers and sisters in Christ. At the Easter vigil, we will renew our baptismal promises and experience rebirth as new men and women by the working of the Holy Spirit. This Lenten journey, like the entire pilgrimage of the Christian life, is even now illumined by the light of the resurrection, which inspires the thoughts, attitudes and decisions of the followers of Christ.

*Fasting, prayer and almsgiving*, as preached by Jesus (cf. *Mt 6:1-18*), enable and express our conversion. The path of poverty and self-denial (*fasting*), concern and loving care for the poor (*almsgiving*), and childlike dialogue with the Father (*prayer*) make it possible for us to live lives of sincere faith, living hope and effective charity.

*1. Faith calls us to accept the truth and testify to it before God and all our brothers and sisters.*

In this Lenten season, *accepting and living the truth revealed in Christ* means, first of all, opening our hearts to God’s word, which the Church passes on from generation to generation. This truth is not an abstract concept reserved for a chosen intelligent few. Instead, it is a message that all of us can receive and understand thanks to the wisdom of a heart open to the grandeur of God, who loves us even before we are aware of it. Christ himself is this truth. By taking on our humanity, even to its very limits, he has made himself the way – demanding, yet open to all – that leads to the fullness of life.

*Fasting, experienced as a form of self-denial*, helps those who undertake it in simplicity of heart to rediscover God’s gift and to recognize that, created in his image and likeness, we find our fulfilment in him. In embracing the experience of poverty, those who fast make themselves poor with the poor and accumulate the treasure of a love both received and shared. In this way, fasting helps us to love God and our neighbour, inasmuch as love, as Saint Thomas Aquinas teaches, is a movement outwards that focuses our attention on others and considers them as one with ourselves (cf. *Fratelli Tutti*, 93).

*Lent is a time for believing*, for welcoming God into our lives and allowing him to “make his dwelling” among us (cf. *Jn 14:23*). Fasting involves being freed from all that

weighs us down – like consumerism or an excess of information, whether true or false – in order to open the doors of our hearts to the One who comes to us, poor in all things, yet “full of grace and truth” (Jn 1:14): the Son of God our Saviour.

## 2. Hope as “living water” enabling us to continue our journey.

The Samaritan woman at the well, whom Jesus asks for a drink, does not understand what he means when he says that he can offer her “living water” (Jn 4:10). Naturally, she thinks that he is referring to material water, but Jesus is speaking of the Holy Spirit whom he will give in abundance through the paschal mystery, bestowing a hope that does not disappoint. Jesus had already spoken of this hope when, in telling of his passion and death, he said that he would “be raised on the third day” (Mt 20:19). Jesus was speaking of the future opened up by the Father’s mercy. Hoping with him and because of him means believing that history does not end with our mistakes, our violence and injustice, or the sin that crucifies Love. It means receiving from his open heart the Father’s forgiveness.

In these times of trouble, when everything seems fragile and uncertain, it may appear challenging to speak of hope. Yet Lent is precisely the season of hope, when we turn back to God who patiently continues to care for his creation which we have often mistreated (cf. *Laudato Si'*, 32-33; 43-44). Saint Paul urges us to place our hope in reconciliation: “Be reconciled to God” (2 Cor 5:20). By receiving forgiveness in the sacrament that lies at the heart of our process of conversion, we in turn can spread forgiveness to others. Having received forgiveness ourselves, we can offer it through our willingness to enter into attentive dialogue with others and to give comfort to those experiencing sorrow and pain. God’s forgiveness, offered also through our words and actions, enables us to experience an Easter of fraternity.

In Lent, may we be increasingly concerned with “speaking words of comfort, strength, consolation and encouragement, and not words that demean, sadden, anger or show scorn” (*Fratelli Tutti*, 223). In order to give hope to others, it is sometimes enough simply to be kind, to be “willing to set everything else aside in order to show interest, to give the gift of a smile, to speak a word of encouragement, to listen amid general indifference” (ibid., 224).

Through recollection and silent prayer, hope is given to us as inspiration and interior light, illuminating the challenges and choices we face in our mission. Hence the need to pray (cf. Mt 6:6) and, in secret, to encounter the Father of tender love.

To experience Lent in hope entails growing in the realization that, in Jesus Christ, we are witnesses of new times, in which God is “making all things new” (cf. Rev 21:1-6). It means receiving the hope of Christ, who gave his life on the cross and was raised by God on the third day, and always being “prepared to make a defense to anyone who calls [us] to account for the hope that is in [us]” (1 Pet 3:15).

## 3. Love, following in the footsteps of Christ, in concern and compassion for all, is the highest expression of our faith and hope.

Love rejoices in seeing others grow. Hence it suffers when others are anguished, lonely, sick, homeless, despised or in need. Love is a leap of the heart; it brings us out of ourselves and creates bonds of sharing and communion.

“Social love’ makes it possible to advance towards a civilization of love, to which all of us can feel called. With its impulse to universality, love is capable of building a new world. No mere sentiment, it is the best means of discovering effective paths of development for everyone” (*Fratelli Tutti*, 183).

Love is a gift that gives meaning to our lives. It enables us to view those in need as members of our own family, as friends, brothers or sisters. A small amount, if given with

love, never ends, but becomes a source of life and happiness. Such was the case with the jar of meal and jug of oil of the widow of Zarephath, who offered a cake of bread to the prophet Elijah (cf. *1 Kings* 17:7-16); it was also the case with the loaves blessed, broken and given by Jesus to the disciples to distribute to the crowd (cf. *Mk* 6:30-44). Such is the case too with our almsgiving, whether small or large, when offered with joy and simplicity.

*To experience Lent with love* means caring for those who suffer or feel abandoned and fearful because of the Covid-19 pandemic. In these days of deep uncertainty about the future, let us keep in mind the Lord's word to his Servant, "Fear not, for I have redeemed you" (*Is* 43:1). In our charity, may we speak words of reassurance and help others to realize that God loves them as sons and daughters.

"Only a gaze transformed by charity can enable the dignity of others to be recognized and, as a consequence, the poor to be acknowledged and valued in their dignity, respected in their identity and culture, and thus truly integrated into society" (*Fratelli Tutti*, 187).

Dear brothers and sisters, every moment of our lives is a time for believing, hoping and loving. The call to experience Lent as a journey of conversion, prayer and sharing of our goods, helps us – as communities and as individuals – to revive the faith that comes from the living Christ, the hope inspired by the breath of the Holy Spirit and the love flowing from the merciful heart of the Father.

May Mary, Mother of the Saviour, ever faithful at the foot of the cross and in the heart of the Church, sustain us with her loving presence. May the blessing of the risen Lord accompany all of us on our journey towards the light of Easter.

Rome, Saint John Lateran, 11 November 2020, the Memorial of Saint Martin of Tours

FRANCISCUS