

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Our Lenten Journey has begun. Ash Wednesday – although not marked in quite the same way as usual this year – initiated this wonderful season in the Church's year. This season of 40 days mirrors the time of the flood, about which we hear in this Sunday's first reading. Our 40 days mirrors the 40 years that the people of the Exodus spent in the desert on their way to the promised land. Our 40 days are spent with the Lord Himself, as He is in the desert before the start of his public ministry. We walk, in these desert times, to our celebration of the Lord's passion, death and resurrection.

Just as the flood prepared Noah and his family for new possibilities; just as the 40 days in the desert prepared the people for entry into the promised land and Jesus time in the desert was a preparation for all that was to come, so our 40 days prepares us for Easter.

Both the flood and the Exodus were times of conversion – a renewed awareness of God's presence and place in the lives of his chosen people. The experience called them to new promises that God would make with them. The new covenant in Christ is sealed in His death and resurrection.

This season is the great time for us to turn to face the Lord, to gaze upon the instruments of the passion and to recognise, in the very depth of our hearts, all that Jesus did for us in His death and rising. There can be only one response to His action – renewed commitment to Him.

Our Lenten fasting, prayer and charity – all intrinsic aspects of this season – are necessary pointers to our reliance on the Lord. This is their value. We deny ourselves so that we can see more clearly our reliance on Him. Sometimes, too, we get a Lent we do not plan – the events of life can also make us turn to the Lord.

This year, we can mark our Lent by sharing in 'Invited' – our diocesan Lenten

Mission about which I wrote in the Pastoral Letter last Sunday. This is a gift to us, calling us to turn to the Lord through this path of conversion, that we be truly His people. This is the wonder of our calling as Christians – to be His, to share the life He gives us, freely, for ourselves and for the work He calls us to do. May these 40 days bring us all to renewed Life in Christ.

With every blessing,

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