



EPARCHY OF MISSISSAUGA

For the Glory of God

CIRCULAR

Prot. N. 011/ 2022

February 25, 2022

LENTEN MESSAGE-2022

JOURNEY IN COMMUNION Vs. ISOLATION

Dear Rev. Fathers, Sisters and beloved Lay Faithful,

The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light" (Rom 13:12). Paul is building a sense of urgency about how Christians should live in this moment. For Paul, of course, the moment was two thousand years ago in human time. For us the moment continues. As he wrote in the previous words, our ultimate salvation is nearer now than we first believed. Spiritually, this symbolic moment began when death was defeated at the resurrection of Jesus.

Now many nations, including Canada, are lifting the state of emergency and other restrictions as the darkness of Covid-19 is nearly over and the sign of the bright day is almost appeared. For most of the world, this pandemic highlighted our sense of vulnerability. It kept many people, including the most fragile, in isolation - both social and spiritual. In the face of so many challenges to our usual way of life, this has been an opportunity to reflect on our faith and on the Church. It has been a time to mourn and to lament, but also a time to review and rise to new life as a Christian community. In his renowned book, *Let Us Dream: The Path to a Better Future*, Pope Francis treats the coronavirus as a challenging

reason: "God invites us to overcome barriers, come out from isolation, banish prejudices and draw near to those around us every day in order to rediscover the grace of everyday life." This is the context as well as the challenge of the Great Lent-2022.

I am Making All Things New" (Rev 21:5)

Msgr. Bruno Marie Duffe, the Secretary of the Dicastery for the Service of Integral Human Development and the Vatican Covid-19 Commission, highlighted in his simple but profound Easter message-2021: "This crisis is an opportunity to start anew. This requires new solutions: "new wine, new skins" (Mk 2:22), new ways of living, new ways of working, new models of development. In Easter, the risen Christ makes "all things new" (Rev 21:5), and He sustains us in our vulnerability, guides us through darkness, and reconciles us with the source of life." Christ“ has opened, for everyone, a path that leads to Life. The miracle of resurrection challenges us for a journey of conversion which is the focal point of the Great Lent.

Lent: A Journey of Conversion

"The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent and believe in the good news" (Mk 1:15). With these words, Jesus began his public ministry. He calls us to conversion. We hear this call anew every year during the season of Lent. The Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches that our Lord's call to conversion "does not aim first at outward works, 'sackcloth and ashes,' fasting and mortification, but at the conversion of the heart, interior conversion. Without this, such penances remain sterile and false; however, interior conversion urges expression in visible signs, gestures and works of penance" (CCC 1430). Prayer, fasting, and almsgiving are good and important practices during Lent and are a great help to our spiritual growth. They help us on our journey of conversion. However, these practices must not be performed only as an external fulfillment, but as the expression

of our interior disposition: the conversion of our hearts, what the Fathers of the Church called, "repentance of heart."

Our external works of penance are to be accompanied by an interior desire to return to the Lord to turn away from evil. We ask the Lord to help us to overcome sinful habits, to cleanse unholy desires, and to purify un-Christian ways of thinking or acting that may have crept into our lives. Sometimes, we can experience powerful forces within us, temptations to sin, that we find hard to resist. During Lent, we resolve to do battle with sin in our lives. We resolve to do battle with sin in our lives. We say to God; "Be merciful, O Lord, for we have sinned." We ask the Lord to take us by the hand and lead us along the way he wishes us to follow.

Journey in Communion Vs. Isolation

God's original plan was not to leave man alone (Cf. Gen 2:18). Jesus preferred communion not isolation. We are made for community (Cf. Jn 13:34). "The body does not consist of one member but of many" (1 Cor 12:14). Proverb 18:11 reminds, "Whoever isolated himself seeks his own desire; he breaks out against all sound judgment". Furthermore, the early Church was essentially communitarian in nature. "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of the bread and the prayers" (Acts 2:42).

But then unfortunately, Covid-19 isolated human beings. Various studies have already proved that the social isolation during the Covid-19 pandemic significantly has had an extraordinary impact with psychological consequences. The medical journal The Lancet recently published an article from which a clear and alarming picture emerges: "Periods of isolation, even less than 10 days, can have long-term effects, with the presence - up to 3 years later - of psychiatric symptoms." Although necessary to limit the spread of the epidemic, in fact, the human beings are not "designed" to manage segregation for a long time. As Greek Philosopher Aristotle reminds us, man is a "social animal," unable to live isolated from others since the absence of relationships

removes essential conditions for the development of personal identity and the exercise of reason.

Finally, it goes in line with the recent popular term 'Synodality'. The topic Pope Francis has chosen for the next Synod is "For a synodal Church: communion, participation and mission". He has defined a synodal Church "as a listening Church, aware that listening is more than hearing ... a reciprocal listening in which each one has something to learn." No one is saved alone. Community is strength and teamwork does wonders. I encourage you to overcome the aftermath of Covid-19 by the antibodies of solidarity.

Welcome Back!

We are excited to welcome everyone back to the church and all our ministries as the provincial and federal authorities of Canada permit! Our goal is to work collaboratively for the "Glory of God" and the holistic development of the people of God as we navigate the new normal. I personally invite you all - dear children, youth, adults, and elderly people - to rediscover the grace of everyday life through active physical participation in your respective parishes and missions.

I hope and pray that this Great Lent be a unique opportunity to regain the power of the Holy Spirit and continue our faith journey in communion, participation, and mission. Let us open our souls to God's grace and live intensely this holy season, this journey of conversion towards Easter!

Appealed: Together with Pope Francis, I invite everyone to make February 28, Ash Monday, a Day of Fasting for Peace. I encourage you in a special way to dedicate yourselves intensely to prayer and fasting on that day. May the Queen of Peace preserve the world from the madness of war."

Mar Jose Kalluvelil

Bishop of the Eparchy of Mississauga

NB. Please read this Circular during Holy Qurbana in all our parishes and missions on February 27, 2022.