

Bishop's Lenten Message

In a time of strong opinions, deep divisions and unresolved issues in Canada and abroad, when heinous crimes against children, women and vulnerable populations are exposed in the news, and when even priests and bishops have been implicated, the healing ministry of Christ is as relevant today as it was on the day he died for us on the cross. He came to bring peace, God's gift of healing, reconciliation and mercy, but on seeing Jerusalem, "he wept over it, saying, "if you, even you, had only recognized on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes." (Lk 19: 42)

In a day and age that our own country has some tough work to do in respect to our First Peoples and the Church has a lot more work to do in regards to healing the hurts of past wrongs, turning to Christ and asking, "what will make for peace?", may be a timely thing to do. Be it through spending more time with him in prayer, turning away from our excesses or in overtures of love, we need to find new ways of engagement and re-learn some of the basics of our faith: listening, forgiveness, gentleness, kindness, generosity, self-sacrifice, patience and self-control.

During Lent the Church is drawn into the wilderness by the Spirit to be more closely united to Christ. There we will be challenged and tempted, but not alone. For the desert path is not without its graces; the Spirit leads us there to strengthen us. Let us call on him at all times, knowing that without Christ's help, without taking up his yoke, and learning from him, who is gentle and humble of heart, we will never find rest for our souls, we will never find the peace he longs to share with us. By leaving our excesses behind, committing ourselves to a greater openness to God in prayer or setting our hearts on comforting the sorrowful, visiting the lonely or lending a listening ear to those whose sufferings have gone unheard, we are united to Christ and the peace he brings.

When we reflect on the unruly nature of our world today, amidst the distractions, confusion and the many voices calling for our attention, maybe there is more sanity in fasting, prayer and charitable deeds than all the riches, honours and desires of the world. "What will make for peace?" Maybe it is the moment when we truly find ourselves again, in all our God-created beauty. Perhaps it is when we come to see him as our loving Father and Merciful Redeemer. Perchance it is when we allow the Spirit to blow afresh on us and become instruments of his love. Lent is an ancient word synonymous with Spring. May this Lent mark a new Springtime in our lives together and may the time we spend to contemplate his cross, and the invitation he extends, lead to a new Springtime in our diocese and in our world.