



Diocese of Corner Brook and Labrador

February 14th, 2021

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

Wednesday, February 17th marks the beginning of Lent. In his Lenten message to the Universal Church, Pope Francis begins with the quote: "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem" (Mt. 20:18). In doing so, he not only gives direction to our lives, but offers us a clear purpose for the coming days.

"Behold". This word is used on several occasions in the Gospel narratives, most notably in John the Baptist's proclamation, "Behold, here is the Lamb of God!" A phrase re-echoed in the Church's Liturgy, when the presiding priest holds up the Body and Blood of Christ prior to the distribution of Holy Communion. The word is telling us to take notice, to ready ourselves and to pay attention; three important dispositions of the Season of Lent.

"We are going up". Notice that the road we travel is not a solitary journey. Far from being a personal discipline that separates us from others, the spiritual journey, and the journey of Lent, is a shared journey that brings us in closer proximity to our brothers and sisters in Christ, and even to our brothers and sisters of other religions and beliefs. Prayer, fasting and almsgiving are not meant to isolate us into a false sense of suffering and deprivation, but bring us closer into communion with the sufferings of others and give voice to the hope that is ours as a community of faith.

"To Jerusalem." God gives direction to our journey. In a world, where so many of us have had the experience of going in circles or running helter-skelter with little focus, Jesus sets our eyes on the City of God, a place known for both his passion, death, and resurrection, but also representative of our True Eternal Home. Together with the sufferings we are asked to carry, as individuals and as Church, some caused by our own sinfulness, we are strengthened by the one who leads us, and bears our sufferings on the cross. Let us never fail to heed the invitation of Christ: "Pick up your cross and follow me."

It is for this reason that I ask you to consider your Lenten actions in the context of family, parish and community prayer, fasting and charitable works. For it is, when we walk together with Christ, as brothers and sisters all, that our lives take on greater meaning and our "Journey to Jerusalem" leads to Easter Joy.

Fraternally in Christ,

Bishop Bart van Roijen

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