



THE DIOCESE OF KALAMAZOO
Office of the Bishop

My Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

The Holy Season of Lent begins this year on Wednesday, March 2, and it lasts for 40 days until we celebrate the Sacred Triduum beginning with the Evening Mass of the Lord's Supper on Holy Thursday (April 14, 2022), followed by the sacred observance of Good Friday (April 15, 2022) and concluding with the Solemn Easter Vigil (April 16, 2022) and the Glorious Easter Sunday (April 17, 2022). These six weeks are a sacred time for all Christians. Rightly observed, Lent is a time of repentance and spiritual growth, a time for listening attentively to the Word of God, for denying ourselves so that we can give more generously of ourselves through acts of Christian charity in Jesus' name.

In his 2022 Message for Lent, Pope Francis calls this season "a favorable time (*kairos*) for personal and community renewal." Our observance of Lent 2022 finds our world weary and divided due to close to two years of pandemic challenges, economic and political turmoil, and social discord. More than ever it seems, we need Lent, this "favorable time", to renew our spirits and to regain a vibrant hope for the future—what the Holy Father calls "a foretaste of Easter joy."

Lent 2022 also comes in the midst of our Diocesan "Jubilee Year of the Holy Spirit". During this special Year, we have been calling upon the Holy Spirit to bestow upon our Diocese His Sevenfold Gifts to help us be renewed in our Love for Jesus, to deepen our faith, and to *in-spire* us to become those joyful and courageous missionary disciples Jesus calls us to be.

In addition to our observance of our "Jubilee Year of the Holy Spirit", Lent 2022 takes place as we are also engaged in a worldwide synodal process called by Pope Francis that commits us to *listening* to God's Word and to one another, to *encountering* Jesus in the Sacraments (especially the Eucharist) as well as in our neighbors, and to *discerning* God's will for His Church. Here in southwest Michigan, parishes, organizations, and other groups are being invited to participate in a series of Synodal Gatherings preceding the world-wide Synod of Bishops in 2023. All people of the Diocese are invited to participate in one of these gatherings with the purpose of praying and listening to one another as a means of coming to know what the Holy Spirit is saying to us.

Lent is a time of heightened awareness of our relationship with God and neighbor; our call, with God's Grace, **to choose what is good** and to turn away from sin and evil. The Scripture Readings, prayer intentions and special devotions offered to us by the Church during this holy season remind us how important it is to listen attentively to the Word of God, to deny ourselves, and to perform acts of Christian charity.

In Pope Francis' "Message for Lent 2022", he reminded us that "the Lenten season calls us to...respond to the Apostle's appeal, "*Let us never grow tired of doing good.*" (Gal. 6:9) The Holy Father then went on to urge us:

"Let us not grow tired of praying; we need to pray because we need God. Let us not grow tired of uprooting evil from our lives; may the corporal fasting to which Lent calls us fortify our spirit for the battle against sin. Let us not grow tired of asking for forgiveness in the



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Sacrament of Penance, knowing that God never tires of forgiving. Let us not grow tired of fighting against concupiscence, which induces us to selfishness and all evil. Let us not grow tired of doing good in active charity towards our neighbors....Let us put into practice our call to do good to all, and take time to love the poor and needy, those abandoned and rejected, those discriminated against and marginalized.

So Lent 2022, indeed, comes at “a favorable time”—if only we can seize this opportunity and become fully engaged in this Spirit-filled moment of grace! Mindful of the divisions in the world around us, and the urgent need for us to be open to the Holy Spirit, our observance of Lent this year should be especially dedicated to the synodal themes of prayerful listening, encounter with the person of Jesus Christ, and discernment of God’s will for His Church. If we allow the Holy Spirit to *in-spire* us, we can make this Lent *a favorable time* which provides both a foretaste of Easter joy and the Hope of Eternal Life to come. Let us not be discouraged by the cold and dark days of winter; rather let us be renewed by the new Life and Hope we find in our renewed relationship with Jesus.

May our Blessed Mother Mary inspire us by her obedience to God’s will and help us to do what she loves to do----to lead us to a deeper, closer, and more vibrant relationship with her Son, Jesus. Through her intercession, may we listen prayerfully and respond generously during this Season of Grace. And may the Holy Spirit fill our hearts with His seven-fold Gifts as we journey together to continue living our lives with Easter joy!

Faithfully yours in Christ,

Most Rev. Paul J. Bradley
Bishop of Kalamazoo