



The Newsletter of the Catholic Commission for Social Justice Issue 26, February 2018



2018 Lenten
Message of
His Holiness
Pope Francis

Theme: “Because of the increase of iniquity, the love of many will grow cold” (Mt 24:12)



I urge the members of the Church to take up the Lenten journey with enthusiasm, sustained by almsgiving, fasting and prayer...If, at times, the flame of charity seems to die in our own hearts, know that this is never the case in the heart of God! He constantly gives us a chance to begin loving anew (Pope Francis).

Introduction by Leela Ramdeen, Chair, CCSJ: My dear brothers and sisters in Christ, in this issue of our Newsletter, CCSJ shares with you Pope Francis' Message for Lent 2018 (14 Feb to 29 Mar). The theme he has chosen this year is: *"Because of the increase of iniquity, the love of many will grow cold"* (Mt 24:12). Mt. ch. 24 refers to Jesus' Sermon on the End of times. He tells his disciples of the sorrows that will befall individuals/nations and of great tribulation to come. He warns them that many false prophets, who will assume various forms, will arise; "they will deceive many, and with the increase of lawlessness, love in most men will grow cold; but the man who stands firm to the end will be saved." Pope Francis' message is divided into four sections: False Prophets; A Cold Heart; What are we to do; and The fire of Easter.

He warns against cold hearts and false prophets who use the strategy of the devil, "the father of lies" who always present "evil as good, falsehood as truth. That is why each of us is called to peer into our heart to see if we are falling prey to the lies of these false prophets" who, he said, tempt us to be led and enslaved by our emotions, or by a desire for wealth: "How many of God's children are mesmerized by momentary pleasures, mistaking them for true happiness!" he wrote.

He said the consequences of a cold heart extend to both the earth e.g. pollution, and to violence - to "the unborn child, the elderly and infirm, the migrant, the alien among us, or our neighbour who does not live up to our expectations." We must be aware of "the signs that indicate that our love is beginning to cool." He encourages us to use the Church's "soothing remedy" of almsgiving, fasting and prayer during Lent to counteract "secret lies" and "self-deception."

"Above all, I urge the members of the Church to take up the Lenten journey with enthusiasm, sustained by almsgiving, fasting and prayer...Lent summons us, and enables us, to come back to the Lord wholeheartedly and in every aspect of our life. With this message, I would like again this year to help the entire Church experience this time of grace anew, with joy and in truth... By devoting more time to **prayer**, we enable our hearts to root out our secret lies and forms of self-deception, and then to find the consolation God offers... When we **give alms**, we share in God's providential care for each of his children... **Fasting** wakes us up. It makes us more attentive to God and our neighbour. It revives our desire to obey God, who alone is capable of satisfying our hunger."

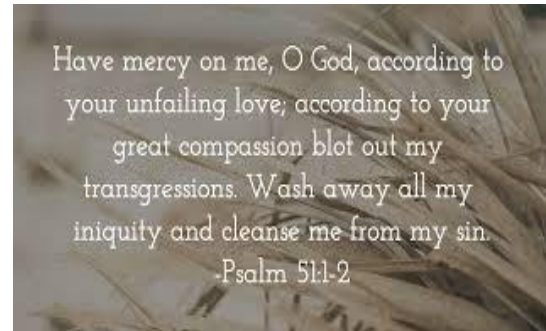
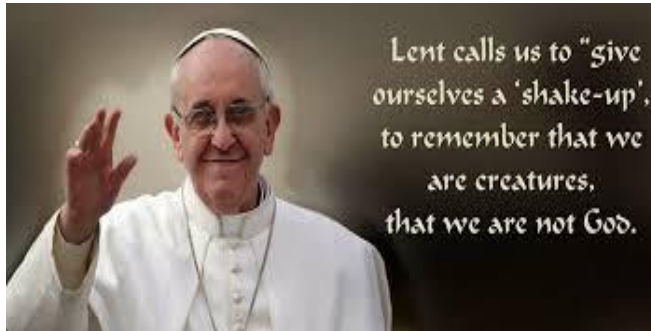
He also said that the Church would again be celebrating the "24 Hours for the Lord" initiative on March 9-10. This worldwide initiative which was launched in 2014 is led by Pope Francis. It will be a day for the whole Church to focus on the celebration of the sacrament of reconciliation, within the context of Eucharistic adoration as a way to experience God's merciful embrace. This year, it will be inspired by the words of Psalm 130:4: "With you is forgiveness."

He ends by praying: "By listening to God's word and drawing nourishment from the table of the Eucharist, may our hearts be ever more ardent in faith, hope and love."

Leela

POPE FRANCIS MESSAGE FOR LENT 2018 ON THE THEME:

“Because of the increase of iniquity, the love of many will grow cold” (Matthew 24:12)

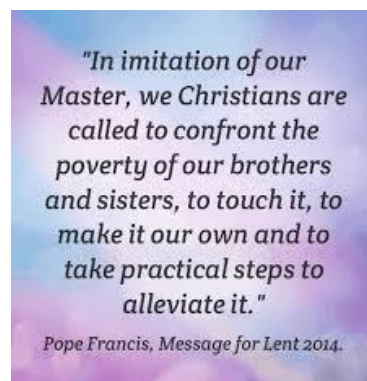


Dear Brothers and Sisters,

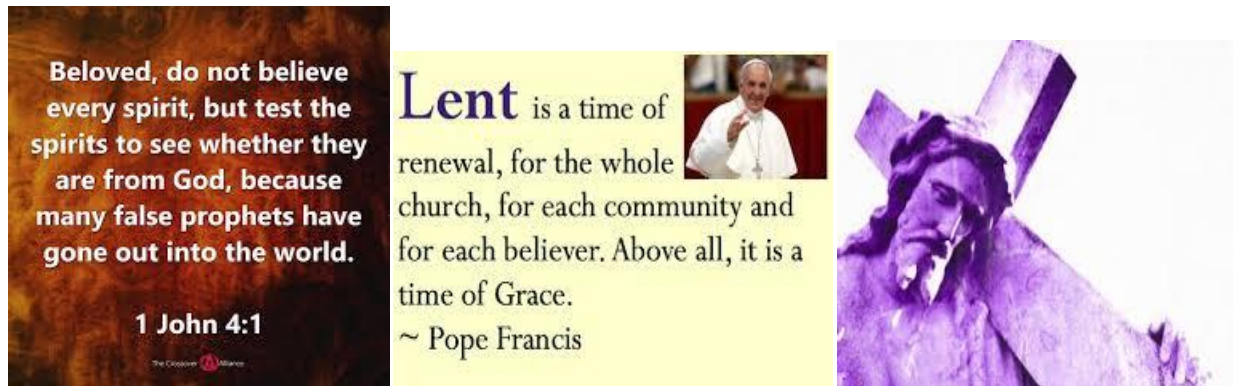
Once again, the Pasch of the Lord draws near! In our preparation for Easter, God in his providence offers us each year the season of Lent as a “sacramental sign of our conversion”.^[1] Lent summons us, and enables us, to come back to the Lord wholeheartedly and in every aspect of our life.

With this message, I would like again this year to help the entire Church experience this time of grace anew, with joy and in truth. I will take my cue from the words of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew: “Because of the increase of iniquity, the love of many will grow cold” (24:12).

These words appear in Christ’s preaching about the end of time. They were spoken in Jerusalem, on the Mount of Olives, where the Lord’s passion would begin. In reply to a question of the disciples, Jesus foretells a great tribulation and describes a situation in which the community of believers might well find itself: amid great trials, false prophets would lead people astray and the love that is the core of the Gospel would grow cold in the hearts of many.



False prophets



Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

1 John 4:1

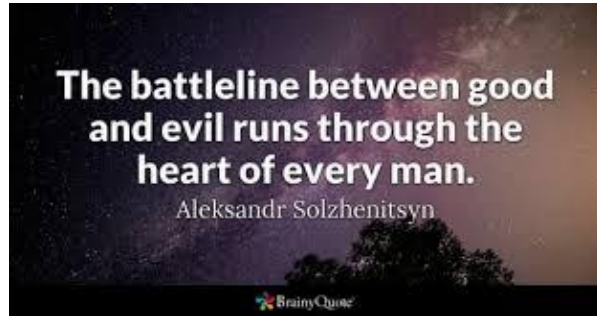
Lent is a time of renewal, for the whole church, for each community and for each believer. Above all, it is a time of Grace.

~ Pope Francis

Let us listen to the Gospel passage and try to understand the guise such false prophets can assume.

They can appear as “snake charmers”, who manipulate human emotions in order to enslave others and lead them where they would have them go. How many of God’s children are mesmerized by momentary pleasures, mistaking them for true happiness! How many men and women live entranced by the dream of wealth, which only makes them slaves to profit and petty interests! How many go through life believing that they are sufficient unto themselves, and end up entrapped by loneliness!

False prophets can also be “charlatans”, who offer easy and immediate solutions to suffering that soon prove utterly useless. How many young people are taken in by the panacea of drugs, of disposable relationships, of easy but dishonest gains! How many more are ensnared in a thoroughly “virtual” existence, in which relationships appear quick and straightforward, only to prove meaningless! These swindlers, in peddling things that have no real value, rob people of all that is most precious: dignity, freedom and the ability to love. They appeal to our vanity, our trust in appearances, but in the end they only make fools of us. Nor should we be surprised. In order to confound the human heart, the devil, who is “a liar and the father of lies” (*Jn 8:44*), has always presented evil as good, falsehood as truth. That is why each of us is called to peer into our heart to see if we are falling prey to the lies of these false prophets. We must learn to look closely, beneath the surface, and to recognize what leaves a good and lasting mark on our hearts, because it comes from God and is truly for our benefit.



A cold heart

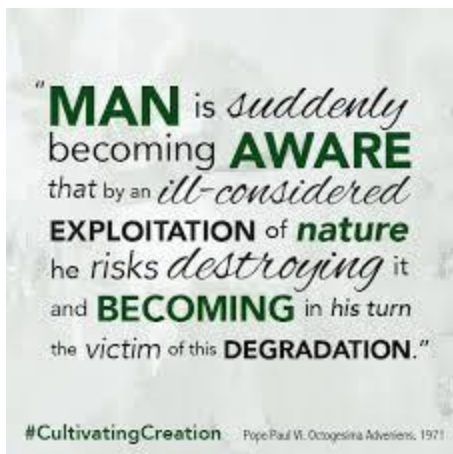
In his description of hell, Dante Alighieri pictures the devil seated on a throne of ice,^[2] in frozen and loveless isolation. We might well ask ourselves how it happens that charity can turn cold within us. What are the signs that indicate that our love is beginning to cool?



More than anything else, what destroys charity is greed for money, “the root of all evil” (*1 Tim 6:10*). The rejection of God and his peace soon follows; we prefer our own desolation rather than the comfort found in his word and the sacraments.^[3] All this leads to violence against anyone we think is a threat to our own “certainties”: the unborn child, the elderly and infirm, the migrant, the alien among us, or our neighbour who does not live up to our expectations.

Creation itself becomes a silent witness to this cooling of charity. The earth is poisoned by refuse, discarded out of carelessness or for self-interest. The seas, themselves polluted, engulf the remains of countless shipwrecked victims of forced migration. The heavens, which in God’s plan, were created to sing his praises, are rent by engines raining down implements of death.

Make Lent Count: Renew your encounter with Christ



Blessed Paul VI



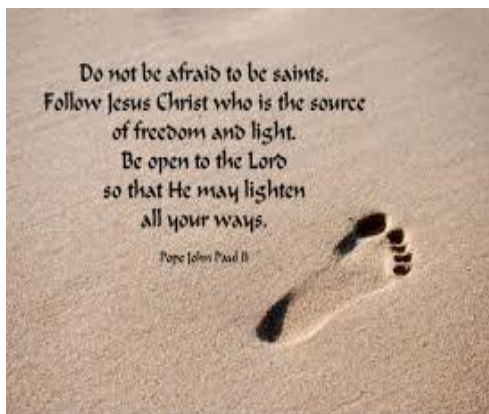
Pope Francis

Love can also grow cold in our own communities. In the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, I sought to describe the most evident signs of this lack of love: selfishness and spiritual sloth, sterile pessimism, the temptation to self-absorption, constant warring among ourselves, and the worldly mentality that makes us concerned only for appearances, and thus lessens our missionary zeal.^[4]

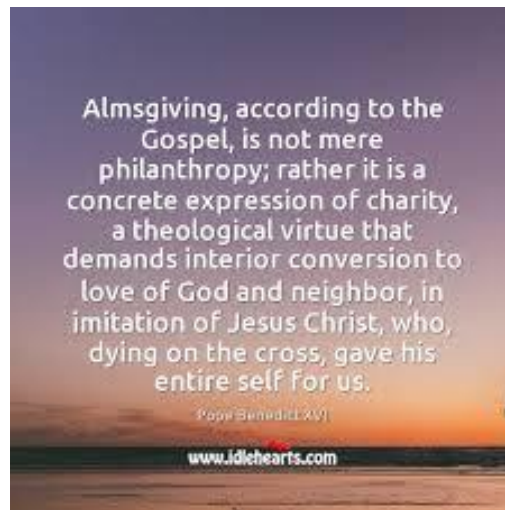
What are we to do?

Perhaps we see, deep within ourselves and all about us, the signs I have just described. But the Church, our Mother and Teacher, along with the often bitter medicine of the truth, offers us in the Lenten season the soothing remedy of prayer, almsgiving and fasting.

By devoting more time to *prayer*, we enable our hearts to root out our secret lies and forms of self-deception,^[5] and then to find the consolation God offers. He is our Father and he wants us to live life well.

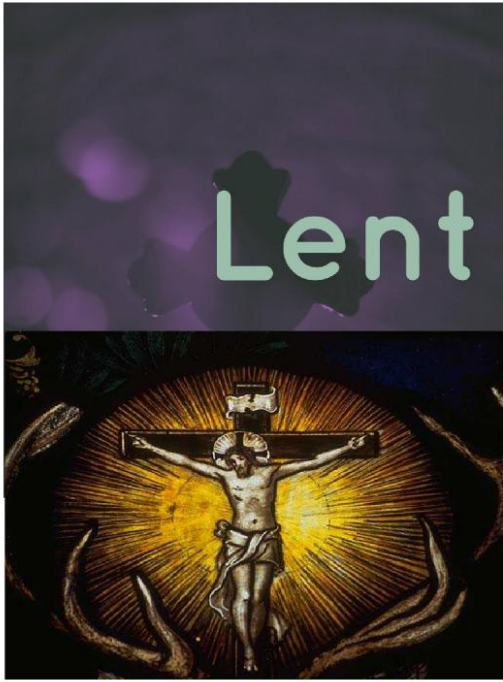


Almsgiving sets us free from greed and helps us to regard our neighbour as a brother or sister. What I possess is never mine alone. How I would like almsgiving to become a genuine style of life for each of us! How I would like us, as Christians, to follow the example of the Apostles and see in the sharing of our possessions a tangible witness of the communion that is ours in the Church! For this reason, I echo Saint Paul's exhortation to the Corinthians to take up a collection for the community of Jerusalem as something from which they themselves would benefit (cf. 2 Cor 8:10). This is all the more fitting during the Lenten season, when many groups take up collections to assist Churches and peoples in need. Yet I would also hope that, even in our daily encounters with those who beg for our assistance, we would see such requests as coming from God himself. When we give alms, we share in God's providential care for each of his children. If through me God helps someone today, will he not tomorrow provide for my own needs? For no one is more generous than God.^[6]



Fasting weakens our tendency to violence; it disarms us and becomes an important opportunity for growth. On the one hand, it allows us to experience what the destitute and the starving have to endure. On the other hand, it expresses our own spiritual hunger and thirst for life in God. Fasting wakes us up. It makes us more attentive to God and our neighbour. It revives our desire to obey God, who alone is capable of satisfying our hunger.

I would also like my invitation to extend beyond the bounds of the Catholic Church, and to reach all of you, men and women of good will, who are open to hearing God's voice. Perhaps, like ourselves, you are disturbed by the spread of iniquity in the world, you are concerned about the chill that paralyzes hearts and actions, and you see a weakening in our sense of being members of the one human family. Join us, then, in raising our plea to God, in fasting, and in offering whatever you can to our brothers and sisters in need!



POPE FRANCIS WORDS for LENT

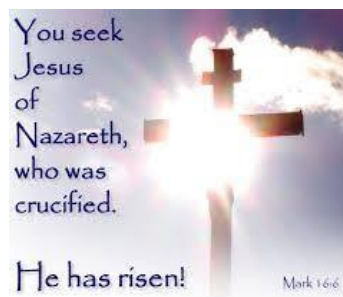
Do you want to fast this Lent?

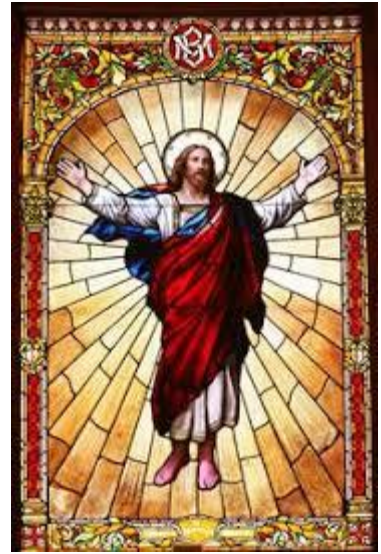
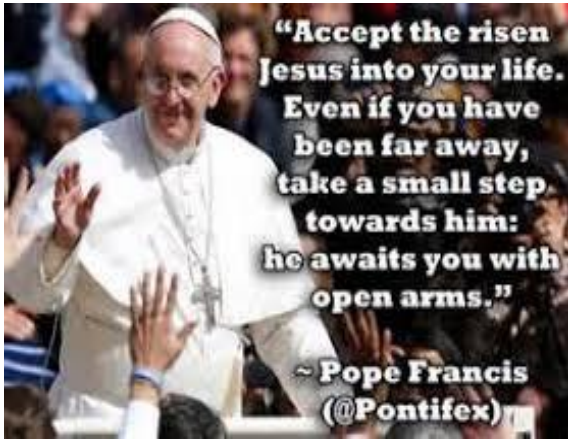
- Fast from hurting words and say kind words.
- Fast from sadness and be filled with gratitude.
- Fast from anger and be filled with patience.
- Fast from pessimism and be filled with hope.
- Fast from worries and trust in God.
- Fast from complaints and contemplate simplicity.
- Fast from pressures and be prayerful.
- Fast from bitterness and fill your heart with joy.
- Fast from selfishness and be compassionate to others.
- Fast from grudges and be reconciled.
- Fast from words and be silent so you can listen.

The fire of Easter

Above all, I urge the members of the Church to take up the Lenten journey with enthusiasm, sustained by almsgiving, fasting and prayer. If, at times, the flame of charity seems to die in our own hearts, know that this is never the case in the heart of God! He constantly gives us a chance to begin loving anew.

One such moment of grace will be, again this year, the **“24 Hours for the Lord”** initiative, which invites the entire Church community to celebrate the sacrament of Reconciliation in the context of Eucharistic adoration. In 2018, inspired by the words of Psalm 130:4, “With you is forgiveness”, this will take place from Friday, 9 March to Saturday, 10 March. In each diocese, at least one church will remain open for twenty-four consecutive hours, offering an opportunity for both Eucharistic adoration and sacramental confession.





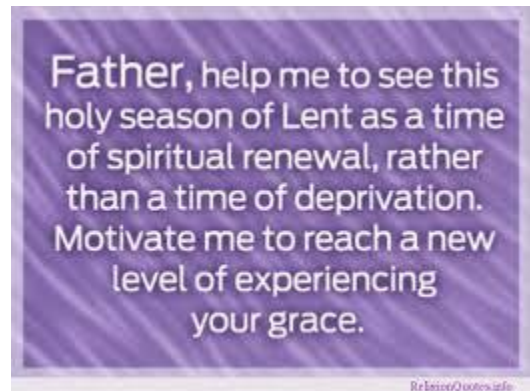
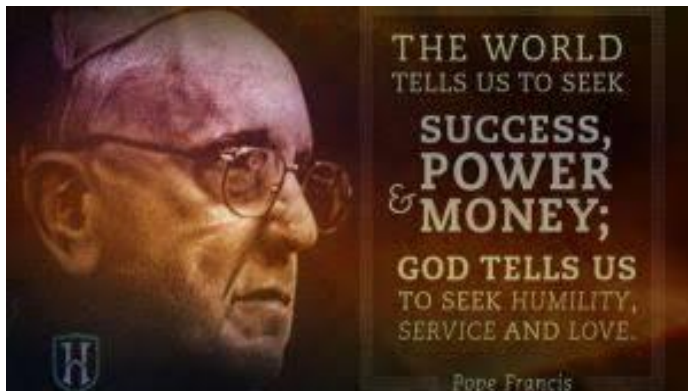
During the Easter Vigil, we will celebrate once more the moving rite of the lighting of the Easter candle. Drawn from the “new fire”, this light will slowly overcome the darkness and illuminate the liturgical assembly. “May the light of Christ rising in glory dispel the darkness of our hearts and minds”,^[7] and enable all of us to relive the experience of the disciples on the way to Emmaus. By listening to God’s word and drawing nourishment from the table of the Eucharist, may our hearts be ever more ardent in faith, hope and love.

With affection and the promise of my prayers for all of you, I send you my blessing. Please do not forget to pray for me.

From the Vatican, 1 November 2017

Solemnity of All Saints

FRANCIS



[1] Roman Missal, Collect for the First Sunday of Lent (Italian).

[2] *Inferno XXXIV*, 28-29.

[3] "It is curious, but many times we are afraid of consolation, of being comforted. Or rather, we feel more secure in sorrow and desolation. Do you know why? Because in sorrow we feel almost as protagonists. However, in consolation the Holy Spirit is the protagonist!" (*Angelus*, 7 December 2014).

[4] *Evangelii Gaudium*, 76-109.

[5] Cf. BENEDICT XVI, Encyclical Letter *Spe Salvi*, 33.

[6] Cf. PIUS XII, Encyclical Letter *Fidei Donum*, III.

[7] Roman Missal (Third Edition), Easter Vigil, Lucernarium.

"During this Lent,
let us all ask the Lord:
Make our hearts like yours."
-Pope Francis

Don't Give Up
Chocolate
this LENT

Instead
take a 40-day journey
to become
the best-version-of-yourself

Pope Benedict XVI,
Ash Wednesday 2011...

"May **Mary**, our guide
on the *Lenten* journey,
lead us to ever deeper knowledge
of the dead and Risen Christ,
help us in the spiritual combat
against sin,
and sustain us
as we pray with conviction:
"Converte nos,
Deus salutaris noster" —
"Convert us to you, O God,
our salvation". Amen!"

ALLISON @ TOTUS TUUS FAMILY

Questions for Reflection during Lent

- Where do you see human dignity needing to be made more visible in your community?
- In what way can you respond to this need during Lent?
- Can you let go of habits that prevent you from listening without being defensive and speaking without judgement?
- How might the Holy Spirit be calling us to respond to the various social ills in society/the world?

Prayer: Lord, we travel in deserts and despair as we focus on how you were crucified and are crucified in the world today.

We agree to make this journey, this pilgrimage, and to leave life as usual, business as usual, to pay attention, to be present to pain and suffering.
The journey to the Light of Easter can only go this way.

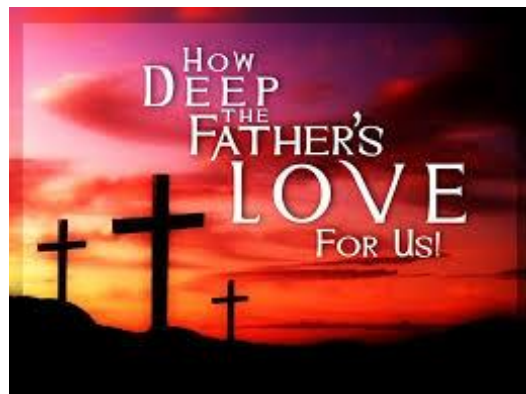
We choose to learn this hard truth, to accept the ashes, to witness the darkness, to walk the way of the cross as it happens in our world.

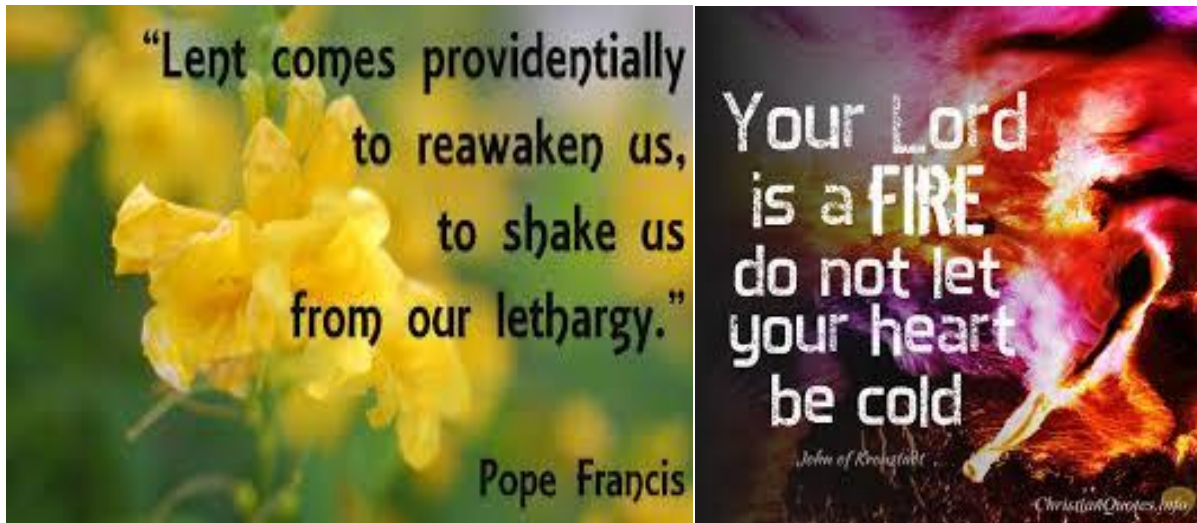
Let us journey together, open to the world, so we may be renewed and help bring to all the renewal of Resurrection.

Lord, during these Lenten days, give us vision to see what you see and strength to act as you would have us act. Amen.

Adapted from: –“*Prayer on the Lenten Journey,*” *Education for Justice, a project of Center for Concern*, <https://educationforjustice.org/>.

- <https://maryknollogc.org/article/first-sunday-lent-and-gospel-nonviolence>





CCSJ RESOURCES

- **Take-a-Bite DVD Series:**

Archbishop Jason Gordon: Overview of Social Justice

Fr. Malcolm Rodrigues: Global Solidarity

Sr Diane Jagdeo (now deceased): Human Life and Dignity

Dr John Agard: Stewards of God's Creation

Ms. Leela Ramdeen: Rights and Responsibilities

- **DVD Series of "Ask Why" TV Programme on Social Justice issues**

- **Responses to 101 Questions on Catholic Social Teaching (KR Himes): \$80.00**

- **Compendium of The Social Doctrine of the Church (Pontifical Council for Justice & Peace): \$140.00**

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