



Catholic Diocese of Victoria

Office of the Bishop

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Ash Wednesday

Dear People of God,

Ash Wednesday is the beginning of Lent, when all humanity, and indeed all creation, is equalized and reminded of its origins; it presents an opportunity for a new start on our common pilgrim journey, all equal in God's merciful gaze.

All are from the dust, and all turn to dust again (Ecc 3:20). Lent gives us 40 days to consider the gracious mercy of God, which gives God's own life to all that exists. How much does the human family need the path of humility, of humble service as shown to us by Christ, to one another, and to the garden of Creation? Together, we begin this journey, encountering Christ's wounds and the wounds of our sisters and brothers.

So let us begin again as dust, embracing our own fragility and the fragility of our neighbour. Into the desert we go, not indifferently or as bystanders, but actively engaged in listening with Christ to the plan and will of the Father Creator.

Lent is a 40-day journey of listening together to God's word and re-awakening to our common destiny, so that we may all spring into the grace of Christ's resurrection and new life.

Lent is a 40-day time of encounter with the real wounds of God's heartache and love for all that exists.

Lent is an invitation to encounter the rich traditions of our faith in the giving of alms, fasting and prayer. All three are an invitation to open-heartedness: an invitation to participate with Jesus in his alms-giving of his life for all; in his fasting, so to be in focused communion with the Father; in his prayer for a peace the world cannot give.

We all need the springtime of Lent, so the dust of our being can be enlivened with the tender mercy of our God and healing grace of Jesus for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

Together we begin the journey of Lent 2023. May the graces of this humble journey renew all of us in our faithfulness to Christ and love for our neighbour. Let this Lent be a springtime of new listening to the Holy Spirit as we prepare to hear anew "Jesus is Risen".

I pray for all of you that our Lenten journey together may be a common witness to the joy of the Gospel so that all may have life and have it abundantly.

In Communion,

Most Reverend Gary Gordon
Bishop of Victoria