



LENTEN MESSAGE 2019

Bishop Columba Macbeth-Green OSPPE DD



My dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Today the Church marks the beginning of our Lenten Season with Ash Wednesday. In the second reading of our Ash Wednesday Liturgy, Saint Paul reminds us that we are, “*Ambassadors for Christ*” and that we are all called to be “*Reconciled to God*”. What a wonderful reflection for us to begin this great season. To simplify the reality of Lent in our own lives and to understand Saint Paul in his message maybe we can get a better insight into Lent by a comparison with farming which is very familiar at Lent throughout our Diocese. When harvest time comes, we take the grain and use the rest to make hay to feed our livestock.

Yet prior to harvesting we need to start somewhere. The ground should be in good condition, the seeds planted properly and when this is done we continue to care and maintain the earth until the wheat appears. Sometimes there are setbacks and things don’t go as the farmer plans - at the moment most of the Diocese is still knocked about by drought, but in the end, with some perseverance, planning and rain, the harvest comes and the farmer reaps what he has sown. Our Lenten journey is a bit like that when we prepare ourselves through the acts of fasting, prayer and almsgiving.

These three aspects of Lent prepare the ground which is our own lives in order to become ambassadors for Christ as Saint Paul writes. Yes, there will be setbacks and times when we fail. The Church is going through a drought at the moment and we are ‘doing it tough’. This drought consists of the scandal of sexual abuse; a society that, in many quarters is openly hostile to us; a loss, even among Catholics of the concept of what the Church is and who Jesus Christ is; personally these things can make us depressed, bewildered, scandalized, angry, or detached from it all. Our Lord walks with us on our journey never giving up on us offering His grace and hope to get us through the drought to reap a bountiful harvest - Lent can be an important part in overcoming these difficulties. Once our hearts and minds have been prepared like the soil, then we are reconciled to God as we allow our new lives to be a rich harvest for Christ when we come to celebrate the great mysteries of our faith during Holy Week. Therefore dear friends, maybe this Lent we can make some time each day to meditate on what Lent is about. Take a small moment each day to pray and give something up that we enjoy so we can focus on Jesus Christ and make our hearts and minds focused on what he has done for us. I encourage you also to participate in Project Compassion as a form of almsgiving as we remember Christ in those who are less fortunate than us in our wider community.

I wish you all of God’s abundant blessings for this Lenten Season and I pray that, under the protection and prayers of our Patroness, Our Lady of Perpetual Help, we may walk with Jesus as she did as we head towards Calvary together in the assured hope of new life in the resurrection.

Yours in Christ Jesus,

Bishop Columba Macbeth-Green OSPPE D.D
Bishop of the Diocese of Wilcannia-Forbes