

## Lenten Reflection 2021

### *Lent: A Time for Renewing Faith, Hope and Love*

In this year's Lenten Message from Pope Francis, he writes about Lent as a "season of conversion," an opportunity for us "to renew our *faith*, draw from the 'living water' of *hope*, and receive with open hearts the *love* of God." Furthermore, he links faith, hope and love to the traditional exercises of Lent: fasting, prayer, and almsgiving.

Regarding faith, Pope Francis says it calls us to accept and live the truth of God's Word who is Jesus by opening our hearts and "welcoming God into our lives." Fasting helps us achieve this by freeing us from burdens and connecting us to the poor, enabling us to rediscover God who fills the void with grace and blessings.

Hope, Pope Francis tells us, "means believing that history does not end with our mistakes, our violence and injustice, or the sin that crucifies Love." Rather it means forgiveness. Lent is "the season of hope" because God does not give up on us, and that, in turn, enables us to offer hope to others. But that requires prayer, prayer to recall and experience the gift of hope from Christ crucified and risen and prayer to extend that gift to those most in need of it.

Pope Francis concludes with love, which he describes as the "highest expression of our faith and hope." He makes it clear that love ties us all together, rejoicing when anyone grows, suffering when anyone hurts. Love is meant to be universal, life-giving, creative, and compassionate. The more you give, the more it expands. Almsgiving is one way we can express love, sharing what we have with those who have not.

In sum, Lent is a time to renew our faith, hope, and love with fasting, prayer and almsgiving. Let us begin.

Please spend some time with this reflection. Also consider doing the following:

- ❖ Read the complete Lenten Message of Pope Francis at [http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/lent/documents/papa-francesco\\_20201111\\_messaggio-quaresima2021.html](http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/lent/documents/papa-francesco_20201111_messaggio-quaresima2021.html)
- ❖ Fast from what weighs you down and distracts you from God's call to believe, hope, and love. For example, fast from consumerism, social media, and divisiveness.
- ❖ Seek forgiveness from God and others you may have hurt. Offer forgiveness to those who may have hurt you. Pray for them.
- ❖ Follow Pope Francis's advice: Speak words of comfort, strength, consolation, and encouragement. Reassure those who have lost hope that God is still with us. Show interest, give the gift of a smile, listen.
- ❖ Give what you can in material support of those in need.
- ❖ Join the 39<sup>th</sup> Good Friday Way of the Cross organized by Pax Christi Metro New York (PCMNY) on April 2<sup>nd</sup> via Zoom. Contact the PCMNY office for details on how to participate.
- ❖ Visit the PCMNY website, [www.nypaxchristi.org](http://www.nypaxchristi.org), for more ways to pray, study, and act.

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