



Diocese of Limerick
Our Catholic Community

Lent 2025

Dear Sister and Brother in Christ,

Lent has begun. Many of us received ashes on Ash Wednesday, the ancient tradition that marks the beginning of Lent. The coming six weeks are like a worldwide spiritual “retreat” for Christians throughout the world. It is a time to grow in love of God and neighbour through prayer, fasting and almsgiving.

This Lent, we are all mindful of Pope Francis whose health is very fragile. We pray for him and remember he has invited us in this Jubilee Year to focus on the theme of hope during the season of Lent. To help us do so, I have written a Lenten Pastoral Letter which I invite you to read. It is available at the back of the church or also on the Diocesan website and Facebook.

In my Letter I distinguish between optimism and hope. Hope is a strength that comes from God. It instils a confidence in us that no matter what happens in life, God is looking after us and is working for our good.

Of course, in daily life are many things that drag us down, discouraging us. It is good, therefore, to work at keeping hope alive within us. In the Pastoral Letter I speak about practices that can help us grow in hope. For instance, it is a good practice every evening, to go back over the day and recall signs of hope you experienced that day – an act of kindness, a smile, a good deed, a moment where you yourself managed to do something good for others... We need to train ourselves in recognising hope. Throughout the day, then, a good motto to repeat often to ourselves is “begin again always”, that is, to begin again to love God and our neighbour, never letting ourselves be imprisoned in our failures and sins.

Pope Francis reminds us that as well as being a gift that consoles us, hope is also a task. Hope prompts us to build a better world. We do so by sharing encouraging words of hope in our family or workplace. We can also take practical actions in favour of people who are marginalised or by caring more for our planet.

Sharing hope also calls for us to speak out against a false rhetoric of compassion regarding, for instance, assisted suicide which ends up threatening people at their most vulnerable. Assisted suicide now accounts for 5% of deaths in Canada.

Ultimately, focus on hope prompts us to dream! On the one hand, we need to dream, yes, of a better world, especially in the fractious situation of our world today. But our dreaming reaches right into the dream of dreams - eternal life in heaven. Our great Christian hope is that we, with all our loved ones who have died, will be united in Christ in the eternally dynamic life of the Trinity.

In conclusion, I would like to share an image that one writer uses to emphasise hope. He says that faith, hope and love are like three sisters. Faith and love seem the stronger sisters with hope like a "little sister" to the other two. However, he says, hope is the sister that the others need. It is hope that keeps faith alive and love active in our lives. Hope is what fuels our spiritual life. So let us ask for a great increase in the virtue of hope in our lives.

I wish you well for Lent. May Lent be a time of renewed hope for each one of us. Let us pray for one another,



✠ Brendan Leahy,
Bishop of Limerick.