



## OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

Lent 2019

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

When it comes to the spiritual life, it is easy<sup>Text</sup> to be complacent. We can become comfortable with the status quo and make little effort to grow in holiness. The 'minimum' becomes the measure when the 'optimum' seems impossible.

In the Book of Revelation the Lord states, "So, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I am about to spit you out of my mouth" (3:16). We cannot be tepid about our faith. This means we need to work at the spiritual life. Whether we are clergy, consecrated men and women, or laity, we should all want to be saints. This desire becomes the 'fire within' that compels us to Christ and moves us to be more like Him in thought, word and deed. It makes the impossible seem possible.

In her wisdom, the Church provides the season of Lent in order to shake us out of our complacency and help us fan the flame. During these forty days we are called to be disciplined and focused. Through prayer, fasting and almsgiving, we are given effective tools to help us grow in holiness. How can these three 'pillars' of Lent help us?

We need to spend time in communion with our God. This can be achieved through prayer and meditation. Set aside time each day to meditate with scripture and offer prayers like the Stations of the Cross and the Rosary. We should also consider attending daily Mass and spending some time in adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. Prayer is foundational to the spiritual life. Saint Jean Vianney states that prayer stretches the heart and makes it capable of loving God.

When we fast, we say 'yes' to God and 'no' to ourselves. It is rooted in self-denial and penance. We simplify our meals and our lives by eating and drinking less and denying ourselves more. There also needs to be a humble acknowledgement that we are sinners in need of God's mercy. Once again we will be celebrating the Sacrament of Penance throughout our diocese on Saturday, April 6, 2019 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. We should never be afraid to celebrate this sacrament of healing and hope. Fasting helps us to see our dependency upon God which leads to spiritual renewal.

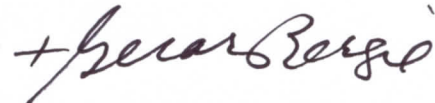
We see the beauty and generosity of God all around us. When we share with others what we have received, we acknowledge God's bounty. Almsgiving is such a significant part of Lent

because it responds to the Lord's preferential option for the poor, "Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me" (Mt. 25:40). By generously giving of our time, talents, and treasure, we are able to help those who are most in need. This helps us to grow closer to Christ.

When we think about personal holiness, we should be focused on someone rather than something. Holiness is about Jesus and the more we become like Him, the holier we become. A saint is someone, who despite limitations, is able to radiate Jesus to the world. To be another Christ is the calling of every baptized Christian.

It is my hope and prayer that during the forty days of Lent, we will make the effort to try to be more like Jesus. Let us work at being saints and reject the minimum so that the optimum will become our spiritual measure.

Yours sincerely in Christ,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Gerard Bergie". The signature is written in a cursive style with a cross at the beginning.

Most Reverend Gerard Bergie, D.D.  
Bishop of St. Catharines