



DIOCESE OF ROCKVILLE CENTRE
OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

Ash Wednesday 2007

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Mark's Gospel tells us that after the arrest of John, Jesus began preaching the Gospel in Galilee, saying, "The time is fulfilled and the Kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel".

Faithful to her divine Founder, the Church imitates Jesus this and every Ash Wednesday when we are signed with the sacramental ashes and hear the words "Turn away from sin and be faithful to the Gospel". Another Lenten season begins. Another opportunity is given us "to harden not our hearts" but to "rend our hearts", to open them to the Lord's voice so that we might let Him enter in and transform our lives.

These next six weeks, our journey of faith takes on a special character. We continue to live our lives as disciples of Jesus, but we do so with a quickened conscience, a livelier sense of Him in our lives, a deeper awareness of what it means to live as His disciples in this community of communion which is His Church. During these forty days of Lent the Church constantly asks the Lord to make us more like Him. She pleads with Him for all those who sin and are in need of forgiveness. She walks with her Lord as he makes the most momentous spiritual journey ever made: Jesus' own pilgrimage from Galilee through Samaria up to Jerusalem where he will die for us on Good Friday.

This Lenten season takes place for us as we are observing our golden jubilee as a Diocese. The fifty previous Lents of the Diocese of Rockville Centre are part of our heritage and part of our spiritual patrimony. All the Lenten prayers and penances, all the sacrifices and spiritual exercises that were offered to God these past fifty Lents become the spiritual nourishment that impels us forward in our own Lenten pilgrimages.

Please take a few moments at the beginning of this Lent to thank God for this opportunity to follow His Son on this year's Lenten journey. Take a moment and thank Him for the gifts of grace and love from previous Lents that have built up our Diocese. And then consider prayerfully with me how we can make this Lent of our jubilee a special time of conversion and renewal.

Perhaps we need to come before the Lord in the sacrament of penance and reconciliation. His loving heart is waiting to forgive! Perhaps we need to seek help with a particular spiritual problem or bad habit that has taken over our lives. What better season to turn away from sin and be faithful to the Gospel! Perhaps we need to choose some special spiritual ways of coming closer to the Lord; daily reading of Scripture, recitation of the rosary, fifteen minutes daily before the Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, or spiritual reading. To these we can add acts of charity and almsgiving and mortification of our bodies through fasting and other means. Above all we can commit ourselves, if possible, to the greatest way to follow the Lord, participation at daily Mass for the forty days of this Lenten pilgrimage. Whatever you choose, make it truly your own by placing it every day before the Lord so that he can accept it and He can bless you on the journey.

At the end we will as Church celebrate the Sacred Triduum, spiritually renewed, refreshed and ready to proclaim with all the Church, "Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again".

Yours faithfully in Christ,

Bishop of Rockville Centre