



## DIOCESE OF NORTHAMPTON

### PASTORAL LETTER IN PREPARATION FOR THE SEASON OF LENT 2020

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

In the readings at this Mass, God is calling us “to be holy”, reminding us that “we are his temple,” that “we belong to Christ,” and that “our hearts must be set on God’s kingdom and his righteousness.” Why? Because our life is born of the love of God our Father whose desire is that we may have life to the full, and that we may be people of joy and hope.

That is the framework for our Catholic life. It is so different from the framework of so many people who think that their life is their own to do with as they will. Our framework is based on our faith in the Good News that Jesus has died and is risen, that he has overcome sin and death, and that through him we receive forgiveness for our sins and the promise of eternal life.

To refresh and renew this faith, we have the time of Lent beginning this coming Wednesday, Ash Wednesday, a day of fasting and abstinence. In his Lenten message, Pope Francis invites us to “keep our eyes fixed on the outstretched arms of Christ crucified and to let ourselves be saved over and over again. And when we confess our sins, to believe firmly in his mercy which frees us from our guilt. Jesus’ death and resurrection is not a past event; through the power of the Holy Spirit it is ever present. It enables us to see and touch with faith the flesh of Christ in those who suffer.”

So, may this Lent be a favourable time to keep our eyes fixed on Jesus on the cross. How? Give time to prayer, to opening your heart to Jesus, and letting his love overcome our hardness of heart and sinfulness. May this Lent be a favourable time for repentance, for allowing Jesus to lift the burden of our sins in our acts of penance and in the sacrament of Confession. May this Lent be a favourable time for our almsgiving to the poor, and a time for showing in small ways our care for creation, and addressing the unequal distribution of the earth’s goods.

Together, can you and I really let the love of the crucified Christ draw us into a good Lent of prayer, penance and almsgiving. Then we will be able, with renewed hearts to celebrate the great mystery of the death and resurrection of Jesus at Eastertime.

I want to sign off my last Pastoral Letter to you with huge thanks for the unusual kindness and support you have given to me as your Bishop for the last fourteen and a half years. Dear brother priests and people in our parishes and schools, fellow deacons and religious, thank you for the example of your faith, prayer and commitment which has been a great grace on my own journey of faith.

With you I remain a member of the local Church in the Diocese of Northampton, and with you I look forward to welcoming our new Bishop, David, on 19 March.

Have a grace-filled and fruitful Lent!

With much affection and every blessing,

+ Peter

Apostolic Administrator

