



OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

Lent 2021

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

This past year has been very difficult as the world has had to deal with a pandemic. We have given up a great deal and endured many difficulties. In certain ways it seems that we have been living a 'long Lent' since March of 2020. So why would we want to embrace this penitential season that begins again on Ash Wednesday? Have we not done enough already?

The truth is that we have endured a great deal; however, many of the things that we have experienced have been more of a distraction than a source of spiritual growth. A number of people feel anxious and lack a genuine sense of peace in their lives thanks to the coronavirus.

Father Jacques Philippe in his book, *Searching for and Maintaining Peace – A Small Treatise on Peace of Heart*, states: "Often, we cause ourselves to become agitated and disturbed by trying to resolve everything by ourselves, when it would be more efficacious to remain peacefully before the gaze of God and to allow Him to act and work in us with His wisdom and power, which are infinitely superior to ours." Father Philippe reminds us that when we are troubled, we need to humbly turn to the Lord if we want peace. When we only rely on ourselves, we are bound to fail and feel frustrated.

We know that after his baptism, Jesus entered the wilderness for forty days and nights. He found peace in this isolated place as he united himself with the Father. Satan tried to distract him; however, Jesus remained steadfast in his response. In his human nature, by his acts of self denial, Jesus became even more dependent on the love of his Heavenly Father. It was doing the will of the Father that gave Jesus the greatest peace.

During Lent we are called to follow the example of Jesus in the wilderness. Through our prayer, fasting and almsgiving, the three pillars of Lent, we are able to focus on God and others. The more we abandon ourselves to the love of God, the greater the peace in our lives. We do not need to worry or be afraid because we know that the Lord will look after us. We pray with greater confidence, "Thy will be done."

Despite the difficulties of this past year, let us use this Lent as a time to cultivate a peaceful heart. May we not allow ourselves to be troubled as we keep our gaze on the Lord. During this time of uncertainty, be confident in the love of God which always brings hope and healing to our anxious world.

Yours sincerely in Christ,

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