



"Stemus in limine"
a pastoral epistle for Lent 2024

HE The Mt Revd Dr Jerome Lloyd DD OSJV FRSA

Carissimi

As we stand on the threshold of the holy season of Lent, I reach out to each of you with a father's heart, filled with love and a deep desire for your spiritual well-being. The Church, in her wisdom, sets aside these forty days as a sacred time for reflection, penance, and spiritual renewal. It is a time when we are called to return to the Lord with our whole heart, to rediscover the path of true discipleship, and to rekindle the flame of divine love within us.

Lent calls us to embrace the traditional disciplines of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving, each a precious gem that can lead us closer to God if embraced with sincerity and commitment.

Prayer is a powerful practice that has the ability to open our hearts to God's voice and strengthen our relationship with Him. It is through prayer that we have the opportunity to encounter the living God, who loves us unconditionally and desires our company. This Lenten season, I encourage you to take the time to deepen your prayer life and explore different ways to connect with God.

One way to enhance your prayer life is by attending Mass more frequently. By participating in the Eucharistic celebration, you can experience a profound sense of communion with God and the community of believers. The Mass provides a sacred space where you can offer your intentions, express gratitude, and seek guidance from the Lord.

Another way to deepen your prayer life is by spending time in adoration before the Blessed Sacrament. Adoration is a beautiful practice that allows you to be in the presence of Jesus Christ, truly present in the Eucharist. In this quiet and contemplative setting, you can pour out your heart to God, listen to His gentle whispers, and find solace in His loving presence.

Additionally, setting aside moments of silence in your day can greatly enrich your prayer life. Just as friends enjoy conversing with each other, we can speak to God as a friend speaks to a friend. By creating space for silence, you create an opportunity for God to speak to your heart and for you to listen attentively. These moments of silence

can be as short as a few minutes or as long as you desire, depending on your schedule and personal preferences.

This Lenten season, I encourage you to *prioritize* your prayer life and explore different ways to deepen your connection with God. Whether it's through attending Mass more frequently, spending time in adoration, or setting aside moments of silence, remember that prayer is a gift that allows us to encounter the living God and strengthen our relationship with Him. May your prayer journey be filled with grace, peace, and a deepening sense of God's presence in your life.

Fasting, as a powerful spiritual discipline, serves multiple purposes. It not only helps us to master our appetites but also provides us with a tangible way to express our sorrow for our sins. By abstaining from food or certain activities, we are reminded of our dependence on God and our solidarity with those who are less fortunate. It is important to understand that fasting is not just an external act; it is a gesture of the heart that seeks purification and conversion.

When we engage in fasting, we embark on a journey of self-reflection and introspection. It allows us to examine our desires and impulses, and to gain control over them. By denying ourselves certain pleasures, we learn to prioritize our spiritual well-being over our physical cravings. This act of self-discipline strengthens our character and deepens our connection with God.

Moreover, fasting is not solely about personal transformation; it also fosters a sense of empathy and compassion towards others. As we experience hunger and deprivation, we are reminded of those who face these challenges on a daily basis. This awareness compels us to take action and extend our support to those who are less fortunate. Through fasting, we cultivate a spirit of generosity and solidarity, recognizing that we are all interconnected in the human family.

It is *crucial* to approach fasting with the right mindset and intentions. Merely abstaining from food or engaging in external rituals is not enough. The true essence of fasting lies in the transformation of the heart. It is a time for self-examination, repentance, and seeking forgiveness. By turning our focus inward, we can identify areas of our lives that need improvement and make a conscious effort to change.

Fasting is a profound spiritual practice that goes beyond the physical act of abstaining from food. It is a means to discipline our desires, express remorse for our sins, and deepen our connection with God. Through fasting, we not only purify ourselves but also cultivate empathy and solidarity with those in need. Let us approach fasting with sincerity and a genuine desire for transformation, knowing that it is a gesture of the heart that seeks purification and conversion.

Almsgiving, a practice deeply rooted in our faith, serves as a powerful expression of our love for God and our commitment to serving others, particularly those who are less fortunate. It is a tangible way for us to demonstrate our compassion and empathy towards our neighbours, especially those who are poor and in need. By engaging in acts

of almsgiving, we are challenged to transcend our own self-interests and recognize the presence of Christ in the marginalized and vulnerable members of society.

During the season of Lent, a time of reflection and spiritual growth, we are called to embrace the virtue of generosity in our giving. It is not merely about donating from our excess or surplus, but rather about making sacrificial offerings of our time, resources, and care. This means going beyond the comfortable boundaries of our own lives and reaching out to those who are struggling, extending a helping hand and offering support in whatever way we can.

In this Lenten journey, let us open our hearts and minds to the needs of others, allowing ourselves to be moved by their stories and experiences. Let us remember that almsgiving is not solely about material possessions, but also about the gift of our presence and attention. It is about actively listening to the voices of the marginalized, advocating for justice, and working towards creating a more inclusive and compassionate society.

As we embark on this path of selflessness and generosity, may we find inspiration in the example set by our Lord Jesus Christ himself. He showed us the true meaning of love and service through his own acts of compassion and self-sacrifice. Let us strive to follow in his footsteps, imitating his boundless love and extending it to those who are most in need.

Almsgiving is a powerful and transformative practice that allows us to deepen our relationship with God and fulfil our duty to care for our fellow human beings. This Lent, let us embrace the call to be generous in our giving, not only with our material possessions but also with our time, attention, and compassion. By doing so, we can make a meaningful difference in the lives of others and experience the profound joy that comes from selflessly serving those in need.

Beloved, as we embark on this Lenten journey, let us do so with enthusiasm and piety. Let us not be hesitant or half-hearted, but rather approach this season as a precious opportunity to mend our relationship with God and to grow in holiness. Avoid setting excessive and unrealistic goals that may lead to frustration but do embrace sacrificial effort and wholehearted commitment.

I encourage you to adopt devotions and engage in study that will help you realign your life with the Gospel and the teachings of the Church. By incorporating devotions into your daily routine, such as praying the rosary or attending Mass more frequently, you can deepen your connection with God and strengthen your faith. Additionally, taking the time to study the teachings of the Church, whether through reading scripture or participating in a catechism group, can provide you with a deeper understanding of your faith and help you live in accordance with the Gospel.

During this Lenten season, it is important to reflect on our lives and make a conscious effort to turn away from sin and embrace a life of holiness. By engaging in devotions and study, we can actively participate in this process of conversion and spiritual

renewal. Through prayer and study, we can open our hearts to God's grace and allow Him to transform us from within.

Devotions and study are not only beneficial for our personal spiritual growth, but they also help us to live out our faith in the world. As we deepen our understanding of the Gospel and the teachings of the Church, we are better equipped to share the Good News with others and be a witness to Christ's love and mercy. By aligning our lives with the Gospel, we can become beacons of light in a world that often feels dark and uncertain.

So, I encourage you to make the most of this Lenten season by incorporating devotions and study into your daily life. Whether it's setting aside time each day for prayer or joining a study group at your local parish, take the opportunity to deepen your relationship with God and grow in your understanding of the teachings of the Church. Let this Lent be a time of true conversion and spiritual renewal, as you strive to live a life that is aligned with the Gospel and the teachings of the Church.

Know that you are in my prayers during this holy season. I pray that the Lord will grant you the grace to enter deeply into the mysteries of His passion and resurrection. May this Lent be a time of profound grace and spiritual growth for you and your loved ones.

My dear faithful, may you embrace the discipline of Lent with open hearts, allowing God's grace to transform you. May your observance of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving draw you closer to the Heart of Jesus, who is ever ready to welcome you with open arms.

I.X.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "+ Joaquin". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

Manilensis, Philippinae
Feria IV Cinerum MMXXIV A.D.