

**“Our Season of Lent may begin with ashes on our forehead but the place to begin is not our forehead but our heart. ”**



Lenten Letter 2022

From Bishop Wayne Kirkpatrick

My Dear People,

Traditionally the Season of Lent is a time for fasting, almsgiving and prayer. The exercise of these virtues keeps us close to God and keeps us focused on service to others. Fasting is an act of self-denial and a way of directing our thoughts away from ourselves and towards our God. Almsgiving is the act by which we give of ourselves in order to assist someone in need. Prayer should be the centre of our Christian lives lifting up our hearts in praise and thanksgiving to our God who loves us.

The word Lent comes from the Old English word, ‘lencten’ referring to the lengthening daylight hours as we move to springtime, a time of renewal and new life. Our Season of Lent may begin with ashes on our forehead but the place to begin is not our forehead but our heart. “Come back to me with all your heart.”

This Lenten call to renewal of our hearts is also a public call for renewal in the heart of the Church. Last October Pope Francis called a Synod and unlike other Synods, he has invited all the people of the world to provide input. He wants the Church to be a listening Church; to have a listening heart. Inspired by the Holy Spirit he wants people everywhere to share what is in their hearts and how the heart of the Church could respond better to the needs of our world. The word Synod means journeying together and Pope Francis has made ‘synodality’ the theme of this Synod. He wants us to focus on how we journey together as we pray, connect and share our story.

As a diocese, we want to focus on the Synod during this Season of Lent. I encourage our parishes to display the Synod poster and offer the Synod Prayer at Sunday Mass, perhaps after the Prayers of Intercession or following the Prayer after Communion. With the easing of COVID restrictions, we hope that we can gather and share our thoughts in person. Our Synod team has expertise and resources to support you in hosting these conversations, for details contact Debbie Aker at the Emmaus Centre. We have also provided many online resources for parish and personal engagement, including an online survey that may be of particular interest to those who are unable to gather. You can find the survey in English and French and other resources on our website: [www.antigonishdiocese.com/listeningchurch](http://www.antigonishdiocese.com/listeningchurch).

I invite you to pray, connect and share your story as people of the local church sharing with the universal church during this Season of Lent.

Faternally,

+ Wayne Kirkpatrick

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