

Lenten Letter from Bishop Peter Lei

My dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Our Lord commands us to love Him above everything else and our neighbours as our own selves.

We have been taught to express our love to God by committing ourselves to Him, namely, by adoring Him, trying to keep free from sin and loving our brothers. St. John reminds us: “a man who does not love the brother that he can see cannot love God whom he has never seen. So this is the commandment that He has given us, that anyone who loves God must also love his brother” (I John 4:20-21).

Inasmuch as we all too often fail to do this, we are taught to do penance, in the hope that it may go some way to compensate for the inadequacies of our performance.

There may be various ways to express penance; but in every devised or devisable form the all important element of penance is represented by self-denial, the denial of our inborn selfishness, for the benefit of our own interior conversion (“metanoia”, change of heart) and of our attentiveness and concern for our needy brothers and sisters.

Thus our Holy Father said in his address to the Universal Church on the occasion of the beginning of Lent last year: “This, rather, is the fasting that I wish... ‘sharing your bread with the hungry, sheltering the oppressed and the homeless, clothing the naked when you see them, and not turning your back on your own’ (Is. 58:6-7; First Reading for Friday after Ash Wednesday). These exhortations echo the anxieties of the people today. Each individual truly shares in the suffering and misery of all. Almsgiving and the gift of self should not be isolated and occasional acts, but the expression of brotherly union”.

Indeed, as our Holy Father still pointed out, “one can give without really communicating, one can be contributing without really sharing, one can deprive oneself of things without really having a spirit of poverty. But the person who makes a real effort, the person who genuinely seeks to help his brothers and sisters, the person who accepts his share of the Cross of Christ, does not run this risk”.

Bearing in mind these words of the Holy Father, I am appealing to you, at the commencement of this year Lenten season, to try to express your love for God and the neighbours through suitable works of penance, which would foster at the same time one’s interior conversion and also the genuine concern for the less-privileged brothers. I ask you,

my brothers and sisters in Christ, as a way of materializing your sincere willingness to share with your needy brothers and sisters, to participate in the social programme entrusted to Caritas - Hong Kong.

May this coming Lenten season, with God's help, provide each one of you with the opportunity to make your daily act of Love.

+ Peter Lei
Bishop of Hong Kong