



From +John...

Dear Friends,

Lent is a time to pay closer attention to the Word of God. The Second Vatican Council over 50 years ago reminded us of this in its Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (Sacrosanctum Concilium 109): the focus of Lent is to be a **“a period of closer attention to the Word of God and more ardent prayer.”**

I have no doubt that we all want to listen attentively to the Word of God and allow it to shape our lives, and that we want to be more ardent in prayer. As we approach Lent many will still be thinking of what they can “give up” for Lent. Some will be thinking of what else they can do in terms of giving to the poor, helping someone who is disadvantaged materially or because they are unemployed for one reason or another, some will be thinking of giving to our Bishops’ Lenten Appeal. They are all wonderful things to do, but unless those actions are inspired by the Word of God they may just be things to do. There are many ways to observe Lent; however the question I think we all need to ask is “what is the best thing to help me grow closer to God?” Lent is a time when we are challenged to be more prayerful and reflective, hopefully more caring, considerate and loving. I am sure that will only happen when we hear the invitation to “pay closer attention to the Word of God.”

In this fast moving world we need time to stop and reflect. I know I certainly do. The Word of God helps us in our prayer and reflection, and then in the way we live our lives. It is challenging, it is demanding, but it is also inspirational and consoling. Maybe at times we find the Word of God too rich or too lavish for our tastes. Perhaps we do not allow ourselves the time to chew on and absorb the Scriptures. It may also be that we do not wait sufficiently on the Lord, or listen for the Lord to speak. So that his Word might flow through our minds with new insights and through our hearts with love, a strong love which in turn enables us to reach out to others.

Each day during Lent the Lord invites us through the Prophet Isaiah:

**“Oh, come to the water all you who are thirsty;
Though you have no money, come!
Buy corn without money, and eat
and, at no cost, wine and milk”** (Isaiah 55:1)

Will we accept the Lord’s invitation this Lent?

+ John

NEWS...

- **Fr Pat McCullough** has been in Hospital for the last couple of weeks and this week will have surgery for a heart valve replacement. Fr Pat is doing well but has asked, as have the doctors and nursing staff, that he does not receive visitors. He is very grateful for peoples’ prayers and concern for him, but the number of visitors is tiring him out, and this will be especially so after the surgery. Please respect his wishes and remember him in prayer.
- **Ministry Formation Day:** Next Tuesday 28 February is the first Ministry Formation Day for 2017 at St Thomas More Church in Wilton from 10am until about 4pm. This is an opportunity to reflect on the forthcoming Synod theme “Go, you are sent” and how we can engage as many people as possible in dialogue and preparation, remembering that Pope Francis has asked us to be a Synodal Church. If you are still to register please do so by Friday 24 February to Ann Williams at a.williams@wn.catholic.org.nz
- **Pope’s Lenten Message:** With Lent beginning next week this might be a good time to look at the Lenten message of Pope Francis, to reflect on it and pray with it. There is wonderful material there for prayer and reflection and it is a great way to begin this season of prayer, almsgiving and fasting. The message can be found at: <https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/lent.index.html>
- **National Day of Prayer and Penance for victims of violence and abuse in New Zealand:** Last year Bishops Conferences throughout the world were asked to find a time to pray and do penance for the victims of violence and abuse. The New Zealand Bishops Conference agreed to make Friday 3 March, the First Friday of Lent, a National Day of Prayer and Penance for victims of violence and abuse in New Zealand. Please include this intention in Masses and prayers that day and invite people to pray for this intention.
- **Website of the Catholic Foundation:** The following website outlines something of the purpose and the work of the Catholic Foundation of the Archdiocese of Wellington. The Foundation supports the work of the Archdiocese and enables us to do things we could not do without that financial support. Please look at this website from time to time www.catholicfoundation.org.nz.

Lent is the favourable season for renewing our encounter with Christ, living in his word, in the sacraments and in our neighbour.

Pope Francis

“Go, you are sent”