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20 Cents

Bishop on Lent: Time for Reconciliation

Lent, 1978

My dear People:

Lent can be viewed from many perspectives. One perspective we had in the past was to think of Lent as a time to do difficult things, because we believe that doing what was difficult somehow pleased God. Seen from such a perspective, Lent became a sober and joyless time that, come Easter, we were happy to be over with.

I would like to suggest another perspective on Lent, namely, that we see it as a time of healing and reconciliation. The New Testament makes much of the healing ministry of Jesus, summarizing His life's work by saying that he went about doing good and healing those who were ill. For the Gospel-writers the healing ministry of Jesus was a sign of what Jesus had come to do not only for the people of his time, but for men and women of all times, for us.

St. Paul, too, describes Jesus' work as healing, or, as he puts it, reconciling. He tells us that God was in Jesus Christ reconciling the world to Himself (2 Cor. 5:19). Paul saw sin as alienating men and women from God and from one another. He saw Jesus as coming to heal this alienation by restoring men and women to communion with God and with one another.

Reconciliation is a desperate need in our society, for alienation is a common experience. We have experienced alienation in our families, division in our Church, corruption in our government, the seeds of destruction in international relationships. Perhaps never before in history has there been so great a need of realizing that the essential mission of Jesus was to heal us from our sinfulness—the ultimate cause of our alienation.

What does reconciliation mean? It is not the same thing as forgiveness. There can be forgiveness without reconciliation. If I have hurt you, you can offer me forgiveness. But unless I accept that forgiveness in a spirit of repentance, we are not truly reconciled. Reconciliation is forgiveness that is given in love and accepted in repentance. Forgiveness and the acceptance of forgiveness brings about communion which is the goal of reconciliation. In Jesus Christ God is always offering us forgiveness of our sins. But to be reconciled with God we must accept His forgiveness in repentance.

God, not only calls us to be reconciled to Himself, He also calls us to be reconcilers ourselves, entrusting to us, as St. Paul says (2 Cor. 19), the ministry of reconciliation. We must be ready to extend forgiveness to others and accept forgiveness from them. This is the way we build community—in our family, in our Church, in our country, in our world.

Easter is uniquely the time when God reconciled us to Himself. For Easter is the sign of the Father accepting the reconciling death of Jesus. Lent is our journey toward Easter and, therefore, toward reconciliation. Lent is a reminder to us that it takes time to be healed, to be reconciled. When a person is wounded physically, it takes time for that wound to heal. So, also, it takes time to be healed spiritually. It takes time for those who are estranged to become reconciled. It takes time to build community. Lent is that time.

So, my dear people, if you are looking for a perspective from which to view this Lent of 1978, think of it as a time of healing and of reconciling. Think of the relationships in your life that need to be healed; and do something about them. Think of the barriers that selfishness has erected between you and other people; and do all that you can to break down these barriers. If we live Lent out of this perspective, Easter will then be a happy experience for us, for it will mean coming to know ever more fully the joy of communion with God and with one another.



Ash Wednesday . . . 1978

Today, Ash Wednesday, is a day of fasting and abstinence from meat. Fridays of Lent are days of abstinence.

Good Friday is the only other day of fast and abstinence, under contemporary regulations for Lent. Other

The prohibition against meat applies to persons 14 years of age and older. The fast, required of those aged 21 to 59, sets a limit of one full meal a day, with two light meals.

the Corinthians: "We implore you in Christ's name: be reconciled." (Cor. 5:20)

Devotedly yours in Christ,

Joseph L. Hogan
+ Most Reverend Joseph L. Hogan, D.D.
Bishop of Rochester



Father M. Gerard Hafner, from associate pastor, St. Joseph's, Penfield, to assist at Annunciation Church, Rochester, and in the Diocesan Planning Office.

Father David P. Simon, from co-pastor, St. Augustine's, Rochester, to associate pastor, St. Mary's, Dansville.

Father Daniel L. Karl, from assistant pastor in internship, St. Mary's, Dansville, to assistant pastor in internship, St. Augustine's, Rochester.

Thoughts For Lent

The Courier-Journal this week begins a special series of columns designed for Lenten reading. Father Alfred McBride, nationally recognized theologian, will write Lenten meditations for our six editions during Lent. In his first column, Father McBride calls for us to retine our sense of sin even though the notion of sin may be taboo to modern Americans.



To complement Father McBride, the Courier-Journal has asked Church leaders from throughout the diocese to contribute. Joining Father McBride this edition are Sister Christine Lloyd, SSJ, chairman of the Theology Department at St. Agnes High School, and Father Albert Cason, pastor of St. Patrick's, Rochester.

coordinator of the Tompkins-Hoga Region.

In the weeks to come Father McBride and diocesan leaders will continue to provide material for Lenten contemplation.

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