

“Let’s give each other a chance!”

Pastoral Letter from the Archbishop for Lent 2013

(Unofficial translation)

Lent is a period which plays an important part in helping us prepare to celebrate the passion and death of Christ during Holy Week, and his resurrection on Easter Day. During this time, Church tradition calls upon us to do without material things, so as to focus better on the essentials of our life. The purpose of such renunciation is to help us believe in the Gospel, the Good News. Lent is a time of conversion, in which we turn back to this God who loves us.

And so I wish to invite you, dear brothers and sisters, to place this Lent under the sign of reconciliation. Where am I at, in my personal relationships? Are there people with whom I’m on bad terms, about whom I think ill, indeed speak ill? If there are, now is the time to be reconciled with them, now is the time to rebuild the bridges, to let new hope illumine the “blind spots” of my humanity. At times, we deal very roughly with each other. The weight of past disappointments leads to loss of confidence in others... Yet would it not be better to acknowledge the good in other people, rather than presume the worst? To find the courage to make a new start. To find the courage of God-given goodness...in our family relationships, with our neighbours, in our working environment...Now there’s a fast that is pleasing to God.

Together we can pray to be enabled to see and hear the good in other people rather than the bad... to see afresh the goodness of men and women as God sees them with His loving gaze... to live no longer isolated, but together.

The fact is that the Church itself is a community, founded by Jesus. This community can be so wonderful when we trust each other and walk together, with heads held high, towards the future.

At times, too, our lack of love and understanding is directed at our own selves. We dare not look deep into our own heart...Not only have we lost faith in others, but also in ourselves. We are like tombstones, beautiful to look at,

but with much rottenness inside. There are times we are afraid of being unable to forgive ourselves. Forgiveness must come from someone else. In Jesus, we have the ultimate, absolute friend, who gave his life for us because he loves and trusts us. That trust of his can help us to our feet again, and help us find the courage to start afresh.

If we try to live along these lines, our Easter confession will also take on renewed importance; we will be able confidently to confess our faults and failures to God, and he will offer us his mercy and forgiveness.

During this Lent, let us therefore open our hearts to each other, and to God... so as to progress together towards Easter.

+ Jean-Claude

Archbishop of Luxembourg