

The Archbishop's Lenten pastoral letter

"Conversion to Christ"

(unofficial translation)

Dear brothers and sisters,

Lent is always an auspicious time for reflecting on our faith. That is particularly true this year, since we, the Church in Luxembourg, have set out on the path towards conversion to Christ. Towards an encounter with Christ: in our reading of the Scriptures, in our personal or collective prayer, in the sacraments or in the presence of our needy brother or sister. That encounter leads us to think afresh, and to convert to a fuller life as authentic and committed Christians.

We have adopted a lifestyle so cluttered with different objects and experiences that we have become out-and-out consumers, to the point that our religion – indeed Jesus Christ himself – is relegated to being just one of many optional extras. So often we stop short at the superficial aspect of things, and fail to penetrate to the heart of the matter. We lose the freedom of our relationship with God, and become men and women driven by our habits and desires of the moment. This is the context in which Christ speaks to us to tell us that the Kingdom of God is near. But if we are to be capable of hearing his voice in our society, we need to take ourselves in hand, to work on our inner self.

That is why I propose we make each Friday in this period of Easter preparation a day of fasting and abstinence. A frugal meal can help us break the mould of our humdrum daily routine, and open ourselves to Christ's call. At the same time it is an act of solidarity with the poor. And how much better if we do this, not just as individuals, but also in our various communities. Fasting and abstinence open up our hearts, making it easier for us to pray. Would this not also be an opportunity for us to deepen our prayer life, to keep up our dialogue and contact with the living God? How much we miss out on, without personal prayer!

Lent also provides a stimulus for almsgiving. Our Pope has exhorted us to do – and to give – things which really cost us something, so as to become freer and happier people. We cannot remain indifferent to the extreme poverty which prevails throughout our globalised world. It is easy, of course, to tell governments and aid organisations what solutions they should adopt, but the real question is this: what could we – what could I – do?

Let us shake ourselves up during this Lenten season! Let us open our hearts to the distress of the world – which is also to be found in Luxembourg. Only if we open our hands in sharing can we receive that wonderful gift of freedom, the freedom enjoyed by the children of God.

Lent is a time for preparing the great Paschal Feast, when we celebrate Jesus' resurrection from the dead. Yet how can we truly celebrate Easter, if we do not first convert to Christ?

Let me therefore invite you to one further action; let us really concentrate on the Passion of Christ Jesus, and let us really contemplate this mystery. I would like to encourage parish communities to celebrate together not only Easter Day, but also Palm Sunday, Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and, during the Easter Vigil, to meet the risen Christ in the depths of the heart.

As Church, we are faced with many challenges: the future of religious instruction in schools, the future funding of salaries for clergy and lay co-workers – these are presently up for discussion – all in the context of the more than disquieting financial situation of the Archdiocese. What serious concerns for our Church! But I am also aware that each of you carries the weight of personal cares in his or her heart: anxiety, suffering, separation, illness and bereavement.

Since we are Christians, hope dwells within us; and it increases within us thanks to the closeness of the Lord of Life.

In this spirit, brothers and sisters, I wish you a positive and fruitful Lent.

In profound communion with you,

+Jean-Claude Hollerich
Archbishop of Luxembourg