

**A PASTORAL LETTER  
FROM THE BISHOP OF LANCASTER  
FOR THE FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT (2016)**



**Appointed to be read aloud at all weekend Public Masses in the  
Diocese of Lancaster on the weekend of 13/14 February 2016**

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ!

I write this short Pastoral Letter to you by way of encouragement on this First Sunday of Lent, as the Church begins her journey and time of preparation for Holy Week and the great feast of Easter. The season of Lent is a spiritual call to each one of us to look into our hearts, examine our priorities and discover what really matters in our life. It is a time of personal discernment and can require courage on our part. As we embark on this six week journey in the company of our brothers and sisters let us be sure to keep our gaze fixed firmly on Jesus, the Son of God. His struggle with the Devil and the power of temptation, as related in today's gospel, ought to give us fresh heart in our endeavour to lead the Christian life.

Those forty days which the Lord Jesus spent apart in the wilderness at the beginning of His public ministry were to prepare Him to carry out His heavenly Father's will above anything else. As we just heard, Satan and the attractions of the world beckoned Him to take another path, but that was not why He came on earth and He courageously refused. Being fully human, Jesus had to choose and He wrestled with temptation, as we ourselves often have to do in our day to day living. The Son of God struggled to discover and fulfil what His Father had laid out for Him. If we find it difficult therefore, we are in good company.

Lent is a time of self-restraint, a holy season for ensuring that we put God at the centre of our life, and for being more than ever aware of the needs of those around us. The three temptations which the Devil set before Jesus and which he resisted, can also seduce us if we allow them to do so. By refusing to turn stones into bread Jesus is teaching us that

apparently immediate and easy answers aren't always the best. Had He chosen to worship the false God which Satan is, He could have been rich and famous. But God alone deserves our total loyalty and devotion. No one can take His place. The Son of God declined to throw Himself from the top of the Temple and so force His heavenly Father's hand. That is not the way of faith, of trusting in a loving Father's merciful care for us. Like Jesus, we are called to walk the often lonely road of faith.

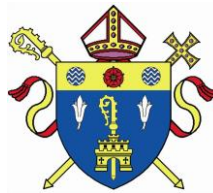
Dear brothers and sisters, Lent is a season of God's grace, it is an opportunity to grow and become ever more aware of our Saviour's love for us, and the extent He went to prove that love. His own journey would take Him to His passion and death, but ultimately to the wonder and glory of the resurrection on Easter Day. I pray that the days of Lent may find us alert and courageous enough to follow the Lord's example in rejecting what is false and illusionary, and that when it comes the new life of Easter and the risen Lord may be ours in abundance.

Assuring you of my constant prayers, and with my blessing.

Yours most sincerely in Jesus Christ,

*+ Michael Campbell OSA*

✠ Michael G Campbell OSA  
Bishop of Lancaster



**The Catholic Diocese of Lancaster**