

Archbishop Martin Currie's Lenten Message 2010

(St. John's, February 9, 2010) Archbishop Martin Currie, Archbishop of St. John's in his annual Lenten Message released today called on Catholics to take some time to reflect on how they celebrate the Lenten season.

On Wednesday, February 17, 2010, Catholics throughout the world will enter one of the most important seasons of the church year: the "40 days" of Lent. The word "Lent" comes from the Anglo-Saxon word *lencten*, or spring, the time of year when the days begin to lengthen.

Lent is one of the most important seasons of the church year because it is a time of penitence, an introspective period during which Christians take stock of their lives and their relationships.

Starting on Ash Wednesday, the Lenten season includes 40 weekdays and five Sundays before Holy Week.

The Full text of the message read in all Churches in the Archdiocese of St. John's and Diocese of Grand Falls this weekend is below:

Dear Pastors, Administrators and Faithful:

In a few days ashes will be placed on our foreheads and we will begin the Season of Lent.

If Lent is to mean anything in our lives it has to be a season of renewal. The word itself means springtime. So above everything else, it's time for a new life, for fresh beginnings and growth. The idea is that we die with Christ, like the seed in the ground and rise with Him to a more abundant life. We die to sin and rise to integrity. We die to selfishness and rise to generosity, especially towards the poor. We prune ourselves through penance growing into stronger and more healthy Christians.

FASTING AND ABSTINENCE

Fasting (the denial of our human appetites) and abstinence (not eating meat) are long standing and venerable practices in the Church. We are encouraged to practice these throughout the year but especially during Lent. The two prescribed days of fast and abstinence are Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. On these days all, over the age of 14, are asked to abstain from meat and those between 18 and 59 are to fast. Those under medical care are always exempt.

FAMILY DISCIPLINE

We live in a fast paced, highly technical modern world which in many ways keeps families from coming together for prayer and meals. May I suggest that each household try to set aside each week a time to pray together and to share a meal together. A fast from television and the computer gives us time to listen to God speaking to us in the silence of our hearts, sharing a meal gives us the opportunity to know each other better and to build healthy relationships.

THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION

During this Lenten Season I wish to strongly encourage you to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation (penance). Meeting Jesus in this sacrament and knowing that we are forgiven and still loved no matter what our sins are can be a beautiful experience. In many churches to-day the celebration of this sacrament is notable absence. I encourage all pastors to make times available to celebrate God's mercy and forgiveness.

As we begin our Lenten journey I pray that each of us may be drawn closer to Christ in our thoughts, our prayers and our love and that Lent will have been a real springtime in our lives.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

MOST REVEREND MARTIN W. CURRIE, D.D.
Archbishop of St. John's