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OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

Bishop Coleman's 2010 Lenten Message: *"Live as Children of the Light"*

February 4, 2010

Dear Friends in Christ,

Looking at the ancient roots of Lent, we focus on this season's origin as a time of preparation for Baptism. Today the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) follows this same approach in preparing men and women for the sacraments of initiation at the Easter Vigil. In Lent, each Sunday's readings reveal a mystery of Christ's identity and of the new life in the Spirit.

We who are already baptized may ask, "What is this season's significance for us beyond a formal observance of fast and abstinence or giving something up? How can we rediscover its spiritual meaning?" Lent calls us to ponder anew our own baptism: our profession of faith, the promises we made to reject sin, and our Christian vocation to holiness of life.

Baptism is the Sacrament in which we share in the death and resurrection of our Lord. We are conformed to his likeness in his death on the cross; we are transformed by his resurrection. We have died with him, so that we may also live with him forever. This gives us great hope.

St. Paul makes us aware of baptism as a sacrament of transformation. He speaks to the baptized as new creatures: "You should put away the old self of your former way of life [...] and be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and put on the new self, created in God's way in righteousness and holiness of truth" (cf. Eph 4:22-24). He goes on to say: "You were once in darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of the light" (Eph 5:8).

This means that as disciples of Christ, we are called not only to meditate upon the fact of our baptism, but also to respond to it, to live it out. During this holy time of year, we recommit ourselves to prayer, to helping the poor, and to telling others about Jesus and our experience of him and of his love in the Church. In this way, the light of Christ will radiate from us and enlighten our world.

May your journey through Lent prepare you for the greatest feast of the Church year—Easter—and to receive the blessings of the new life it promises us.

Sincerely yours in the Lord,

+ *George W. Coleman*
Bishop of Fall River