



Diocese of Fall River
Office of the Bishop
Most Reverend Edgar M. da Cunha, S.D.V., D.D.

Bishop da Cunha's 2022 Lenten Message

Dear Friends in Christ,

The holy season of Lent is again upon us, a season in which we are called to embark on a spiritual journey of reflection, repentance, and renewal. The Church reminds us that the Lord calls us and invites us during this time to a life of change and conversion. The Scripture readings speak of beginning anew; of fasting, prayer, and almsgiving; of conversion of heart; of forgiveness. They remind us we are called to live a holy life.

We begin this Lent with cautious optimism that progress is being made against the coronavirus pandemic. We are hopeful and grateful, as the number of cases continues to decline, illness is less severe, and vaccines are widely available.

In some ways, the pandemic may have seemed like an extended Lent, as many parallels can be seen between them. During Lent we practice penance, sacrifice, fasting, and abstinence to come out on the other side renewed and strengthened to celebrate the Paschal mystery and new life at Easter. In a sense, the coronavirus ushered in a long-lasting "Lenten Season." We have made sacrifices, we have experienced or witnessed suffering, and now look forward to new beginnings and emerging from the ashes of the pandemic.

Many of us are eager to reconnect and stay connected with family and friends. Lent, especially this year, can help support this. Lent is a wonderful opportunity to spend more time together in prayer, in growing in understanding of faith, in service to those in need, and in support of one another as we try to live better and more holy lives.

As we seek ways to practice prayer, fasting, and charity this Lent, let us not forget to consider doing so with our parish community — gathering for Mass, prayer services, the sacraments, and for working together to serve the poor and needy within the community. I hope this Lent can be a time for vibrant parish community involvement, reinvolvement, and forging lasting relationships in and with Christ.

Suffering, pain, sadness, the cross, these are never a dead end, Jesus' Passion assures us, death will never have the last word for He has conquered it when He rose again. They point to new life. How can we find, during Lent, signs of life for us, our communities, our country, and world?

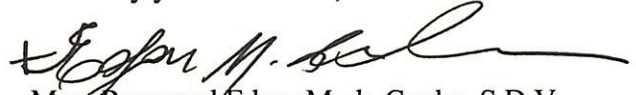
As I said in my homily at the Mass for the opening of the Synod:

"I want to tell you that I have a dream today. And my dream is that from the ashes of the coronavirus pandemic, a renewed church will be born. A church that is centered on Jesus, centered on the Eucharist, and a church that has a Synod process as its main character. Yes, I have this dream, that we will be a united church, an active participant church, a church focused on the Gospel, on the teaching and the presence of Jesus. What is your dream today?"

It is important to remember that Lent is not an end in and of itself, but a season that leads us to the joyous and hope-filled celebration of Easter.

Likewise, this year it can also be a season to lead us to reconnect with God, with church, with community and with family after pandemic-imposed restrictions kept us apart. Let this Lent be the time to restore our practice of the faith and rebuild a vibrant church for now and the generations to follow.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Edgar M. da Cunha". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Most Reverend Edgar M. da Cunha, S.D.V.
Bishop of Fall River