



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

2023 LENTEN MESSAGE

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

It has been one year since the beginning of the war in Ukraine. We have seen the tremendous loss of life, property and the unimaginable suffering inflicted upon so many innocent people in that country. More recently, we also witnessed the tragedy of the earthquake in Turkey and Syria. There, too, we have seen an incredible loss of life and the unthinkable suffering of millions of people who were wounded, who lost loved ones, possessions, and a way of life that will never be the same.

Sometimes we take for granted the peace and prosperity that we enjoy and the blessings of being healthy and living in freedom. Lent reminds us that all things, as St. Teresa of Avila said, “All things are passing away:[but gratefully] God never changes.” It is a season to recall we are subject to pain and suffering, to loss and a cross at any time. Lent is a time for us to reflect and recognize how important our faith is in our lives and how important family is to each one of us; it is a time to embrace our faith and our family with generosity, faithfulness, and gratitude.

Jesus tells us in the Gospel that if we want to be His disciples, we must take up our cross each day and follow Him (Luke 9:23). Even though this is a challenging invitation and a difficult path to follow, it is still the best way to a life of ultimate happiness, peace, and salvation. When we embrace our crosses with love, faith and resignation-- knowing that we are not carrying it alone -- the burden becomes lighter and possible to endure.

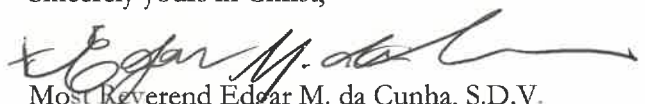
Lent is also a time to reflect and recognize all that Jesus did for us by dying on the cross and shedding His blood for our salvation. We are called to deeper reflection on the Paschal Mystery - Jesus’ suffering, death, and Resurrection.

In his Lenten message this year, Pope Francis writes: “Lent leads to Easter: the ‘retreat’ is not an end in itself, but a means of preparing us to experience the Lord’s passion and cross with faith, hope, and love, and thus to arrive at the resurrection.”

How best to prepare for the glorious feast of Easter? By examining our actions, our attitudes, and our relationship with God with renewed scrutiny and by committing ourselves to repentance and conversion of heart. Now is the time; this is the opportunity of Lent. As a start, we can put into practice the Lenten disciplines of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. These offer wonderful means to support our resolve to deepen our faith and to help those around us in need.

It is my prayer that we all open our hearts to the Lenten journey ahead; that it be blessed and transformative. May we ever cherish our faith and be sustained by it, and may we never forget the suffering and crosses borne by our sisters and brothers across the human family.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

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