

THE EPISCOPAL CONFERENCE OF MALAWI



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A Lenten Message from the Chairperson of the Episcopal Conference of Malawi (ECM)

LET US LOVE NOT IN WORD AND SPEECH BUT IN DEED

AND TRUTH (1 Jn. 3:18)

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

With Ash Wednesday, the Catholic Church begins its conversion journey of forty days, which is traditionally marked by prayer, sharing, silence, fasting and works of charity, as she awaits Easter celebration.

Considering that Lent is a precious time given us by God “for discerning and performing good works” (Pope Benedict XVI), I take this opportunity to exhort and encourage each and every Christian to work for attainment of the fullness of love (1 Jn. 2:3-11; 3:11-24) and good works as inspired by the Gospel and our faith.

Pope Benedict XVI's message for Lent, 2012

In his Lenten message for 2012, His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI has proposed to all of us a few thoughts in the light of this forty days' journey. Inspired by the text from the letter to the Hebrews (10:24) “Let us be concerned for each other, to stir a response in love and good works”, the Holy Father has highlighted that Lenten Season is an opportunity to specially reflect upon charity, which is ‘the very heart of Christian life.’

Based on this passage but also the Great Commandment of love (Matt. 22:36-39) and the Parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk. 10:30-32), the Holy Father invites all the faithful to take the Lenten journey of 2012 as an opportunity to show concern for each other by taking up responsibility of a custodian towards our brothers and sisters in a spirit of charity and gentleness (Gal. 6:1; Prov. 9:8; Eph. 5:11). However, this would be impossible without getting rid of life of isolation, indifference and selfishness from our hearts.

The Holy Father further points to the fact that to be custodians of each other in our Christian communities implies “desiring what is good for them from every point of view – physical, moral and spiritual.” According to Saint Paul, fraternal correction in humility is an act of charity (1 Cor. 12:25). Therefore, taking spiritual responsibility towards our brothers and sisters is considered to be a necessary expression of our genuine concern for the good of our companions in discipleship.

Thus Pope Benedict wants us to consider the Lenten journey as a precious moment whereby every Christian takes heed of that call “to be concerned for each other and to stir a response in love and good works by walking together in holiness” (Heb. 10:24).

Let us journey with a new heart and a new spirit (Ezek. 36:26)

On behalf of my fellow brother bishops of the Catholic Church, I appeal to all the Catholic faithful to journey in the path that the Holy Father has called us to do. Let us aim at a higher standard of Christian living. Let us renew our witness of love and fidelity to the Lord.

Therefore, let us desist the temptation of being lukewarm Christians. Let us use our different talents for our own good and the good of others. Malawi would be a better place to live in if we all take our respective roles. Let us indeed follow the invitation of the Holy Father, Pope Benedict XV1 so that our journey during this Lent motivate us into anticipation of one another charity, service and good works (Heb. 6:10). Let us help carry one another’s burden (Gal. 6:2).

Among the evils we should fight against more especially during this Holy Season of Lent are: corruption, nepotism, tribalism, pride, body desires, witchcraft, Satanism, child abuse, drunkenness, etc. My brothers and sisters, these evils are against the law of love which is the centre of Christian life.

I urge you to pray for our country and our leaders. They have the big responsibility of working for the good of each and everyone. Malawi today is passing through very difficult times. As believers, we know God will not abandon us for He loves us so dearly. Let us all pray for our country.

May Mary, Mother of the Church accompany us during this Holy Season of Lent so that we may be transformed into Easter People: men and women filled with faith, hope and love.

I wish you all a blessed Lent.

Right Rev. Joseph M. Zuza

CHAIRPERSON, EPISCOPAL CONFERENCE OF MALAWI

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