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MESSAGE FROM + NOËL SIMARD, BISHOP OF VALLEYFIELD, FOR LENT 2022

WITH JESUS, BE REBORN DIFFERENTLY

Every year, Lent calls us to convert, to make a new start and to be reborn with Jesus. But how and why? Indeed, the pandemic has afflicted us for two years and has severely affected our hope for a better world and a humanity healed and saved in Jesus. The Covid 19 virus has caused an unprecedented health, social and humanitarian crisis, a crisis that has shown our great vulnerability and fragility. This crisis has made us even more aware of the essential good that is health and how much we must be in solidarity in the care that we must give it. And now, the brutal, totally unjustified and horrible invasion of Ukraine by Russia threatens another essential good that is necessary for us to live together, namely peace.

In such a context of threat and fear, Lent offers us the possibility of being reborn in trust, trust in God, trust in others, trust in the world and trust in the future. As we journey towards Easter, let us ask the Lord to renew His life in us and to help us to take those royal roads of conversion that are prayer, fasting and charity. The Lord invites us to make a conscious effort: to return to Him, to draw from the source through prayer and listening to His Word, to be silent in order to hear His voice better. In his encyclical Laudato Si, Pope Francis reminds us that "the external deserts are multiplying in our world because the internal deserts have become so great". Lent also asks us to fast by stripping ourselves of that which weighs down our following of Christ, by digging into the desire for God that is too often extinguished by the pursuit of material goods and luxury, by adopting that voluntary and joyful simplicity lived by John the Baptist, Francis and Clare of Assisi, Mother Teresa, Charles de Foucauld, and many other contemporaries like Pope Francis.

Finally, Lent reminds us to be authentic witnesses of the life of the Risen Lord through a renewed charity towards those who are destitute, excluded or fleeing their country because of war. Several organizations, including Development and Peace - Caritas Canada, which is the spokesperson for Caritas Ukraine, are already inviting us to increase our generosity in order to respond to the essential needs of millions of Ukrainians who are displaced or who have taken refuge in neighbouring countries such as Poland and Hungary. The Share Lent campaign has already begun.

May this Lent 2022 help us to be reborn in a different way and to let the new life of the Risen One blossom in us and bear fruits of conversion, justice, peace, sharing, love and solidarity!

Have a good Lent! Together, let us trust and make something new!

+ Bishop Noël