

Lenten Message

By The Most Rev. Daniel E. Flores, Bishop of Brownsville

Note: The following is a transcript of Bishop Daniel E. Flores' Lenten message. The video recording of the Lenten message is available on the Diocese of Brownsville's Web site at www.cdob.org.

La Cuaresma – Una temporada para compartir la vida de Jesús

Refocus upon the presence of the Lord

I would like to share a few thoughts about this Lenten season as we enter more deeply into the sacred time the Lord gives us to prepare for the Easter celebration, the Easter mysteries.

Este es un momento en que toda la Iglesia debe de compartir la vida de Jesús de un modo muy especial, debemos prepararnos en la gracia del Señor a vivir en los misterios de las fiestas pascales.

The Lord Jesus went 40 days into the desert and he shows us, by his example, that we are called to separate ourselves a little bit, in a different way, than maybe we do ordinarily from our routine, to give more time to perhaps some penance in our lives, to give a little more time to prayer in our lives, and certainly to give more time in acts of charity and acts of compassion for those who are in need.

Tradicionalmente en la Iglesia tenemos tres prácticas cuaresmales: la penitencia, la oración y el ayuno. Las prácticas tienen un efecto de ayudarnos a participar en la vida de Jesús especialmente en su caridad, porque todo tiene que ver con el amor de Dios y lo que queremos nosotros durante la Cuaresma es entrar con más profundidad a participar con más fuerza en el amor que Jesús ha compartido con nosotros.

When we separate ourselves, for example, from some of the ordinary things that we like, maybe we give up something for Lent, this is a good way to help us recognize that God must be first in our lives, and we can say “no” to little things so that we can say “yes” to the great mystery in our lives which is the love of almighty God. Also, when we spend more time in prayer, we really imitate Jesus, who went into the desert specifically so that He could speak with his Father in that intimate communion which He shares always and constantly with his Father. He invites us to pray more, read the Gospel, and then in a certain way, to ask the Lord for the grace to put the Gospel into practice.

Maybe take just five minutes extra during the day to read the Holy Gospel. To enter into a conversation with the Lord Jesus would be a very good way of imitating the Lord in his time in the desert. Ultimately it is to help us become more loving and more generous in our concern and in our compassion for those around us. Just as the Lord Jesus gave up his very life in this great act of love for the good of all of us, so also we are called really to enter into that mystery of generosity which often requires a sacrifice of our time, of our energy, of our attention so that we can in some way experience that joy which the Lord Jesus gives us when we share in this great act of love which is his gift of himself to us. And so Lent is really a time to purify and to focus so that the Lord and his grace can help us to become stronger in our sharing in the great mysteries of life.

Sometimes people say “Where is God?” I think sometimes we don’t realize that the Lord is very close to us and we just need to know where to look for him. He is in prayer. He is in the scriptures. He is also in those who suffer, and so during Lent we try to refocus upon the presence of the Lord and give ourselves the space that the Lord needs to make a difference in our lives.

Muchas personas en el mundo se preguntan ¿dónde está Dios?, ¿dónde puedo encontrar al Señor? Los evangelios nos enseñan que prácticamente el Señor se encuentra en la oración, especialmente en presencia del Santísimo Sacramento, porque el Señor dijo “Esto es mi cuerpo”. Esto quiere decir que la presencia del Señor durante la Cuaresma la podemos buscar especialmente en la hostia, en el Santísimo Sacramento del altar.

También el Señor mismo dijo que nosotros íbamos a encontrar su presencia en los más pequeños, en los que están sufriendo. El Señor nos invita a la compasión, a buscar la cara del Señor en las personas más necesitadas.

Las obras de caridad tienen mucho que ver con nuestra vida cristiana y nuestro deseo de compartir la vida de Jesús y todo tiene que ver con eso.

Cuando el mundo nos pregunta ¿dónde está tu Dios? nosotros diremos: está presente en su Cuerpo, en su Sangre. Hablando del Santísimo Sacramento, éste se hace presente en los que están sufriendo en su propio cuerpo, que son la Iglesia de los miembros fieles que viven aquí, alrededor de nosotros. Busquemos al Señor en la oración, busquemos su cara en los que están sufriendo.

La penitencia nos crea un espacio para poder mantener la libertad y buscar la libertad de servir al Señor, en esto imitamos la vida del Señor Jesús en el desierto.

The Lord Jesus invites us to share in his life. We look for him; we look for him in those who suffer; we look for him in prayer, especially in the Blessed Sacrament because He is truly present there. Ultimately our penitential practices in Lent, even if they are small practices of saying no to ourselves, are ways by which we create space to be able to have that freedom of spirit. That discipline that allows us to open our eyes to see where God is present in the world and in ourselves as we encounter him in our daily lives, and really that is where the Lord wishes to be found in our daily lives - in prayer, in meditation, in penitential practices, but, ultimately in acts of Love.

May God, during this Lenten season, bless you all and fill your hearts with the knowledge of his love as a good preparation for the Easter mysteries.

*Que Dios les conceda a todos ustedes la bendición y la gracia necesaria para seguir en éste camino con nuestro Señor en el desierto, para prepararnos con mayor esfuerzo a celebrar las fiestas pascuales.
AMÉN.*