



**Diocese of Worcester**  
Office of the Bishop  
49 Elm Street  
Worcester, Massachusetts 01609

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Christians throughout the world will celebrate Ash Wednesday next week, and a new Lent will begin for Christians everywhere. This holy season should be a special time for us. Lent is a time to turn from sin and live as true disciples of Jesus Christ, giving evidence to the central role the Lord should play in our lives.

Deep down, most of us know the need for personal spiritual renewal. There is, perhaps, no better time than Lent to rethink old attitudes and practices. It is a time to walk with the Lord more faithfully and share in His life and mission in a more concerted way.

Living the Christian life is never easy and this is especially true in a self-indulgent society. It takes courage and conviction to "repent and believe the Good News." (*Mark 1:14-20*). However, we find our deepest meaning as human persons when we turn toward God and discover the hope that He offers to us.

In Lent we find spiritual renewal in many ways. While particular attention should always be given to our traditional practices of fasting and abstinence, there is much more that we can do. Time-honored customs include frequent reception of the Sacraments of Eucharist and Reconciliation, reading Sacred Scripture, making the Stations of the Cross, participating in devotions like the Rosary or in parish missions, and living by the Corporal Works of Mercy.

In a special way I ask you to offer prayers and sacrifices for peace in Afghanistan and in the Middle East. Please remember all those who long for freedom and justice in China as well, especially our fellow Catholics. And, here at home, we should recommit ourselves to the importance of religious liberty and the inviolable dignity of all human life from natural conception to natural death.

Together, let us try to follow the Lord more closely this Lent. It is my hope that fervent prayer, sincere penance and care for others will characterize our spiritual lives. Having done these things, we can trust that the joy of Easter will be ours in abundance.

With every prayerful best wish, I remain

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Robert J. McManus  
Bishop of Worcester

February 17, 2012