



A Time of Grace and Renewal: Lenten Penance and Preparation for Easter in the Jubilee of Hope

We are three months along our pilgrim way of the Holy Year 2025, the Jubilee of Hope, and we are invited once more to open our hearts to the transforming grace of God. This year is a time for all of us to renew our faith and hope in Jesus Christ, who has overcome the world and offers us the gift of eternal life. Our Lenten journey - marked by penance, prayer, and preparation - calls us to draw nearer to Christ and to one another as members of His Body, the Church.

The theme of this Jubilee is anchored in the words of St. Paul from his Letter to the Romans: *“Hope does not disappoint us, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.”* (Romans 5:5). As we meditate upon these words, we are reminded that our Christian life, from the grace of our Baptism to the ongoing call to conversion, is built upon the foundation of hope. Hope in the promise of salvation, hope in the mercy of God, and hope in the eternal life that awaits us in Christ Jesus.

RENEWING THE GRACE OF BAPTISM

The grace of Baptism, which we celebrate once for all, is not a one-time event, but a continual reality in the life of the Christian. Through Baptism, we are restored to God’s divine life, washed clean of sin, adopted as children of God, and called to live according to the promises made at our Baptism. Each day, the Church calls us to renew these promises by striving to live as faithful disciples of Jesus Christ. This ongoing renewal is an invitation to embrace the hope we have in God’s love, a love that sustains us in every moment of our lives.

THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE: A PATH TO RECONCILIATION

Lent is a time of penance, but penance is not merely a matter of outward actions; it is about turning our hearts back to God. The sacrament of Penance offers us the grace of forgiveness and reconciliation. In this sacrament, God’s mercy is poured out upon us, healing the wounds of sin and division, and restoring us to full communion with the Church. The Lord calls us to reconciliation not only for the forgiveness of our sins but also to restore the unity of the Body of Christ, which sin can harm.

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In the sacrament of Reconciliation, we are reminded that God is always ready to forgive and to embrace us with open arms. For those who may have fallen away from the practice of this sacrament, I encourage you to return with confidence, trusting in God's infinite mercy. As Pope Francis reminds us, *"For all of us, may the Jubilee be an opportunity to be renewed in hope. God's Word helps us find reasons for that hope."*

THE CALL TO PENANCE: FASTING, ABSTINENCE, AND CHARITY

The days of Ash Wednesday and Good Friday stand as significant moments in our Lenten journey of penance. On **Ash Wednesday**, 5 March 2025, we begin the season with a powerful reminder of our mortality and need for repentance. On Ash Wednesday and **Good Friday**, 18 April 2025, the Church calls us to abstain from meat and to fast as acts of penance and self-denial. All those who have completed their fourteenth year of age are to abstain from meat on these days, and those between the ages of 18 and 60 are urged to fast.

While these days of penance are vital, the Church also encourages us to embrace each Friday throughout the year as a special day of penance and prayer, as well as a day to accompany others, through charitable works of mercy. These practices of self-denial and charity help us to grow in holiness, especially as we follow Christ's example of self-sacrificial love, which we commemorate most powerfully in His Passion and death on the Cross. I urge all the faithful to embrace these Lenten disciplines not as a burden or imposition, but as joyful opportunities to grow closer to the Lord and to one another, as we share in the love and mercy of God.

THE HOLY DAYS OF LENT AND EASTER

Lent and Easter are the heart of the Church's liturgical year, and I encourage all the faithful to make a conscious effort to participate in the sacred liturgies of these Seasons, but most especially the Sacred Triduum. On Holy Thursday, 17 April 2025, we celebrate the **Mass of the Lord's Supper**, marking the institution of the Eucharist. On Good Friday, 18 April 2025, we observe the **Passion of our Lord**, remembering His suffering and death for our salvation. On Holy Saturday, 19 April 2025, we gather in vigil to celebrate the **Resurrection of the Lord**, the triumph of life over death. And finally, on Easter Sunday, 20 April 2025, we celebrate the glorious victory of Christ's Resurrection.

The *Paschal Precept*, also known as the Easter duty, calls all the faithful who have received the sacraments of Initiation: Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist; to prepare themselves to receive Holy Communion between Ash Wednesday and **Trinity Sunday**, 15 June 2025. This is a time to renew our commitment to Christ and to the community of the Church, to participate fully in the Eucharist, and to be transformed by the grace of God, which equips us for the mission of announcing the Good News to the world.



EMBRACING THE HOPE OF CHRIST

The Holy Year, and especially the season of Lent, invites us to rediscover the joy and hope that comes from knowing Jesus Christ. I urge all of you, my sisters and brothers, especially those people who have suffered harm from members of our community, or who may have chosen to distance themselves from the Church or from the sacraments, to seek out Christ, who is love and mercy and who is the hope of the world. Read the Scriptures, pray with your heart, seek spiritual direction, and make use of the rich devotional practices of our faith, such as the Rosary and the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Saints. And, most importantly, come back to the Sacrament of Reconciliation. God is waiting to be gracious to you, to heal, to forgive, and to restore you to the fullness of His love.

This Jubilee of Hope is an opportunity for each of us to be renewed in our faith and to be witnesses to the world of the good things the Lord has done for us. Let us allow the Word of God to inspire our hearts and open our eyes to the many reasons we have for hope. May this season of Lent prepare us to celebrate Easter with renewed hearts, full of the hope that only Christ can give.

In Christ's love and peace,

+ Anthony Randazzo

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