



LENT – A TIME TO TAKE STOCK AND BE GRATEFUL

We are in the season of Lent – a time to take stock of our lives and our relationship with God and each other. This is both personal and an invitation to us in our communities and for us as Mercy Associates. Fr Ron Rolheiser OMI, an Oblate theologian, offers this reflection:

Images for Lent

Religiously, the richest image we have for Lent is the image of Jesus going into the desert, voluntarily, to fast and pray. Scripture tells us that Jesus went into the desert for forty days and, while there, he ate nothing. This doesn't necessarily mean that, literally, he took no food or water during that time, but that he deprived himself of all physical supports (including food, water, enjoyments, distractions) that protected him from feeling, full force, his vulnerability, dependence, and need to surrender in deeper trust to God. And in doing this, we are told, he found himself hungry and consequently vulnerable to temptations from the devil – but also, by that same token, more open to God. The desert, by taking away the securities and protections of ordinary life, strips us bare and leaves us naked, both before God and the devil. This brings us face-to-face with our own chaos. That's an image for Lent.

- *What words resonate with me? What image do I have of Lent?*
- *What is my desert?*
- ❖ *As I take stock - for what or for whom am I grateful in my life?*



As we celebrated the twelfth anniversary of Pope Francis on 13 March for what are we grateful?

What is his legacy?

What are the attributes of his leadership?

For what are we grateful?

What might be the reflections for us?

What is our prayer of gratitude for Pope Francis?

Loving God,

whenever our interior life becomes caught up in its own interests and concerns, there is no longer room for others, no place for the poor.

May we always hear your voice, and feel the quiet joy of your love.

Never let us become resentful, angry or listless.

May we live the dignified fulfilled life, that is your will for us,

that has its life in the Spirit and its source in your heart, O Risen Christ. Amen.

[Prayer from Pope Francis' words 'The Joy of the Gospel' – Evangelii Gaudium, 1]



Pope Francis' Message for Lent 2025: “Let us journey together in hope”.

The Holy Father's Message is inspired by the Jubilee 2025 theme “Pilgrims of Hope”.

“This Lent, as we share in the grace of the Jubilee Year, I would like to propose a few reflections on what it means to *journey together in hope*, and on the summons to conversion that God in his mercy addresses to all of us, as individuals and as a community,” Pope Francis writes.

In his Message, the Holy Father underlines that to journey “*evokes the lengthy journey of the people of Israel to the Promised Land*” and adds that “*a first call to conversion thus comes from the realization that all of us are pilgrims in this life*”, as we reflected during World Day of Migrants and Refugees 2024.

Secondly, the Pope underlines that this journey is made together and explains that “*Christians are called to walk at the side of others, and never as lone travellers*”, it is necessary “*to walk together, to be synodal*” because “*this is the vocation of the Church*”.

In conclusion, the Holy Father affirms that it is necessary “*to journey together in hope, for we have been given a promise*”, in that “*hope does not disappoint*” (Rom 5:5).

This is the third call to conversion, which is the central message of the Jubilee, “*a call to hope, to trust in God and his great promise of eternal life*”. For this reason, the Pope encourages us so that **hope** “*may be the focus of our Lenten journey towards the victory of Easter*”.

What is the Call of Lent for us as Mercy Associates?

Mercy Associates are called to live and share the mercy of God.

We are women and men inspired by the life of Jesus Christ revealed in Scripture and by the vision and charism of Catherine McAuley.

Guided by mercy values of compassion, justice, hospitality and hope, we:

- ◆ celebrate and give thanks for God’s merciful love
- ◆ nurture our relationship with God
- ◆ witness to our faith in prayer and action, giving expression to God’s mercy under the guidance of the Holy Spirit in response to the needs of these times in the ordinariness of our daily lives and in right relationship with all of creation.
- ◆ journey with each other and in companionship with the Sisters of Mercy.



As we journey through Lent as Pilgrims of Hope:

- ❖ How are we living our commitment to living and sharing the Mercy of God?
- ❖ Are we taking time to reflect on the Gospels for each week?

God is our Companion on the Journey and Catherine is walking with us in Mercy.