

Office of the Bishop

Ash Wednesday
February 25, 2009

My Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

On this Ash Wednesday, we already anxiously await the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. But first, we must follow Him to Calvary. As the one Church in East Texas, let us embark on a Lenten journey of penance, prayer, fasting, and almsgiving for love of God and one another. Many times before, you have heard this, my constant plea to you that is The Bishop's Appeal: "do penance, pray, fast, and give alms."

Our Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI also reminds us: "At the beginning of Lent... the Liturgy sets before us again, three penitential practices that are very dear to the biblical and Christian tradition – prayer, almsgiving, fasting – to prepare us to better celebrate Easter."¹

As Bishop of the Diocese of Tyler, I wish to join my voice with that of our Holy Father. I pray every Christian may enter more deeply this season of Lent as free sons and daughters of God. Let us be diligent in our preparations for the joyous celebration of Easter.

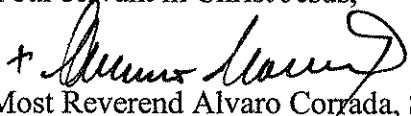
With the help of God's grace, may we experience abundant life in Christ Jesus. May self-sacrifice become our daily habit. May Jesus help each of us to make a good confession of our sins. (At least monthly confession is a positive rule of life.) With the Sacrament of Reconciliation, may these instruments of God's saving grace – penance, prayer, fasting, and almsgiving – help bring about renewal of body, mind, and spirit. For then, our Holy Father tells us, we may "... experience God's power that... 'dispels all evil, washes guilt away, restores lost innocence, brings mourners joy, casts out hatred, brings us peace and humbles earthly pride'."¹

To assist our Lenten preparations for Easter, I have prepared a series of reflections on the Sacred Scripture for the Sundays of Lent, our baptismal covenant, penance, prayer, fasting, almsgiving and works of mercy. I pray these reflections might help us on our Lenten journey to Easter.²

As part of our Lenten observances, we might do well to also read the full text of our Holy Father's Lenten message for 2009. In his message, Pope Benedict presents to us the ascetic practice of fasting as a means of doing "... battle against every possible disordered attachment to ourselves... to make a complete gift of self to God."¹ In this time of economic recession, it is good to fast as a sign of our desire to help those in greater need than we are.

We begin the journey of Lent, the way to Calvary, knowing that our Blessed Mother Mary walks with us. We go to stand with Mary at the foot of the cross of her Son, our Lord Jesus. Let us ask her to help us along the way so that we might hear with her the good news of His resurrection. Finally, let us ask Mary to be with us on that day of our own death and resurrection.

Your servant in Christ Jesus,


Most Reverend Alvaro Corrada, S.J.
Bishop of Tyler

¹ Papal Message for Lent 2009 <http://www.ewtn.com/vnews/getstory.asp?number=93489>

² Live Abundantly, Live in Jesus <http://www.dioceseoftyler.org/CalltoHoliness.htm>

Most Reverend Alvaro Corrada, S.J., Bishop of Tyler