



OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

Lent 2018

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

In a restless world filled with noise and distractions there are times when we need to find silence. This search is not simply about an absence of sound; it is more about listening because God communicates to us in silence. This profound truth is revealed to us in the sacred scripture.

In the Gospel of St. Matthew we are told that Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness where He fasted for forty days and forty nights. Jesus sought God in the silence of the wilderness in order to prepare Himself for His public ministry. He fasted, prayed, and at times had to battle Satan. The setting for this profound experience was solitude.

The season of Lent is an invitation to follow the example of Jesus; however, since it is not always possible to physically enter the wilderness, we can do so spiritually. In his book, *The Power of Silence*, Cardinal Robert Sarah states, "For, even before the desert, the solitude, and the silence, God is already in man. The true desert is within us, in our soul." During Lent we should make the effort to enter this interior dwelling place where we will find God. In this sacred place we are molded and fashioned into something beautiful by the hands of the Divine Potter. We are then placed into the furnace of His burning love where we are strengthened for the challenges of life. This all happens in silence.

It is my hope and prayer that during Lent we will all make an effort to be more silent. During our forty-day desert experience, may our hearts become an oasis for all of those things that are most important in the spiritual life; not power, money or prestige, but peace and quiet for a restless spirit.

We should also pray with more devotion, perform acts of charity with greater love, practice self-denial with joy, seek God's forgiveness with confidence, and attend Mass with reverence and devotion. In the spiritual life, growth is not always found in attempting to do the big things; it is often found in being faithful to the little things. May simplicity and fidelity be our compass on this Lenten journey.

With wishes for a grace-filled Lenten season, I remain

Yours sincerely in Christ,

Most Reverend Gerard Bergie, D.D.
Bishop of St. Catharines