https://www.hbgdiocese.org/lenten-message-from-bishop-senior-2026/

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

As we enter once more into the sacred season of Lent, the Church invites us to a profound journey of spiritual renewal, prayer, and reflection. This holy time calls us to draw closer to Christ by conforming our lives ever more faithfully according to His Gospel. The traditional practices of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving remain exercises throughout these forty days, guiding us toward deeper conversion.

Often, fasting is associated simply with giving up favorite foods or drinks. Such disciplines provide a practical way to make more room in our lives for God; to center our lives a bit more on our relationship with Jesus Christ. Even so, the Prophet Isaiah reveals an even richer meaning: "This, rather, is the fasting that I wish: releasing those bound unjustly; untying the thongs of the yoke; setting free the oppressed; breaking every yoke; sharing your bread with the hungry, sheltering the oppressed and the homeless; clothing the naked when you see them, and not turning your back on your own" (58:6-7). True fasting, then, is not only abstaining from food and drink, it is also opening our hearts to those in need, making room for others through acts of mercy.

This year, I especially encourage you to meditate on the Corporal Works of Mercy, practical expressions of love for our neighbor that Christ Himself modeled for us. Among these, "welcoming the stranger" stands out as a most urgent and profound witness in our times. Many among us, whether immigrants and refugees – regardless of their legal status – or those who simply feel isolated or afraid, all yearn for a word of kindness, an open door, a gesture of genuine hospitality, a sense of belonging. The Lord Himself teaches us, "I was a stranger and you welcomed me" (Matthew 25:35).

Pope Leo wrote in his recent Apostolic Exhortation, *Dilexi Te*, that "The Church, like a mother, accompanies those who are walking. Where the world sees threats, she sees children; where walls are built, she builds bridges. She knows that her proclamation of the Gospel is credible only when it is translated into gestures of closeness and welcome. And she knows that in every rejected migrant, it is Christ himself who knocks at the door of the community (*Dilexi Te*, n.75)." In welcoming the stranger, we welcome Christ Himself into our midst.

Let this Lent be a season when, as a Diocesan family, we embody mercy in tangible ways: feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and those in prisons, comforting those who are bereaved, and, most especially, welcoming the stranger with compassion and joy. Let us be mindful of the challenges faced by migrant families. I urge you to consider advocating with our elected officials for comprehensive immigration reform, which will provide pathways to regularize the status of those who have been in our country for many years, many of whom hold jobs and contribute to our communities, and whose children are being educated in our schools. In doing so, we renew not only ourselves, but also our entire community in the love of Christ.

May these days of Lent lead us to Easter with hearts transformed by mercy and hospitality. Be assured of my prayers for you during this holy season; please remember me in yours. May our Blessed Mother accompany us in our Lenten reflections and guide us to celebrate the glorious victory of Her Son at Easter.

Sincerely in Christ,



Most Reverend Timothy C. Senior

Bishop of Harrisburg