

## **RETURN TO THE LORD, YOUR GOD, FOR HE IS GRACIOUS AND MERCIFUL**

My dear brothers and sisters!

Here we are in the season of Lent, the season of grace when God our merciful father invites us his children to experience his mercy and grace in a special way. Lent is a forty-day spiritual journey that prepares us for the celebration of the great mystery of our salvation, and the great event in human history, namely, Easter, when we will be celebrating the Passion, Death and Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

**What does God expect of us during this season?** "The time has come, ... "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!" (Mark 1:15). These words are at the centre of Jesus' proclamation, and this is what Lent is about. This explains why the priest, while distributing the ashes on Ash Wednesday says: "repent and believe the gospel." In this season of Lent, God is calling us to repentance and to have a deeper relationship with him. For we have all sinned, and like sheep, we have gone astray due to our sins (Isaiah 53:6); but God has taken the first step to go in search of us. He wants to cleanse us of our sins, renew us and reconcile us to himself. For thus says the Lord: "'Come now, and let us reason together,'" Says the Lord, "Though your sins are like scarlet, They shall be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They shall be as wool" (Isaiah 1:18). Yes, for his mercy is greater than our sins and his love endures from age to age.

**"What shall we do" and how?** This is a very important question that we must ask ourselves this season of Lent. In this season of Lent, we are called to do three very important things as a sign of repentance and reconciliation with God and our neighbor. First, we are called to **fast**, not just from food or meat, but also from whatever leads to sin and from all that can enslave us. For example, we can spend less time on the social media, and use that time to read the bible or to help those who need our help. Through fasting, we discipline the body so that the soul may become stronger. The second thing we must do in this holy season is to **pray**. We are encouraged to come closer to God in our hearts, and to ask for the grace to leave our sinful life so that we can live in union with God. Thirdly, we are encouraged to **give alms**, especially to the poor. There are many people in need around us and around the world today – people who have no food, clean water or security. The orphans, the elderly, the sick need our love and care. The season of Lent gives us a good opportunity to reach out to them, because God awaits us in them.

May the Lord fill us with his grace and draw us closer to himself during this holy season.

### **Some important information**

- There will be **Lenten Retreat from 20<sup>th</sup> to 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2020**. The retreat will be directed by Fr Ludwik Spalek OMI. There will also be opportunity for confessions in Swedish, English and Polish.
- **Stations of the Cross** holds every Friday throughout the season of Lent from **5:30pm**, followed by Mass at 6:30pm.

- The parish bank account number (**bankgiro**) is **5022-3395**. We will appreciate your generosity and pray for you. You could also **swish to 1234 136305**. Simply indicate “gift”.
- The parish annual general meeting will hold on Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2020, after the Mass.
- Caritas Sweden is making a special collection during this season of Lent in order to help children in Zimbabwe. We are encouraged to be generous in supporting the work that Caritas is doing. **Caritas bankgiro is 900-4789**
- There will be denary pilgrimage to Härnösand from 4<sup>th</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> June, 2020. There is information about the train time on the church noticeboard.
- All other information regarding mass schedules and other activities in Luleå parish and in the outstations are available in the program. They are also available on the parish website: [www.katolskakyrkanlulea.se](http://www.katolskakyrkanlulea.se)

Fr Gene and I wish you all a blessed season of Lent and a happy Easter!

Fr Michael Akpan MSP

**(Parish priest)**