



Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

May God bless the beginning of our Lenten journey!

Thank you for all you have done over the last two years as we have striven together to keep our churches as safe as possible and open.

Like many, I am relieved to see many of the pandemic restrictions being lifted. As we journey through Lent, I anticipate more requirements being relaxed as we get closer to the celebration of Easter. What a blessed moment to look forward celebrating together in our parishes!

Reflecting on discussions about our unrestricted gatherings together, we should be mindful that re-opening will be a stressful time for some. Everyone has had their own difficult experience with the pandemic and the measures we had to adopt. For some, unrestricted numbers at Sunday Mass will be a joy and for others it may make them anxious to be around many people after our experience these past two years. How will we be agents of Christ's peace to one another in this time of transition? What special efforts will we take to welcome the faithful home once again?

The famous passage from St. Paul's Letter to the Corinthians may encourage us at this moment: "Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends" (1 Cor 13:4-8).

May God bless our Lenten preparations to celebrate together the joy of Easter!

✠ Marcel Damphousse
Archbishop of Ottawa-Cornwall