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## LENTEN PASTORAL MESSAGE 2017

March 1, 2017

### ASH WEDNESDAY

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Once again, we stand on the threshold of the Season of Lent. I often think of Lent as my annual retreat, a chance to look into my heart- and, more importantly, allow God to look in there! I ask God to show me where He has been active and working in my life during this past year. The next part is more challenging, but I also ask God to show me where and how I have failed, how I have been less than charitable, less than loving, quick to anger or take offence. I then ask God to forgive me, and lead me to be a better reflection of His love in the coming year. One thing is certain: it is God, who will enlighten my reflection and the examination of my life, and it is God, who will change my heart.

The Church offers us three traditional practices through which we invite God to change our hearts and guide our footsteps on ways leading to more joy, more peace, more love, more charity, more justice and more mercy. These three practices are prayer, fasting and almsgiving.

When we pray, we listen to the God who speaks in the deepest corners of our hearts. God surely speaks, and sometimes we just need to open up a place of quiet in which we can hear God. We pray so that God may make us better listeners, to Him and to the cries of His people.

When we fast, we create a different kind of silence. We fast so that God may bring us to a greater sense that everything we have been given is a gift, and nothing is to be taken for granted. We fast so that God can help us to grow more grateful hearts.

When we give alms, or give to those who are in greater need, God pushes us to look outside ourselves, beyond our own limited horizons and concerns. There, God opens us up to respond to the needs of others. We give so that we may see more clearly.

In prayer, fasting and almsgiving, God invites us to hear Him and the cries of the poor, see the needs around us, and respond in greater love. Lent, then, is God's invitation to become better and more loving disciples, missionaries of God's love and mercy in our world. How will you respond to the invitation this Lenten Season?

Sincerely Yours in Christ,

**MOST REVEREND MARTIN W. CURRIE, D.D.**

*Archbishop of St. John's*