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## Memoranda

**To:** : All Clergy and Religious working in the Diocese  
**From** : Most Rev. Gabriel Malzaire  
**Re** : Bishop's Lenten Message for 2020 (*to be read in Church*)  
**Date** : Sunday, March 01, 2020

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Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

The Season of Lent, as you are aware, is one of the most important periods on the Catholic Calendar. It is a time of intense prayer and penance including fasting and almsgiving, in preparation for the celebration of the Paschal Mystery, i.e. the Passion, Death and Resurrection of our Blessed Lord, by which human salvation was wrought.

It is indeed a time for introspection, reconciliation, renewal and conversion. It has become a time when both Clergy and Catholic faithful seek something special and something different to challenge and assist us in making the necessary adjustment to our lives.

We have noticed with sadness the changes in the tone of our Lenten season over the past years; a tone which has become less conducive to reflection and introspection. Many Catholics today, especially the young, are not able tell the difference between the season of Lent and Ordinary time. The reason being that there is little change in the tenor of our observances that would speak to the special qualities of the Lenten season.

This is evident in the type of music we entertain at home and on the airwaves. Our older folks would be quite aware that it was not so when they grew up. For them Carnival Tuesday was the end of one *modus operandi* and

Ash Wednesday ushered in a new. Every Catholic instinctively knew the difference. Sadly today, we cannot say the same. Times have changed, we say! But should it be that way? Is there any hope of engendering another change for the better?

Truthfully, in the recent past, we ourselves have not helped the cause. To a significant extent, our Lenten exercises have become moments of entertainment rather than times of reflection and introspection. For this Lenten season, therefore, I invite you to the following disciplines which can assist in enhancing your Lenten observance:

1. Make greater use of moments of silence during liturgical celebrations and your prayer time;
2. Listen to the teachings and Lenten programmes on the Dominica Catholic Radio;
3. With the family, find time to pray and read the Scripture together;
4. Make it a point to share what you learn and experience at retreats with your family, neighbour, co-workers and others;
5. Try your utmost to create a peaceful and prayerful atmosphere at home, at work and in Church.
6. Avail yourself to attend the Lenten exercises organized by your parish and vicariates: retreats, days of recollection, Bible sharing, penitential services, etc. Allow them to increase your faith, rejuvenate your spirit, draw you closer to God and make you a better witness for the Lord;
7. Make greater use of the Lenten hymns provided in the Catholic Hymnal (MOC) at your Lenten retreats and liturgical celebrations (*they are rich and profound in meaning*).
8. One of the requirements of the Lenten observance is to do some form of penance: *fasting, abstinence, almsgiving, visit of the sick and shut-in or intense prayer for self and for others*. Decide for yourself what form(s) you wish to embrace to prepare for the glorious celebration of Easter.
9. Going to the Sacrament of Reconciliation (Confession) is an obligation for every Catholic Christian in preparation for the celebration of Easter, hence the term "*making your Easter duty*." Getting to Easter without reconciliation is akin to saying to our Blessed Lord that he died

for nothing. I have strongly encouraged the pastors to plan their Lenten exercises in such a way that opportunities for the celebration of the Sacrament will be readily available to all the faithful. It has been said that “*the shortest road to heaven is through the confessional.*” It is indeed “a narrow road”—the road of humility and truth. Happy is the one who takes that route on a regular basis.

As we continue our pastoral journey together as a Diocese, we always keep in mind our pastoral theme: *Stewardship: A Way of Life*; and The Catholic Biblical Federation’s call, with the approval of the Holy Father to observe this year as the *Year of the Word of God*. Through our Lenten retreats, days of recollection, liturgies, prayer, spiritual reading of the Scriptures (*Lectio Divina*), radio programmes, etc., let us place great emphasis on the centrality of the Word of God.

Ours is a task to renew the face of God’s earth. Lent is no doubt an opportune moment to make good on that requirement. Let us saturate our religious environment with the Word of God and the Sacraments during this Lenten Season so that all of us, Clergy and laity will arrive at Easter with a renewed faith. *A happy and Holy Lent to all!*