



CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF ROCKHAMPTON

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5 March 2025

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ

Ash Wednesday begins with an unusual sign...the imposition of Ashes which we allow to be placed on our foreheads. Normally, we place creams and oils to soften and protect our skins. Today, it is ashes, gritty and dirty, an ancient tradition of being in a mode of penance, a mode of saying sorry, a mode of willing to be a better person. The ashes are a gritty reminder.

You may have heard that this year is a Jubilee Year, with the theme being *Pilgrims of hope*. The theme evokes a journey, walking together, leaving no one behind and to trust in God. Our Lenten journey calls us to prayer, fasting and almsgiving. We don't do this just because the Church tells us to. We are presented with this opportunity to reflect, to pray and look beyond ourselves. We are called to journey to Easter having moved closer to God, to others and being a better version of ourselves.

There are many opportunities to help you in your Lenten journey. Project Compassion is a wonderful way to reach out to help others in great need. You can participate more in your local communities by attending Mass, confession, Stations of the Cross, join a Lenten small group or prayer group. Reflect on the weekday and Sunday readings, these can be found online for every day, and listen to the messages that come through. Engage more in prayer – you can use the formal prayers of the Church or just sit quietly and speak to, but more importantly listen to, God. Think about what can change and give time and space to allow that to happen.

Life can be so busy and routine, and we often just go through the motions because it's 'what we need to do'. Our faith challenges us though to move beyond this thinking, to be pilgrims of hope. Don't do Lent just to get to the end and say, well that's done. I challenge you to actively take part this Lent and to reach the great celebration of Easter renewed, re-energised and deeper in your faith to continue your journey as a disciple of the risen Christ.

May God bless you on this journey.

Yours sincerely

Most Rev Michael McCarthy
Bishop of Rockhampton

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