



Southern African Catholic
Bishops' Conference



SEEKING

**GOD'S MERCY &
THE COMMON GOOD**

Lenten Reflections

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Introductory Message

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

In the previous years, we have issued various statements challenging political leaders to address the political and economic challenges in South Africa, Eswatini and Botswana.

We have not given up hope on the possibilities of change in the three respective countries because we know that the Holy Spirit is building something new in our lives, families and countries. “See, I am doing something new. Now it springs forth. Do you not perceive it?” (Isaiah 43:19).

We however believe that this new thing that God is building requires repentance and a greater sense of the common good, not only on the part of our political leaders, but also the ordinary citizens in the three countries.

While it is important for the Church to continue challenging our political leaders to prioritize the common good over their narrow political interests, we consider it important to remind ourselves that each one of us has a responsibility to work for the common good. God’s commandment to love our neighbor finds concrete expression in the way each of us places the good of the country ahead of our vested interests.

The FORMAT proposed is a simple one, as laid out on page 5. Last year, we asked all the parishes to recite a prayer for Southern Africa, a prayer asking God to heal our three countries. Each reflection therefore begins with this prayer. Our hope is that we all use the Lenten Season to fast and pray for the healing of the three respective countries.

The return to prayer should also be accompanied by repentance so that we embrace a way of life grounded on the love of God, love of neighbor and the common good. The reflections therefore include references to the Gospel and the Catholic Social Teaching. These should challenge us to repentance so that we become new people in Christ who put our lives at the service of God and the common good. Our prayer is that these reflections open our hearts to receive Christ and the power of His mercy in the Sacrament of Penance.

It is our hope and prayer that this Lenten season be a moment of God’s healing and repentance for us who are “created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared before hand to be our way of life.” (Ephesians 2:10)

Format of the Lenten Reflections

Opening Hymn (Lenten hymn)
Opening Prayer (as below)
Sharing of experiences
Being challenged by the Scriptures and Catholic Social Teaching
Deciding on a relevant action for the week for the group
Spontaneous prayers
Closing Prayer (as below).

Opening prayer (Prayer for Southern Africa)

Merciful Father, send forth your Spirit upon us the people of Southern Africa. May we hear anew the voice of Jesus Christ, inviting us to walk with him across the turbulent waters of our time: "Courage, it is I. Do not be afraid."

By the grace of the Holy Spirit empower us to bring comfort to the restless, hope to those who despair, healing to victims of violence and reconciliation where there is division.

May the Holy Spirit heal our families and communities. Grant us ethical and courageous leaders who put the good of the people before their own interest.

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, we commit ourselves to speak the truth with courage, to act justly in all we do, to share with those in need, and always and everywhere to respect your gift of life as we strive to proclaim the values of the Kingdom in solidarity with all people of good will. Amen.

Closing prayer

God of love show us our place in this world as channels of your love for all the creatures of this earth, for not one of them is forgotten in your sight. Enlighten those who possess power and money that they may avoid the sin of indifference, that they may love the common good, advance the weak, and care for this world in which we live. Amen.

St. Francis of Assisi. Pray for us Blessed Benedict Daswa. Pray for us