



Ash Wednesday  
February 17, 2010

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Today our Lenten journey has begun. This is the first day of the Church's annual 40-day retreat, during which we are called to more intense prayer, more generous charity and more genuine self-discipline. These three "works of Lent," rooted in the Ash Wednesday Gospel, provide us with the means of growing more fully into the image of Christ Jesus whose very life we began to share from baptism onwards.

However, the image of Christ within us can and does become distorted whenever we sin. In our more honest moments, we readily admit that we do sin daily – in thought, word and deed, and also by omission. Each one of us stands in need of God's merciful and healing forgiveness.

In his Lenten message for 2010, Pope Benedict XVI emphasizes the necessity of God's forgiveness in our lives. The Pope teaches us, "Conversion to Christ, believing in the Gospel, ultimately means this: to exit the illusion of self-sufficiency in order to discover and accept one's own need – the need of others and God, the need of His forgiveness and His friendship" (Pope Benedict XVI, 2010 Lenten Message). This Lent, answer this call to conversion, this call to return to full communion with God and with the Body of Christ, His Church!

In order to aid us in truly experiencing God's merciful and healing forgiveness, the Diocese of Arlington is partnering with the Archdiocese of Washington in an initiative called *The Light is On For You*. In addition to regularly scheduled Confessions, **every Catholic Church** in the Diocese of Arlington and the Archdiocese of Washington will be open during the Wednesdays of Lent from 6:30 to 8 p.m. for Confession and quiet prayer. If you have been away from the healing Sacrament of Penance, please do take advantage of this opportunity.

Just as the Apostles spread the news of the abundant forgiveness of the Lord in their time, so I ask that this Lent you commit to inviting one person a week back to the Church. Perhaps a friend or relative has been struggling with their relationship with God or is uncertain about the Church. Take this opportunity to invite them to prayer and the Sacrament of Confession. Please remember: every Catholic Church in the Diocese of Arlington and the Archdiocese of Washington will be open on Wednesday evenings during Lent from 6:30 to 8 for prayer and Confession. More information is available at [www.thelightison.org](http://www.thelightison.org).

My prayer is that this Lenten retreat will be a time of authentic conversion for each one of us and, for those among us who have been away, a time to come back home where the Lord Jesus and all of us await them with open arms and loving hearts.

Faithfully in Christ,

Most Reverend Paul S. Loverde  
Bishop of Arlington