



ROMAN CATHOLIC CHANCERY OFFICE

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LENTEN MESSAGE 2023 BISHOP LAWRENCE SYDNEY NICASIO

The quickest way to encounter Jesus is to “put yourself in need: in need of Grace, in need of forgiveness, in need of joy, and He will come to you.” This is the Holy Father speaking to the people of God at the installation of lectors and catechists. The talk we heard around town as I was growing up was, “my child will not be in need”. So, parents work extra hard, neglecting their own needs, in order to provide for the needs and wants of their children.

In the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, we are told that the rich man was materially rich, but deep down he was spiritually poor. He was unable to live the virtues and gifts given him by the Holy Spirit and to reach out in love to his brother starving to death.

Our life’s journey is about walking with the Lord God, carrying our cross and walking in his footsteps. We cannot carry our cross if we do not know him. We cannot carry our cross if the cross is too heavy to be carried. This puts us all in the category of “people in need.” For us not to be walking around with sad faces all over Belize, we must reach out to him for whom all things are possible. For him, He will not need to work extra hard or take on two jobs to provide for our every need. The quickest way to encounter him is to put ourselves in need; in need of him and all that He provides. But we can live life making belief that we are self-sufficient and in need of nothing and in need of no one.

We are able to sing the hymn ‘Come Back to Me’ every Lenten Season because we have accepted the fact that we have strayed from the path of life; that we have come to realize that we are truly people in need. Like the woman in Scripture who had a bleeding condition for twelve years, who sought out the one for whom all things were possible, her need was fulfilled.

Every year we begin our Lenten Season with the great day, Ash Wednesday, when many Catholics come inside their church, even if for a few minutes to “get their ashes on their forehead.” Do we come to Ash Wednesday Mass just to get ashes? Is our Lord God in his church waiting for us to give us ashes? Are the ashes the only thing He can provide us with on Ash Wednesday? Is getting ashes our only need? Do we hear the words told to us at the imposition of ashes? “You, turn away from sin and be true to the Gospel?” Is this a need for us to do and be committed to it?

Can we now understand why at the end of the Lenten journey nothing changed for us? Is it because we started the journey with no true need? We started the journey with no intention of conversion, to be a better person? For many of us in our Church we only took our usual ‘Lenten Ride.’

This Lenten Season we continue our synodal journey. I am aware that for some of us the journey has become very challenging. The listening process is too much. It is taking away from my listening to myself and doing my own thing. For some of us we are about to give up or have already given up the journey for a new and greater encounter with the Lord. If we bishops,

priests and laity will only journey to the point we want to go, or making belief that we already have everything we need, then the encounter with the Lord God, for whom all things are possible, during this Lenten Season, will be void for us. This would mean then that the synodal journey for us would have ended.

Hebrews 13:16-17 says, "May He carry out in you what is pleasing to him through Jesus Christ to whom be glory forever." Who listened and obeyed him more than his Apostles? For this reason, when Jesus sent them out on mission/ journey they encountered great success. They returned rejoicing as they saw the hand of the Lord working in their midst as they loved and served his people.

The Lord God refuses to depart from us. How can He with the name EMMANUEL? It is us, then, who must come back to him with our varied needs and pray that our Lenten journey 2023 will be a great success.

May His blessings be upon us as we journey together- the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen!