

## My Friends in the Lord Jesus

Today is the First Sunday of Lent. As we enter this season of forty days of preparation for Easter, it seems that we ask ourselves every year “what shall I do for Lent?” Usually we give up one of our favorite foods or even an activity, in an effort to enter more fully into the spirit of Lent. The Church helps to guide us by giving us its Lenten program: prayer, fasting, and giving to those in need. As a spiritual discipline, prayer, fasting and giving to those in need, is an act of faith, hope and charity. It is faith in action.

Lent is a season of hope and joy in the Lord. It is a season of hope, because of the mercy and forgiveness of God. It is a season of joy, because of the mercy and forgiveness of God. Every year we pray, “Be near, O Lord, to those who plead before you, and look kindly on those who place their hope in your mercy, that, cleansed from the stain of their sins, they may persevere in holy living and be made full heirs of your promise.” Our Holy Father, Pope Francis, teaches, “Everyone needs to be touched by the comfort and attraction of God’s saving love, which is mysteriously at work in each person, above and beyond their faults and failings.”

Pope Francis encourages faith in action as a way of life for all Christians. “The word, once accepted, becomes a response, a confession of faith, which spreads to others and invites them to believe...The light of Christ shines, as in a mirror, upon the face of Christians; as it spreads, it comes down to us, so that we too can share in that vision and reflect that light to others, in the same way that, in the Easter liturgy, the light of the paschal candle lights countless other candles. Faith is passed on, we might say, by contact, from one person to another, just as one candle is lighted from another. Christians, in their poverty, plant a seed so rich that it becomes a great tree, capable of filling the world with its fruit.”

Lent helps us to focus, in a particular way, as Pope Francis says, on “the name of God is Mercy.” Let us pray during Lent especially, that the Lord let his light shine through each of us. During these days of uncertainty, illness and pandemic, may the light of hope encourage our hearts. May the Lord allow the seed of faith, which he has planted in our hearts, to be nourished with his mercy. And by God’s mercy, may faith in us become a great tree, filling the world with its fruit.

Fr. Ron