



# *Diocese of Corner Brook and Labrador*

February 9<sup>th</sup>, 2026

## **Bishop's Lenten Message**

On the occasion of the 800<sup>th</sup> anniversary of St. Francis of Assisi's death, Pope Leo has declared a special year focusing on the quality of our relationship to God, to others, to creation and to ourselves. As we enter into this season of Lent, I would like to take this opportunity to reflect on this fourfold relationship and to suggest that we make an effort to deepen each one in a particular way.

Lent is synonymous with Spring, a season when the darkness and cold of Winter begins to break and the promise of life begins to slowly reveal itself. Crocuses and daffodils break through the thawing ground. Birds begin to return, building their nests and filling the air with their song. The sun breaks through the oppressive winter clouds. Spring is in the air. So begins our renewed engagement with creation; a relationship that dates back to creation, when God established a sacred bond, entrusting us with a commission to steward, to protect and to look after all that God has created. Lent, therefore, is an excellent time to reflect on our day-to-day interaction with the natural world, the air we breathe, the water we drink, the things we consume and the time we spend to be one with the gift God has entrusted to our care. Lent is a wonderful time to focus on "being" rather than "having".

Lent is also a time to look at the quality of our relationship to others, especially those in need. Rather than "doing more", leaving little time for authenticity, reflection and true human contact, Lent calls us to be present to the other, much like Mary's visit to Elizabeth, so that it becomes a gift by which God is made known and celebrated. By striving to be more present to the other, and to embrace the present moment, we begin to see each day, each person, each encounter as "gift" and not "one more thing to do", opening us up to God's grace, love and healing.

Lent's invitation, thereby, transforms the way we interact with ourselves and with God. Here I want to use some quotes from Pope Leo's letter, "The figure of St. Francis is particularly valuable in the context of spiritual fatigue. He does not propose "more practices", but simplicity and authenticity: a return to personal reading of the Gospel, joy in small things, a faith lived in relationships, not only in events." He further goes on to say that, "By renouncing wealth and social prestige, Francis showed that freedom of heart is born of detachment from material goods. For today's person, living in a world of consumerism, this is an extremely timely invitation to moderation, responsible use of goods, and placing God and neighbour above material possessions: it is a matter of "being" more than "having"." He also writes, "St. Francis teaches active and fraternal love, especially toward the weakest, the poor, and the marginalized. His life was a response to indifference and sometimes to selfishness." Finally, "Not least, St. Francis also shows that peace is born from a converted heart."

Bishop Bart