

Pastoral letter for the Lenten season of 2026

Dear brothers and sisters in the Catholic diocese of Stockholm!

"Blessed are *you* who walk according to the law of the Lord." (see Ps 119:1)

During the Lenten season the Church wants to remind us of our dignity and our vocation to live a holy life as 'mature' Christians, as S:t Paul says in 1Corinthians 2:6. In today's collect prayer it says, "by grace make us such that You may dwell in us." Through our baptism, we are already a temple of the Holy Spirit, where the triune God is always living and working.

The purpose of our lives here on Earth is to allow ourselves to be transformed by this sanctifying grace. Then we may, in a credible way, testify about God's truth and goodness to a splintered and divided world, a world that thirsts for truth to replace all the half-truths and hateful messages that are constantly accosting and plaguing us in our modern times.

Our personal conversion to a life lived in ever growing fidelity to Jesus and His gospel means more than we realize in dispelling the powers of darkness and evil. One single person who takes this more seriously, and who follows Jesus with all their heart, makes the world a better place to live in, and spreads hope and light to more people than they can imagine.

In S:t Paul's first letter to the Corinthians he writes, "we declare God's wisdom, a mystery that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory, before time began." (2:7) God wants to lead us with a gentle yet firm hand through this perishable life, to the imperishable and eternal glory that He wishes to share with us for eternity. God loves us so much that He does not want to live in that eternal glory without us. When we truly comprehend that reality, everything changes.

The Almighty is the only one who can have a completely personal love for each and every human being. When this sinks in we want to, at any cost, try to reciprocate His love for us in everything that we are, do, think, and say. With every breath and heartbeat we may surrender ourselves to God and find our joy and peace in belonging to Him. It is the mission of the Holy Spirit to remind us of all these things and to wake us up when we become trapped in ourselves. It is easy for us to forget our vocation to live in this constant yearning for, and obedience to, Him.

In the midst of the ordinary life that we all live, there is much we can do to repay God's love. Through His commandments, the beatitudes, and all the things that Jesus has taught us, we know in which direction to go. The Holy Spirit helps us to see how we should act in order to concretely live these things out. First Corinthians 2:10 says, "these are the things God has revealed to us by His spirit. The Spirit searches all

things, even the deep things of God."

In today's Gospel reading, Jesus shows us that we must realize the full potential of God's commands; we must not just do the bare minimum, but do everything possible. That doesn't just mean to not kill, it also means to not harbor anger toward our fellow human beings. It's not just to avoid cheating on our spouse, but to not look lustfully at another woman. It's not enough to not bear false witness; one should avoid all oaths and slander. As Christians we are not minimalists, we are in fact called to steward and realize the Gospel to its fullest, maximal degree. In all areas of our lives we are called to, in the footsteps of Christ, make God's truth visible, audible, and noticeable.

It is an exciting task that Jesus has confided to every Catholic in our diocese. Each one of us have been given our own little piece of the Swedish reality where we may try to make manifest the Good News. The Holy Spirit can help us to clearly see what we're supposed to do. Sirach says "if you will, you can keep the commandments." (15:15) If we want to, we can change the atmosphere of where we live.

We can show others that we do not tolerate slander, racist and hateful speech, or cursewords. We can improve the lives of the elderly and the infirm, and make sure that they are not subjected to maltreatment or abuse. We can spend our free time supporting children and youth in need, instead of playing golf and bingo. We can spend more money on helping single mothers than we do on makeup or nicotine products. If we truly allow ourselves to be guided by the gentle promptings of the Holy Spirit, big things can happen in the small slice of reality where we live.

The Lenten season is the time of holy imagination. We may discover unexpected opportunities to strengthen our spiritual life. At the same time we can make more of an effort to be there for our neighbor in their need and distress. This is why it is good to start every day with a short prayer, asking for the light and inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

The season of Lent is the time of spiritual freedom. It can liberate us from the tyranny of selfishness and the heavy yoke of globalized indifference. As beloved children of the Father, we may discover that we are freed from the melancholy of sin. One contrite confession can give us something that money can not buy.

Lent is the time of tranquility and peace. Even with our limitations and weakness, we may be reconciled to God and to our neighbor. We learn that simplicity and restraint gives us more satisfaction and peace than we can ever comprehend.

Lent is the time of holy poverty. Like S:t Francis, we can find more heavenly joy by sharing and distributing than by hoarding and trying to acquire larger and more expensive homes.

May God bless you all, and fill you with grateful joy for being chosen to follow Jesus by living a holy life, in accordance with His commands. May the Virgin Mary pray for you, and for peace, reconciliation, and justice in our world.

Stockholm

Feast of the Presentation of the Lord

2.2.2026

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