

HOPE... RESISTANCE!

Message from bishop Alain Faubert - Lent 2025

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

« Eyes fixed on Jesus Christ, let's enter God's fight. »

« Grant, Lord, that we may begin with holy fasting this campaign of Christian service, so that as we take up battle against spiritual evils, we may be armed with weapons of self-restraint. »

It's well known that Lent is considered a time of trial. The French Lauds antiphon in the Liturgy of the Hours and the opening prayer of the Ash Wednesday Mass bear witness to this: Lent is a battle. God's fight; our fight. The agenda includes training, challenges, renunciations, sacrifices and privations. It will require discipline and self-control.

Many of our brothers and sisters, whether churchgoers or not, will spontaneously ask themselves, « What will I do without during Lent? » Chips, chocolate, television or social networks? Anything else? Some will have the good idea of combining their sacrifices with the amount of money saved and donate it to a social justice organization, such as Development and Peace (www.devp.org).

That's all very well! The traditional practices of fasting, prayer and almsgiving remain privileged means of associating ourselves with the Passion of Jesus, to better rise with him on Easter morning.

I'd still like to suggest another kind of training, in addition to all the others you can think of. There are two reasons for this proposal: firstly, the Jubilee 2025, which invites us to be « Pilgrims of Hope »; secondly, the current situation of our world. As mentioned in the *Final Document* of the Synod on Synodality (October 2024), approved by our Pope Francis: « We live in an age marked by ever-increasing inequalities; growing disillusionment with traditional models of governance, disenchantment with the functioning of democracy, increasing autocratic and dictatorial tendencies and the predominance of the market model without regard for the vulnerability of people and of creation. The temptation can be to resolve conflicts by force rather than by dialogue. »¹

I therefore propose that together we undertake a training in *hope*, so that we can *resist* the toxic tendencies and behaviors that infiltrate our relationships and come to poison us, robbing us of our evangelical joy and peace.

How are we going to undertake this training? What do we have to do? The recipe is simple: let's keep our eyes fixed on Jesus Christ, and on his Cross, Tree of Life, symbol of his Victory over evil, death and despair.

A few minutes a day will suffice. Contemplating not so much the very real suffering of our brother, but above all what God is able to accomplish in an astonishing way through the Cross: he is able to take everything, to pick it all up, even the hatred that is thrown in his face, all the shit we can imagine, to transform it into fertilizer, the better to make his reign of justice and peace flourish.

¹Final document, no. 47. See www.synod.va/content/dam/synod/news/2024-10-26_final-document/ENG---Documento-finale.pdf

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After a few minutes' contemplation of the Cross, let's turn to look at this world God loves, and discover that the Lord is there, working in the hearts of men and women of good will. Quietly, unobtrusively, he wins the day.

That's the genius of God! That is our hope! An Easter hope, far removed from illusion, nostalgia or wishful thinking: not that the Lord will withdraw us from this world full of tensions, not that he will restore for us a triumphant Church like it was in the past, but that he will make us stand upright, in confidence, in this world, and that he will raise us up, as a Church transfigured, transformed, adapted to the pressing challenge of bearing witness, here and now, to his Love stronger than Death.

This training in hope will enable us to joyfully resist the temptation to spread, in what we say or write, the violence and intolerance that destroy others and hurt us in the process, and choose instead to build bridges, to nurture relationships that bring life to our neighbors and contribute to our own health.

Hope... resistance! Happy and fruitful Lent, my sisters and brothers!



†Alain, bishop