



DIOCESE OF SALFORD

*Pastoral Letter of
The Right Reverend Terence J Brain
Bishop of Salford*

Dear Family of God in Salford Diocese,

“... the Church ... clasping sinners to its bosom, at once holy and always in need of purification, follows constantly the path of penance and renewal”. (Porta Fidei 6)

I have a lot of time for Ash Wednesday: coming to kneel and receive ashes is a sign to ourselves and a witness to others that we want to remain within the door of faith. It is an occasion when we clearly see the Church clasping us, sinners, to her bosom. We can all come and receive ashes and wear them confidently as a sign. Maybe as a sign that we want to be **open** to the gift of faith – seeking the fullness of the gift of faith: maybe we need to **grow** in faith - deepen our faith and let it mature: and maybe we want to **proclaim** our faith more positively through our daily lives. We begin the Lenten season on Ash Wednesday by queuing for ashes with all these reasons and others in our minds and hearts.

Ash Wednesday is a symbol of the Door of Faith, which opens out onto the weeks of **Lent**: and Lent gives us the opportunity to purify ourselves through **prayer** – “if your lips confess that Jesus is Lord...then you will be saved” (Romans 10). But we mustn't be what we might call 'fair weather only' in our prayers; not everyone who calls 'Lord, Lord', enters the kingdom of God. We must want to seek out and search for God: persist and persevere in prayer. This takes discipline, and **mortification** is a way to develop the discipline of seeking God at all times in our lives, and not just when we think we need him. Lent gives us the opportunity to discipline ourselves in simple ways: to offer amends for the times when we have not lived in faith. “I'm sorry, Lord: accept my offering.”

Lent also turns our minds to the fact that the Lord is the one who truly makes amends to the Father for all our sins and that his generous love for us was motive enough to lay down his life on Calvary – “all belong to the same Lord, who is rich enough, however many ask for his help.” (Rom 10) So in Lent we also give **alms** in

thanks for the riches that God has already shared with us, and because we cannot say we love God if we ignore others, loved by God, who are in need.

May Lent, in this Year of Faith, lead you deeper into the mystery of faith.

A handwritten signature in brown ink that reads "+ Terence J Brain". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small cross at the beginning.

✠ Terence J Brain
Bishop of Salford

*Given at Wardley Hall on the Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes, 11th February 2013,
and appointed to be read in all churches and chapels of the diocese
on the weekend of 16th/17th February, 2013, the First Sunday of Lent.*