



February 17, 2012

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ:

In his Lenten message this year, Pope Benedict XVI asks us to reflect on a verse from the Letter to the Hebrews: “*Let us be concerned for each other, to stir a response in love and good works.*” (10:24) As I was reflecting on the Holy Father’s words, I was reminded of the many prayer requests that I receive from our sisters and brothers throughout the North Country. Some of the concerns expressed include:

- The forgotten elderly
- The poor and homeless
- The troubled teen
- The cancer patient
- The worried parent and anxious grandparent
- The emotionally, sexually and physically abused
- The fractured family
- Loved ones in the military
- The “un-Churched”

The spiritual pillars of our Lenten practices are prayer, fasting and almsgiving. Humble prayer and purposeful fasting lead us to charitable works and concern for the well-being of another. Each of us is called to walk in solidarity with Christ to the Cross. I do not follow Christ as a “lone ranger,” but as a fellow pilgrim. Christ Himself teaches us that no one is strong enough to travel the entire path of salvation unaided.

I invite you to make the forty days of Lent 2012 a focused journey of faith generously lived. Join me in prayer, fasting, and acts of charity for those hurting in our family, parish and community. Lent is a season when Jesus graces us to a new resolve and new determination to become the kind of persons our Father in heaven created us to be: brothers and sisters all.

We recommit ourselves this Lent to seek holiness and grow in our love of Jesus expressed in our respect and concern for our neighbor. A faith that is lived only internally, with no signs of it by the witness of our lives, is a hollow, shallow faith. Our children suffer from such spiritual neglect and future generations are deprived of the fullness of faith. I pray that the flame of faith be stirred and made alive in each of us these next forty days so that we are not afraid to witness our faith, walking together in holiness.

Through the graces and spiritual strength we receive from our participation at Eucharist and other Lenten devotional practices, God clears our vision and opens our hearts to see and respond to the needs of those around us. As a pilgrim people, seeking to follow Jesus, the Crucified and Risen One, we embrace this Lenten summons to strengthen our bond of love and concern for our sisters and brothers. Let us pray for each other this Lent and always!

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Terry R. LaValley'. The signature is written in a cursive style and is preceded by a small cross symbol.

Most Reverend Terry R. LaValley
Bishop of Ogdensburg