



Kyo.Prot.N. 8/2021

First Sunday of Lent
February 21, 2021

A LETTER TO THE CATECHUMENS OF THE KYOTO DIOCESE

Dear Catechumens,

Lent has begun.

On Sundays of Lent liturgies for baptismal candidates are held, and we Catholics of the Diocese of Kyoto offer special prayers for you who are preparing for baptism.

Because of the new corona virus that struck us last year, perhaps you do not feel as prepared for Baptism as you might like. But please keep in mind that our prayers are with you and cherish this period of purification and illumination. You have been chosen by the free love and plan of our merciful God. Pray that God who heals our wounds and weaknesses will free you from the forces of sin and evil and strengthen your commitment to follow Christ, the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

To those who are already baptized, remember that though it is still difficult to gather in the churches due to the corona virus, we are a community that is united by faith. So, wholeheartedly participate in the liturgies for baptismal candidates during Lent and pray with them so that each church community can be renewed and share the Passover mystery. Renew your lives through conversion, faith, and love, striving to be models for the baptismal candidates.

In his Ash Wednesday homily this year Pope Francis said, "Lent is not just about the little sacrifices we make, but about discerning where our hearts are directed." He continued, "Let us ask: Where is my life's navigation system taking me – towards God or towards myself? Do I live to please the Lord, or to be noticed, praised, put at the head of line...?"

As I wrote in my New Year's letter, *Living Faith in the Corona Era*, in the face of this pandemic "we must set aside quiet time to talk with God," asking what it means for us to live in this time. We must pray for the humility to realize the importance of the Lord's call to us in this storm.

Each year on a Sunday during the Easter Season at the Kyoto Diocesan Gathering of New Catholics, the Kyoto Diocese welcomes the newly baptized and those who have joined us from other Christian Churches. Last year it was canceled due to the pandemic, but this year we plan to hold the gathering on the Third Sunday of Easter, April 18. I look forward to meeting you all there.

✙ Paul Yoshinao Otsuka
Catholic Bishop of Kyoto