

PASTORAL LETTER OF THE DIOCESE OF ALIWAL NORTH
LEADERS AND COMMUNITY SERVING HUMANITY (LENT 1988)

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Greetings in our Lord Jesus Christ. I write this letter to you at the beginning of Lent, the time to prepare ourselves for the Feast of Easter. Through this letter I want to ask that we help each other prepare together for this great feast of the Resurrection of our Lord and wish to thank you all for your prayers, and for the many ways in which you offered help for the day of my ordination as bishop of Aliwal Diocese.

There are many ways in which we should turn our task of repentance and conversion before Easter. I will remind you of only one of them: That we must repent in the way in which we cooperate with our leaders in the Church.

I was made your leader when I was ordained bishop. The Lord wants me to serve you as your leader, and he wants you to work with me. If ever I should fail to serve you and lead you, I must convert, and ask you to help me to convert.

Should I sin by trying to lead the diocese alone, without any priests, then I ask you to remind me and to help me to convert. Similarly, if priests should try to lead parishes of this diocese alone, without their bishop, I ask you to remind them and to help us to work together again. Christ wants us to work as a community.

Community links

The same must happen between each priest and the community he serves and leads. No priest should work alone, but should work with leaders and members of the parish. At the same time no member of the Church and no leader of the community should act as if he or she were alone, independent of the priest. The priest and the leaders of each parish should be like family. This is the example, which Christ gave us when He went about with the twelve Apostles. We must convert and follow His example.

The same must happen between the many leaders of each parish, of each small community. Each community must have leaders who must be one among themselves and work with all the members of the community. They must avoid working alone. At the same time all community members must work in union and harmony with the leaders. This is the spirit which we have learnt from Christ.

Cooperation and harmony

During Lent please reflect on your cooperation with your priest; your examples of unity and of love and of being one family with him. Does the priest work with you, and do you work with him? Do you leave all work to him, and does he invite you to accept a share of the work? Does your community have several leaders or only one? Are there people who lead Sunday services; who give catechism lessons to the children; who care for the sick and the needy? Is there a Church committee? If there is only one leader who does the work, what can be done to find more?

At many meetings we spoke about our pastoral plan and said we wanted to be a Community Serving Humanity. Therefore we have to ask ourselves now, during Lent if we are really a community? Can a community be seen in the leaders, and the way in which cooperation with leaders can be seen as all participate in the work of the Church.

If all parish work is left to the priest alone, the parish should convert and change, in order to give an example of real Christian community and if leaders fail to work together, they should convert to give the example of unity which Christ wants.

We serve humanity if we make life more human, more as God wants human beings to be. We want our whole country to be more happy, more human. But we must start in Catholic parishes and give an example of working together. We must find a way of bringing forth leaders and of working with them, for if we cannot achieve this in our parishes, how can we expect the whole country to do so?

Reconciliation

As your bishop I ask you to come together during Lent and reflect together on how you can increase community spirit among yourselves. Dear brothers and sisters, there are of course many other ways as well in, which we must convert and purify ourselves before Easter, for Lent is a time of inviting back all those who have withdrawn from your parish community. Please make efforts to invite them back to become reconciled to the community and to God.

Lent is also a time of preparing new members, the catechumens to be baptised and for them to join the Christian community with a clear intention and with full understanding of what they are doing. Let the whole community help together, so that new members may truly convert to the Lord, and become living members of the Church.

You will also be asked to contribute to the Lenten Appeal Fund. Please make a real sacrifice.

May the Lord be with you during these weeks of Lent. May He guide and purify each one of you and each of your communities.

(Signed) FREDERICK LOBINGER
Bishop of Aliwal North