

PRIESTLY FRATERNITY JESUS CARITAS

LENTEN LETTER 2021 TO THE BROTHERS AROUND THE WORLD, Eric LOZADA

But now, declares Yahweh, come back to me with all your heart, fasting, weeping, mourning. Tear your hearts and not your clothes, and come back to Yahweh, your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger, rich in faithful love, and he relents about inflicting disaster. (Joel 2:12-13)

All of us, when we were baptized into Christ Jesus, were baptized into his death. By our baptism into his death, we were buried with him, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the Father's glorious power, we too should begin living a new life... [] our former self was crucified with him... [] and now the life that he lives is life with God. In the same way, you must see yourselves as being dead to sin but alive for God in Christ Jesus. (Romans: 6: 3-11)



Greetings to all of you, my dearest brothers!

As I am writing to you, I am holding you and the complex realities that each of you are facing because of this global crisis. It seems that the pandemic is revealing to us our strengths and our weaknesses, in personal, national and global relations, in the economic,



political and religious spheres. The pandemic is a time of great unveiling, as Fr Richard Rohr puts it and as Pope Francis seems to imply as he engages in a systemic deconstruction of our global structures in Fratelli Tutti. I wish not to add to their magnificent work. Rather, I intend to situate our celebration of Lent with what the

pandemic reveals and teaches our world. I would like to visualize the celebration of Lent as a downward spiral journey, the deeper we go, the more we expose what is hidden in human hearts and in the subcultures of our world that hold us hostage in the dungeon of sin, fear, indifference, violence. If we all take this journey together with honesty and firm resolve, we reach rock bottom from which all the lies of sin, the delusions and distortions of this world originate. This is our entombment with Christ, as St Paul says, where our old selves are buried with Christ so that the Father could give birth to a new life in us in Christ. It is my hope that at the end of our 40-day Lenten journey through Easter, like the apostles after the resurrection, we all walk with renewed joy and courage crying out the message of God's love and delight for our world.

Our journey starts with what the Prophet Joel proposes, "Come back," "turn to God with all of your heart." We start the journey with a question: Whose am I? To whom does the world turn? If we take a long, loving look at the



world and ourselves, it seems that the world, we, have many false gods (manifest or hidden) that we worship, attend to, give all our time and energy. Our addictive society seems to have deep-seated forms of idolatry, supplanting the true God of our deepest longing with the false gods of superficial living. That is why, the Prophet recommends

fasting, weeping and mourning. We need to fast from what we feed our minds and hearts every day that are toxic and not coming from the Gospel values. We need to weep over the violence, injustice, indifference, greed of this world because, in very subtle ways, we have been operating under their spell. We mourn over the mistakes of the past and learn not to repeat them. St Paul calls this a baptism into Christ which is also a baptism into his death. Our baptism is our initiation and our communion in the Paschal Mystery. What is it that we are willing to die to for the sake of Jesus and the Gospel? We need to name our dying. And in the passivity of our dying into Christ, the Father's redemptive work in us and in our world restores us to original life of grace. When we consciously die to the old self, the self which is enslaved by sin, we become free and empty of ourselves yet living fully and authentically in the new life of Christ and in Christ.



And so, dear brothers, may we all commit to this journey from slavery to freedom, from fear to trust, from darkness to light, from sin to grace. May this journey be our humble yet sincere gift to the people entrusted to us and to our anxious, fragmented and violent world. Allow me to express also my deep appreciation for your humble witness of the Gospel and zealous care for the poor in your own places of assignment, especially at this time of the pandemic. My gratitude to our brothers who wrote the five texts and the translators of those texts. They were meant to prepare us spiritually for the canonization of Brother Charles. May I invite those who have

not read and reflected on those texts to access them at our website: www.iesuscaritas.org. And for those who have, continue to go back to these texts.

Complementing our Lenten journey, I thought of introducing the process of re-grounding. In my correspondences with Cardinal Stella of the Congregation for the Clergy, he has been asking me important questions about how are we in terms of our fidelity to the charism of Brother Charles and how are we growing in mission as diocesan priests inspired by his spirituality. From these conversations, the whole idea of coming up with a global survey is born. Instead of responding to these questions alone, I thought of us together in an adventure of finding and reclaiming our precious gems which may be hidden from us but which continue to inspire us. I am proposing a process in two phases.



The first phase will be more on facts. Here, I am making an appeal to the local, national and continental brother- responsables to do the major work. You, brother local responsables shall provide us with facts from your local fraternity as to how many are the regular members and other important information. When the survey form arrives, please read it



carefully. Be mindful that the facts that you are providing our global fraternity are true. A note on regular members. They are brothers who have been regularly attending your monthly meeting for at least a year or have been regularly connecting digitally to you or to any of the brothers from your local fraternity. If the brother is in a remote assignment but he regularly connects, he could still be a regular member. Brothers who are interested of our spirituality but could not commit to regular attendance at meetings or regular correspondences,

they are called "sympathizers." The key is commitment. Survey form will be coming from

your national/country responsible. There is a time frame of two weeks for you to fill up the form and return it to your country responsible. I sincerely thank you for your generosity.

The second phase will be some months or a year later. The process will be more of a communal review of our lives as to how are we growing in terms of our fidelity to the charism of Brother Charles and how are we growing in our missionary zeal as diocesan priests inspired by Brother Charles. Thank you very much, dear brothers. Please know that I continue to hold your continent and your country in my



prayer. Kindly hold me also in your prayer. I need that.
With fraternal delight,

Eric LOZADA, international responsible



Dumaguete, Philippines, February 2021