



February 13, 2024

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

As we approach the season of Lent, I am filled with both gratitude and anticipation. This forty-day journey is a time of profound significance in our spiritual lives, inviting us to reflect on the transformative power of repentance, prayer, and fasting as we prepare to celebrate the Paschal Mystery of our Lord at Easter. As we begin this holy season let us each take advantage of this opportunity to draw nearer to God, to deepen our relationship with Christ, and to grow in holiness both individually and as parish communities.

Our journey of Lent provides an opportune time to reflect on synodality within our diocese. Synodality fundamentally means *Journeying Together*, and is rooted in the understanding that the Church is the People of God, called to live and proclaim the Gospel in unity and mission. Lent is not only a time of personal renewal, but of community renewal as well. In a spirit of synodality – of journeying together – we embark on this journey together in a spirit of encouragement and mutual support, collaboration, and shared responsibility.

One way in particular that we are striving to live synodality in our parishes this Lent is by promoting small groups within the parish. Small groups were consistently mentioned at all levels of the synod as key areas where individuals grew in their faith, felt encouraged by others, and were able to participate in mission. As we focus on the pastoral priority of catechesis within the diocese, we are promoting small group participation by adult parishioners as a key way of deepening their faith and growing in holiness. ***I ask that each parishioner reach out to the leaders within their parish to learn how they can be a part of a small group program this Lent.***

Each parish within the diocese has developed its own approach to promoting small group faith sharing groups this Lent, and the goal is to provide each parishioner an opportunity to take part. No one should be alone in their journey through the Lenten season, and small groups are a particularly effective way to experience accompaniment on an individual level.

I encourage you to participate in a small group project with your friends and family. By leading this kind of group, each person can express their co-responsibility for the renewing of their parish and proclaiming the Kingdom of God.

Pope Francis closes his Lenten message reflecting on the importance of community. “Love of God and love of neighbour are one love...in place of threats and enemies, we discover companions and fellow travelers.” As you encounter fellow travelers within small groups this Lent, I pray that you will experience mutual encouragement from each other, and the joy that only comes from God. May this Lenten journey through the desert be a time of reflection, purification, and renewal which leads to the freedom in the love of God.

Sincerely in Christ,

†Brian Joseph Dunn
Archbishop of Halifax-Yarmouth