



"LENTEN IS AN INVITATION NOT TO GIVE UP AMID ADVERSITY" -Most Rev. Alfred Adewale Martins

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LAGOS, NIGERIA -

The Catholic Archbishop of Lagos, Most Rev. Alfred Adewale Martins has described Lenten Season as an invitation to draw closer to righteousness and to find comfort in God in the face of adversity.

Archbishop Martins, in his Ash Wednesday message said that the season of Lent also provides an opportunity for the people of God to prepare themselves for the joy that comes with Easter. "Like soldiers worn out by raging battle, the season of Lent is an opportunity for us to do the three 'R's', that is, retreat, re-examine, and renew our inner selves so as to prepare adequately for the joy that comes from the victory of Easter", Archbishop Adewale stated.

He continued: "We may have been battered by sin, tossed around by the popular culture of our time, humiliated by the harsh economic realities, seduced by the inordinate greed

for material things, harassed by the insecurity in our land. Perhaps as a result of this, we are at the verge of giving up on God's readiness to take control. Beginning today, dear brothers and sisters, let us draw closer to Jesus as He wishes to draw closer to us and renew our confidence in His mercy and compassion.

In his invitation to the people of God under his pastoral care to reflect on the theme, "Return to the Lord", the Archbishop highlighted the importance of embracing repentance and the mood of sorrow throughout the season of Lent. "Today, dear friends, marks the beginning of our 40-day journey, which will come to an end with Easter when we begin a new life with full reconciliation with God," he says, and adds, "I warmly welcome you to this season of grace when our reflection on the suffering and death of Christ in a special way puts us in the mood for sorrow and repentance for our sins and our sinfulness."

The Archbishop encouraged the people of God to strive "to be more aware of the presence of God" within the 40 days that marks Lent so as to be "freed from the bondage of sin to enjoy the glorious liberty of children of God", adding that the Lenten journey is uniquely marked by the three traditional practices of prayer, fasting and alms giving.

By fasting, the Archbishop of Lagos explained that the people of God deny themselves of

food and other forms of bodily pleasure so as to free themselves from any form of material distraction that could stop them from rising up to God in Prayer.

As for Alms giving, he explains that Christians take upon themselves the work of Christ, bringing hope and consolation to those considered lesser members of the society.

Explaining the essence of Ash Wednesday, the 61-year-old Archbishop says, "We place ashes on our heads and when we do so, we make a public declaration that we are dust and that we are nothing without God and the good news of salvation."

"We accept that our friendship with God has been weakened by God and so declare to the world that we depend on the mercy of God. And as we mark ourselves as beneficiaries of God's mercy, we take advantage of the opportunity to start afresh and begin anew," he says.

The Nigerian Prelate who has been at the helm of Lagos Archdiocese since August 2012 expresses optimism that the Lenten season will lead many souls to conversion ahead of Easter celebrations.

"Our Lenten journey will be successful if we keep step with the Master," he says, and adds, "He will take us by the hand and lead us in the path of righteousness through the

waters of rebirth and renewal into the glorious liberties of the children of God at Easter."