



## Pastoral letter for Lent 2018

(Unofficial translation)

My dear sisters and brothers,

**You are important!** Important to your loved ones, to your families, to society, to our Church, and - first and foremost - to God.

During this Lenten season, let us remind ourselves - in all humility - that God accepts us as we are, and encourages us to move forward with a joyful heart. God trusts us and says to us, as Jesus did, during his time on earth, to his disciples: "Go forth and proclaim the Gospel!". God does not say: "Hold on, wait and see...better do nothing." No, God relies on us, just as we can always rely on Him. Let us use this period of preparation for Easter to respond to this invitation as Christians in today's world. Being important means shouldering responsibility for one's neighbour, and caring for the needy.

**You are important to your partner, your family and your children.** They need you, just as you need them. Your family should never be consigned to second or even third place behind your career, your hobbies or your smartphone. The family remains the cornerstone of our lives and of society. To take this reflection to a deeper level, I invite you to take part, together with Pope Francis and the universal Church, in the World Meeting of Families in Ireland next August, and/or over the coming months, to engage at parish level in studying the message of the Encyclical Letter "Amoris Laetitia".

**You are important to someone who needs you, relies on you, confides in you.** Take this call to heart, make time for it, seek that interior quiet which will enable you to hear this cry for help, which is often barely perceptible. Ask yourself : "For whom can I be important? Whom can I walk beside and support through their difficulties?"

Let us open our eyes and look around. Our place is simply wherever there is need. At the home of someone living on their own, at the hospital bedside of the seriously ill, at the refugee centre, where families are attempting to rebuild their lives. If we are to live the

Gospel authentically, our challenge is to go out, together with Pope Francis and the universal Church, to the peripheries and place them at the centre of our lives.

We must meet others in the desert places of their lives and lead them to the wellspring of love and hope.

During this Lenten season, I would particularly urge you to support the projects of our Church charity 'partage.lu'. It was created, under the name of 'Bridderlech Delen', more than 50 years ago, and is today at least as necessary as it was then. All who work for and with partage.lu, Reech eng Hand, Caritas, Missio and many other charitable organisations are engaged in service to the peripheries. They need our support, because the people they serve rely on us, too.

**You are important to our Church.** Our archdiocese is undergoing major transformation. Of course, quite a few people find this disquieting, and that is understandable, since so much has changed in the space of three years. They have been, beyond any doubt whatsoever, difficult years for our Archdiocese and for the diocesan Administration, marking a break with the local Church's past; and yet we should not be fearful of the future. Today, our task is to rebuild our Church in a new context, and with renewed enthusiasm. Parish-based catechesis, with 9000 children registered, is one of the fields in which we must labour and bring forth fruit.

The Church needs each and every one of us. And if everyone makes his or her contribution, each one bringing a stone to the edifice, my concern for the future of the Church in Luxembourg will be all the more eased. An essential precondition, however, is that we more fully understand the Church as a living community of believers, as the people of God, and, as Saint Paul has it, as the body of Christ, in which we are all united in the Holy Spirit. That is the way towards overcoming our differences and increasing our credibility, and towards being able, once again, to attract from outside our church walls new adherents, including young people, to the message and call of Christ.

**You are especially important to the 33 new parishes,** in the new pastoral councils, in the committees operating the Religious Buildings Management Fund, in the new local 'fabriques d'église'. More than ever before, volunteers form the backbone of our archdiocese. This voluntary service calls for the highest respect and due recognition. My warmest thanks go to all the members of parish councils and groups, and of the 'fabriques d'église', to the sacristans, readers, altar servers, organists, singers, church cleaners and decorators, and to all those volunteers who, often unnoticed, work away out of the limelight. Together with the pastoral teams and catechists, our task will be to ensure that ours is a living, listening Church, close to people and 'tuned in' to our society. We look back gratefully to the past, and confidently towards the future.

Dear fellow-Christians, let us take the opportunity of this Lent to maintain through prayer a renewed and authentic relationship with Christ. It is our great good fortune that God

reconciles us to Himself through the sacrament of penance. We are equally fortunate to be able to meet Him in the Eucharist, to permit Him to renew our lives and convert us, as St Mark writes in the Gospel we hear on the First Sunday of Lent. Through regular reading of the Bible we can prepare for Holy Week and Easter, when we celebrate what lies at the heart of our faith: the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This, the foundation of our hope, is at the centre of every Eucharistic celebration. If we live our faith, we can turn towards the future, where Christ awaits us already.

Self-denial and the Friday fast can help us along this path. These actions are not expressions of mournfulness, but rather liberate us from the superfluous. "When you fast, do not look gloomy!" the Gospel tells us. Doing without enables us to discern more clearly what really matters in our lives, opens us up to God, and also helps us to live more consciously in harmony with creation.

**Yes, you are important for our society and our environment.** As Christians, let us not hesitate to commit to working for the good of society and of the individual, to defending Christian values, to maintaining social cohesion, to protecting the environment and nature. The encyclical 'Laudato Si' can serve as a guide, and the 'Autofasten' <sup>1</sup>campaign can provide an opening for practical action during Lent.

If, as the prayer says, Christ has no hands but ours to accomplish his work today, no feet but ours to guide men and women along his Way today, no lips but ours to speak of him to them today, then it is clear to us that today this mission is ours.

May God pour out His blessings on you during this coming Lent!

*Luxembourg, on the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord in the Temple, 2<sup>nd</sup> February, 2017*

+Jean-Claude Hollerich  
Archbishop of Luxembourg

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<sup>1</sup> Translator's note: From 14 February (Ash Wednesday) until Easter Saturday (31 March), Churches in Southwest Germany and in Luxembourg will once again, as in previous years, be encouraging people to leave their car at home whenever possible and to use more environmentally friendly forms of transport