

A PASTORAL LETTER FROM ARCHBISHOP LEO FOR THE FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT



Edinburgh, 7 March 2019

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

I know that many of you are feeling saddened, confused and discouraged not only by the scandals which have emerged in recent times within the Church, but also by the apparent mishandling of these matters by some of those in authority. We are living through deeply distressing times.

In times such as these, we must remember that Jesus himself foresaw that some of his followers would, through their weakness and sinfulness, cause such upheaval in the Church. Shortly before his Passion, Jesus warned that those who caused them would be better “drowned in the depth of the sea”. (Matthew 18:5-7)

Remember also that in the Garden of Gethsemane Jesus pleaded with his disciples to stay awake and pray with him in his anguish, lest they lose faith. We too are called not to lose faith in these difficult times. We trust the words of Jesus that "the gates of Hell will not prevail" against his Church (Matthew 16:18). We trust in our Risen Saviour, who will not abandon us; and we trust in the prayers of Mary who stayed with her son, faithful and suffering at the foot of the Cross.

The Church is, and will always remain, the spotless Bride of Christ because She consists first and foremost of Our Blessed Lady and the Saints in heaven, and because in the Church on earth there are countless men and women of great holiness and virtue, men and women who seek to follow Christ in their lives and who suffer with the Church at times of crisis.

Sadly, there are times in the Church's history when gross unfaithfulness and betrayal, even in the highest places, take place. This happens not because the Church's teaching is somehow mistaken and needs to be changed, but because Her teaching has been undermined, ignored or not lived out authentically. The profound moral confusion in our society has inevitably had its influence upon individuals within the Church, with the results we all know. Our response must surely be to return to the highest standards of personal holiness. This painful time is therefore a call for all of us as the people of God actively to purify ourselves and to work together for the spiritual renewal of the entire Church.

On a practical level, you know that in recent years the safeguarding policies of the Church in Scotland have been independently reviewed and completely updated, and that these policies are audited, also independently and on a regular basis. Within the Archdiocese, our clergy and I, along with hundreds of volunteers, have been working unstintingly to put in place, not just good, but the best available practices of safeguarding in all respects. These safeguarding standards have been implemented in every parish and in every Archdiocesan organisation.

On a spiritual level, as we enter the season of Lent, I would like to urge all of you, together with the clergy of the Archdiocese, to offer your Lenten prayers, penances and works of charity this year for all victims of abuse, and for the healing of the Church at this time of crisis. In particular, I ask you to pray for our Holy Father, Pope Francis, that he will confirm all of us in our Catholic faith and in the authentic ways of holiness that Christ Our Lord calls us to live up to. (Luke 22:31-32)

Above all, I would urge you to take comfort, not from my words and assurances, but from those of Our Lord who also said: "I have told you these things, so that you may find peace in me. In this world you will have troubles. But do not be afraid, for I have overcome the world." (John 16:33)

Asking for your prayers, and assuring you of mine for all of you, I am
Yours sincerely in Christ,

+ Leo

+Leo Cushley
Archbishop of St Andrews & Edinburgh