

Richard



Bishop of Arundel & Brighton

**PASTORAL LETTER
for the 14th February 2021
6th Sunday in Ordinary Time**

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

The great season of Lent is approaching. Lent is a time of repentance, of renewal and of healing. Perhaps, like me, you look forward to this time. These coming forty days are a great gift to us, for Lent invites us to engage more deeply with the Gospel message as we prepare to celebrate the events of our Salvation - the Passion, Death and Resurrection of Jesus.

The account of the healing of the leper that we hear in today's Gospel is a very good preparation for Lent. The leper had to overcome the stigma that went along with the disease. He had to find the courage that enabled him to step back into the company of others, conscious that the society of his day would not welcome him. Not only did Jesus welcome him, He touched him. This physical contact, of which he had been deprived - perhaps for many years - brought healing of his sickness and the social and psychological burdens that went along with the disease. This was healing beyond measure.

This account in the Gospel calls us to stand before the Lord just as we are, with our ills and failings. Like the sick man in the Gospel, we must place our trust totally in the person of Jesus Christ. The joy that this trust engenders in us is beyond our description and, even in these difficult times, is a wonderful consolation.

This coming Lent, therefore, let us stand before the Lord as we truly are. This will demand a little courage, but the Lord wishes to reach out to us, to touch us with his healing and forgiveness that we may be truly at one with Him.

This Lent, we can all be assisted on this journey through a new initiative for our Diocese - 'Invited'. This is more than an event. It is a journey, a pilgrimage through the weeks of Lent. It is something in which every one of us can take part and it will call us to a renewed experience of Jesus' call to us.