

The Season of Lent – 2022

Acknowledgment of Land, Seas, Skies and Waterways

As we begin the Lenten Season, we remember and acknowledge the First Nations Peoples who have walked upon and cared for these lands, seas, and waterways for many thousands of years. Lore has been taught on these lands, seas, and waterways over millennia; and connection to Creator Spirit and Country has been handed down to young people over time. We pay our respect to the elders, past, present, and emerging as we continue to walk together on the journey towards reconciliation.



Image Bec Burns Feb 21.2.22

Context of Lent

This week sees the starting of the Lenten Season. Lent begins with Ash Wednesday and during this 40-day journey the Liturgical colour changes to purple, and you won't hear Alleluia spoken or see flowers in Church until Easter Sunday. You will see the little boxes popping up everywhere at this time of year as donations are sought for the work of Caritas Australia. Their 'Project Compassion' Campaign is run during Lent every year and the work carried out by 'Caritas Australia' occurs all year and all across the world, including of course Australia.

Scripture Reading

If God is For Us then who is against us? [Romans 8:31 – 34]

What then are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not withhold his own Son, but gave him up for all of us, will he not with him also give us everything else? Who will bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? It is Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us.

Reflection by Bec Burns

Consultant Formation, Identity and Outreach Directorate, Cairns Diocese

This reading is full of questions. Paul uses probing questions to invite the community into dialogue. This act of questioning was modelled by the master educator himself, Jesus. The first question "*If God is for us, who can be against us?*" resonates with the entrenched concepts of *For and Against* we often see entrenched in modern society. Sometimes it may appear that the whole community is either for or against a certain position, e.g., 'saving the environment' (for) or 'domestic violence' (against). Other issues can be more divisive, including vaccinations, and social policies on unemployment and tax reforms. From Paul's letter we gather that God has a clear position on humanity, - He is for us. However, do we always believe this to be true?

The following ideas from a recent Sermon given by America Pastor, Chuck Smith, invites us to think about our own experience of whether we believe God is for us or against us, as we prepare to enter the Lenten Season.

Some of his thoughts may resonate with your own – or they may be different.

For a long time in my Christian experience, I somehow had the idea that God was against me. I thought....

- 1. That God was just waiting for me to make a mistake so that I be taught a lesson and be judged – and therefore I felt guilty.*
- 2. Every bad thing that happened to me I blamed on God. I figured that God was punishing me for something.*
- 3. I thought that somehow, I had to earn God's favour or approval.*
- 4. Somehow, I had to persuade God to love me, I thought that God's love was something that I had to deserve.*
- 5. Basically, I thought that God loved good children and did not like bad Children*
- 6. That song about Santa Claus making out a list and checking it twice, going to find out who's naughty and nice was sort of describing God.*

Through all this time, stress, worry and guilt at the bottom of it all was that I did not understand this one simple concept. The truth was I did not comprehend the extent of God's love for me. Not against me, not condemning me. There was no fear, just love. (Smith, The Word of the Day,

In much the same way we love our children, God loves us. Through this lens Lent is less about guilt and suffering to prove ourselves and becomes more about how we can love more; more to those we currently love, and more to those who we do not understand, who we may feel don't deserve our love, who have wronged us, or those who may be strangers whose needs are highlighted to us through media or story sharing.

Caritas Australia, the Catholic agency supported by many Catholic schools, holds the 'Project Compassion Campaign during Lent. This is focused on raising funds, and links to the commitment of almsgiving which Christians adopt during Lent. Caritas Australia does not judge who is deserving of love, nor do they cease their work when the commitment to give has ended. As a Catholic Agency, Caritas Australia speaks of Jesus' love through actions for those in need, regardless of race, religion, or gender. Like Paul, they seek to empower people, and strive to maintain culture and tradition in communities where it at risk of being lost. This year they are also standing 'for' something with their theme 'For Future Generations.' As a parent, this theme speaks of doing all we can to ensure our children, inherit a world which values love, compassion, and kindness to all of creation so they can be proud to our world to the generations which will follow.



Prayer

I greet today with a smile.

Thank you for this glorious day, Lord

A day of forgiveness, that stretches out like a lake of never ending grace.

A day of promise, of love in action, alive and outstretched.

A day of unity, mending broken lives, where we build bridges of peace and restoration.

A day of celebration, of worship to a living Lord who holds heaven out to us and proclaims life over death.

I greet today with a smile.

Image by Unknown Author is licensed under [CC BY-NC](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/)

Prayer from

https://www.prayerscapes.com/prayers/times/sunday_morning_prayer.html#ixzz7LTsdRI7i

Call to Action

As a family, take time to think about your idea of God's love for you and your children.

Explore the stories of the 'For Future Generations' on the [Caritas Australia](#) website.

Discuss as a family what you may be able to do or give to show God's love to other's in your community during Lent.

References

Blue Letter Bible

https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/smith_chuck/SermonNotes_Rom/Rom_11.cfm

