

Lenten Message to the Archdiocese of Baltimore

Dear Friends in Christ, On Ash Wednesday Jesus, through the Church, again invites us to walk with him, as best we can, along the Lenten way to Holy Week and Easter. During this Lent, I invite you to join me in invoking the Holy Spirit to guide us through this special season of prayer, penance and almsgiving. In preparation for the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000, Pope John Paul II has designated 1998 as the Year of the Holy Spirit. This Lent can be a time when we are especially mindful of the Holy Spirit's work in our lives, a work begun in Baptism, when God's spirit poured into our hearts a share in the divine life, together with gifts of faith, hope and love. It is the Holy Spirit in our hearts, the Apostle Paul reminds us, who enables us to address God in the most familiar way, as "Abba, Father!" (Romans 8:15) The Apostle further reminds us: "The Spirit too comes to the aid of our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes with inexpressible groanings. And the one who searches hearts knows what is the intention of the Spirit, because it intercedes for the holy ones according to God's will. (Romans 8:26-27) Thus we may invoke the Holy Spirit dwelling within us as we seek to hear and do God's will in our participation in weekday Lenten Mass, in reading God's word in the Scriptures and in praying the rosary and the Way of the Cross. With the Holy Spirit as our strength, we undertake Lenten acts of spiritual self-discipline and of penance, to atone for our sinfulness and for sins against faith and family which trouble so many. With the Holy Spirit's gift as an incentive to our generosity, we approach our Lenten almsgiving with a refreshed trust in God and the understanding that we see and serve Jesus in those who are in need. With the Holy Spirit as our light, let us pray in Lent for those who suffer persecution and those who face temptation, especially to sins destructive to God's sacred gift of human life. May the Holy Spirit bless their minds and hearts with wisdom, courage and perseverance. May the Holy Spirit grant each of you a holy Lent, a season in which you will find yourself growing daily in knowing and responding to Christ's love for you, and in sharing it with others. Sincerely yours in Christ, Cardinal William H. Keeler Archbishop of Baltimore