



Wednesday, March 5, 2014
Ash Wednesday

Dear Friends in Christ,

Today is Ash Wednesday, a day when all the members of the Catholic Church begin the Lenten journey of prayer, fasting, and alms-giving so that we might better focus our minds and hearts on God, His great love for us, and the important role He plays in our lives.

Pope Francis speaks of this time of conversion in his Lenten message to us, in which he reminds us of our Baptismal call to also help others become closer to Christ. "May this Lenten season find the whole Church ready to bear witness to all who live in material, moral and spiritual destitution the Gospel message of the merciful love of God our Father, who is ready to embrace everyone in Christ. We can do this to the extent that we imitate Christ who became poor and enriched us by his poverty," the Holy Father said.

The example Jesus has given us is on powerful display in the new film, *Son of God*. I had the privilege last night of joining with 300 members of our Archdiocese for a screening of the new movie about the life of Jesus. The film helped to make real for all present the humanity of Jesus and reminded us of God's great love for us as evidenced by the sacrifice of His only Son. It was a wonderful way to begin the Lenten season. I pray you will have an opportunity to see the film and to access the [Catholic resources](#) that have been developed.

As we journey together this Lent toward a deeper relationship with Christ, I invite you to participate in the grace-filled Sacrament of Reconciliation. "Everyone says to himself: 'When was the last time I went to confession?' And if it has been a long time, don't lose another day!" the Pope said recently. "Go, the priest will be good. And Jesus will be there, and Jesus is better than the priests...He will receive you with so much love! Be courageous, and go to confession." Every parish in the Archdiocese will offer the sacrament this lent and you can have your confession heard in any Church in the Archdiocese on April 11 from 3-8 p.m. The [website](#) of

the Archdiocese offers a complete list of churches and a simple guide for making a confession. Whether you go regularly or haven't been in many years, I pray that you will make a good, unburdened confession this Lent.

It is hard to believe that it has been almost one year since Pope Francis was elected Supreme Pontiff of the Roman Catholic Church. Our Holy Father has had a profound impact not only on the Catholic Church, but on people of all faiths the world over. The Archdiocese of Baltimore is celebrating the one-year anniversary of the Pope's election by hosting a symposium featuring Cardinal Seán O'Malley, Archbishop of Boston and member of the Pope's Advisory Council of Cardinals. The event, *The Francis Factor*, will take place on March 18 at 7 p.m. at Loyola University Maryland's Reitz Arena, and is part of the year-long celebration of the 225th anniversary of the establishment of the Diocese of Baltimore as the first Catholic diocese in the United States of America.

In addition to Cardinal O'Malley, others who will speak at the event include Fr. Thomas Rosica of Salt & Light TV and Vatican Spokesperson, Helen Alvaré, Catholic author and law professor, Fr. Matt Malone, Editor-in-Chief of *America*, and Kerry Robinson, Executive Director of the National Leadership Roundtable on Church Management. Following Cardinal O'Malley's address, all the speakers will form a panel to answer audience questions about *The Francis Factor*.

A [website](#) has been established for people to obtain more information about *The Francis Factor*, including about how to request tickets. There is no fee for tickets to the event, but they must be requested through the website. The event will also be streamed live via the website for those unable to attend, and people will have the ability to submit questions during the event via social media.

On this first day of Lent, I join my prayers to those of Pope Francis, who today in Rome offered his prayer that "The awareness of the wonders that the Lord carried out for our salvation should lead our minds and hearts to gratitude to God." May you and your family have a blessed and holy Lenten season.

Faithfully in Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "+ William E. Lori". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Most Reverend William E. Lori
Archbishop of Baltimore