

210217 Ash Wednesday - Oecumenical service

Lent, those 7 weeks preparing for Easter, is a kind of training camp. Just as athletes prepare for important competitions, we will also prepare for Easter. Our training consists of these elements: devoting ourselves to fasting, to prayer, and to good works.

It doesn't mean that we don't keep our desires in check, or that we don't pray, or that we don't sympathise with others.

We know what it means to live with the limitations of these times. Corona has taught us in the last year that we must put ourselves in limits in order to get better or to stay healthy.

And we pray, perhaps not enough or sometimes too much, but often without thinking, without being aware of God's presence.

We pay attention to the people around us, we empathise with them, without exaggerating.

We are given seven weeks to refine our technique, to strengthen our endurance, to deepen our commitment.

Seven weeks to become aware of why we want to live like this.

Pope Francis writes in his letter: "Fratelli tutti" *There is a reason why Jesus tells us: "When you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your alms may remain hidden" (Mt 6:3-4).*

*We have received life free of charge; we have paid nothing for it. Consequently, we are all able to give without expecting anything in return, to do good to others without demanding that they treat us well in return. As Jesus said to his disciples: "For nothing have you received, for nothing must you give" (Mt 10:8).*

So this weeks we make ourselves aware that God is the giver of all that we have and are. He has made our lives so humanly rich. Our goodness, our compassion, our helpfulness, our patience with this world and our courage to make it better: it comes from God.

We now have seven weeks to appreciate that gift and to pass it on to our world as a gift. Let us become more aware that we go into the world with God, with Jesus Christ, and love that world with divine love.