



Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

### **1.0. Seasons of Salvation**

The seasons of the liturgical year give shape and texture to the unfolding of time in our life as Catholics. These seasons celebrate our salvation, evoking the mystery of Jesus Christ alive in our midst throughout the year—each in a unique and beautiful way. He is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, and “To Him belongs all time and all the ages; all glory and dominion is his now and forever. Amen” (the words used by the priest when tracing the symbols on the Paschal Candle at Easter Vigil).

### **2.0 The Purpose of Lent**

Lent has a two-fold purpose: the journey to Baptism for the catechumens (or to the renewal of Baptism by the baptised) at Easter, and the purifying work of penance that takes place throughout the forty days. The traditional disciplines of prayer, fasting and almsgiving, support these two goals during this period of repentance, conversion, and enlightenment.

### **3.0 Sacrament of Initiation**

This year, we are blessed with a total of 28 candidates who will be receiving all three sacraments of initiation, 2 baptised Christians who will be received into the Catholic Church and 4 adults preparing to receive confirmation at Easter. Let us continue to accompany them with our friendship, support, and prayers. Our observance of Lent has no meaning if it is not experienced in solidarity and in communion with these candidates preparing to receive the sacraments of initiation.

### **4.0 Lenten Activities**

During this season of Lent, we hope to continue the traditional custom of praying the Way of the Cross, on every Friday of Lent until Holy Week. We hope that those who are still unable to join us in physical celebrations due to health reasons, can still follow us online.

We, the three priests, will begin our visits to the homebound in the vast areas covered by our parish. We would like to do so in a safe way, as we bring the sacraments of penance, anointing and Holy Communion to the sick.

Lastly, in view of the fact that penitential services, with large number of penitents and visiting clergy hearing confessions, would not be possible during this pandemic, we the three priests will also avail ourselves on Saturday mornings to hear confessions in Church. Making a good confession would be the best preparation for Easter.



## 5.0 Sacrifice and safety

It has been almost two years since the start of this pandemic. A general fatigue over the restrictions imposed by the SOPs is understandable and all of us are yearning for a return to the freedoms we enjoyed before this crisis. There have been many suggestions to conduct the celebration of the Eucharist in a more relaxed fashion taking the cue from restaurants, malls, and aeroplanes. This argument essentially implies that Catholics should fall in line with the consumer practices of society. Insisting that “we” should be able to live like “them” is not an argument; it is a sign of envy or a desire to copy the actions of others, even if such actions prove to be imprudent.

But as Catholics, we are called to a much higher standard which involves self-denial and sacrifice in imitation of Christ. With regards to vigilance and compliance with the SOPs, let us do so in the same spirit for the good of the community and our loved ones.

## 6.0 A springtime of renewal

The Church gives us forty days of fasting (during Lent), but fifty days of feasting (during Easter), because Christian life is more about rejoicing than it is about sorrow, more about grace than it is about sin. For this reason, Lent should not be regarded as a sobering experience of giving up all the delights of life but about gaining graces and celebrating a springtime that brings about new life from the thawing frozen ground of our old selves.

Let us continue to keep our gaze on Christ as we follow Him and walk with Him during this Lent, for He alone can “enlighten the eyes of our mind so that we can see what hope his call holds for us” (Ephesians 1:17-18).

Have a Blessed Lent!

Your Loving Shepherds,  
Fr Michael Chua, Fr Philip Chua and Fr Bonaventure Rayappan  
Ash Wednesday  
2nd March 2022