

Dear Friends,

We have entered the season of Lent. Last month, thousands of students participated in Ash Wednesday liturgies in Catholic schools across our Archdiocese. Many of you have chosen to give something up in this time before Easter, and I thank God for your faith.

I want us to keep in mind, too, that Lent is not only about giving something up.

In Lent, we might say "no" to chocolate or Facebook or makeup or the snooze button, but that is not all we do.

The true meaning of Lent is drawing near to Christ. It is about learning to say "yes" to God's will for our lives.

Throughout history, different people have given up something they loved for the sake of a greater love or a deeper purpose. People have made sacrifices for their families or their countries, or for the arts and the sciences.

In our Lenten fasts, we join this same heroic tradition by striving to love God more than we love any earthly thing.

This Lent, I encourage you to speak to God in the privacy of your own heart. Tell God, "I love you more than these things. I choose you. Nothing means more to me than you do." Every time you give something up, remember that you are not simply depriving yourself. You are turning to God. You are teaching yourself to love what is truly best.

When we choose God over the things of this world, we are following the example of all the saints and the holy angels. Young people, parents, teachers, staff, administrators – do you wish to make a difference in the world? There is no better path.

May this Lent be the beginning of a renewed and restored faith in each one of us.

I bless you all in the Lord.

✠Richard W. Smith
Archbishop of Edmonton