



February 17, 2021  
Ash Wednesday

Dear Friends in Christ,

The liturgical seasons of the year can have profound effects upon our spiritual life. In a special way, during the season of Lent, we are invited to go into the desert (which is very different and far away from the landscape of South Georgia) to shed distractions and seek the Presence of God. The barren environment, dry air and quiet of the desert landscape allow one to go *inward* into the stillness of the soul to see what is stirring in our relationship with God. We are also asked to go *outside* of ourselves and realize the many needs of those around us. Thus, the concentration during Lent on prayer, fasting and almsgiving are exercises to help us grow in our knowledge, love and service to God and others.

For this season of Lent, I invite you, the faithful of the Diocese of Savannah, to *Look for the Sacred*. For just a moment, think about what this means to you...to look beyond what we see with our eyes, to focus more clearly in the midst of these challenging times and to find holiness. You may be asking: 'How?' Below are a few suggestions to help you to look for and find the SACRED.

**SACRED SILENCE:** I invite you to make time each day to spend in quiet with the Lord. Start with three minutes in silence and add a minute each week. It may be awkward at first but you will be amazed at what you hear in the stillness. Remember that God is always present to us but we are not always present to Him. Silence will open up a conversation with God that you may not be expecting.

**SACRED SCRIPTURE:** How familiar are you with the Bible? Each day randomly open the Bible and read a few verses. Reflect on those verses as it will indicate how God is speaking directly to you. How can you apply God's Word to your daily life?

**SACRED SPACE:** Do you have a place in your home which provides a comfortable spot to sit and have a conversation with God? Maybe it is the spot (inside or outside) where you most like to sit and read, talk on the phone or have a conversation with a friend or family member. Setting aside an inviting spot where you can become more aware of your spiritual life helps in creating a consistency in praying and connecting with God. Of course, you are always invited to stop by one of our churches (please check the local schedule for open hours) to visit and spend some quiet and reflective time with the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist.

**SACREDNESS OF LIFE:** Every human life is made in the image and likeness of God. Have you recently thanked God for the gift of your own life? Do you express gratitude, reverence and respect for the lives of your loved ones and friends? Are you a voice for those in our world whose voice is not heard because people are not listening? Especially for the most vulnerable and innocent of our society? How do we care for those who we see each day? How do we care for those who we do not see and are often forgotten?

**SACRED HEART:** I invite you to reflect upon the image of the Sacred Heart of Jesus Christ. Do you have a picture of the Sacred Heart in your home? The heart is our lifeline not just in a physical way but also emotionally and spiritually. The Heart of Jesus Christ can inspire us to love beyond measure.

I could provide more examples of ways to *Look for the Sacred* but I want you to personally reflect on finding holiness in the everyday. In the midst of our secular world, in the midst of these difficult times...where will you find God's Presence this Lent and beyond?

Please know that I will pray for you in a special way this Lenten Season. May we meet each day in our prayers as we journey together and *Look for the Sacred*.

In Christ,

*+ Stephen D. Parkes*

Most Rev. Stephen D. Parkes, DD  
Bishop of Savannah

