
Lent: messages and proposals from the Catholic Church in Sweden, Norway and Denmark

Pastoral letters, advice and proposals of various kinds are being published on the websites of the Bishops' Conferences and Dioceses ahead of Lent. Cardinal Anders Arborelius of Stockholm, for example, addressed a letter to the Catholic sisters and brothers of the Diocese to explain that Lent is "God's generous gift for each one of us to discover our own log, our sin, our boundless need to be purified and saved by God's grace". Bishop Bernd Esvig of Oslo, for his part, together with the norms relating to the precept of Lenten fasting, published a message inspired by the famous words "The lamps are going out", uttered by British Foreign Secretary Sir Edward Grey on 3 August 1914, to speak of the "many lights" that have gone out, with particular reference to the Middle East, Ukraine, Sudan, Taiwan and Korea, anti-Semitism, and the persecution of millions of Christians and other believers. "It is our responsibility to refrain from racist, ethnic and religious prejudices", he wrote, calling on everyone to "oppose demagogues" and to light "bigger lights" together, through gestures of charity. Bishop Czeslaw Kozon of Copenhagen, instead, draws on Pope Francis' Lenten message to describe how the desert can be an experience "without distractions and trivialities", focused on the essential, and an opportunity to "reflect on our own inadequacy" in order to acknowledge "our need for conversion and reorientation", which are both experiences that "can be liberating for us and give us new courage and motivation". And he invites to prayer, fasting and almsgiving as a means to "focus on God, minimize our needs and pay attention to our neighbour".

Valentina Bombelli