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2021 LENTEN PASTORAL LETTER

Strive for peace with everyone, and for that holiness without which no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one be deprived of the grace of God, that no bitter root spring up and cause trouble, through which many may become defiled.

Hebrews 12:14-15

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

The quote above from Hebrews is not frequently cited in Lenten reflections. This Lent, however, these words especially strike me as we embrace this Season as a time of reconciliation which comes as the fruit of penance.

True repentance includes reconciliation with God, the Church, neighbor, and self. The many manifestations of division that we have seen so clearly in our Church and Nation enjoin us to the repentance that leads to true reconciliation with God, the Church, and our brothers and sisters.

It is often said that we create the times in which we live. We determine through our thoughts, words, and actions whether our individual and societal lives will be created by a preference for division or a preference for reconciliation. Through prayer, fasting, and charitable works, we can more easily see our neighbor, in the light of God's precious creation, like ourselves rather than as an adversary to vanquish by words, violence, or pre-judgments.

Finally, we cannot achieve the reconciliation desired without our faith, devotion, and reception of the Most Holy Eucharist which is the Sacrament of unity and charity. Our real presence at Mass and reception of Holy Communion, the Real Presence of Christ, is the bedrock of any true peace and reconciliation that begins within us.

May we accompany one another this Lent with prayer, fasting, good works, and reception of the Holy Eucharist to build a Church and Nation of reconciliation.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

✠ Most Reverend Alfred A. Schlert
Bishop of Allentown