



The Ecumenical Catholic Servants of The Good Shepherd, ECSGS
OFFICE OF THE PRESIDING BISHOP

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Pastoral Letter for Lent 2026
Diocese of the Ecumenical Catholic Servants of the Good Shepherd
Saint Matthew Church

“Return to Me with All Your Heart.” (Joel 2:12)

Dear Beloved Clergy, Religious, and Faithful People of God,

Grace and peace to you in our Lord Jesus Christ.

As we enter the holy season of Lent 2026, we do so not in calm waters, but amid storms. Our parish of Saint Matthew continues to experience rebranding and realignment in both corporate and ecclesial governance. Some among us grieve the death of loved ones. Many of our immigrant families live with anxiety due to targeted immigration enforcement. We witness instability in our communities and corruption in national leadership. We feel the weight of uncertainty.

And yet — **this is precisely where Lent begins.**

Lent does not begin in stability. It begins in the wilderness.

1. A Church Being Purified, Not Destroyed

The realignment of our structures is not the death of our mission. It is pruning. The Lord reminds us:

“Every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit.” (John 15:2)

Rebranding is not abandoning our identity — it is clarifying it. Governance reform is not division — it is stewardship. When done with transparency, charity, and fidelity to Christ, it becomes an act of spiritual maturity.

We must resist fear-driven narratives. Christ remains the Head of the Church. No corporate document, no faction, no human weakness can overthrow what belongs to Him.

2. Grief in Our Families

To those who have buried parents, siblings, spouses, or children this year: the Church walks with you. Lent teaches us that death does not have the final word. The ashes placed on our foreheads proclaim both mortality and hope. “Remember that you are dust” — yes. But also remember: dust is what God breathes life into.

We carry our departed not in despair, but toward Easter.

3. Our Immigrant Families: You Are Not Alone

To our undocumented and mixed-status families: you are not invisible to God. You are not forgotten by this Church.

The Holy Family themselves were refugees. Christ knows what it is to flee violence. Fear must not silence our faith.

As a Diocese, we recommit ourselves to:

- Accompaniment over abandonment
- Pastoral presence over political fear
- Gospel justice over partisan ideology

We will remain a Church where no one is turned away from the sacraments because of status.

4. Corruption and Public Scandal

We are witnessing troubling instability and moral confusion in national leadership. As Christians, our response is neither blind nationalism nor cynical withdrawal.

Lent calls us to:

- Pray for leaders.
- Speak truth without hatred.
- Practice civic responsibility without losing our Gospel identity.

Our hope does not rest in political figures. It rests in Christ crucified and risen.

5. What Lent Asks of Saint Matthew Church

This Lent, I call our clergy and faithful to three commitments:

5.1. Prayer that is Visible and Communal

Adoration. Stations of the Cross. Rosary for immigrants. Clergy holy hours.

5.2. Fasting from Division

No gossip. No factional whispering. No social media attacks.
If there is conflict, address it face-to-face with Christian charity.

5.3. Almsgiving that Protects the Vulnerable

Support families facing deportation proceedings. Assist those who have lost loved ones.
Strengthen parish solidarity funds.

6. A Word to Our Clergy and Leaders

My sisters and brothers in ministry: this is not a time for ego. It is a time for shepherding.
Leadership must be calm, transparent, and sacrificial.
Authority must look like Christ washing feet.

If we remain united in prayer and integrity, Saint Matthew will emerge not weakened — but purified.

Beloved faithful, Lent 2026 is not a season of survival.
It is a season of conversion.

We do not deny our wounds.
We bring them to the Cross.

And from the Cross comes Resurrection.

May the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church, intercede for us.
May Saint Matthew pray for our parish.
May the Holy Spirit guide this Diocese into truth and peace.

With paternal love and blessing,

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