



Ash Wednesday, March 2, 2022

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

In working with our homeless people, we realized that one of our basic needs as a human being is to have a home. A place that we, as individuals, can call our own – a Physical Home. A physical structure that keeps us warm, protects us from harmful weather and houses the things that make our lives a bit better. Without this place, this building, this permanent place to return to at the end of the day, we are then Homeless. We are very aware there is a crisis in our country of physical homelessness.

Another home needed and more desired than ever is not one of a structure or a storage place, but instead a spiritual place of belonging – a Spiritual Home. In this place we keep our most precious of things so that they are protected with dignity and held sacredly. This is a place where we are welcomed and loved, a place where we are missed when we are gone and at the end of the day, we yearn deeply to return to it – the place of faith, hope, peace, joy, and love. The place where we are with other companions traveling on a long and sometimes tiresome road, yet we feel we belong. Having a spiritual homelessness comes from having a lack of all these things.

Spiritual homelessness is feeling lost, without true purpose, without a place to turn in our most desperate times, a place where we are at our lowest and are without a place or person to turn. It is often referred to as a “hole inside” us that feels empty and in need of being filled. Saint Augustine captures this in his *Confessions*: “You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it rests in you.” It is the place which many vices and bad choices are used to try and fill. It is where we ask ourselves often, “is this it?” or even, “what is my purpose?”. A spiritual homelessness is not being connected to creation, to our creator and to our soul.

Finding a spiritual home starts when we accept that we cannot find it in things, in vices, in lifestyles, in careers, in willpower. It starts when we accept it cannot be built or created by us but instead, when we get out of our own way and rely on a higher presence. It is where we release our sense of control and power and choose to give up our will to be filled by a power of a loving God. It is where we securely trust. This returns us to the deepest sense of knowing and belonging, most precious sense of home that we have ever experienced. This emptiness is only filled when we invite the presence of Jesus to our lives, welcoming Him into our daily existence and asking for His will to be done – this is the call of evangelization. It is where we return from the dark, return from the long voyage, to be welcomed into the loving and compassionate arms of our Father and held to rest in safety, security and with grace, mercy and deep abiding love.

During this Season of Lent, let us focus our spiritual practices on the developing of our Spiritual Home.

†Brian Joseph Dunn
Archbishop of Halifax-Yarmouth