I greet you at the beginning of Lent.

In this year I’m going to invite you to think about the ancient traditions of preparing in solidarity with candidates for baptism, to think about the old disciplines of prayer and fasting and alms-giving and study, through the focus on those beyond our communities, in the developing world, who live in abject poverty.

I invite you to use the Millennium Development Goals as your focus for Lenten study and discipline and prayer and fasting this year. I’m going to remind you that the Millennium Development Goals are about healing the worst of the world’s hunger. They’re about seeing that all children get access to primary education. They’re about empowering women. They’re about attending to issues of maternal health and child mortality. They’re about attending to issues of communicable disease like AIDS and malaria and tuberculosis. They’re about environmentally sustainable development, seeing that people have access to clean water and sanitation and that the conditions in slums are alleviated. And finally, they are about aid, foreign aid. They’re about trade relationships, and they’re about building partnerships for sustainable development in this world.

As you pray through the forty days of Lent, I encourage you to attend to the needs of those with the least around the world. I would invite you to study, both about how human beings live in other parts of the world and our own responsibility as Christians.

What the Bible says more often than anything else is to tend to the needs of the widows and orphans, those without. Jesus himself says, “Care for the least of these.”

I invite you to consider your alms-giving discipline this Lent and remember those in the developing world who go without.

I wish you a blessed Lent and a joyful resurrection at the end of it that may be shared with others around the world.

God bless you.

The Most Rev. Katharine Jefferts Schori
Presiding Bishop and Primate
The Episcopal Church

* An audio version of this message is available at www.episcopalchurch.org/page/presiding-bishop

Logo by the United Nations Development Programme