



*“Whatever you did for the **least among my brothers and sisters**, you did for me.”* —MATTHEW 25:40

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February 20, 2020

The Most Reverend Seán Patrick O'Malley, O.F.M. Cap.
Archbishop of Boston

Dear Cardinal O'Malley,

Peace be with you! I'm writing on behalf of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals and our more than 6.5 million members and supporters worldwide, including those of us in LAMBS, our Christian outreach division. I'd like to suggest a simple way—one particularly Capuchin in spirit—to honor God's plan for the world and Christ's compassion while promoting your flock's health and protecting God's planet for future generations: Pledge to go vegan for Lent, and encourage those you shepherd to do the same.

More animals are killed for food than for all other uses combined. As St. Francis saw and respected long ago, they are made of flesh, blood, and bone and feel love, happiness, loneliness, and fear just as we do, yet in the food industry, they're denied the chance to do anything that they were designed and created by God to enjoy—they're never able to feel the grass beneath their feet or the sun on their faces, smell fresh air, or raise a family.

Christian theology has long recognized human dominion over the Earth not as authorization to exploit other sentient beings but as a sacred duty to be loving stewards of God's creation. Jesus tells us in Matthew 25:40, "As you did it to one of the least of these, my brethren, you did it to me." We were created in God's loving image (Genesis 1:27; 1 John 4:8), and thus, we're called to show love to the world and all His creatures. Surely, Jesus' teaching, "Blessed are the merciful" (Matthew 5:7), is relevant to our treatment of animals.

Nothing in Scripture or tradition supports desecrating the environment, destroying entire species of wildlife, and tormenting and killing billions of animals every year. The Bible imparts a reverence for life, and the living, loving God must be appalled at the way His creatures are treated. Jesus taught us to extend love and compassion to those who are weak, vulnerable, and different from us, and—as you and your brothers and sisters know so well—Francis encouraged us to see humans as one of God's many creations, *all* of whom are blessed.

We pray that you will encourage your sheep to stop eating animals—including fish—during Lent. Fish, too, have distinct personalities, just like other animals and humans. They are very social animals with sophisticated societal structures and can use tools to accomplish tasks, pass on knowledge, and learn from one another. It's no more necessary to eat them on Fridays—or any other day—than it is to eat any other animal. Eating meat is also a serious threat to our health. The bodies that God entrusted to us would be healthier and less likely to suffer from heart disease, cancer, strokes, and diabetes if we ate exclusively plant-based foods.

Every time that we feed ourselves, our families, and our neighbors, we have the opportunity to make compassionate choices and anticipate the Peaceable Kingdom depicted by Isaiah. Please, will you pledge to go vegan for Lent and encourage those you pasture to do the same? We'll be sending you copies of our "[Why Christians Should Be Vegan](#)" leaflet and [vegan starter kits](#) to help the faithful make the transition over these 40 days. I look forward to hearing from you. Thank you for your consideration. I pray that you—and all you serve—will have a particularly blessed and fruitful Lent.

Yours respectfully in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Daniel Paden". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Daniel Paden
Vice President