

FAITH AND REASON

First Sunday of Lent: Now is the time for conversion Lent is a time to face our temptations and be converted by the Gospel, Pope Francis said in his Angelus address on the first Sunday of Lent. His reflections were based on the passage in the Gospel of Mark when Jesus is tempted by Satan in the desert for 40 days. Jesus goes into the desert to prepare for his mission on earth, the Pope said. While Jesus has no need of conversion himself, he must go to the desert out of obedience to God the Father and "for us, to give us the grace to overcome temptation." "For us, too, Lent is a time of spiritual 'training', of spiritual combat: we are called to face the Evil one through prayer, to be able, with God's help, to overcome him in our daily life," he continued. Immediately after he is tempted, Jesus goes out of the desert to preach the Gospel, which demands conversion from all who hear it, the Holy Father said. "(Jesus) proclaims, 'Repent, and believe in the Gospel!' Believe, that is, in this Good News that the kingdom of God is at hand. In our life we always have need of conversion every day! And the Church has us pray for this. In fact, we are never sufficiently oriented toward God, and we must continually direct our mind and our heart to Him." Lent is the time to have the courage to reject anything that leads us away from God and repent, Francis noted, "but it is not a sad time!" "It is a joyful and serious duty to strip ourselves of our selfishness, of our 'old man,' and to renew ourselves according to the grace of our Baptism," he said. During Lent, we must listen to the call of Christ and be converted, recognizing that true happiness lies in God alone, Francis said.

He concluded his address with an appeal to Mary: "May Mary Most Holy help us to live this Lent with fidelity to the Word of God and with incessant prayer, as Jesus did in the desert. It is not impossible! It means living the days with the desire to welcome the love that comes from God, and that desires to transform our life, and the whole world."... **Pope Francis 2018**

How many times have we read and listened to the awesome text from Chapter 25 of the Gospel according to Saint Matthew:

"When the Son of man comes in his glory..., he will say... 'Come O blessed of my Father... for I was hungry, and you gave me food...'"! Yes, the Redeemer of the world experiences the hungers of all his hungry brothers and sisters. He suffers with those who cannot feed their bodies: all those peoples that are victims of drought or unfavorable economic conditions, all those families affected by unemployment or scarcity of work. And yet our earth can and must feed all its inhabitants, from the youngest children to the aged, and including all the categories of those who work.

Christ also suffers with those who rightly hunger for justice and for respect for their human dignity; he suffers with those who are deprived of their fundamental liberties, with those who are neglected or, worse still, exploited in their state of poverty. Christ suffers with those who yearn for an equitable and universal peace, while this peace is being destroyed or threatened by so many conflicts and by a senseless and excessive build-up of arms. Can we be allowed to forget that the world is meant to be built, not destroyed? In a word, Christ suffers with all the victims of material, moral and spiritual poverty.

"I was hungry, and you gave me food..., I was a stranger and you welcomed me... I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me". It is to each one of us that these words will be addressed at the Day of Judgment. But they already challenge us and judge us.

Giving from our surplus and even from what we need for ourselves is not always a spontaneous reaction of our nature. It is precisely for this reason that we must constantly cast a fraternal glance at our fellow human beings and their lives; it is precisely for this reason that we stimulate within ourselves this hunger and thirst for sharing, for justice and for peace, so that we shall really undertake deeds that will help to assist individuals and peoples that are hard pressed.

Dear brothers and sisters, at this season of Lent in the Jubilee Year of Redemption, let us be more deeply converted; let us be more sincerely reconciled with God and with our neighbour. Then this spirit of penance, sharing and fasting will be translated into real action, which your local Churches will certainly urge upon you.

"Each one must do as he has made up his mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver". This exhortation of Saint Paul to the Corinthians is extremely relevant today. May you be enabled to feel the deep joy that comes from sharing food, from giving a welcome to a stranger, from assisting in the human advancement of the poor, from obtaining work for the unemployed, from the honest and courageous exercise of your civic, social, and professional responsibilities, from the peace experienced in your homes and in all your relationships with others! All of this reflects the Love of God, to which we must be converted. Love inseparable from the so often urgent service of our neighbour. Let us desire, and let us deserve, to hear Christ tell us at the last day that inasmuch as we did good to one of the least of his brethren, we did it to him... **Message of His Holiness for lent 1984 - St. John Paul II**

Everything on earth and in heaven compared with God is nothing as Jeremiah says in these words "I beheld the earth and it was empty, and it was nothing. I beheld the heavens and saw that they had no light. When he looked at the heavens and saw no light in them, he says that all bright stars in the skies, compared with God, are pure darkness. All created things are nothing and their passions are less than nothing since they are impediments to transformation in God. The soul that expends its passions on created things will not be able to possess God, either on this earth through pure transformation of love, or beyond this earth with a clear vision... **St John of the Cross**

May today there be peace within. May you trust God that you are exactly where you are meant to be. May you not forget the infinite possibilities that are born of faith. May you use those gifts that you have received and pass on the love that has been given to you. May you be content knowing you are a child of God. Let this presence settle into your bones, and allow your soul the freedom to sing, dance, praise, and love. It is there for each one of us."... **St Teresa Of Avila**

A Lenten Bible Verse For the Day

Sunday "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you." *Matthew 5:44*
Monday "If you forgive others their transgressions, your heavenly Father will forgive you." *Matthew 6:14*
Tuesday "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find" *Matthew 7:7*
Wednesday "For the measure with which you measure will in return be measured out to you." *Luke 6:38*
Thursday "For your Father knows what you need before you ask Him." *Matthew 6:8*
Friday "Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful." *Luke 6:36*
Saturday "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness" *2 Corinthians 12:9*

God knows: God knows how it feels to cry like a baby and die like a criminal. God knows how it feels to work with rough hands on rougher wood. And walk this earth with calloused feet. And taste the sweetness of precious food. Shared one last time with friends. God knows a broken heart hurts more than a whip or cross or nails or crown God knows comfort in a mother's arms longing for a father's love, sadness at a brother's loss, strength of a sister's undying loyalty. God knows why a heart overflowing with love erupts with anger, when people hurt one another God knows the joy of life restored. When the dead arise and the lost are found. God knows all this not by being alone but because a woman once said yes, and God became one of us.

Gone Fishing: In forming his church, Jesus did not begin with Emperors or senators but with fishermen. Had any persons of rank been the first to be chosen, they might have brazenly attributed their own selection to their own eminent worth, not to God's grace. Moreover, if these fishermen had not come first, who would have "caught us"? Nowadays person is considered a great preacher, if he can give a good explanation of what was written by a fisherman... **St Augustine**

The Spirit of Adventure: And so despite the emptiness, honor the void in tribute to what once was; Bless the pain, as proof it was real, and light a candle of prayer in the quiet chapel of your soul to dispel this hour's darkness. And only when you are ready, let go of even this. Do not be afraid. I shall live in your heart as you do in mine as we do in God's. As for me, I go to my next adventure. Confident the smallest atom in the farthest galaxy obeys God's command, how can we, made of billions of atoms ever be forgotten? The One who fashioned us and breathed into us a living spirit, creates, comforts and called us still to rise higher and become more.

My Wish for You: I wish you God's rich blessings upon life's happy way; Success and happiness be yours, on each succeeding day. One little prayer I hope you will say, in hail or rain or sun: We learned this prayer from Christ's own lips "Father Thy will be done". And if perchance we do not meet till years have passed away. Perhaps this little verse will bring fond memories of today.....Fr Thomas Foy, Diocese of Elphin, Ireland

In His Will is Our Peace
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