

Lent, 2003

John Paul Speaks

*Notable quotations from Pope John Paul II and
official teachings of the Roman Catholic Church*

ENLIGHTENMENT FOR DAILY JOURNEY

Lent is a season of intense prayer, fasting and concern for those in need. It offers all Christians an opportunity to prepare for Easter by serious discernment about their lives, with particular attention to the word of God which enlightens the daily journey of all who believe.

TRAGIC SITUATION

Faced with the tragic situation of persistent poverty which afflicts so many people in our world, how can we fail to see that the quest for profit at any cost and the lack of effective, responsible concern for the common good have concentrated immense resources in the hands of a few while the rest of humanity suffers in poverty and neglect?

“OFTEN IGNORED”

Appealing to believers and to all people of good will, I would like to reaffirm a principle which is self-evident yet often ignored: our goal should not be the benefit of a privileged few, but rather the improvement of the living conditions of all. Only on this foundation can we build that international order truly marked by justice and solidarity which is the hope of everyone.

“INEXHAUSTIBLE TREASURE OF LOVE”

The efforts of Christians to promote justice, their commitment in defense of the powerless, their humanitarian work in providing bread for the hungry and their care for the sick by responding to every emergency and need, draw their strength from that sole and inexhaustible treasury of love which is the complete gift of Jesus to the Father.

“FOLLOW IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF JESUS”

Believers are called to follow in the footsteps of Jesus Christ, true God and true man, Who, in perfect obedience to the will of the Father, emptied Himself (cf. Phil 2:6 ff), and humbly gave Himself to us in selfless and total love, even unto death on a cross. Calvary eloquently proclaims the message of the Blessed Trinity’s love for human beings of all times and places.

“UNCONDITIONAL”

The Son of God loved us first... with an unconditional love which asks nothing in return. If this is so, how can we fail to see the season of Lent as a providential opportunity to make courageous decisions inspired by altruism and generosity?

“PRACTICAL AND EFFECTIVE WEAPONS”

Lent offers us the practical and effective weapons of fasting and almsgiving as a means of combating an excessive attachment to money. Giving not only from our abundance, but sacrificing something more in order to give to the needy, fosters that self-denial which is essential to authentic Christian living. Strengthened by constant prayer, the baptized reveal the priority which they have given to God in their lives.

“THE CHARITY OF CHRIST”

The love of God poured into our hearts ought to inspire and transform who we are and what we do. Christians must not think that they can seek the true good of their brothers and sisters without embodying the charity of Christ. Even in those cases where they might succeed in improving important aspects of social or political life, without charity every change would remain short-lived.

“A PROVIDENTIAL PATH”

For those who are far-off, service to the needy can be a providential path leading to an encounter with Christ, since the Lord abundantly repays the good deeds done to one’s neighbor (cf. Mt 25:40).

(Source: Message for Lent, 2003, issued Jan 7, 2003.)

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