



The Holy See

MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II FOR LENT 1980

Each year, as Lent approaches, the Pope likes to address all the Members of the Church and to encourage them to live correctly this season which is offered to us so that we may prepare for true liberation.

The spirit of penance and its practice impel us to detach ourselves sincerely from our unnecessary possessions, and even sometimes from our necessary ones, which prevent us from really “being” as God wishes us to be: “For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also”. Is our heart attached to material wealth, to power over others, to subtle ways of dominating? If so, we need Christ, the Easter Liberator, who, if we wish him to, can free us of all the bonds of sin that hold us fast.

Let us prepare to allow ourselves to be enriched by the grace of the Resurrection, by ridding ourselves of all false treasures: the material goods that we do not need are often the very conditions for the survival of millions of human beings. Also, in addition to their bare subsistence, hundreds of millions of people are waiting for us to help them to give themselves the necessary means both for their own full human advancement and for the economic and cultural development of their countries.

But declarations of intent and simple gifts are not enough to change people’s hearts. What is needed is that conversion of spirit that impels us, in the meeting of hearts, to share what we have with the least favoured members of our societies, with those who have been dispossessed of everything, even sometimes of their dignity as men and women, young people and children, with all the refugees of the world, who can no longer live in the land of their ancestors and must leave their own homeland. This is where we find and live most intimately the mystery of the Lord’s redeeming sufferings and death. True sharing, which is a meeting with others, helps us to free ourselves from those bonds that enslave us. And, because it makes us see others as brothers and sisters, it enables us to rediscover that we are children of the same Father, “heirs of God and

coheirs with Christ" (*Rm* 8:17), from whom we have incorruptible riches.

I therefore exhort you to respond generously to the appeals that your Bishops, either personally or through those in charge of sharing campaigns, will address to you during Lent. You will be the first to benefit from those campaigns, for in this way you will be stepping out on the path to the only true Liberation. Your efforts, linked with the efforts of all the baptized, will bear witness to the Charity of Christ and thus will build up that "civilization of Love" that is so much desired, consciously or unconsciously, by our world torn by conflicts and injustices, and disillusioned when it no longer finds true witnesses to the Love of God.

I bless you, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

JOHN PAUL II

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