



# The Holy See

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## *MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II FOR LENT 1979*

You ask: "What has happened to Lent?". Going to some small extent without food does not, you think, mean much, at a time when so many of our brothers and sisters are victims of war of disasters and are undergoing such suffering, both physically and morally.

Fasting concerns personal asceticism, which is always necessary; but the Church asks the baptized to mark this liturgical season in yet another way.

For us, in fact, Lent must mean something: it must show the world that the whole People of God, because it is made up of sinners, is preparing in Penance to re-live liturgically Christ's Passion, Death and Resurrection. This public collective witness derives from the spirit of Penance of each individual, and it also leads us to deepen this inward attitude and to strengthen our motivation for it.

Going without things does not consist only of giving away what we do not need; sometimes it also consists of giving away what we do need, like the widow in the Gospel who knew that what she was giving away was already a gift to her from God. Going without things is to free oneself from the slaveries of a civilization that is always urging people on to greater comfort and consumption, without a thought even for the preservation of our environment, which is the common heritage of humanity.

Your ecclesial communities call upon you to take part in "Lenten Campaigns", and in this way they help you to direct the exercise of your spirit of Penance by sharing what you possess with those who have less or have nothing at all.

Are you perhaps still standing idle in the market place because no one has called you to work? The vineyard of Christian Charity is short of workers; the Church is calling you to it. Do not wait until it is too late to help Christ in prison or without clothing, Christ persecuted or a refugee, Christ

who is hungry or without a roof. Help our brothers and sisters who lack the bare necessities to escape from inhuman conditions and to reach true human advancement.

All of you who are resolved to give this evangelical witness of penance and sharing, 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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