
Pope Francis: “Feeling compassion for the many innocent victims of wars, in attacks on life”

“Putting the paschal mystery at the centre of our lives means feeling compassion towards the wounds of the crucified Christ present in the many innocent victims of wars, in attacks on life, from that of the unborn to that of the elderly, and various forms of violence. They are likewise present in environmental disasters, the unequal distribution of the earth’s goods, human trafficking in all its forms, and the unbridled thirst for profit, which is a form of idolatry.” The Holy Father’s appeal that concludes his message for Lent titled “We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God” published today – is overarching. “Today too – Francis writes - there is a need to appeal to men and women of good will to share, by almsgiving, their goods with those most in need, as a means of personally participating in the building of a better world.” “Charitable giving makes us more human, whereas hoarding risks making us less human, imprisoned by our own selfishness.” The Pope’s invitation for Lent 2020 is that

“we can and must go even further, and consider the structural aspects of our economic life”

“For this reason – for Lent 2000 - **from 26 to 28 March I have convened a meeting in Assisi with young economists, entrepreneurs and change-makers**, with the aim of shaping a more just and inclusive economy.” “As the Church’s magisterium has often repeated, political life represents an eminent form of charity”, the Pope declares quoting from Pius XI. “The same holds true for economic life, which can be approached in the same evangelical spirit, the spirit of the Beatitudes.” *If we listen to the tempting voice of the “father of lies we risk sinking into the abyss of absurdity”, and “experiencing hell here on earth”,* exhorts the Pope: whoever believes the message of the Pascal mystery “rejects the lie that our life is ours to do with as we will. Rather, life is born of the love of God our Father, from his desire to grant us life in abundance.” “If we listen instead to the tempting voice of the ‘father of lies’ we risk sinking into the abyss of absurdity, and experiencing hell here on earth, as all too many tragic events in the personal and collective human experience sadly bear witness.” *“May we not let this time of grace pass in vain, in the foolish illusion that we can control the times and means of our conversion to him”,* is the Pope’s appeal with regard to “conversion”, the key word of Lent. “The experience of mercy – Francis writes in the message released today - is only possible in a ‘face to face’ relationship with the crucified and risen Lord ‘who loved me and gave himself for me’, in a heartfelt dialogue between friends.” That is why prayer is so important in Lent: “even more than a duty, prayer is an expression of our need to respond to God’s love which always precedes and sustains us. Christians pray in the knowledge that, although unworthy, we are still loved. Prayer can take any number of different forms, but what truly matters in God’s eyes is that it penetrates deep within us and chips away at our hardness of heart, in order to convert us ever more fully to God and to his will.” Francis’ hope for Lent is that “in this favourable season then, may we allow ourselves to be led like Israel into the desert. The more fully we are engaged with his word, the more we will experience the mercy he freely gives us. May we not let this time of grace pass in vain, in the foolish illusion that we can control the times and means of our conversion to him.”

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