



The Holy See

MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II FOR LENT 1987

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

“He has filled the hungry with good things, and has sent the rich away empty” (*Lk 1:53*).

These words, spoken by the Virgin Mary in her Magnificat, are at the same time a praise of God the Father and a call which each of us can take to heart and meditate upon during this Lenten season.

Lent is a time for conversion, a time for the Truth which “makes us free” (cf. *Jn 8:32*), since we cannot deceive the one who searches “the minds and the hearts” (*Ps 7:9*). In the presence of God our Creator, in the presence of Christ our Redeemer, in what can we take pride? What riches or what talents could give us a sense of superiority?

As for true riches, those which do not pass away, Mary teaches us that they come from God. We must long for them, we must hunger for them, putting aside what is artificial and passing, in order to receive these good things, and to receive them in abundance. Let us be converted, let us forsake the old leaven (cf. *1 Cor 5:7*) of pride and of all that leads to injustice, contempt, and the thirst to possess for ourselves money and power.

If we recognize ourselves as poor in the presence of God - this being the truth, and not a false humility - we will have the heart of one who is poor, the eyes and hands of the poor, in order to share the riches which God has lavished upon us: our faith, which we cannot keep selfishly for ourselves alone; hope, which those deprived of everything need so much; and charity which makes us love the poor as God does, with a preferential love. The Spirit of Love showers upon us a thousand good things to be shared; the more we seek them, the more we shall receive them in abundance.

If we are truly those “poor in spirit” to whom the kingdom of heaven (cf. *Mt* 5:3) is promised, then our offering will be acceptable to God. Even the material offerings which are part of our Lenten observance are riches if they are made with the heart of one who is poor, because we are giving what we have received from God so that it may be distributed: we only receive so that we may give. Just as the young boy’s five loaves and two fishes were multiplied in the hands of Christ in order to feed the multitude, so will our offerings be multiplied by God for the poor.

Shall we come to the end of Lent with a conceited heart, full of our own importance, but with empty hands for others? Or led by the Virgin of the Magnificat, shall we find ourselves at Easter with the heart of one who is poor, starving for God, but with our hands filled with all God’s gifts to be distributed to the world which needs them so much?

“Give thanks to God for he is good; his steadfast love endures forever” (*Ps* 117:1).

JOHN PAUL II