



The Holy See

MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II FOR LENT 1981

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Lent is a time of truth.

Christians, called by the Church to prayer, penance, fasting and self-sacrifice, place themselves before God and recognize themselves; they rediscover themselves.

“Remember, man, you are dust and to dust you will return” (Formula for the Distribution of Ashes). Remember, man, that you are called to things other than worldly and material goods that can easily divert you from what is essential. Remember, man, your first calling: you come from God, and you return to God by going towards the Resurrection which is the path marked out by Christ. “Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple” (*Lk 14:27*).

Lent is a time of profound truth, which brings conversion, restores hope and, by putting everything back in its proper place, brings peace and optimism.

Lent is a time that makes us think about our relationship with “Our Father”; it re-establishes the order that should reign between brothers and sisters. Lent is a time that makes us jointly responsible for one another; it detaches us from our selfishness, small-mindedness, meanness and pride; it is a time that enlightens us and makes us understand better that we too, like Christ, must serve.

“A new commandment I give to you, that you also love one another” (*Jn 13:34*). “And who is my neighbour?” (*Lk 10:29*).

Lent is a time of truth, which, as in the case of the Good Samaritan, makes us pause, recognize our brothers and sisters, and put our time and possessions at their service in daily sharing. The

Good Samaritan is the Church! The Good Samaritan is every man and woman! By calling! By duty! The Good Samaritan lives charity.

Saint Paul says: "So we are ambassadors for Christ" (2 Cor 5:20). It is here that our responsibility lies. We are sent to other people, to our brothers and sisters. Let us respond generously to the confidence that Christ thus places in us.

Yes, Lent is a time of truth. Let us examine ourselves sincerely, honestly and simply. Our brothers and sisters are there among the poor, the sick, the outcast, the aged. What sort of love do we have? What sort of truth?

On the occasion of Lent, in all your dioceses and churches an appeal is going to be made to that truth of yours, to that charity which is the proof of it.

So open your minds to look around you, open your hearts to understand and sympathise, open your hands to help. The needs are vast, as you know. I therefore urge you to take a generous part in this sharing, and I assure you of my prayers and send you my Apostolic Blessing.

JOHN PAUL II