

## **MISSIONARY SERVANTS OF THE MOST HOLY TRINITY**

**Spiritual Life Committee  
Fr. Gustavo Baloco, S.T.**

### **Lenten Reflection**

#### **Lent: Journey, Encounter and Transformation**

#### **Introduction**

**The Cenacle spirit is a prayerful spirit. We recognize that only a spiritual person can lead an apostolic life, and that we cannot be spiritual without prayer. Great value, then, shall be placed upon periods of prayerful silence and recollection. (Rule of Life #17)**

**Because of our need for Gods mercy in our brokenness, we are to approach the Sacrament of Penance frequently for reconciliation and healing. By our experience of sacramental forgiveness, we grow in mercy and compassion towards others. (Rule of Life #16)**

Each year we celebrate Lent in preparation for Easter with prayer, fasting and alms, with the objective of reflecting, meditating and praying and later confessing and thus renewing our spiritual life. This year are invited to live Lent as a journey that will lead us to an encounter with God in the image of Jesus who was led by the Spirit to the desert. There in the desert we are confronted with our fears, challenges, frustrations, the good and bad choices in our ministries and in our personal lives. And finally, we will transform our fears into convictions, our frustrations into joy, our challenges into experiences that help us grow in our vocation and in our relationship with God.

#### **Mindful of this, the following questions will help us enter the Lenten season:**

In your journey as a Missionary Servant, what challenges have you met in your ministry at a personal, community and pastoral level?

During Lent, do you dedicate time to let yourself be encountered by God?

During Lenten activities, do you take time to review what you need in order to transform your spiritual life as well as your personal and community life?

#### **Scriptural references**

The temptations of Jesus according to Saint Matthew (4, 1-11)

“Then Jesus was led into the desert by the Spirit to be tempted by the devil. He fasted forty days and forty nights, and afterward was hungry. The tempter approached and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command these stones to turn into bread.” Jesus replied, “Scripture has it: ‘Not on bread alone is man to live but on every utterance that comes from the mouth of God.’” Next the devil took him to the holy city, set him on the parapet of the temple, and said, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down. Scripture has it: ‘He will bid his angels take care of you; with their hands they will support you that you may never stumble on a stone.’” Jesus answered him, “Scripture also has it: ‘You shall not put the Lord your God to the test,’” The devil then took him up a very high mountain and displayed before him all the kingdoms of the world in their magnificence, promising, “All these will I bestow on you if you prostrate yourself in homage before me.” At this Jesus said to him, “Away with you, Satan! Scripture has it: ‘You shall do homage to the Lord your God; him alone shall you adore.’” At that the devil left him, and angels came and waited on him.”

*Other passages that will help us in this reflection:*

(Acts 9, 1-21; John 4, 1-26; Mark 2, 1-12; Psalm 50; Luke 3,3-14)

### ***Material that will help us enter our Lenten desert***

#### **Ash Wednesday/ The Spirit of Lent**

Article, THE HOLY GHOST MESSENGER, February 1931, MF 14093.

"Be converted to me with all your heart, in fasting, and in weeping, and in mourning. And rend your hearts, and not your garments, and turn to the Lord your God." (Joel 2:12-13) With these weighty words the Church, like St. John the Baptist, bids her children to enter into the spirit of penance. The holy and salutary days of Lent are upon us. Today we companion our blessed Lord as he goes up to the desert and urged on to an angry self-violence we will spend the forty days studying and following the salutary counsels of the church.

What a stupendous grace to be with Jesus in the desert! How appreciative, how thankful, how happy are we for it? This call to the desert is God's call of love for our souls. He yearns and desires to cleanse and purify these souls of ours, to fill them out of the abundance of His grace and the depths of His love. Knowing the infinite mercy of God's love, how justly angry we should be with our meaner self when our offensive and carnal nature would attempt to deafen or stifle this cry.

What an obstruction we can become to our own best interest! What a contradiction to our better

selves! Why do we everlastingly shrink from the truth? It is because the hidden, inner purpose, the very heart and essence of our Saviour's life is hidden from our darkened understanding. Unworthy self-interest and undisciplined self-love have veiled the efficacy of suffering and sorrow.

Our gratitude to the Holy Spirit for the twofold grace of calling us to penance and of placing before us the divine example of our Blessed Lord doing penance for our sins should move us to manifest in ourselves "fruit worthy of penance." (Mt 3:8) Let us change our lives, our minds and our hearts. Let us turn our affections from sin to God. Let us strive to satisfy Divine Justice for the injury and affront our sins have caused Him. Voluntary mortification of the flesh, mental mortification, resignation to God's Holy Will in all the events of life, patience in sufferings will help us to effect these resolutions.

The Church pleads with us to do penance. The merciful Christ urges us to do penance. Divine Justice demands that we do penance. "He wills not the death of a sinner." (cf. Ez 18:23) For this reason God sent His only Begotten Son to the desert to do penance for us, and to encourage us in its practice."

### **Friday, second week of Lent/ Love of the Cross**

Article in the *Holy Ghost Magazine*-Nov. 1923-MF 830-33.

"We adore Thee, O Christ, and we bless Thee, because by Thy holy Cross Thou hast redeemed the world." Oh Jesus, on Thy Cross Thou art most adorable! Oh you lovers of the Cross, you men and women who are trained in the school of the crucified Jesus, behold those outstretched arms, those pierced feet. Study the gaping wound in His side. Contemplate the inclined thorn-crowned head. See the victim of sin's malice and the price paid for the salvation of our souls. Impulsively, lovingly, penitently, adoringly we cry out: "We adore Thee, O Christ and we bless Thee, because by Thy holy Cross Thou hast redeemed the world!"

How we should love the Cross! How we should live for it! Yes, how we should die for it! Cruel ingrates will we be if we ever forget that the Cross of Jesus was the instrument of the redemption of the world. Realize and pray that in part, at least, you may appreciate the privilege and grace given us of exalting this Cross.

There is another lesson that this Cross will teach, but only the favored few will learn it. Some will gaze upon this Cross as they gazed upon it of old; "All they that saw me have laughed me to scorn: they have spoken with the lips and wagged the head." (Ps 21:8) Others will gaze upon it with love

and holy desire. These will enter deeply into its holy mysteries and that which to Jew and Gentile may be but a stumbling block and rock of scandal, to these it will be “The mystery which hath been hidden from ages and generations but now is manifested to his saints.”(Col 1:26) (My dear children,) may it be your grace to be numbered among that chosen few.

May it be your supreme happiness to say with that great lover of the Cross, St. Paul, “For I judged not myself to know anything among you, but Jesus Christ, and him crucified.”(1 Cor 2:2) If you would become world conquerors for Christ, if you would enter into a large share of His glorious immortality, then you must learn from the Cross: “If we suffer, we shall also reign with him.”(2 Tim 2:12) When you attain this perfection your refreshed soul will confound the haters of the Cross; you will comfort and strengthen the less favored in the school of Jesus in your cry of holy joy, “But we glory also in tribulations.”(Rom 5:3)

“Stabat mater juxta crucem.” It is our grace of graces to stand with her, the little group of His faithful followers has passed away; the Mother of Sorrows remains. It is our day, it is our opportunity, it is our transcending grace (to stand) with her on the Calvary of our generation; in the midst of its indifference and contempt of her Son, with her to stand by the Cross of Jesus, and to exalt above the turbulence of impiety that Cross of her Divine son, the conqueror of sin, of death, and of hell.

### **Monday: third week of Lent/ The Need for Penance**

Conference to Missionary Cenacle Apostolate-March 1928-MF 10711

“Spare, O Lord, spare Thy people, and be not angry with them forever.”

To our Holy Mother the Church this season is one of great importance. It is the penitential season. The Christian is to conserve grace now through these penitential days to tide over the difficulties, the contradictions and the struggles of the Christian life throughout the year.

There are lessons during the holy season that are not pleasant. It is humiliating and it goes to the very marrow of the bone. In her liturgy during the Lenten season the Church tells us some very salutary truths. She does not spare us, because she is a tender mother. And she cautions her priests that they be honest with her people and truthful, for she has learned a secret from her Divine Founder, a terrible secret, a secret of penance.

She learned from Jesus Christ the truth that the world hates, and because the Church holds to this truth the world is very unpleasant. The world has never accepted that lesson of penance, the world never will; and this really, my dear children, is the reason, practically the entire reason, of the

opposition of the world to Christ and His Church. The Church knows the doctrine of penance is unpleasant, the priests know it is unpleasant, but what are we to do?

Our meek and gentle Saviour says this and He holds it at our conscience: “Unless you shall do penance, you shall all likewise perish.” (Lk 13:3) Therefore for two thousand years in the Church we have heard the swish and whirl of the penitential lash. We have seen generations of men and women macerating themselves with terrible fasts, clothing themselves with haircloth; in fact, that they might crucify the disorderly in them, even cutting themselves to the very bone.

The Lord speaks of a straight and narrow way to the Kingdom of Heaven, and no matter where we look, on all sides, we see a cross. This is the holy office now commissioned to us priests. O, you priest of God, you stand between the porch and the tabernacle and cry out, “Spare, O Lord, spare Thy people!”(cf. Joel 2:17) Because I am a priest I must remind you now of sad truths. Why? Because a consideration of these truths will save you.

The Church says to us pleadingly, pointedly, “I exhort you that you make not vain the grace that you have received.” Just study how the Church treats us. During the holy season of Lent she hands us the unleavened crusts; she speaks of sorrows and woes to our untempered passions; and even if, because of bodily infirmity and incapacity, we seek exemption or exception (from the fast) if she mitigates, she says, “I cannot absolve you, I cannot dispense you from the obligation of penance.”

My dear children, remember we are sinners and we are the children of sinners and in sin did our mothers beget us. Through sin death came into this world, through sin all those horrible, miserable consequences afflict the soul, the spirit of man, and we are healed only through a salutary penance.