



A Message from the Catholic Secular Society of Missionaries of God's Love

Calgary, Alberta

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Lent

Year 1 - Vol. 1

## Lent, Spiritual Combat



This past year could be described as different and difficult, to say the least. The pandemic, protests, conflicts, and divisions have made us protagonists of a chapter of history that will undoubtedly be felt by future generations. We are living daily with sickness and death, either through personal experience or what we hear from the government and media.

By virtue of faith, we understand with certainty that God in His immense mercy is present among us. By the action of the Holy Spirit, He encourages us and confirms that He is in control.

Every year presents us with the opportunity to live Lent more intensely, consider our own mortality, and prepare us for eternal life.

Lent is a time of preparation for Easter. It is a time of introspection, to look at ourselves and question: **what is there in my life that I must change?**

During this time, the Church proposes three practices to help us fully live these forty days, meditating on the passion, death, and resurrection of Christ. These three practices that foster the state of inner penance are: Prayer, Alms, and Fasting.

**Prayer:** Time for God; that is, to create the moments to live the silence, learn to listen, appreciate all that we have received from God, and let go of our desire to control exactly when things will happen. It is through prayer that we develop a more intimate relationship with God.

**Alms:** Time for others. Through the experience of prayer, almsgiving is the expression of our gratitude for all that God has given us. Out of love for Him, we seek a way to share our time, attention, food, and dress with those in need of love, food, and spiritual support.

**Fasting:** Time for ourselves. To stop focusing on ourselves, our pleasures, and whims, and to review our path to God and see how certain situations can affect our desire to be prayerful people or affect our service in our families, in the community of faith, and at work.

### QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS:

**Q:** Why do we fast in Lent?

**A:** Fasting is to abstain from bodily food. It is a form of prayer and penance; Jesus Christ practiced fasting at important times. Food satisfies our senses; they are part of the carnal world. When we fast, we are demonstrating that we can overcome ourselves and make our self-control available to God. Fasting alone makes no sense if it is not accompanied by reflection.

**Q:** Do we fast only in Lent?

**A:** *Every Friday, unless they coincide with a solemnity, abstinence from meat, or other food determined by the Episcopal Conference, should be kept; fasting and abstinence will be kept on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday.* Canon law numbers 1251-1252 1251.

**Note:** Send us your questions [info@misioneroslaicos.org](mailto:info@misioneroslaicos.org)

### Reflection

"Oh God, who, to deliver us from the power of the enemy, you wanted your Son to die on the cross, grant us to attain the grace of the resurrection. By our Lord Jesus Christ." (Prayer Vespers, Holy Wednesday)



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Pope Francis in his Angelus meditation on the first Sunday of Lent in 2018 explained:

"Lent is a time of 'spiritual combat', of spiritual struggle. We are called to face the evil one through prayer to be able, with God's help, to overcome him in our daily lives."

The Gospel of Matthew in Chapter 4 tells us that Jesus, having fasted forty days and forty nights, was hungry. The tempter made three proposals: "If you are the son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread... If you are the son of God, throw yourself down; for it is written, 'He will give His angels charge of you', and 'On their hands they will bear you up'." Finally, "the tempter took him on a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them. And he said to him, 'all these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me'."

The three temptations relate to the three enemies of the soul: ourselves, the world, and the devil.

The first temptation refers to the temptation of the **flesh**; our desires and immediate inclinations, which are not in conformity with God's will. A missionary sister in our community tells of her experience associated with food, where in times of anxiety she sought comfort in food, eating until she was satisfied. The moment she noticed that she was beginning to do so in secret, so as not to feel judged, she understood that she had a problem: she had to struggle with herself to modify this behavior and overcome her weakness, and embracing God, she felt she was freed.

The second temptation refers to the **world**, in prioritizing personal and professional success, in having power and prestige, in giving more importance to what others say about us, and to be accepted by them. Not to tempt God is to trust fully that He is the one who gives strength of character and the virtues to act as his children.

The third temptation refers to the **devil**; he seeks our weakest point and attacks, he rounds us to make us fall. Jesus shows us how to defeat the tempter, who comes to fascinate us with false promises and to turn away from God's way. Jesus for forty days remained in meditation seeking the will of the Father. When the tempter approached him, he found him full of God's love and wisdom.

What better time than Lent to turn to the Lord and recognize that we are weak and sinful. The certainty of knowing that as long as we are on this earth, we will always have at our disposal His mercy through the Sacrament of Confession should encourage us to convert to Him. With his help and grace, we will emerge victorious from this spiritual fight.

Let us journey with our eyes fixed on the goal, a personal encounter with Jesus, and ask God that we live this lent with a burning heart. May our daily prayer be intensified, so that as we wake up in the morning, our first thoughts will be directed towards God. Let us consider more time reading Sacred Scripture, in helping financially, with our time, accompanying those in need, and let us be firm in our fasting and abstinence. St Paul reminds us in his writing: "No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and He will not let you be tempted beyond your strength, but with the temptation will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it" (1Cor 10.13).

How are you going to live your lent this year?

How do you plan to pray, fast, and give alms?

Let us not miss this opportunity.

- May silence, as a personal experience, lead us to deeper prayer
- May our sacrifices and penances help us proclaim the gospel
- That with the practice of this tradition, we can help our brothers and sisters come closer to Jesus
- That on Easter Sunday you can say you had a conversion experience, that something changed in your life