



The Holy See

MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS PAUL VI FOR LENT 1977

Dear Sons and Daughters, Here we are in Lent! Listen to us for a moment. Lent is a period for receiving God's favour. The liturgy speaks of Lent as the "acceptable time" for us to prepare to celebrate worthily the Paschal Mystery. It is a period which is of course austere, but it is fruitful and it already brings a renewal like a spiritual springtime. We must awaken our consciences. We must give fresh vigour to our sense of duty and to our desire to respond, in a practical way, to the demands of a genuine Christian life. Nearly ten years ago, our Encyclical *Populorum Progressio*, on the development of peoples, was like a "cry of anguish, in the name of the Lord", addressed to the Christian communities and to all the people of good will. Today, as the liturgical season of Lent begins, we would like to renew that solemn appeal. Our gaze and our heart as pastor of all continue to be overwhelmed by the immense multitude of those whom all the world's societies leave by the wayside, wounded in body and soul, stripped of their human dignity, without bread, without a voice, defenceless, alone in their distress! Of course we find it hard to share our possessions in order to contribute to the disappearance of the inequalities of a world that has grown unjust. Yet statements of principles are not enough. That is why it is necessary and salutary for us to remember that we are stewards of God's gifts, and that "during Lent, penance should not be only internal and individual but also external and social" (Second Vatican Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosantum Concilium*, 110). We ask you to go out to meet poor Lazarus, in his hunger and misery. Make yourself his neighbour, so that he can recognize in your eyes the eyes of Christ welcoming him, and in your hands the hands of the Lord sharing his gifts. And respond generously to the appeals that will be made to you in your own local Churches, so that you can relieve those who are most disinherited, and share in the progress of the peoples who are most deprived. We remind you of the words of the Lord Jesus on helping the weak, words happily preserved for us by the Apostle Paul: "it is more blessed to give than to receive" (*Acts* 20:35). We exhort you all, dear sons and daughters, to purify your hearts in order to welcome the coming Easter celebrations and to proclaim to the world the joyous Good News of salvation. And we bless you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. **PAUL VI** Copyright © Libreria Editrice Vaticana