

LENT 2017

My dear Sisters:

Today, Ash Wednesday, the Lord gives us “un tiempo fuerte”, - as the Church says, a time for self denial and spiritual discipline. This is the time of Lent, in which each of us will have to reflect much on our faith, that it maybe strong and firm and so make us ready for the great paschal event. We also have to reflect in a special way on our life: how do we live it personally and in community?

The Pope tells us that it is a time of renewal for the Church and for each one of us, but above all it is a time of grace, of conversion. We must open our eyes and ears and, especially, the heart to go beyond our small lot. We are invited to open ourselves to God and the brothers, challenging the routine that dwarfs us.

For this time of reflection, the Church proposes three pillars that we find in the Gospel of Matthew 6: 1-6, 16-18. This text tells us about the three fundamental pillars of the Christian life which is prayer, fasting and almsgiving and it tells us in a simple, humble way, without desires of notoriety, without letting ourselves be dominated by external appearances, without vanity, without ostentation, but simply in intimacy, in the Heart of God. The value of life does not depend on success but on what we have inside.

The first element is prayer. "When you pray, do not be like the hypocrites ... to be seen by others ..."

Lent is a time for a simple, deep, intimate, prolonged prayer. We should not pray only for pure compliance, because it is scheduled ... we pray because we love, we want to encounter God who is Love and also we feel the need to express to God our own needs and those of others. In the prayer of intercession we pray to God for so many situations of poverty and sufferings we have in our world.

The second element on the Lenten journey is fasting. "When you fast, do not appear sad, like the hypocrites ... but anoint your head and wash your face ..."

Fasting makes sense if it truly makes an impact in our security and whether it translates into a benefit for others, if it helps us to foster the style of the Good Samaritan, who leans over the brother in need and takes care of him. In other words, that we put ourselves in the place of the other, in the shoes of those who are suffering from unemployment, wars, or any kind of injustice ...

Fasting must help us to direct the heart to the essentials, to analyze our attitudes, to see the desires we have in order to give ourselves a little more to others by leaving our comfort zones and selfishness, forgetting our little things, and turning our heart to the essentials and to share with those in need.

The third element is almsgiving. "When you give alms, do not blow the trumpet in front of you, as the hypocrites do ..."


Almsgiving is one of the forms of fraternal charity, since we give it without expecting anything in return; freely we have received, freely we are obliged to share with the most needy. Almsgiving helps us to live the gratuity of the gift, makes us free from the desire for possession, frees us from the fear of losing what we have. But true charity is not only helping materially but rather sharing in the suffering. Let us think of so many people around us who are not sure of tomorrow or even now they are experiencing hunger ; entire families living in undeserved shanties and who do not have enough for the whole month ; elderly who end up in indigence... Let us ask ourselves, why only they and not me? Do we merely accuse the defects of society and the public powers when we can alleviate their suffering, as little as it may be? Will our conscience and our heart be satisfied if we do not participate in their misfortune by giving a part of what we enjoy? The same can be done with our time, our friendship, and everything that we do in fraternal justice.

Jesus tells us three very strong things: if you want to be more Christian, pray, surrender and sacrifice for others and also do it in a simple, modest, natural and joyful way.

Dear sisters, let us ask the Lord that these forty days be a true encounter with ourselves, a great love for others and a demanding concern for everything around us.

Thank you, Lord, for giving us this precious time that prepares us to celebrate and live the joy of Easter.

A fraternal embrace and my prayer,


Sr. M^a Asunción González, O.P.
Priora General