

My dear children: may Jesus watch over my daughters and sons for me!

We have begun Lent, a time of preparation for Holy Week, which recalls for us the forty days Jesus spent in the desert. Through his fasting and his experience of temptation, our Lord shows us that God is all we need. The Lenten practices of fasting, alms and prayer help us to penetrate more deeply into this truth.

By fasting we seek to identify ourselves with Christ through the path of poverty. “Fasting, experienced as a form of self-denial, helps those who undertake it in simplicity of heart to rediscover God’s gift and to recognize that, created in his image and likeness, we find our fulfilment in him” (Francis, *Message for Lent 2021*).

As we already know, the beauty of the virtue of poverty does not lie mainly in the renunciation of created goods, but rather in renouncing the disorder a person experiences when these goods are separated from God. Poverty proclaims and recalls the original goodness of creation and material goods, while fostering detachment from them as “a sign that the heart is not satisfied with created things and aspires to the Creator” (*Conversations*, no. 110).

This Lent can be a good time to be enthused once again with the challenge of examining our heart in order to discover how the material goods we possess are helping us to carry out the mission God has entrusted to us. Then we will be able to detach ourselves more easily from those that are not helping. Like our Lord, who had “nowhere to lay his head” (*Lk 9:58*), we will go forward without excess baggage. With poverty, we will learn to appreciate the world’s goods by seeing in them their value as a path for union with Him and for service to others, and we will renounce with joy those goods that, here and now, are not part of this path.

Your Father blesses you with all his affection,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Leonardo". The script is cursive and fluid.

Rome, 20 February 2021