



The Holy See

MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS PAUL VI FOR LENT 1974

Dear Sons and Daughters, It is some ten months since we announced the Holy Year. “Renewal” and “reconciliation” remain the key words of this celebration: they sum up the hopes that we place in the Holy Year. And yet, as we have said, they will have no effect unless a certain “break” takes place within us (cf. Address of 9 May 1973). We have now come to Lent, that special time set aside for the renewal of ourselves in Christ, and for reconciliation with God and with our neighbour. During Lent we share deeply in the death and Resurrection of Christ, through a breaking with sin, injustice and selfishness. We wish therefore to stress today a “break” which is demanded by the spirit of Lent, a break from a too exclusive attachment to our worldly goods, whether they are abundant as in the case of the rich man Zacchaeus (cf. *Lk* 19:8), or meager as in the case of the poor widow praised by Jesus (cf. *Mk* 12:43). In the vivid language of the time, Saint Basil preached to the wealthy in these terms: “The bread which you do not use is the bread of the hungry; the garment hanging in your wardrobe is the garment of him who is naked; the shoes that you do not wear are the shoes of the one who is barefoot; the money that you keep locked away is the money of the poor: the acts of charity that you do not perform are so many injustices that you commit” (*Homily VI in Lc*, XII, 18, *PG XXXI*, col. 275). Words like these make us reflect at a time when hatred and conflict are caused by the injustice of those who hoard when others have nothing, by those who put their own tomorrow before their neighbour’s today, and by those who through ignorance or selfishness refuse to give up what they do not need for the sake of those who lack the bare necessities of life (cf. *Mater et Magistra*). And how can we not recall at this point the renewal and reconciliation demanded and assured by the fullness of our single Eucharistic meal. If we are to share together in the Body of the Lord, we must sincerely desire that no one should lack what is necessary, even though this should involve us in some personal sacrifice. Otherwise, we would be heaping insults on the Church, the Mystical Body of Christ, of which we are the members. In his warning to the Corinthians, Saint Paul puts us on our guard against the danger of blameworthy conduct in this regard (cf. *1 Cor* 11:17ff). We would be sinning against this oneness of mind and heart if today we were to refuse millions of our brothers and sisters the things that their human development demands. More and more in this time of Lent, the Church and her charitable institutions exhort Christians to help promote this immense enterprise. Preaching the Holy Year means preaching that profound and joyful self-sacrifice which restores us to the truth of ourselves and to the truth of the human family, as God wants it to be. This is how the present Lent can bring even in this life, besides the pledge of a heavenly reward, the hundredfold promised by Christ to those who give with an open heart. We wish you to hear in this our appeal a twofold echo: the echo of the Lord’s voice speaking to you and exhorting you, and the echo of the pleas of mankind weeping and imploring help. All of us, bishops, priests, religious, lay people, young and old, as individuals and as members of the community – we are all called upon to take part in the work of sharing, in love, for it is a commandment of

the Lord. To each of you we impart our Apostolic Blessing: in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen. **PAUL VI** Copyright © Libreria Editrice Vaticana

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