



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

ANGELUS

Saint Peter's Square

First Sunday of Lent, 22 February 2015

[Multimedia]

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Good morning!

Last Wednesday, with the rite of Ashes, Lent began, and today is the First Sunday of this Liturgical Season which refers to the 40 days Jesus spent in the desert, after his Baptism in the River Jordan. St Mark writes in today's Gospel: "The Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. And he was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered to him" (1:12-13). With these simple words the Evangelist describes the trials willingly faced by Jesus before he began his messianic mission. It is a trial from which the Lord leaves victorious and which prepares him to proclaim the Gospel of the Kingdom of God. In these 40 days of solitude, he confronts Satan "body to body", He unmasks his temptations and conquers him. And through Him, we have all conquered, but we must protect this victory in our daily lives.

The Church reminds us of that mystery at the beginning of Lent, so that it may give us the perspective and the meaning of this Time, which is a time of combat. Lent is a *time of combat! A spiritual combat against the spirit of evil* (cf. Collective Prayer for Ash Wednesday). And while we cross the Lenten "desert", we keep our gaze fixed upon Easter, which is the definitive victory of Jesus against the Evil One, against sin and against death. This is the meaning of this First Sunday of Lent: to place ourselves decisively on the path of Jesus, the road that leads to life. To look at Jesus. Look at what Jesus has done and go with Him.

This path of Jesus passes through *the desert*. The desert is the place where *the voice of God and*

the voice of the tempter can be heard. In the noise, in the confusion, this cannot be done; only superficial voices can be heard. Instead we can go deeper in the desert, where our destiny is truly played out, life or death. And how do we hear the voice of God? We hear it in his Word. For this reason, it is important to know Scripture, because otherwise we do not know how to react to the snares of the Evil One. And here I would like to return to my advice of reading the Gospel every day. Read the Gospel every day! Meditate on it for a little while, for 10 minutes. And also to carry it with you in your pocket or your purse.... But always have the Gospel at hand. The Lenten desert helps us to say 'no' to worldliness, to the "idols", it helps us to make courageous choices in accordance with the Gospel and to strengthen solidarity with the brothers.

Now let us enter into the desert without fear, because we are not alone: we are *with Jesus, with the Father and with the Holy Spirit*. In fact, as it was for Jesus, it is the Holy Spirit who guides us on the Lenten journey; that same *Spirit that descended upon Jesus and that has been given to us in Baptism*.

Lent, therefore is an appropriate time that should lead us to be ever more aware of how much the Holy Spirit, received in Baptism, has worked and can work in us. And at the end of the Lenten itinerary, at the Easter Vigil, we can renew with greater awareness the Baptismal covenant and the commitments that flow from it.

May the Blessed Virgin, model of docility to the Spirit, help us to let ourselves be led by Him, who wishes to make each of us a "new creature".

To her I entrust, in particular, the week of Spiritual Exercises, that will begin this afternoon, and in which I shall participate with my collaborators of the Roman Curia. I ask that you pray for us, that in this "desert" of the Spiritual Exercises, we may listen to the voice of Jesus, and also correct the many defects that we have. And also to confront the temptations that attack us every day. I ask you therefore to accompany us with your prayers.

After the Angelus:

Dear brothers and sisters, I cordially greet the families, the parish groups, the Associations and all the pilgrims from Rome, from Italy and from various countries. I greet the faithful from Naples, Cosenza and Verona, and the youth from Seregno who have come for the profession of faith.

Lent is a journey of conversion that puts the heart at its centre. Our heart must convert to the Lord. Therefore, in this First Sunday, I thought to give those of you who are here in the Square a small booklet entitled "*Custodisci il cuore*" ("Guard the heart"). It's this one. [he holds up the booklet] This book contains some of Jesus's teaching and the essential contents of our faith, for example the seven Sacraments, the gifts of the Holy Spirit, the Ten Commandments, the Virtues, the works

of mercy, etc...

The volunteers, among whom there are many homeless people who have come on pilgrimage, will now distribute them. And as always, today too, here in the Square, are those who are in need, the same who bring us a great wealth: the wealth of our doctrine, to guard your heart. Each one of you take a booklet and carry it with you, as a help for spiritual conversion and growth that always starts from the heart: the place where the match of daily choices between good and evil is played out, between worldliness and the Gospel, between indifference and sharing. Humanity is in need of justice, of peace, of love and will have it only by returning with their whole heart to God, who is the source of it all. Take the book and read it.

I wish you all a Good Sunday. Please, especially in this week of [Spiritual] Exercises do not forget to pray for me. Have a good lunch and *Arrivederci*.