



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

ANGELUS

Saint Peter's Square

First Sunday of Lent, 18 February 2018

[Multimedia]

*Dear Brothers and Sisters,
Good morning!*

This first Sunday of Lent, the Gospel recalls the themes of temptation, conversion and the Good News. Mark the Evangelist writes: “The Spirit immediately drove Jesus out into the wilderness. And he was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan” (cf. Mk 1:12-13). Jesus goes into the desert to prepare himself for his mission in the world. He does not need conversion, but as a man, he must go through this trial, both for himself, to obey the Father’s will, and for us, to give us the grace to overcome temptation. This preparation consists in the battle against the evil spirit, that is, against the devil. For us too, Lent is a time of spiritual “contest”, of spiritual struggle: we are called to confront the Evil One through prayer in order to be able, with God’s help, to overcome him in our daily life. We know that evil unfortunately is at work in our existence and around us, where there is violence, rejection of the other, closure, war, injustice. All of these are the work of the Evil One, of evil.

Immediately following the temptations in the desert, Jesus begins to preach the Gospel, that is, the Good News, the second word. The first was “temptation”, the second, “Good News”. And this Good News demands man’s conversion — the third word — and faith. He proclaims: “The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand”; and then he cautions, “repent, and believe in the gospel” (v. 15), that is, believe in this Good News that the kingdom of God is at hand. In our lives, we always need to convert — every day! —, and the Church invites us to pray for this. In fact, we are never sufficiently orientated towards God and we must continually direct our minds and our hearts towards him. In order to do this, we need to have the courage to reject all that takes us off

course, the false values which deceive us, by subtly flattering our ego. Rather, we must entrust ourselves to the Lord, to his goodness and to his project of love for each of us. Lent is a time of repentance, yes, but it is not a time of sorrow! It is a time of penance, but it is not a time of sorrow, of mourning. It is a joyous and serious commitment to strip ourselves of our selfishness, of our “old man”, and to renew ourselves according to the grace of our Baptism.

Only God can give us true happiness: it is useless to waste our time seeking it elsewhere, in wealth, in pleasure, in power, in a career.... The Kingdom of God is the realization of all our aspirations because at the same time, it is the salvation of mankind and the glory of God. On this first Sunday of Lent, we are invited to listen carefully and to hear Jesus’ appeal to convert, and to believe in the Gospel. We are exhorted to begin the journey towards Easter with commitment, to embrace evermore the grace of God who wishes to transform the world into a kingdom of justice, peace and fraternity.

May Mary Most Holy help us to live this Lenten Season with fidelity to the Word of God and with unceasing prayer, as Jesus did in the desert. It is not impossible! It means living each day with the desire to embrace the love that comes from God and which seeks to transform our life and the entire world.

After the Angelus:

Dear brothers and sisters, in a month, from 19 to 24 March, some 300 young people from all over the world will come to Rome for a preparatory meeting for the October Synod. However, I firmly wish that *all* young people can be protagonists in this preparation. Therefore, they will be able to participate online, through language groups moderated by other young people. The contributions of the “Internet groups” will combine with those of the Rome meeting. Dear young people, you can find the information on the [website](#) of the Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops. I thank you for contributing to our journey together!

I greet you, families, parish groups, associations and all the pilgrims who have come from Italy and from different countries. I greet the faithful from Murcia, Vannes, Warsaw and Wrocław; as I do those from Erba, Vignole, Fontaneto d’Agogna, Silvi and Troina. I greet the young people from the Deanery of Baggio, Milan, and those from Melito Porto Salvo.

At the beginning of Lent, which, as I said, is a journey of conversion and a battle against evil, I wish to extend a special greeting to inmates: dear brothers and sisters who are in prison, I encourage each of you to experience the Lenten period as an occasion for reconciliation and for renewal of your own lives, under the merciful gaze of the Lord. He never tires of offering forgiveness.

I ask everyone to remember me and the personnel of the Roman Curia in your prayers as we begin the week of Spiritual Exercises this evening.

I wish you all a nice Sunday. Enjoy your lunch. *Arrivederci!*