



«Jesus taught us that the diabolical senselessness of violence is answered with God's weapons, with **prayer** and **fasting**.»

Pope Francis

Introduction:

Today, Ash Wednesday, we welcome as Calabrian Family the appeal of Pope Francis to dedicate this day of prayer and fasting to peace in Ukraine and in the entire world.

Prayer and fasting are the “God’s weapons” to respond and win the enemy pitfalls, who sows division, violence and war among us.

This hour of prayer is also a favorable opportunity to begin the time of Lent well, and set out again, all together, towards an ever more authentic and profound communion. Let us intensify our prayers for the General Chapters that will start on 1st May at Maguzzano (Italy), asking the Spirit for the gift of conversion, which can bear fruit of unity and peace to the Opera and the entire world.

Lent is a time of return to God, for Whom nothing is impossible. It is a favorable time of personal and community renewal that guides us to the Passover of Christ dead and risen.

May the great hope coming to us from Easter push us all not to grow tired of doing good to all. (From the Massage for Lento of Pope Francis). Stronger than the tiredness or disappointment that can be experienced, must be the desire to continue walking, keeping our gaze fixed on the One who can do everything.

- Song for exposition

- Prayer for PEACE (of Saint John Paul II)

*God of our Father, great and merciful,
Lord of peace and life, Father of all.
You have plans for peace and not for affliction,
condemn wars and break down
the pride of the violent.*

*You have sent your Son Jesus proclaiming
peace to those near and far,
to gather men of every race
and lineage into one family.
Listen to the unanimous cry of your children:
silence the roar of arms,*

*return the refugees to their homes,
and a fraternal and peaceful
coexistence may be established.*

*In communion with Mary, the Mother of Jesus, we
ask you again:
speak to the hearts of the leaders of the nations,
stop all violence, retaliation and revenge.
Suggest with your Spirit new solutions,
more fruitful than the hasty deadlines of the war.
Give our time days of peace. Amen*

- In silence or with a song let us invoke the Holy Spirit, who gathers us in unity and gives us the gift of Peace.

- Word of Saint John Calabria (From his personal Diary, 9 June, 1918)

My God, the war continues. I have never understood how a Christian can invoke and sponsor war. War is a great scourge that has called humanity with its disorders and sins. The Christian must always pray that peace may reign, that men in their conflicts may reflect in the light of reason, enlightened even more by faith, and may decide and realize what is best for Christian and civil people, but war no, no, no! The task of the Christian in war is to suffer it and work at all possible to soothe all the pains and miseries that this scourge brings. Brothers who kill brothers! Who can think and approve of it without renouncing that he is a follower of Jesus Christ?

(Silence of reflection)

- Message of Pope Francis for Lent:

“Let us not grow tired of doing good!”

In his message for Lent, the Holy Father, taking up the Letter of Saint Paul to the Galatians, invites them: *“Let us not grow tired of doing good!”*.

He identifies three areas of Christian life in which we can translate the exhortation: let us not grow tired. Let us not grow tired of praying, because no one can be saved without God, and it is just in the prayer that one can find the strength to fight and to go through trials. Let us not grow tired of uprooting evil from our life. During Lent, through fasting and valuing more the sacrament of reconciliation, we can train ourselves to oppose everything that hurts ourselves and others. And finally, let us not grow tired of doing good in active charity towards our neighbor. Lent is propitious time to take care of others, to look down to those in need, to help those who are in difficulty to survive, and to raise up the poor and marginalized.

Let's also allow ourselves to be enlightened by this Word:

- Letter of St. Paul to the Galatians (Gal 6:9,10a)

***«Let us not grow tired of doing good;
for in due time we shall have our harvest, if we do not give up.
So then, while we have the opportunity,
let us do good to all».***

I- Let us not grow tired of praying.

Let us not grow tired of praying. Jesus taught us to “pray always without becoming weary” (Lk 18:1). We need to pray because we need God. Thinking that we need nothing other than ourselves is a dangerous illusion. If the pandemic has heightened the awareness of our own personal and social fragility, may this Lent allow us to experience the consolation provided by faith in God, without whom we cannot stand firm (cf. Is 7:9). No one attains salvation alone, since we are all in the same boat, amid the storms of history;^[2] and certainly no one reaches salvation without God, for only the paschal mystery of Jesus Christ triumphs over the dark waters of death. Faith does not spare us life's burdens and tribulations, but it does allow us to face them in union with God in Christ, with the great hope that does not disappoint, whose pledge is the love that God has poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit (cf. Rom 5:1-5).

- *Spontaneous prayers, by invoking the salvation of God on so many situations in which life is threatened by evil and death.*

II- Let us not grow tired of uprooting evil from our lives.

Let us not grow tired of uprooting evil from our lives. May the corporal fasting to which Lent calls us fortify our spirit for the battle against sin. *Let us not grow tired of asking for forgiveness in the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation*, knowing that God never tires of forgiving.^[3] *Let us not grow tired of fighting against concupiscence*, that weakness which induces to selfishness and all evil, and finds in the course of history a variety of ways to lure men and women into sin (cf. *All Brothers*, 166). One of these is addiction to the digital media, which impoverishes human relationships. Lent is a propitious time to resist these temptations and to cultivate instead a more integral form of human communication (ibid., 43) made up of “authentic encounters” (ibid., 50), face-to-face and in person.

- *A look at our heart*, where the small and large daily wars that attack communion are born. *Let us recognize the sin that lurks in each one of us, and sincerely ask forgiveness from the Lord and the grace of conversion.* (Let us do this in silence)
- *The call to conversion urges us to strip ourselves of the superfluous, lightening ourselves of things, but also of wounds and grudges that can weigh out our hearts in the following of Jesus. What steps of freedom does the Lord ask us to take this Lent?*

III- Let us not grow tired of doing good in active charity towards our neighbours.

Let us not grow tired of doing good in active charity towards our neighbours. During this Lent, may we practise almsgiving by giving joyfully (cf. 2 Cor 9:7). God who “supplies seed to the sower and bread for food” (2 Cor 9:10) enables each of us not only to have food to eat, but also to be generous in doing good to others. While it is true that we have our entire life to sow goodness, let us take special advantage of this Lenten season to care for those close to us and to reach out to our brothers and sisters who lie wounded along the path of life (cf. Lk 10:25-37). Lent is a favourable time to seek out – and not to avoid – those in need; to reach out – and not to ignore – those who need a sympathetic ear and a good word; to visit – and not to abandon – those who are lonely. Let us put into practice our call to do good to all, and take time to love the poor and needy, those abandoned and rejected, those discriminated against and marginalized (cf. *All Brothers*, 193).

- *Let us concretize our commitment to Peace and communion.* In silence, before Jesus, let us renew our commitment “of doing good, without growing tired” to be builders of Peace and instruments of communion.
What attitudes and concrete steps, of prayers, fasting and charity does the Lord ask of us in this time?
- *Before concluding this hour of prayer and adoration, let us offer each other a sign-gaze of Peace.*

- Our Father

- **Let us pray.** O God, you are true peace and cannot be welcomed by those who sow discord and meditate on violence: grant those who promote peace to persevere in the good, and those who hinder it to find healing by moving away from evil. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, Your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.

- Eucharistic Blessing

- Song