

## **MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS FOR LENT 2018**

*“Because of the increase of iniquity, the love of many will grow cold” (Mt 24:12)*

**Dear Brothers and Sisters,**

Once again, the Pasch of the Lord draws near! In our preparation for Easter, God in his providence offers us each year the season of Lent as a “sacramental sign of our conversion”.[1] Lent summons us, and enables us, to come back to the Lord wholeheartedly and in every aspect of our life.

With this message, I would like again this year to help the entire Church experience this time of grace anew, with joy and in truth. I will take my cue from the words of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew: “Because of the increase of iniquity, the love of many will grow cold” (24:12).

These words appear in Christ’s preaching about the end of time. They were spoken in Jerusalem, on the Mount of Olives, where the Lord’s passion would begin. In reply to a question of the disciples, Jesus foretells a great tribulation and describes a situation in which the community of believers might well find itself: amid great trials, false prophets would lead people astray and the love that is the core of the Gospel would grow cold in the hearts of many.

### **False prophets**

Let us listen to the Gospel passage and try to understand the guise such false prophets can assume.

They can appear as “snake charmers”, who manipulate human emotions in order to enslave others and lead them where they would have them go. How many of God’s children are mesmerized by momentary pleasures, mistaking them for true happiness! How many men and women live entranced by the dream of wealth, which only makes them slaves to profit and petty interests! How many go through life believing that they are sufficient unto themselves, and end up entrapped by loneliness!

False prophets can also be “charlatans”, who offer easy and immediate solutions to suffering that soon prove utterly useless. How many young people are taken in by the panacea of drugs, of disposable relationships, of easy but dishonest gains! How many more are ensnared in a thoroughly “virtual” existence, in which relationships appear quick and straightforward, only to prove meaningless! These swindlers, in peddling things that have no real value, rob people of all that is most precious: dignity, freedom and the ability to love. They appeal to our vanity, our trust in appearances, but in the end they only make fools of us. Nor should we be surprised. In order to confound the human heart, the devil, who is “a liar and the father of lies” (Jn 8:44), has always presented evil as good, falsehood as truth. That is why each of us is called to peer into our heart to see if we are falling prey to the lies of these false prophets. We must learn to look closely, beneath the surface, and to recognize what leaves a good and lasting mark on our hearts, because it comes from God and is truly for our benefit.

### **A cold heart**

In his description of hell, Dante Alighieri pictures the devil seated on a throne of ice,[2] in frozen and loveless isolation. We might well ask ourselves how it happens that charity can turn cold within us. What are the signs that indicate that our love is beginning to cool?

More than anything else, what destroys charity is greed for money, “the root of all evil” (1 Tim 6:10). The rejection of God and his peace soon follows; we prefer our own desolation rather than the comfort found in his word and the sacraments.[3] All this leads to violence against anyone we think is a threat to our own “certainties”: the unborn child, the elderly and infirm, the migrant, the alien among us, or our neighbour who does not live up to our expectations.

Creation itself becomes a silent witness to this cooling of charity. The earth is poisoned by refuse, discarded out of carelessness or for self-interest. The seas, themselves polluted, engulf the remains of countless shipwrecked victims of forced migration. The heavens, which in God’s plan, were created to sing his praises, are rent by engines raining down implements of death.

Love can also grow cold in our own communities. In the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, I sought to describe the most evident signs of this lack of love: selfishness and spiritual sloth, sterile pessimism, the temptation to self-absorption, constant warring among ourselves, and the worldly mentality that makes us concerned only for appearances, and thus lessens our missionary zeal.[4]

### **What are we to do?**

Perhaps we see, deep within ourselves and all about us, the signs I have just described. But the Church, our Mother and Teacher, along with the often bitter medicine of the truth, offers us in the Lenten season the soothing remedy of prayer, almsgiving and fasting.

By devoting more time to prayer, we enable our hearts to root out our secret lies and forms of self-deception,[5] and then to find the consolation God offers. He is our Father and he wants us to live life well.

Almsgiving sets us free from greed and helps us to regard our neighbour as a brother or sister. What I possess is never mine alone. How I would like almsgiving to become a genuine style of life for each of us! How I would like us, as Christians, to follow the example of the Apostles and see in the sharing of our possessions a tangible witness of the communion that is ours in the Church! For this reason, I echo Saint Paul’s exhortation to the Corinthians to take up a collection for the community of Jerusalem as something from which they themselves would benefit (cf. 2 Cor 8:10). This is all the more fitting during the Lenten season, when many groups take up collections to assist Churches and peoples in need. Yet I would also hope that, even in our daily encounters with those who beg for our assistance, we would see such requests as coming from God himself. When we give alms, we share in God’s providential care for each of his children. If through me God helps someone today, will he not tomorrow provide for my own needs? For no one is more generous than God.[6]

Fasting weakens our tendency to violence; it disarms us and becomes an important opportunity for growth. On the one hand, it allows us to experience what the destitute and the starving have to endure. On the other hand, it expresses our own spiritual hunger and thirst for life in God. Fasting wakes us up. It makes us more attentive to God and our neighbour. It revives our desire to obey God, who alone is capable of satisfying our hunger.

I would also like my invitation to extend beyond the bounds of the Catholic Church, and to reach all of you, men and women of good will, who are open to hearing God’s voice. Perhaps, like ourselves, you are disturbed by the spread of iniquity in the world, you are concerned about the chill that paralyzes hearts and actions, and you see a weakening in our sense of being members of

the one human family. Join us, then, in raising our plea to God, in fasting, and in offering whatever you can to our brothers and sisters in need!

### **The fire of Easter**

Above all, I urge the members of the Church to take up the Lenten journey with enthusiasm, sustained by almsgiving, fasting and prayer. If, at times, the flame of charity seems to die in our own hearts, know that this is never the case in the heart of God! He constantly gives us a chance to begin loving anew.

One such moment of grace will be, again this year, the “24 Hours for the Lord” initiative, which invites the entire Church community to celebrate the sacrament of Reconciliation in the context of Eucharistic adoration. In 2018, inspired by the words of Psalm 130:4, “With you is forgiveness”, this will take place from Friday, 9 March to Saturday, 10 March. In each diocese, at least one church will remain open for twenty-four consecutive hours, offering an opportunity for both Eucharistic adoration and sacramental confession.

During the Easter Vigil, we will celebrate once more the moving rite of the lighting of the Easter candle. Drawn from the “new fire”, this light will slowly overcome the darkness and illuminate the liturgical assembly. “May the light of Christ rising in glory dispel the darkness of our hearts and minds”,<sup>[7]</sup> and enable all of us to relive the experience of the disciples on the way to Emmaus. By listening to God’s word and drawing nourishment from the table of the Eucharist, may our hearts be ever more ardent in faith, hope and love.

With affection and the promise of my prayers for all of you, I send you my blessing. Please do not forget to pray for me.

*From the Vatican, 1 November 2017*

Solemnity of All Saints

**Francis**

## 教宗方濟各 2018 年四旬期文告

「由於罪惡的增加，許多人的愛情必要冷淡。」（瑪廿四 12）

### 親愛的弟兄姊妹們：

主的逾越節又近了！在我們預備過復活節時，因著天主上智的安排，每年 給我們四旬期，作為「我們悔改的聖事性標誌」<sup>1</sup>。四旬期召喚我們，叫 我們在整個生活中全心歸向上主。

在這篇文告中，我願再次幫助整個教會，以喜樂的心並在真理中，重新體驗此一恩寵的時刻。我願以瑪竇福音中耶穌的話做為導引：「由於罪惡的增加，許多人的愛情必要冷淡。」（瑪廿四 12）

這段話出現在基督有關末世的訓導。耶穌講這話的時候，是在耶路撒冷的 橄欖山上，吾主的受難在那裡即將開始。耶穌回答門徒的問題時，預言了 一個大磨難，且描述了一個信友團體極易陷入的情境：在重大的考驗當中，假先知會令人誤入歧途，而福音的核心——愛，在許多人心中會冷淡下來。

### 假先知

讓我們聽聽這段福音章節，盡力去了解這些假先知會假扮成什麼。

他們會宛如「舞蛇人」那般，操縱人的感情，去奴役他人，把他們帶到他們想要帶去的地方。有多少天主的兒女被一時的享樂所迷惑，誤以為那是 真正的幸福！有多少男女鎮日沉迷在發財夢中，那只會使他們成為財富和 薄利的奴隸。有多少人一輩子都相信他們只需依靠自己，最後卻陷於孤單 之中！

假先知也彷彿「江湖郎中」，他們提供簡便而又迅速的療法來解除痛苦， 但很快就證明完全無效。有多少年輕人受到毒品，或是受到各種有用則要，而無用即棄的關係、得來容易的不義之財所吸引！又有更多人被困於純 是「虛擬」的世界——可馬上並直接建立各種關係，但最後卻證明那些關係都毫無意義！這些騙子叫賣一些沒有真正價值的東西，奪去了人們最珍貴的一切：尊嚴、自由以及愛人的能力。他們挑起我們的虛榮心，使我們 重視外表，但最後卻愚弄我們。我們對此也不應感到驚訝。為了擾亂人心，魔鬼「既是撒謊者，又是撒謊者的父親」（若八 44），常常以惡為善，以虛假為真理。所以我們每個人都應該檢視自己的心，查看我們是否落入 這些假先知的謊言中。我們必須學習仔細觀察，透視事物的表面，以認清 究竟是什麼會在我們心中留下良善且持久的印記，因為那才是來自天主，且真正對我們有益的事。

## 冷漠的心

[義大利詩人]但丁 ( Dante Alighieri ) 描述地獄時，他描繪了魔鬼坐在一個 冰塊寶座上<sup>2</sup>，冰凍著、沒有愛，孤立在那兒。我們也大可以自問，我們 內心的愛何以會轉為冷淡？如何可以看出我們的愛開始冷淡下來了？

摧毀愛德的最大力量就是貪愛錢財，那是「萬惡的根源」( 弟前六 10 )。緊接著而來的就是拒絕天主以及祂的平安；我們寧可生活在淒涼孤寂中，也不願在天主的聖言和聖事中找到安慰<sup>3</sup>。這一切都引領我們以暴力反對 任何我們認為對自己的「確定感」有威脅的人，亦即：未出生的孩子、年 長及衰弱的人、移民、我們當中的外人，或是那些不符我們期望的鄰人。宇宙萬物本身就默默見證了世人愛心的漸趨冷淡。地球被垃圾所毒化，那 些垃圾都是因為漠不關心或只顧自己利益而丟棄的。被污染的海洋，吞噬 了無數被迫遷移、卻遭船難而葬身大海的人。在天主的計劃中，蒼天是要 讚美上主的，卻被如雨降臨般的死亡武器所撕裂。

在我們自己的團體裡，愛也可能漸趨冷淡。在《福音的喜樂》勸諭中，我 試著描述缺乏愛的最明顯記號：自私、精神懈怠、悲觀主義、自我陶醉的 誘惑、不斷地自相殘殺，以及讓我們只關心表面，因而減少了傳教熱忱的 世俗心態。<sup>4</sup>

## 我們該怎麼做？

也許我們在內心深處以及自身週遭，都能看到我剛才描述的那些標記。但 是教會—我們的慈母與導師，加上「真理」的苦口良藥，卻能讓我們在 四旬期用祈禱、施捨、守齋等作為療藥。

我們以更多的時間祈禱，就能讓自己的心脫離那隱藏著的各種欺騙自己的 謊言，<sup>5</sup> 也就能得到天主給我們的安慰。祂是我們的父，祂要我們好好地 生活。

施捨他人可讓我們免於貪婪，也幫助我們把近人視為弟兄姊妹。我所擁有 的，絕對不可能只是我的。我多麼希望施捨能成為每一個人真正的生活方 式！多麼希望我們基督徒能效法宗徒們的榜樣，在分享財物中看到我們教 會共融的具體證明！因此，我呼應聖保祿對格林多人的勸告，能為耶路撒 冷團體捐款，他們自己也會因此受益 ( 參：格後八 10 )。在 四旬期內，這 樣做再合適不過了，因為這時有許多團體拿出捐款來幫助有需要的教會和 人 們。然而，我也希望，即使在日常生活中，遇到向我們乞求幫助的人時，也能把這視為來自天主親自的懇求。當我們施捨他人時，就參與了天主 對他每一個子女的眷顧。如果今天

天主藉著我幫助了某人，明日祂豈不是 也會照顧我自己的需要？因為沒有一個人比天主來得大方慷慨。6

守齋可減輕我們的暴力傾向；它緩和我們的怒氣，成為我們成長的重要機會。一方面它讓我們體驗自己必須忍受怎樣的孤寂和饑餓。另一方面也表達我們自己在主內靈修生命上的饑渴。守齋使我們清醒。它使我們更注意 天主和我們的鄰人。它重燃我們服從天主的渴望，因為唯有天主能滿足我們的饑渴。

我也願意將我的請求延伸到天主教會以外，擴及於凡願意聆聽天主聲音的 善心男女人士。或許你們跟我們一樣，也受到散布全世界的罪惡所困擾，你們也關心那被冷漠所癱瘓的人心和行動，你們也注意到我們作為人類大家庭中一分子的意義被淡化了。那麼，請加入我們，向天主提出我們的懇求，並主動去為我們那些有需要的弟兄姊妹做些事！

## 復活節的燭火

最重要的是，我呼籲教會人士以熱心走上四旬期之旅，藉由施捨、守齋和 祈禱獲得力量。如果有時我們心中的愛之火焰似乎熄滅，要知道天主的心 絕對不會這樣！祂不斷給我們機會重新去愛。

今年仍然會有此一恩寵的時刻，也就是「奉獻廿四小時給天主」的活動，邀請全體教會在朝拜聖體的時間內領受和好聖事。2018 年的這個活動，是從聖詠一三〇4：「你以寬恕為懷」得到啟發，將在 3 月 9 日星期五至 3 月 10 日星期六舉行。在每一個教區裡，至少要有一座教堂連續廿四小時開放，讓大家可以有機會去朝拜聖體、行和好聖事。

在復活節前夕，我們要再一次舉行點燃復活蠟的禮儀。從「新火」點燃的這光，會漸漸消除黑暗，照亮整個參與禮儀的會眾，「願光榮復活的 基督，以祂的真光驅散我們心靈的黑暗」7，也讓我們能再一次體驗到厄 瑪烏門徒的經驗。願我們藉著聆聽天主聖言、從聖體的餐桌汲取養分，讓我們的心能夠更熱切地活在信望愛中。

我衷心許諾，要為大家獻上我的祈禱，並降福各位。也請勿忘為我祈禱。

**教宗方濟各**

2017 年 11 月 1 日，諸聖節

發自梵蒂岡

( 臺灣明愛會恭譯 )