

CWL Lenten Reflection - Everyone is a Gift

The holy season of Lent is an opportunity for each of us, as member of the Catholic Women's League, to take stock of our relationship with the Lord and with each other. Pope Francis in his lenten message this year, asks us to see the word of God and each person as a gift to us. He uses the Gospel story of Lazarus and the rich man to help us identify the need to reach out to our brothers and sisters in need, and to stay attentive to the temptations that can lure us away from God and one another, especially the desire for wealth, power and riches. We know as league members that our call is to respond to the needy and those who feel alone and abandoned whenever we can. The season of Lent makes this call even more real and evident for us.

The Pope says: "Lent is a favourable season for deepening our spiritual life through the means of sanctification offered us by the Church: fasting, prayer and almsgiving. At the basis of everything is the word of God, which during this season we are invited to hear and ponder more deeply." Through the Lazarus story, we learn that "other persons are a gift, and a right relationship with people consists in gratefully recognizing their value." Through the opening of our hearts to others, especially to the poor and the stranger, we can recognize the face of Christ in them. In meeting people every day, each life, says the Pope, is a gift deserving acceptance, respect and love. As league members, we daily note the giftedness in those we serve, especially in being a voice for the voiceless and an ambassador of change for the good, for those who are vulnerable in our society.

Lent is also a time, through our prayer and fasting, to make an account of how we are living our call as league members and followers of the Lord. As the Pope notes in his letter, sin and temptation, can lead us away from good and from God, and can make us blind to the needs of our brothers and sisters around us. As the rich man was blind to Lazarus and his needs, so we too can become blind and unaware of the struggles of our sisters and brothers around us, even in our families. That is why during Lent we make a special effort through Development and Peace to raise our awareness of these needs and to reach out in generosity to our brothers and sisters struggling throughout the world. This is a duty that compels us through our works of mercy and in our Christian calling.

As we enter this holy season, let us in particular, make it a time of true prayer and reflection, a time of true reconciliation and forgiveness, a time of deepening our awareness of the gifts of those whom we meet daily in our lives,

and a time to strengthen our relationship with God through the forgiveness of our sins in the sacrament of Penance. God's word in the scriptures can help us realize our need for this conversion and direct us in our daily encounters with one another. It will help us to bring peace to one another and in our families.

Again Pope Francis notes: "Lent is the favourable season for renewing our encounter with Christ, living in his word, in the sacraments and in our neighbour. May the Holy Spirit lead us on a true journey of conversion, so that we can rediscover the gift of God's word, be purified of the sin that blinds us, and serve Christ present in our brothers and sisters in need." As women inspired by the Holy Spirit and open to His gifts, in doing so, we can respond to our call with generous and compassionate hearts. This is the best advice we can follow as we enter this holy season together, on our journey to Easter joy.

Bishop Fred J. Colli,

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