

“For all of us, then, the season of Lent in this Jubilee Year is a favourable time to overcome our existential alienation by listening to God’s word and by practising the works of mercy. In the corporal works of mercy we touch the flesh of Christ in our brothers and sisters who need to be fed, clothed, sheltered, visited; in the spiritual works of mercy – counsel, instruction, forgiveness, admonishment and prayer – we touch more directly our own sinfulness. The corporal and spiritual works of mercy must never be separated. By touching the flesh of the crucified Jesus in the suffering, sinners can receive the gift of realizing that they too are poor and in need. By taking this path, the “proud”, the “powerful” and the “wealthy” spoken of in the *Magnificat* can also be embraced and undeservedly loved by the crucified Lord who died and rose for them. This love alone is the answer to that yearning for infinite happiness and love that we think we can satisfy with the idols of knowledge, power and riches. Yet the danger always remains that by a constant refusal to open the doors of their hearts to Christ who knocks on them in the poor, the proud, rich and powerful will end up condemning themselves and plunging into the eternal abyss of solitude which is Hell. The pointed words of Abraham apply to them and to all of us: “They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them” (*Lk 16:29*). Such attentive listening will best prepare us to celebrate the final victory over sin and death of the Bridegroom, now risen, who desires to purify his Betrothed in expectation of his coming.

Let us not waste this season of Lent, so favourable a time for conversion! We ask this through the maternal intercession of the Virgin Mary, who, encountering the greatness of God’s mercy freely bestowed upon her, was the first to acknowledge her lowliness (cf. *Lk 1:48*) and to call herself the Lord’s humble servant (cf. *Lk 1:38*).”

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