

OPEN  
YOUR  
HEART

DAILY LENTEN REFLECTIONS  
FROM  
**POPE FRANCIS**



Open Your Heart

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DAILY LENTEN REFLECTIONS

WITH

# Pope Francis

Edited by Theresa Khoo



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# *A Change of Heart*







## Be Reconciled to God

We urge you also not to accept the grace of God in vain.

—2 Corinthians 6:2



**T**he Lord never tires of having mercy on us, and wants to offer us his forgiveness once again, inviting us to return to him with a new heart, purified of evil, purified by tears, to take part in his joy. How should we accept this invitation? Saint Paul advises us: “We entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God” (2 Cor 5:20). This power of conversion is not only the work of mankind; it is letting oneself be reconciled. Reconciliation between us and God is possible thanks to the mercy of the Father who, out of love for us, did not hesitate to sacrifice his only begotten Son. Indeed Christ, who was just and without sin, was made

to be sin (see v. 21) when, on the cross, he took on the burden of our sins, and in this way he redeemed and justified us before God. “In him” we can become just, in him we can change, if we accept the grace of God and do not allow this “acceptable time” to pass in vain (6:2). Please, let us stop, let us stop a while and let ourselves be reconciled to God.

*Homily, February 18, 2015*

## REFLECTION

How can I be reconciled to God this Lent?

## PRAYER

Lord, help me stop and consciously open my heart to your grace and mercy.



## Opening the Door of Our Hearts

Choose life so that you and your descendants may live, loving the LORD your God, obeying him, and holding fast to him.

—Deuteronomy 30:19–20



The first step on the Christian path . . . entails entering through the open door which is Christ, where he, the Savior, awaits us and offers us a new and joyful life.

There may be a few obstacles, which close the door of the heart. There is the temptation to lock the doors, or to live with our sin, minimizing it, always justifying it, thinking we are no worse than others. This, however, is how the locks of the soul are closed and we remain shut inside, prisoners of evil. Another obstacle is the *shame of opening* the secret door of the heart. Shame, in reality, is a good symptom, because it shows that we want to break

away from evil; however, it must never be transformed into apprehension or fear. There is a third pitfall, that of *distancing ourselves from the door* . . . when we hide in our misery, when we ruminate constantly. . . . This happens because we stay alone with ourselves, closing ourselves off and avoiding the light; while the Lord's grace alone frees us. Therefore let us be reconciled, let us listen to Jesus who says to those who are weary and oppressed: "Come to me" (Mt 11:28). Not to dwell within themselves, but to go to him! Comfort and peace are there.

*Homily, February 10, 2016*

## REFLECTION

What obstacles prevent me from opening the door of my heart to Christ?

## PRAYER

Help me see myself honestly, Lord, and remove whatever blocks me from you.



## Three Remedies for Sin

Seek good and not evil, that you may live; and so the LORD, the God of hosts, will be with you.

—Amos 5:14



The Gospel . . . calls us to be protagonists, embracing three remedies, three medicines which heal us from sin (see Mt 6:1–6, 16–18).

In the first place is *prayer*, an expression of openness and trust in the Lord; it is the personal encounter with him, which shortens the distances created by sin. Praying means saying: “I am not self-sufficient, I need you; *you* are my life and my salvation.” In the second place is *charity*, in order to overcome our lack of involvement with regard to others. True love, in fact, is not an outward act; it is not giving something in a paternalistic way in order

to assuage the conscience, but to accept those who are in need of our time, our friendship, our help. It means living to serve, overcoming the temptation to satisfy ourselves. In the third place is *fasting*, penance, in order to free ourselves from dependencies regarding what is passing, and to train ourselves to be more sensitive and merciful. It is an invitation to simplicity and to sharing: to take something from our table and from our assets in order to once again find the true benefit of freedom.

*Homily, February 10, 2016*

## REFLECTION

How do I extend myself in love and service of others?

## PRAYER

Lord, may I respond to your call to love through sincere acts of self-giving toward my brothers and sisters.



## Finding Our Christian Identity

We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin.

—Romans 6:6



Jesus calls us to live prayer, charity, and penance with consistency and authenticity, overcoming hypocrisy. May Lent be a beneficial time to “prune” falseness, worldliness, indifference: so as not to think that everything is fine if I am fine; so as to understand that what counts is not approval, the search for success or consensus, but the cleansing of the heart and of life; so as to find again our Christian identity, namely, *the love that serves, not the selfishness that serves us*. Let us embark on the journey together, as Church . . . and keeping our gaze

fixed on the crucifix. He, loving us, invites us to be reconciled with God and to return to him, in order to find ourselves again.

*Homily, February 10, 2016*

## REFLECTION

How can I live more authentically as a disciple of Jesus?

## PRAYER

Cleanse me of self-righteousness and hypocrisy, Lord, and help me seek my deepest identity in you.





WEEK 1

*Entering  
the Path of Lent*





## Fight Satan with the Word of God

And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. He was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him.

—Mark 1:12–13



**L**ent is *a time of combat! A spiritual combat against the spirit of evil.* And while we cross the Lenten “desert,” we keep our gaze[s] fixed upon Easter, which is the definitive victory of Jesus against the Evil One, against sin and against death. This is the meaning of this First Sunday of Lent: to place ourselves decisively on the path of Jesus, the road that leads to life. . . .

This path of Jesus passes through *the desert*. The desert is the place where *the voice of God and the voice of the tempter can be heard*. . . . And how do we hear the voice

of God? We hear it in his word. For this reason, it is important to know Scripture, because otherwise we do not know how to react to the snares of the Evil One. And here I would like to return to my advice of reading the Gospel every day. . . . Meditate on it for a little while, for ten minutes. And also carry it with you in your pocket or your purse. . . . But always have the Gospel at hand. The Lenten desert helps us to say “no” to worldliness, to “idols”; it helps us to make courageous choices in accordance with the Gospel and to strengthen solidarity with the brothers.

*Angelus, February 22, 2015*

## REFLECTION

Can I make an effort to read and reflect on the Scriptures each day?

## PRAYER

In the struggle of daily life, let me find courage and light in your holy word.



## The Breath of Life

See, now is the acceptable time; see, now is the day of salvation!

—2 Corinthians 6:2



Lent is a path; it leads to the triumph of mercy over all that would crush us or reduce us to something unworthy of our dignity as God's children. Lent is the road leading from slavery to freedom, from suffering to joy, from death to life. . . . We are dust in the loving hands of God, who has breathed his spirit of life upon each one of us, and still wants to do so. He wants to keep giving us that *breath of life* that saves us from every other type of breath: the stifling *asphyxia* brought on by our selfishness, the stifling asphyxia generated by petty ambition and silent indifference—an asphyxia that smothers the

spirit, narrows our horizons, and slows the beating of our hearts. The breath of God's life saves us from this asphyxia that dampens our faith, cools our charity, and strangles every hope. To experience Lent is to yearn for this breath of life that our Father unceasingly offers us amid the mire of our history. . . . Lent is the time to start breathing again.

*Homily, March 1, 2017*

## REFLECTION

How is the Lord inviting me to freedom from any selfish ambitions I may have?

## PRAYER

Help me breathe deeply of your life-giving spirit, Lord, and respond to you with generosity and joy.