# "The Word is a gift; other persons are a gift..."

Recollection to Sisters of St. Peter Claver, based on Pope Francis's message for Lent 2017 – 18<sup>th</sup> March 2017

## **Introduction: Outline**

This is the procedure for our recollection
Talk now (9.00 am)
Adoration at midday
Mass at 10.00 pm
We reflect on the letter of the Holy Father which has five steps
What is the meaning of the Lenten season?
Do not settle for mediocrity
Return to the Father with all your heart
Regain the friendship of Jesus
Although very difficult fortunately, God is there waiting for us
What are the means to attaining the goal of Lent?
There are the traditional means of fasting prayer and almsgiving
Fasting helps us to strengthen our will to say no to evil and yes to God
Prayer may not be so much an increase in the quantity but in the quality
<ul> <li>Almsgiving helps us to be attentive to the other and not to self</li> </ul>
However, all these practices should lead us to listening to God
That is why the Pope does not delay on them
We are also invited to return to the word of God
This was the most important guide to Jesus
<ul> <li>Here I am, I come to do your will (Hebrews 10:9)</li> </ul>
_ If you love me you will listen to my word (John 14:15)
What are the results of using these means?
Discovering that our neighbor is a gift
<ul> <li>The Pope uses the story of Lazarus</li> </ul>
He was not just a nuisance, a beggar, but a person with needs and a dignity
What hinders us from the attaining of the goal of Lent?
Sin blinds us from seeing the truth
The rich man was blinded by wealth, vanity and pride
We have to ask ourselves: what hinders me from seeing the needs of others?
How can we avoid these hindrances?
Return to the Word of God
When the rich man asked to warn his brothers he was referred to the Word
They have Moses and the Prophets (the Scriptures)
We have all this plus the Gospels and the Epistles
We hear them every day

#### Meaning of Lent: Conversion, return to God, experience Christ's friendship

We are concluding the second week of Lent

- You may be having your way of practicing it
- Or you may have slackened from the zeal of the beginning
  - We are invited to reflect on what we are doing

According to the Pope's letter

Return to God with all your hearts" (Joel 2:12)

We all are here because we love God, I think

Yet we also love other things, which may be contrary to love of God

Our hearts look elsewhere like a distracted goat led to pasture

Joel asks us to turn all attention to God

We must refuse to settle for mediocrity

Don't say that I am not the worst

Don't say that I have tried so much, but I never seem to change

Don't get used to things you know are not right in your life

\_ We are called to be saints; called to live our full potential

Instead we must grow in friendship with the Lord

One we admire, we listen to, we try to imitate

One we seek to please

One we are sorry to hurt

One we can consult before serious undertakings

One we are eager to talk about to others

A friend with whom we go to in our joys and sorrows

Slowly by slowly we become a little like our friend

Jesus is the faithful friend who never abandons us

Conversion is hard

Many of us have tried over and over again

 $\leq$  But the one who invites us in Lent is eager to help us

When we sin he patiently awaits our return

His patience is shown in his readiness to forgive us

In the sacrament of reconciliation we feel shame and guilt

Yet he never tires to give it to us

The human being does not matter; Jesus is ready to welcome us

You fell the relief and the joy in the degree you make a good confession

Lent also prepares us for Easter

In three more weeks we shall come to Holy Week

We shall then go through an intense 3 days of the Easter Triduum

Unless we live Lent now, those events can be just tiring practices

But when fully live Lent now, Easter will have a much greater meaning

#### Means of attaining the goal of Lent: Prayer, Almsgiving, Fasting, Word

<sup>–</sup> There are the traditional means of fasting prayer and almsgiving

Fasting helps us to strengthen our will to say no to evil and yes to God

Recently someone told me about someone who fasted to convert a person He succeeded where nothing else would have worked

She in turn converted her brother to Matrimony through fasting
 Fasting especially for something pleasing to God is very powerful prayer
 However

Don't exaggerate; don't put God to the test

Especially be careful if you have health issues

You can abstain instead from something you like

Prayer may not be so much an increase in the quantity but in the quality

You have many communal prayers everyday

And I think each of you prayers on her own

If you know you are neglecting some prayers, then this is a call to return

But this may be a call to improve the quality of your prayer

Do I sleep during my prayers

Or am I so distracted?

Do I just go through routine without thinking about the prayers

Share about experience of celebrating the liturgy of hours like a Muslim

Almsgiving helps us to be attentive to the other and not to self

The parable which the Pope uses leads us to this

So, we needn't say much about it now

However, all these practices should lead us to listening to God

That is why the Pope does not delay on them

We are also invited to return to the word of God

This is at the basis of the Lenten observances

At the beginning of Lent we are invited to hear and ponder more deeply

Other practices are meaningless unless I learn to listen to what God says I think the Pope has in mind Isaiah 58:1-8

Explaining the kind of fasting that is wasted

And the kind of fast that pleases God

Also read Matthew 9: 13 "I desire mercy not sacrifice..."

Hebrews 10: 8-9 "...instead here I am ... "

\_\_\_\_\_If you love me you will listen to my word (John 14:15)

Then the Holy Father uses the story of the rich man and Lazarus as an example

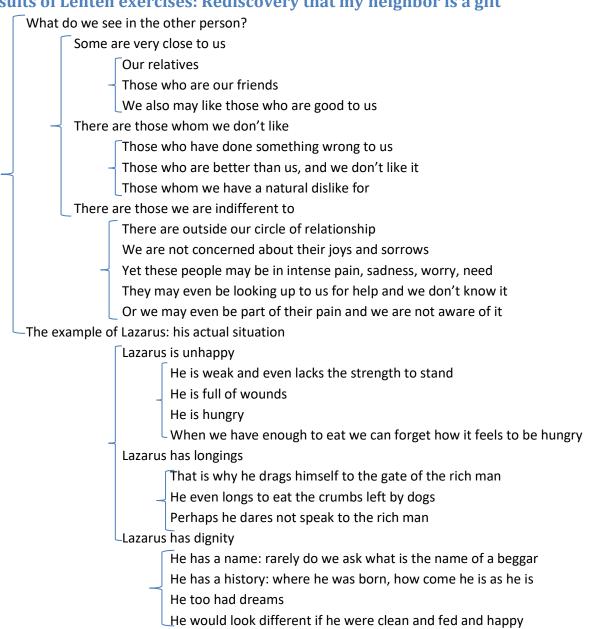
 $\int$  "...for it provides a key to understanding what we need to do."

u think as a Jesuit he uses the Ignatian form of meditation on the story

Putting yourself in the situation using your imagination

It is a method we too can apply in our reflections

#### Results of Lenten exercises: Rediscovery that my neighbor is a gift



### Sin hinders us to see our neighbor as they really are He is blinded by wealth We know that people pursue wealth regardless of other people's needs We hear it in the news everyday People kill for wealth This helps us the wisdom of evangelical poverty The love of wealth makes him vain He likes to show off in his robes We see it all the time where people spend in order to show off Even in our avowed poverty we can be vain in small ways Vanity makes him proud He forgets that he will die and leave all this wealth Pride makes him blind to the needs of the poor: in Lazarus he only sees a beggar Lazarus is just a nuisance: dirty, smelling, an embarrassment He would perhaps have preferred that the guests don't see such a sight \_ He does not see him as he really are: unhappy, longing, with dignity, a brother In the after-life the truth finally dawns on him All wealth is of no use to him Instead he is in torment Then he notices Abraham in the other world And to his surprise Lazarus is happy with him Now he remembers that he was a son of Abraham, a child of God How he sees the true dignity of Lazarus But this discovery comes too late for him The teaching that it should not come too late to us, and it is now we must act What are the sins that blind me to the needs of my neighbor? It may not be wealth since you have chosen a life of poverty Yet each has that which makes them blind to the needs of others How can we avoid these hindrances?

<sup>–</sup> Return to the Word of God

When the rich man asked to warn his brothers he was referred to the Word

They have Moses and the Prophets (the Scriptures)

These constituted the scriptures at the time

We have all this plus the gospels and the epistles

We have all this plus the Gospels and the Epistles

We hear them every day

The challenge is how to can the Word of God become a guide for my actions?

- This is also the work of the Holy Spirit to whom we must pray

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.

Homily