

Three attitudes for living Lent: Listening, Fasting, Together

“Listen and Fasting. Lent as a Time of Conversion” is the theme of Pope Leo XIV’s message for this liturgical season, which begins on Wednesday, 18 February, when the Church celebrates **Ash Wednesday**, marking the start of 40 days of preparation to live the Paschal Mystery during Holy Week.

“Lent is a time in which the Church, guided by a sense of maternal care, invites us to place the mystery of God back in the center of our lives, **in order to find renewal in our faith and keep our hearts from being consumed by the anxieties and distractions of daily life**”, the Pontiff recalls at the beginning of his message.

Listening to the Lord

In this sense, the Pope continues, “the Lenten journey is a welcome opportunity **to heed the voice of the Lord and renew our commitment to following Christ**, accompanying him on the road to Jerusalem, where the mystery of his passion, death and resurrection will be fulfilled”.

The attitude of listening is precisely the first key that Leo XIV proposes for living this Lent, “since **the willingness to listen is the first way we demonstrate our desire to enter into relationship with someone**”.

In particular, the Pope highlights the importance of “**making room for the word through listening**” and opening oneself to “**hearing the cry of the oppressed**” as God himself did in the face of the suffering of his people in Egypt (cf. Ex 3:7).

“Sacred Scripture help us to **recognize and respond to the cry of those who are anguished and suffering**”, stresses the Pope, recognizing that “the condition of the poor is a cry that, throughout human history, constantly challenges our lives, societies, political and economic systems, and, not least, the Church” (*Dilexi te* 9).

Refrain from words that hurt others

Referring to fasting, one of the ancient practices of Lent, which refers to the path

of abstinence and conversion, the Bishop of Rome recalls that “**austerity alone makes the Christian life strong and authentic**”, as St. Paul VI said in one of his catechesis.

Specifically, Pope Leo XIV exhorts us to “refrain from words that offend and hurt our neighbor”, and to this end, he invites us to “**disarm our language, avoiding harsh words and rash judgement, refraining from slander and speaking ill of those who are not present** and cannot defend themselves”.

“**Instead, let us strive to measure our words and cultivate kindness and respect** in our families, among our friends, at work, on social media, in political debates, in the media and in Christian communities. In this way, words of hatred will give way to words of hope and peace”, adds the American Pontiff.

A shared journey

Finally, the Pope highlights the communal dimension of Lent and encourages us to undertake “a shared journey, in **which listening to the word of God, as well as to the cry of the poor and of the earth, becomes part of our community life**, and fasting a foundation for sincere repentance”.

“Dear friends, let us ask for the grace of a Lent that leads us to greater attentiveness to God and to the least among us. Let us ask for the strength that comes from the type of fasting that also extends to our use of language, so that hurtful words may diminish and give way to a greater space for the voice of others. **Let us strive to make our communities places where the cry of those who suffer finds welcome, and listening opens paths towards liberation**, making us ready and eager to contribute to building a civilization of love”, concludes Pope Leo XIV.

As Lasallians, how can we commit ourselves, together in our religious and educational communities, in order to make it possible to listen to the most impoverished and to fast from words that hurt our neighbors during this Lent?