

Dearest

Sisters,

every year during Lent, the Church offers us a path of Christian tradition; the itinerary recommended also by **our Constitutions** (n. 64 and following) includes: **reading, silence, fasting, moderation, sharing, giving time a Christian meaning**. This year, Pope Francis urges us to fight indifference, now spread at all levels. The question we need to ask ourselves is simple: are we **willing to live a Christian Lent?** Let's us not forget that Gospel itself opens with John the Baptist's and Jesus' invitation: "Repent and believe in the Gospel!" This is "*the suitable time*", the appropriate time for each of us to recall our Baptism, our Oblation and renew a free interior communion with God.

LENT: A TIME for READING

For Christians and for us Religious, aware that the Word of God is contained in the Bible, *reading becomes almost as much important as listening*. The Bible is the sacrament of the Word. Reading, in fact, is always the meeting of two Words: the Word of the Scripture and the interior word of the reader. In this sense, the reader becomes the book and the book reads itself through the reader. This is an important practice in our lives, not much for its intellectual meaning, but as a tool to deepen our faith, to overcome the fear of thinking, to open our hearts to the new and to what has been deepened by others. **We know that our free time is short**, but we must find that "**convenient time for reading**" recommended by our **Dir. 31**.

A TIME to PRESERVE SILENCE

Lent is identified with the desert, with "standing aside", with solitude and silence, in view of listening to the Lord. Silencing words around us becomes the occasion to give priority and central position to the WORD, in our daytime, so that it's truly heard, welcomed, meditated, guarded and lived. The Gospel tells us: "*The mouth speaks of the abundance of the heart*" and only an inner silence can silence thoughts, images, opinions, murmurings, that arise in the human heart (cfr. Mk 7:21). The very silence that we fear, may actually be the others' hospitality in us; it is God's and community sisters' welcoming and listening. Madeleine Delbrel warns that: "*We will be asked to account for every word, that we should have said and that our fear might have kept silent; for all those who had to remain silent and that our superficiality could have disclosed...*". It's essential to return to the silence that is listening to others and to ourselves, because that's what transforms people. **Let's review Constitutions no 68 -69**.

A TIME to ENJOY FASTING

We have acknowledged that a similar time is lived by Muslims who fast from sunrise to sunset for the entire month of Ramadan; by the Jews during Yom Kippur; by Orthodox and Eastern tradition's Christians; but do we, Western Christians, still understand the meaning of fasting? Lent may provide an opportunity for "fasting" **from words and judgments, for research and practice**, for times of silence during the day and attention that our words should never be violent or vain. Each one of us, to live a good and beautiful life marked by the beatitudes, must learn how to stay silent, otherwise we will end up losing touch with the authentic reality and will no longer be able to listen to God. If God, according to the prophets, calls his wife to the desert to speak to her heart, it is because in the desert silence reigns and you can grasp God's presence, as "the voice of a subtle silence" (see 1 Kings 19:12). **No. 34 of the Directory** says that sobriety and fasting have the purpose of solidarity.... Today fasting is often the center of attention for health, for diet plans, for aesthetic reasons or sports. A few times it appears as a means of struggle and protest, called "political hunger strike". This public fasting must "appear", must be absolutely noticed and highlighted by the media, otherwise its purpose will fail. This form is the opposite of the Christian fasting meaning that, according to Jesus' command, should be done in secret without anyone noticing (see. Mt 6,16).

INDIFFERENCE TURNED into ASSUMING RESPONSIBILITY of OTHERS

The real problem, in every community life, is that we should know the others from within, so that we can no longer be indifferent to them. In this way we cannot avoid their sufferings, their histories, and perhaps we would become even more forgiving with their mistakes. In ordinary life

many personal realities come into play: likes and dislikes, empathy, intelligence and inner wounds; all realities that measure up with the others' ones and intertwine to faith and love, prayer and everyone's willingness to follow the Lord.

Fr. Milani proposed a nice English slogan: **I CARE** = I am interested in you, = I do care for you as Jesus takes care of each one of us.

A TIME to RETURN to the ESSENTIAL (Const. Chapter of Poverty: n. 20 and following). Sisters, do not worry to follow this long list of tips for living Lent well - let's begin seriously with one and ... everything else will follow by itself.

While waiting to meet the many of you who will be able to come to Alba on March 15th, let's pray for each others for a earnest Lenten journey. Affectionately yours Sr. Angela

