



LENT: GOD INVITES US TO INDIVIDUAL CONVERSION

VATICAN CITY, 7 MAR 2010 (VIS) - This morning Benedict XVI visited the parish of St. John of the Cross in the northern sector of the diocese of Rome, where he celebrated Mass.

In his homily, the Pope said that "during Lent each one of us is invited by God to change our lives, to think and live in accordance with the Gospel, correcting some aspect of our way of praying, acting, working and of our relations with others. Jesus makes this appeal to us not with a severity that serves as an end unto itself, but precisely because He is concerned with our good, our happiness, our salvation. For our part, we must respond to Him by making a sincere interior effort, asking Him to show us in what particular points we must seek to convert".

He then went on to comment on the parish itself, which was founded twenty-one years ago, noting how "it has opened itself to the new movements and ecclesial communities, thus maturing a broader understanding of Church and experiencing new forms of evangelisation.

"I encourage you to continue courageously in this direction, while undertaking to involve all sides in a united pastoral project", the Holy Father added. In this context he expressed his joy at the fact that the parish community "aims to promote - while respecting the vocations and roles of consecrated and lay people - the co-responsibility of all members of the People of God. ... This requires a change of mentality, especially as regards lay persons, 'considering them not merely as collaborators of the clergy but recognising them as co-responsible in the life and activity of the Church, thus favouring the promotion of a mature and committed laity".

Turning then to address the families and young people of the local area who frequent the parish, Benedict XVI encouraged them "to announce the Gospel of Jesus Christ to everyone. Do not wait for others to come bringing you other messages, messages which do not lead to life, but make yourselves missionaries of Christ for your brothers and sisters in the places where they live, study or spend their free time. Here too, implement a capillary and organic activity of pastoral care of vocations, consisting in the education of families and young people to prayer and to living life as a gift that comes from God".

Lent, he said, "invites each of us to recognise the mystery of God present in our lives. ... On the hill of Golgotha God, Who on the flight from Egypt revealed Himself as the One Who frees us from slavery, revealed Himself as the One Who embraces all men and women with the salvific power of the Cross and the Resurrection, freeing them from sin and death and accepting them in the embrace of His love".

The Pope concluded by encouraging the faithful to continue "contemplating this mystery of the name of God in order better to understand the mystery of Lent and to

live as individuals and communities in a permanent state of conversion, so as to be a constant epiphany in the world, witnesses of the living God Who frees and saves us out of love".

HML/CONVERSION/ST. JOHN OF THE CROSS PARISH VIS 100308 (550)