



The Holy See

MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS PAUL VI FOR LENT 1978

Dear Sons and Daughters, Once again Lent is here with its urgent summons! Lent is a time which brings us closer to Christ. And through him, it brings us closer to one another. Lent is a time of fellowship, and fellowship involves sharing in common. We are impressed by the description given in the Acts of the Apostles of the community life in the early Church: "Those who believed shared all things in common" (Acts 2:44). This way of living was not something artificial, invented to consolidate the young community in Jerusalem. Rather it was the expression of "a single heart" (Acts 4:32), and it inspired all the actions of the faithful, uniting them in the very heart of Jesus. The Acts of the Apostles show us one of the most remarkable effects of this oneness: there was a constant sharing of goods, according to the needs of each one. Thus, the first Christians spontaneously practised the principle that the goods of this world are intended by the Creator to meet the needs of everyone, without exception. Christian sharing puts this natural obligation into practice, and the motive of charity makes the obligation more urgent. So sharing is a fundamental Christian attitude. The Christian finds joy in sharing, in enjoying together a heritage that God has generously placed at the disposal of everyone. The Christian finds joy in the many ways of showing love for one's neighbour – from almsgiving and serving individuals, to collective contributions for the advancement of peoples who are at a material disadvantage. It has been said that there is an art in giving and an art in receiving. Christians, however, have only one expression for both of these and this expression is "fraternal sharing". May Lent make us practise this sharing as a sign of fellowship with everyone, for everyone is called to share in the mystery of the Cross and Resurrection of Christ! At the beginning of this special season, we repeat the words of Saint Paul to the first Christians: we invite every member of the great fellowship of the Catholic Church "to put something aside and store it up" (1 Cor 16:2), in a spirit of penance and charity, so as to be able to offer it to a common fund. And to all those who are thus ready to share their goods with the needy brothers and sisters we send our blessing: in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. **PAUL VI** Copyright © Libreria Editrice Vaticana
