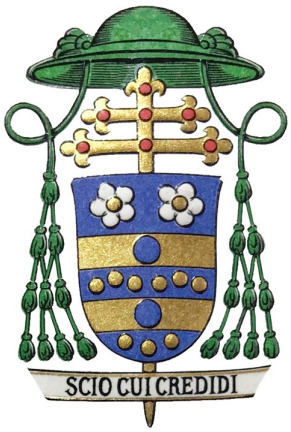
Abp. Viganò's Meditation for Lent: Embrace God's Justice, Make Reparation for Sin by Offering "True Penance" in Union with Christ Crucified



Venite, convertimini ad me, dicit Dominus.
Venite flentes, fundamus lacrymas ad Deum:
quia nos negleximus, et propter nos terra patitur:
nos iniquitatem fecimus,
et propter nos fundamenta commota sunt.
Festinemus anteire ante iram Dei,
flentes et dicentes:
Qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis.

Transitorium ambrosianum in Dominica Quinquagesimæ

Come and be converted to Me, says the Lord. Come weeping, let us shed tears to God: because we have transgressed, and because of us the earth suffers: we have committed iniquity and because of us its foundations have been shaken. Let us hasten to prevent God's wrath, weeping and saying: You Who take upon Yourself the sins of the world, have mercy on us.

It is difficult for a man of today to understand these words of the Ambrosian Missal. Yet they are simple in their severe clarity, for they show us that God's wrath because of our sins and betrayals can only be appeased by contrition and penance. In the Roman Rite this concept is made even more clearly in the prayer of the Litany of Saints: *Deus, qui culpa offenderis, pœnitentia placaris: preces populi tui supplicantis propitius respice; et flagella tuæ iracundiæ, quæ pro peccatis nostris meremur, averte.* O God, Who is offended by guilt and appeased by penance: look kindly on the prayers of Your people who implore You; and turn away from us the scourges of Your wrath, which we deserve because of our sins.

Christian civilization was able to treasure this salutary notion, which keeps us away from sin not only for fear of the just punishment that it entails, but also for the offense caused to the Majesty of God, "infinitely good and worthy of being loved above all things," as the Act of

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Contrition teaches us. Down the centuries humanity converted to Christ knew how to recognize in the mournful events of history — in earthquakes, famines, pestilences and wars — the punishment of God; and always the people struck by these scourges knew how to do penance and implore Divine Mercy. And when the Lord, the Blessed Virgin, or the Saints intervened in human affairs with apparitions and revelations, in addition to the call to observe the Law of God they threatened great tribulations if men were not converted. At Fatima, also, Our Lady asked for the Consecration of Russia to Her Immaculate Heart and the reparative Communion of the First Saturdays as an instrument to appease the anger of God and to be able to enjoy a period of peace. Otherwise, Russia *"will spread its errors throughout the world, promoting wars and persecutions of the Church. The good will be martyred, the Holy Father will have much to suffer, various nations will be destroyed."* What should we expect from disregarding Our Lady's requests and continuing to offend the Lord with more and more horrible sins? *"They did not want to fulfill My request! Like the King of France, they will repent and do it, but it will be late. Russia will have already spread its errors throughout the world, provoking wars and persecutions of the Church."* These wars, which today afflict humanity to enslave it and submit it to the infernal plan of the Great Reset inspired by Chinese Communism, are once again the result of our indocility, of our obstinacy in believing that we can trample on the Law of the Lord and blaspheme His Holy Name without consequences. What wretched presumption! How much Luciferian pride!

The de-Christianized world and the secularized mentality that has infected even Catholics does not accept the idea of a God offended by the sins of men, and Who punishes them with scourges so that they repent and ask for forgiveness. Yet this concept is one of the ideas that the creative hand of God has impressed on the soul of every man, inspiring that sense of justice that even pagans have. But precisely because it is present in all men of all times, our contemporaries are horrified by the idea of a God Who rewards the good and punishes the bad, a God Who reveals Himself in His anger, Who asks for tears and sacrifices from those who offend Him.

Behind this aversion to the wrath of the Lord, offended by the sins of mankind — and even more so by those whom He made His children in Baptism — is the implacable hatred of the enemy of the human race for the redeeming Sacrifice of Our Lord Jesus Christ, for the Passion of the Son of God, for the ransom that His Blood has merited for each of us, after the fall of Adam and our personal sins. A hatred that has consumed him ever since the creation of man, in a mad attempt to frustrate the work of God, to disfigure the creature made in His image and likeness, and even more to prevent the divine reparation of Christ, the new Adam, and Mary, the new Eve. On the Cross, the new Adam restores the order broken by sin as Redeemer; at the foot of the Cross, the new Eve participates in this restoration as Coredemptrix. The failure of Satan's action is accomplished in the obedience

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of the Second Person of the Most Holy Trinity to the Father, in the humiliation of the Son of God, just as Adam's temptation was consummated in disobedience to the Lord's will and in the proud presumption of being able to break His orders without consequences.

The world does not accept pain and death, either as a just punishment for original sin and actual sins, nor as an instrument of ransom and redemption by Christ. And it is almost a paradox: the very one who by the temptation of our first Parents introduced death, sickness, and pain into the world does not tolerate that these very same things can also be the instrument of atonement when they are accepted with humility in order to repair fractured justice. He does not tolerate the weapons of destruction and death to be snatched from him in order to become instruments of reconstruction and life.

Contemporary man is newly deceived by Satan, just as he was in the garden of Eden. Then, the Serpent made him believe that disobeying the order given by God not to reap the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil would not have any consequences; indeed, the Serpent told him that by such disobedience Adam would become like God. Today, the Serpent deludes man that these consequences are inescapable, and that he cannot accept death, sickness, and pain as just punishment, overturning them to his own advantage by uniting them to the Passion and Death of Jesus Christ. Because in accepting the sentence, the offender accepts the authority of the Judge, recognizes the infinite gravity of his fault, repairs the crime committed, and expiates the sanction that is deserved. By so doing, he returns to the Grace of God, nullifying the work of Satan.

For this reason, the closer the end of time approaches, the more the efforts of the Evil One are multiplied to cancel not only the Truth revealed by Christ and preached down the centuries by the Holy Church, but also to eliminate the very concept of justice that is the basis of the Redemption, the idea of the need of punishment for violation, of the reparation of guilt, of the gravity of the disobedience of the creature towards the Creator. It is obvious that the more men are led to believe that they have not committed any sin, the more they will think that do not need to repent of anything, that they have no debt of gratitude towards God Who has so loved the world that He gave His Only-Begotten Son, obedient even to death, death on a Cross.

If we look around us, we see how this cancellation of justice, of the sense of Good and Evil, of the idea that there is a God Who rewards the good and punishes the wicked leads to a definitive, irreparable and irredeemable rebellion against the Lord, a premise for the eternal damnation of souls. The judge who acquits the criminal and punishes the righteous person; the ruler who promotes sin and vice and condemns or prevents honest and virtuous actions; the doctor who considers sickness as an opportunity for profit and health as a fault; the priest who is silent about the Last Things and considers as "pagan" concepts like penance,

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sacrifice, and fasting in atonement for sins — all of these are accomplices, perhaps unknowingly, in this latest deception of Satan. It is a deception that on the one side denies God's lordship over creatures and the right to reward them and punish them according to their actions; while on the other he comes to promise goods and rewards that only God can grant: "All this I will give You, if You will fall prostrate and adore me" (Mt 4:9), he dares to say to Christ in the desert, after leading Him to the summit of the mountain.

The present events, the crimes that are daily committed by humanity, the multitude of sins that defy the Divine Majesty, the injustices of individuals and of Nations, the lies and frauds committed with impunity cannot be defeated by human means, not even if an army would take up weapons to restore justice and punish the wicked. Because human forces, without the grace of God and without being enlivened by a supernatural vision, are sterile and ineffective.

But there is a way to combat this deception, into which humanity has fallen for more than three centuries, that is, since it has had the pride and presumption to deify man and usurp the Royal Crown from Jesus Christ. And this way, infallible because it is divine, is the return to penance, sacrifice, and fasting. Not the vain penance of those who run on treadmills, not the foolish sacrifice of those who make themselves sterile in order not to overpopulate the planet, not the empty fasting of those who deprive themselves of meat in the name of green ideology. These are once again diabolical deceptions, with which we silence our consciences.

True penance, which Holy Lent ought to encourage us to carry out in a fruitful way, is that by which each of us offers privations and sufferings in atonement for our own sins and those committed by our neighbor, by Nations, and by the men of the Church. True sacrifice is that with which we unite ourselves with gratitude to the Sacrifice of Our Lord, giving a spiritual sense and a supernatural end to the pain that we nevertheless deserve. True fasting is that with which we deprive ourselves of food, not to lose weight, but in order to restore the primacy of the will over the passions, of the soul over the body.

The penances, sacrifices, and fasts that we will undertake during this Holy Lent will have a value of reparation and expiation that will merit for us, for our dear ones, for our neighbor, for our Homeland, for the Church, for the entire world, and for the souls in Purgatory those graces that alone can stop the wrath of God the Father, because in uniting ourselves to the Sacrifice of His Son we will transform what Satan caused for all of us into a supernatural treasure, leading us into sin by disobeying the Lord. This treasure will restore broken order and violated justice; it will repair the faults that we have committed in Adam and also personally. To the infernal *chaos* there must be opposed the divine *kosmos*;to the prince of this world, the King of kings; to pride, humility; to rebellion, obedience. "To this in fact you

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have been called, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you may follow in His footsteps. […] He bore our sins in His own body on the wood of the Cross, so that, no longer living for sin, we might live for justice; by His wounds you have been healed" (1 Pt 2:21-25).

I conclude this meditation by quoting the Epistle of the Mass of Ash Wednesday: this is taken from the book of the prophet Joel, and it reminds us of the role of the priests as mediators and intercessors in admonishing the people of God and calling them to conversion. It is a role that many clergy have forgotten, and that they even refuse, believing that it is the heritage of a Church that is out of date, a Church that does not keep up with the times, a Church that still believes that the Lord must be "appeased" with penance and fasting.

"Blow the trumpet in Zion, proclaim a fast, call a solemn assembly. Between the vestibule and the altar, let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep and say: Pardon, Lord, pardon Your people, and do not abandon Your inheritance to disgrace, do not make it the slave of the nations; that they may not say among the peoples: Where is their God? The Lord has shown zeal for His land and has pardoned His people. The Lord answered and said to His people: Behold, I will send you grain, wine, and oil, and you will have them in abundance, and no longer will I make you the disgrace of the nations: says the Lord Almighty" (Joel 2:15-19).

As long as we have time, dear brothers and sisters, let us ask God for mercy; let us implore His pardon and make amends for sins that have been committed. Because a day will arrive when the time of Mercy will be completed, and the day of Justice will begin. *Dies illa, dies iræ: calamitatis et miseriæ; dies magna et amara valde.* That day will be a day of wrath: a day of catastrophe and misery; a great and truly bitter day. On that day the Lord will come to judge the world with fire: *judicare sæculum per ignem*.

May it please God that the admonitions of Our Lady and the mystic Saints lead us, in this hour of darkness, to truly convert, to recognize our sins, to see them absolved in the Sacrament of Confession, and to atone for them with fasts and penances. So that the arm of God's Justice may be stopped by the few, when it ought to fall upon the many. And so may it be.

+ Carlo Maria Viganò, *Archbishop*

2 March 2022
Feria IV Cinerum, in capite jejunii

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