

# Jubilaem



A call to conversion!

# 4

[TO TRANSFORM MY LIFE, TO RENEW THE MISSION]

## 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Lent

Forty days to leave your comfort zone.

Prayer Guide

## Gospel Text

A READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN (3:14-21)

Jesus said to Nicodemus: *“Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, so that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life.”* For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him will not be condemned, but whoever does not believe has already been condemned, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. And this is the verdict, that the light came into the world, but people preferred darkness to light, because their works were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come toward the light, so that his works might not be exposed. But whoever lives the truth comes to the light, so that his works may be clearly seen as done in God.

Pray with St. Paul of the Cross according to the Castellazzo experience

Penance.  
What can you do for yourself?

Penance  
Nicodemus

# Lent

2021



# Meditation and text of St. Paul of the Cross

(FROM HIS SPIRITUAL DIARY)

Nicodemus was an important Pharisee who goes to Jesus *"at night"*. He senses - in darkness - that Jesus is "a man from God"; Jesus will guide him into the light. He learned from Jesus that it is necessary to be born again in order to enter the Kingdom of God. It is not about making any changes or something purely physical-biological; it is about believing in Jesus. It is the life-giving Spirit of Jesus who is the agent of this new birth, who produces new life, a new perspective, who brings to light the glory of Jesus, the only begotten Son of the Father, and the Kingdom of God.



**The Son of Man must be lifted up, so that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life.**

The light that can illuminate everything in our lives is the Crucified One. The Crucified One must be contemplated: "they shall look upon the one who was pierced" (Zach. 12:10; Jn 19:37). How do I look at the Crucified One? A usual look? Distracted look? Indifferent look? Contemplative look?

**God so loved the world that He gave his only Son.** This phrase contains the essential core of the Gospel, of all faith: God loves us with free and boundless love; love is the innermost quality of his Being (1Jn. 4:8). God can only love, he can only offer loving plans to humanity. He loves the

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world as it is-- imperfect and uncertain, with its joys and sorrows, with its conflicts and contradictions, capable of the best and the worst. Jesus is God's "gift" to the world, the greatest sign of his caring for all mankind, not just Christians. St. Paul the Apostle reminds us: *"God, who is rich in mercy, because of the great love he had for us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, brought us to life with Christ."* (Eph.2:4-5) The supreme proof, to the end, of God's love for us is in the Cross (Jn 13:1; 15:13).

From the cross Jesus is sending us signs of life and love. Can we see and feel God's love in that God-man tortured on the Cross? In those outstretched arms that can no longer embrace children; in those nailed hands that can no longer caress lepers or bless the sick; in those eyes that can no longer look tenderly at sinners and victims of discrimination; from that mouth that can no longer express indignation for the victims of so many abuses and injustices. God is shouting out to us about his "crazy love" for humanity.

**God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him.** The word "judgment" or "condemnation" is not part of God's plan; it is not his ultimate goal. Jesus has come from God to attract us with his attitudes and words, with his free and unconditional forgiveness. Jesus, God raises us from the purely judicial plane (sin, judgment, and punishment) to the level of his gratuitous, merciful love. When we believe in Him by attraction and receive His gift, we are then called to descend back into the field of transgressions and evils of our world to enlighten

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en and transform them from within our own experience of being saved.

**Light-darkness.** We can freely accept or reject this gift of God; it is our decision. Jesus, who has been raised on high, can fill even the one who is most lost with light and offer him the way back. When we live in the truth and have nothing to hide, we seek to look at the Crucified One and, from Him, to project a path of conversion-penance that leads us to life in and for the Kingdom of God.

**St. Paul of the Cross had a strong spirit of conversion-penance according to the customs and culture of his time.** He labored so that there would be no lack of means for a Passionist to become a “*living portrait of Jesus Crucified*” and to promote with his life and mission the Memory of the Passion of Christ, “*the greatest and most overwhelming work of God’s love*”. In 1721, when he concluded his retreat in Castellazzo, he recounted his experience to Bishop Gattinara: “*About two years after the good God had converted me to a life of penance [...] I had the idea of wearing a poor black tunic of coarse cloth [...] of going barefoot, of living in very deep poverty – in short, by God’s grace, leading a penitential life.*” During this retreat, where he discerned God’s will for his life, he had the opportunity to experience some of these penitential elements. He referred to the cold, snow, ice, crude clothing, bare feet, and scarce food. (November 27).

However, he did not merely practice external penances, but also those that lead to authentic evangelical conversion-- seeking and doing God’s will throughout his life. In those days Paul of the Cross made decisions, considered options, and opened paths for following Jesus Crucified for himself and the Congregation, inserting them in the Rule he wrote: “*I, Paul Francis, poorest of men, a great sinner, and the least servant of the Poor of Jesus, have written this holy Rule [...] in the year 1720 on December 2 and finished on the seventh of the same month.*”

In this Lent-Jubilee year 2021 we Passionists need to be aware that “*Contemplation of the mystery of Christ’s Passion spurs us on to that continual conversion and penance implied in our Lord’s challenge: ‘If anyone wishes to come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.’*” (Constitutions, No. 56)

LOOKING AT THE CRUCIFIED-RISEN ONE, WHAT IS THE MESSAGE HE COMMUNICATES TO ME ABOUT MYSELF, THE WORLD, THE CHURCH, AND THE CONGREGATION? AT THE PRESENT MOMENT IN THE PROCESS OF CONVERSION-PENANCE, WHICH CHOICES, OPTIONS, AND PATHS AM I INCLINED TO FOLLOW, AND WHICH ONES SHOULD I DISCARD?

Pray with St. Paul of the Cross according to the Castellazzo experience





## Gesture

[FRATERNAL AFFIRMATION]

A chair is placed in the center of the chapel. Those who wish can offer and receive the warmth and love of all present, who speak about the talents and goodness of each brother. Example: Louis, you are a very generous person. You have a kind character. You are a good friend, etc...

## Prayer Guide

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## Prayer

Saint Paul of the Cross, you who gathered companions to live together, and to proclaim the Gospel of Christ to all people...

You who from the beginning called them "The Poor of Jesus", because their life had to be based on evangelical poverty, as the basis for observing the other evangelical counsels, persevering in prayer, and continually proclaiming the Word of the Cross...

You who wanted those same companions to observe a lifestyle "in the manner of the Apostles", and encouraged a deep spirit of prayer, penance and solitude, by which they could achieve a more intimate union with God and become witnesses of his love...

You who with a clear understanding of the evils of your time, tirelessly proclaimed that the Passion of Jesus Christ, "the greatest and most overwhelming work of divine love", is the most effective remedy...

Grant that many young people may experience this same call and dedicate their life to the proclamation of your Passion. Help us, who are part of the Passionist family, to be reliable and credible in fulfilling this task.

May we be faithful witnesses of your Passion. May it be engraved on our hearts, and on the hearts of our brothers and sisters.

# Lent



# Jubilaecum