

Lent, the great journey of 40 days of preparation for Easter.

It starts with the **SIGN of the ASHES**, reminding us that **we are dust**, that alone we are nothing. But with the love of God that surrounds us **we are "work of God's hands."**

This sign helps us return to Jesus, to recognize in Him the essential, the meaning and purpose of life.

This sign opens our eyes and our hearts to see, "with the eyes of the heart", the other signs before us, in order to walk this Easter path in an experience of intimacy with Jesus.



This sign is the visible echo of the call of the Word of God: **"Look at me with all your heart."**

Pope Francis, in his message for Lent, invites us to have a merciful heart. "A merciful heart does not mean a weak heart. Anyone who wishes to be merciful must have a strong and steadfast heart, closed to the tempter but open to God. A heart which lets itself be pierced by the Spirit so as to bring love along the roads that lead to our brothers and sisters. And, ultimately, a poor heart, one which realizes its own poverty and gives itself freely for others. During this Lent, then, brothers and sisters, let us all ask the Lord: "Fac cor nostrum secundum cor tuum": Make our hearts like yours (Litany of the Sacred Heart of Jesus). In this way **we will receive a heart which is firm and merciful, attentive and generous, a heart which is not closed**, indifferent or prey to the globalization of indifference."

Let us prepare our hearts to live the true JOY, which is the Lord's PASSOVER.

1st Week: **PREPARE the way!**

Pope Francis (Message for Lent 2015):

Lent is a time of renewal for the whole Church, for each communities and every believer. Above all it is a "time of grace" (2 Cor6:2). God does not ask of us anything that he himself has not first given us. "We love because he first has loved us" (1 Jn4:19). He is not aloof from us. Each one of us has a place in his heart. He knows us by name, he cares for us and he seeks us out whenever we turn away from him. He is interested in each of us; his love does not allow him to be indifferent to what happens to us.

Saint Raphaela Mary:

"I see God very big and myself very small, and I rejoice because this is to see what God is and what I am. When I see my littleness, I am in my center, because I see what God does in me and in my things, which is what I want."

2nd Week: **DO NOT STOP on the way!**

Pope Francis (Message for Lent 2015):

Usually, when we are healthy and comfortable, we forget about others (something God the Father never does): we are unconcerned with their problems, their sufferings and the injustices they endure ... Our heart grows cold. As long as I am relatively healthy and comfortable, I don't think about those less well off. Today, this selfish attitude of indifference has taken on global proportions, to the extent that we can speak of a globalization of indifference. It is a problem which we, as Christians, need to confront.

Saint Raphaela Mary:

"Less care of myself, and much, much more, about the interests of Jesus in all their extension."

"Let us be continually transformed by Him, as clay in the hands of the potter."

3rd Week: **BE MINDFUL along the way!**

Pope Francis (Message for Lent 2015):

When the people of God are converted to his love, they find answers to the questions that history continually raises. One of the most urgent challenges which I would like to address in this Message is precisely the globalization of indifference. Indifference to our neighbour and to God also represents a real temptation for us Christians. Each year during Lent we need to hear once more the voice of the prophets who cry out and trouble our conscience. God is not indifferent to our world; he so loves it that he gave his Son for our salvation. In the Incarnation, in the earthly life, death, and resurrection of the Son of God, the gate between God and man, between heaven and earth, opens once for all. The Church is like the hand holding this

gate open, thanks to her proclamation of God's word, her celebration of the sacraments and her witness of the faith which works through love (cf. Gal5:6).

Saint Raphaela Mary:

"I should be aware, in all my actions, that I am in this world as in a great temple and, as a priest of it, I must offer continual sacrifice in things that go against me, whatever they may be, and continual praise in those that satisfy me, and always everything for the glory of God, that is the purpose for which we are in this world. "

4th Week: Walk with JOY!

Pope Francis (Message for Lent 2015):

Together with the saints who have found their fulfilment in God, we form part of that communion in which indifference is conquered by love. The Church in heaven is not triumphant because she has turned her back on the sufferings of the world and rejoices in splendid isolation. Rather, the saints already joyfully contemplate the fact that, through Jesus death and resurrection, they have triumphed once and for all over indifference, hardness of heart and hatred. Until this victory of love penetrates the whole world, the saints continue to accompany us on our pilgrim way. Saint Therese of Lisieux, a Doctor of the Church, expressed her conviction that the joy in heaven for the victory of crucified love remains incomplete as long as there is still a single man or woman on earth who suffers and cries out in pain: "I trust fully that I shall not remain idle in heaven; my desire is to continue to work for the Church and for souls" (Letter 254, July 14, 1897). We share in the merits and joy of the saints, even as they share in our struggles and our longing for peace and reconciliation. Their joy in the victory of the Risen Christ gives us strength as we strive to overcome our indifference and hardness of heart.

Saint Raphaela Mary:

"Give Him all my heart, as He asks."

"I cannot do anything else but leave myself in the hands of God the Father, and tell Him in regard to everything: may your will be done."

"Let us be people of peace and celebration."

5th Week: BENDS in the road!

Pope Francis (Message for Lent 2015):

Lent is a favourable time for letting Christ serve us so that we in turn may become more like Him. This happens whenever we hear the word of God and receive the sacraments, especially the Eucharist. There we become what we receive: the Body of Christ. In this body there is no room for the indifference which so often seems to possess our hearts. For whoever is of Christ, belongs to one body, and in him we cannot be indifferent to one another. "If one part suffers, all the parts suffer with it; if one part is honoured, all the parts share its joy" (1 Cor12:26).

Saint Raphaela Mary:

"In the difficulties, do not forget that only God remains, and will not abandon those who trust in Him."

"The greatest work that I can do for my God is this: to surrender all to his holy will without putting even the smallest hindrance in his way."

"Only in Jesus, through Jesus and for Jesus, all my life and all my heart, and forever."

6th Week: On the way to EASTER!

Pope Francis (Message for Lent 2015):

Her mission is to bring to all a love which cannot remain silent. The Church follows Jesus Christ along the paths that lead to every man and woman, to the very ends of the earth (cf. Acts 1:8). In each of our neighbours, then, we must see a brother or sister for whom Christ died and rose again. What we ourselves have received, we have received for them as well. Similarly, all that our brothers and sisters possess is a gift for the Church and for all humanity.

Dear brothers and sisters, how greatly I desire that all those places where the Church is present, especially our parishes and our communities, may become islands of mercy in the midst of the sea of indifference!

Saint Raphaela Mary:

"And everything, always, for even greater glory of God, which is the purpose for which we are in this world!"

"Make life a continuous act of love, and offer the Lord our whole existence, giving continuous praise for the beauty of all things!"

HAPPY EASTER!