

Weekday Homilies of Pope Francis



Vol.2, no. 5, March 17 – March 31, 2014

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1. The way to peace is through mercy

“To find mercy we must first forgive. It is through forgiveness that our hearts, and the world, are filled with peace.” *This was the overarching theme of Pope Francis' homily at Mass on **Monday, March 17.** [\(VIDEO\)](#)*



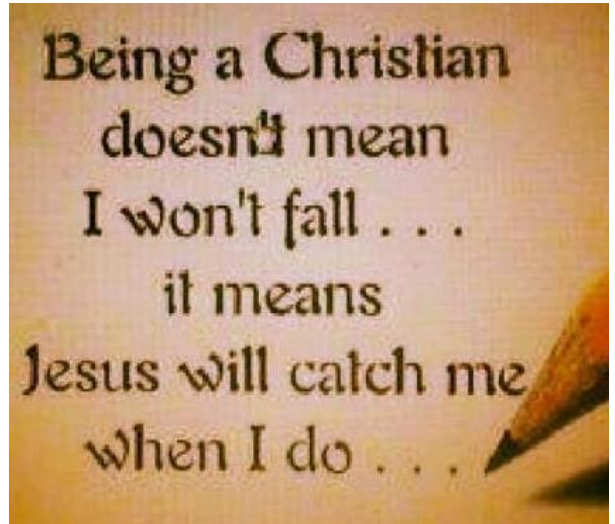
“Be merciful as your Father is merciful.” *Commenting on these words of Jesus, the Pope added that “it is not easy to understand this attitude of mercy because we are habitually judgmental. We are not the sort of people who naturally allow for understanding and mercy.*

To be merciful, two attitudes are needed. The first is knowledge of oneself. This self-knowledge means that we acknowledge we have done many bad things: we are sinners! And, when faced with the need for repentance, the justice of God transforms us in mercy and forgiveness. **However, we must have shame for our sins.**

It is true none of us have murdered anyone, but many little things, many daily sins, every day... and when someone thinks: ‘But what a small heart: I have done this against the Lord!’ And he is ashamed! **He is ashamed before God, and this shame is a grace:** it is the grace of being sinners. ‘I am a sinner, and I am ashamed before You and ask your forgiveness.’ It is simple, but very difficult, to say: ‘I have sinned.’ Often, we blame others for our sins, like Adam and Eve did. Maybe someone else did help me, facilitated the way to do it, but I did it myself!

If we think like this, how much good will occur, because we will be humble! And with this attitude of penitence we are more able to be merciful, because we feel within us the mercy of God. Just like in the Our Father: “Forgive, as we are forgiven.” **Therefore, if I do not forgive, I am somewhat out of the game!**

The other attitude we need to have in order to be merciful is to have a large heart, because a small and egotistical heart is incapable of mercy. Make the heart grow! ‘But I myself am a sinner.’ ‘Who am I to judge?’ This statement, ‘Who am I to judge this? Who am I to gossip about this?... Who am I, who have done the same or worse?’ The heart grows! And the Lord says, ‘Judge not, and you will not be judged! Condemn not, and you will not be condemned! Forgive, and you will be forgiven! Give, and you will receive!’ This is generosity of heart! And what will you receive? A good measure, pressed down and overflowing will be poured into your lap. And the image of the person of the person who goes out to collect the wheat with the apron and makes the apron larger so as to receive more, more wheat. If you have a wide, large heart, you can receive more.



The merciful heart does not condemn, but forgives, forgets.. because God has forgotten my sins; God has forgiven my sins. Enlarge the heart. This is beautiful, “You are merciful.”

Merciful men and women have a wide, wide heart: always forgiving others and thinking about their own sins. This is the way of mercy for which we must ask. But if all of us, if all people, individuals, families, neighbourhoods, had this attitude, how much peace there would be in the world – how much peace in our hearts! Because mercy brings us peace. Always remember: ‘Who am I to judge? Have shame and enlarge your heart. May the Lord give us this grace.’

2. Lent is a time to adjust your life

“Lent is a time to adjust your life, to get closer to the Lord.” *That was the message of Pope Francis at Mass*



Tuesday March 18. *The Pope warned against thinking of ourselves as better than others. “The hypocrites”, he warned, “disguise themselves as good people and do not understand that no one is made just by his own efforts; we all need to undergo justification.”*

Pope Francis began his homily stressing ‘conversion’ as the key word of Lent, and a favourable time to grow closer to Jesus. Commenting on the First Reading, from the book of Isaiah, he said “the Lord calls two ‘sinful cities’ like Sodom and Gomorrah to conversion. This shows us that we all need to make a change of life, to take a good look into our soul - where we always find something.

The purpose of Lent, then, is precisely to adjust my life, to draw closer to the Lord. Jesus wants to be close to us; He assures us the He is waiting for us in order to forgive us. However, the Lord wants a sincere approach; and not as the hypocrites. **[\(VIDEO\)](#)**

What makes people hypocrites? They disguise themselves, they disguise themselves as good people: they make themselves up like little holy cards, looking up at heaven as they pray, making sure they are



seen - they believe they are more righteous than others, they despise others. “But”, they say, “I’m very Catholic, because my uncle was a great benefactor, my family is this, I’m that... I’ve learned... I know this bishop, this Cardinal, this priest... I am this or that...” They think they are better than others. This is hypocrisy. The Lord says, “No, not that.” No one is justified by himself. We all need to be justified. And the only one who justifies us is Jesus Christ.”

For this reason, he said, we must approach the Lord: In order not to be Christians in disguise, so that when the appearance passes, one can see the reality that they are not Christians. What, then, is ‘the yardstick’ to ensure that we are not hypocrites and that we are

able to draw closer to the Lord? The answer is that given us by the Lord in the First Reading: “**Wash yourselves clean!** ...Purify yourself! ...Put away your misdeeds from before my eyes; cease doing evil; learn to do good.” This is the invitation. But, what is the sign that we are going along on a good path?

Redress the wronged, hear the orphan’s plea, defend the widow... Take care of the neighbour: the sick, the poor, the needy, the ignorant... This is the yardstick. The hypocrites do not know how to do this, they can’t, because they are so full of themselves that they are blind on account of watching others. When one walks a little bit and comes closer to the Lord, the light of the Lord makes him see these things and he goes to help the brothers. This is the sign, this is the sign of conversion.

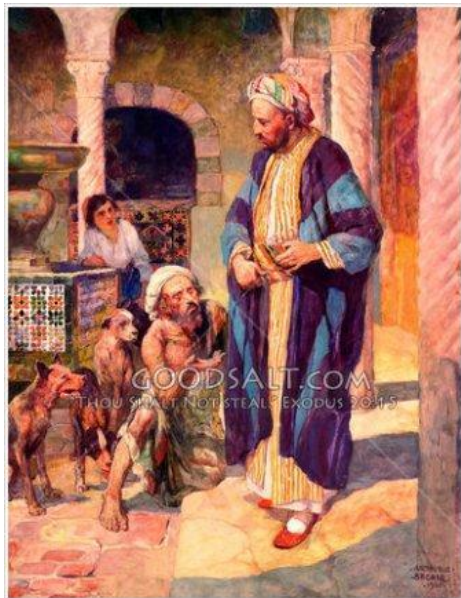
Of course, this is not the whole of conversion; that, in fact, is the encounter with Jesus Christ. The sign that we are with Jesus Christ is this: caring for the brothers and sisters, the poorest, the sick, as the Lord teaches us, as we read in chapter 25 of the Gospel of St Matthew.



Lent is to adjust life, to fix life, to change life, to draw closer to the Lord. The sign that we are far from the Lord is hypocrisy. **The hypocrite does not need the Lord, he is saved by himself** — so he thinks — and he disguises himself as a saint. The sign that we are drawing closer to the Lord with repentance, asking for forgiveness, is that we care for the needy brethren. May the Lord give us all light and courage: light to know what’s happening within us, and courage to convert, to draw closer to the Lord. It is beautiful to be close to the Lord.”

3. Trust in the Lord, not in yourself

“The one who trusts in himself, in his own richness or ideologies is destined for unhappiness. The one who trusts in the Lord, on the other hand, bears fruit even of time of drought.” *That was the message of Pope Francis at Mass Thursday, March 20. (VIDEO)*



“Cursed is the man who trusts in human beings, the man who trusts in himself: he will be like a barren bush in the desert, condemned by the drought to remain without fruit and to die.” *Pope Francis began with the day’s First Reading, which also says that the one who trusts in the Lord will be blessed: “He is like a tree planted beside the waters, who in times of drought still bears fruit.”*

“Only in the Lord”, *Pope Francis said*, “is our sure confidence. Trusting in others is useless; such confidences don’t save, they don’t give us life, they don’t give us joy. And even if we know this, we like to trust ourselves, to trust in that friend or trust in that situation I have, or in that ideology and the Lord remains on the side. Such a person is closed in on himself, without horizons, without open doors, without windows and will not have salvation, he cannot save himself. That’s what happens to the rich man in the Gospel, He had it all, he dressed in purple, he ate all day, great banquets. He was so content, but he didn’t notice that there

was a poor man at his door . . . covered with sores. The Gospel gives the name of the poor man - he was called Lazarus - while the rich man has no name.

This is the worst misfortune of those who trust in themselves or in their own strength; in the possibilities of men and not in God: **they lose their name. What is your name? The amount in your account, in your bank. . . . What is your name? So many properties, so many villas, so many. . . . What is your name? The things we have, the idols. And you trust in that, and this man is cursed. We all have this weakness, this fragility, of putting our hopes in ourselves or in friends or in human possibilities alone, and we forget the Lord. And that takes us along the path . . . of unhappiness.**

Today, in this day of Lent, we would do well to ask ourselves: where is my confidence? In the Lord? Or am I a pagan, who confides in things, in the idols that I have made? **Do I still have a name or have I begun to lose my name and begun to call myself ‘I’? I, me, with me, for me, only ‘I’? For me, for me . . . always that self-centredness: ‘I.’ This will not give us salvation.**

But, in the end, there is a door of hope for those who trust in themselves and have lost their name.

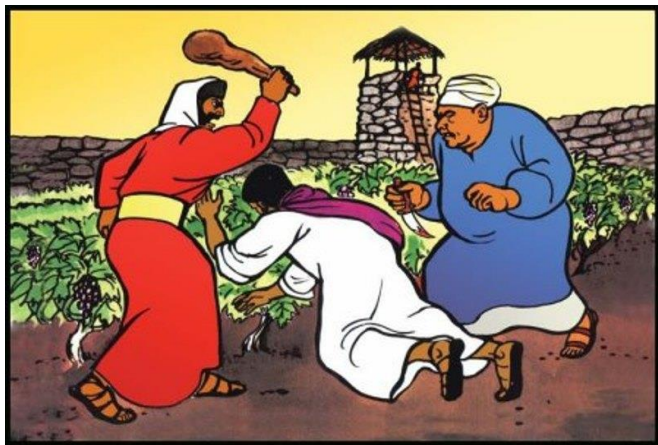
To the end, to the end, to the end there is always a possibility. And this man, when he realized that he had lost his name, he had lost everything, everything, looks up and says one word: ‘Father.’ And God’s answer is one word: ‘Son!’ If one of us in life, having so much trust in man and in ourselves, **we end up losing the name, losing this dignity, there is still a chance to say this word that is more than magic, it is more, it is strong: ‘Father.’ He always waits for us to open a door that we do not see and says to us: ‘Son.’** Let us ask the Lord for the grace that He would give to each of us the wisdom to have confidence only in Him — not in things, not in human powers; only in Him.”



4. Do not kill the Word of God

In order not to ‘kill’ the Word of God in our hearts, we need to be humble and capable of prayer. *Pope Francis pointed out these attitudes in his homily **Friday, March 21.** [\(VIDEO\)](#)*

“If a Christian is not humble, if he does not pray, he risks taking the Word of God and remaking it in his own liking. To see how to guard against this temptation”, *Pope Francis looked at the Gospel of the day. Jesus*



recounts the story of the workers in a vineyard, who killed first the servants, and ultimately the son, of the master of the vineyard, with the intention of making themselves masters of his inheritance.

This parable, was directed to the Pharisees, the elders of the people, the priests; Jesus was trying to show them where they had ‘fallen’ by not having their hearts open to the Word of God. This is the tragedy of these people, and our tragedy too! They have taken over the Word of God. **And the Word of God becomes their word, a word according to their interests, their ideologies, their theologies...** but in their service. And everyone interprets

it according to their own will, according to their own interests. This is the tragedy of this people. And to preserve this, they kill. This happened to Jesus.”

When they heard this parable, the chief priests and the Pharisees understood that Jesus was talking about them – and they sought to capture Him, and to kill Him. **In this way, the Word of God dies, is imprisoned, the Holy Spirit is caged in the desires of each of them.** And that is exactly what happens to us, when we are not open to the newness of the Word of God, when we are not obedient to the Word of God.

But there is a phrase that give us hope. The Word of God died in the hearts of these people; and can die in our heart! **But it is not finished, because it is alive in the hearts of the simple, of the humble, of the people of God.** They seek to capture it, but they were afraid of the crowds of the people of God. That simple crowd, that followed Jesus because what He said did their hearts good, warmed their hearts.... this people wasn’t wrong. They didn’t use the Word of God for their own interests, they listened and sought to be a little bit better.

And so, what can we do to not kill the Word of God, to be docile, to not cage the Holy Spirit? Two simple things: This is the attitude of those who will to hear the Word of God: **first, humility; second, prayer.** This people didn’t pray. They didn’t need to pray. They thought they were safe, they thought they were strong, they thought they were ‘gods.’ **Humility and prayer: with humility and prayer we go forward by listening to the Word of God and obeying it.** In the Church, Humility and prayer in the Church. And so, what happened to these people will not happen to us: we should not kill to defend the Word of God, that Word which we believe is the Word of God, but is a word totally altered by us.”



5. Humility is the path to salvation

Our salvation is not just in observing the Commandments, but in the humility to always feel the need to be healed by God. *This was the message voiced by Pope Francis during Mass on **Monday March 24.*** [\(VIDEO\)](#)

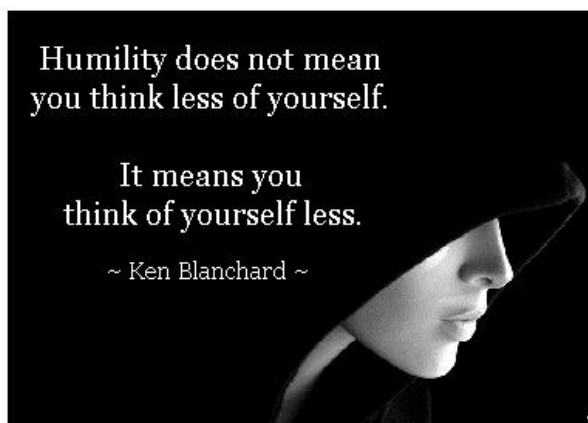


Pope Francis' homily found inspiration in these words that Jesus addressed to his fellow citizens in Nazareth: "No prophet is accepted in his hometown". "It was a place where he never worked miracles because they had no faith. Jesus recalls two biblical episodes: the miracle of the healing of the leper Naaman, and the meeting of the prophet Elijah with the widow of Serapta who shared her last morsel of food and was saved from famine. "Leper and widows in those days were the outcasts of society. And yet, these two outcasts,

welcomed the prophets and were saved, while the people of Nazareth did not accept Jesus because they felt so strong in their faith, so sure of their faithful observance of the Commandments, they felt they had no need for other salvation.

It is the tragedy of observing the Commandments without faith: 'I save myself because I go to the Synagogue every Saturday, I try to obey the Commandments, I do not want to hear that the leper or the widow is better than me!' They are outcasts! **And Jesus tells us: 'if you do not put yourself on the margins, if you don't feel what it is to be an outcast, you will not obtain salvation'**. This is humility, the path of humility: to feel so marginalized that we need the Salvation of the Lord. He alone saves us, not our observance of the law. And they did not like this; they were angry and wanted to kill him.

This was the same anger initially felt by Naaman, because he felt that Elisha's invitation to wash himself seven times in the Jordan was ridiculous and humiliating. The Lord asked him for a gesture of humility, He asked him to obey like a child, to be ridiculous. Naaman turned and went off in a rage, but afterwards his servants convinced him to do what the prophet asked of him. That act of humility healed him. This is the message for today: in this third week of Lent: if we want to be healed, we must choose the road of humility.



In her Canticle, Mary does not say she is happy because God was looking to her virginity, to her kindness or to her sweetness – all of them virtues that she possessed – no: because the Lord was looking to her humility, the humility of His servant, her smallness. This is what the Lord looks for. And we must take heed of this wisdom and put ourselves on the margins so that the Lord may find us. **He will not find us at the center of our certainties.** That is not where the Lord looks. He will find us on the margins, in our sins, in our mistakes, in our need for spiritual healing, for salvation; that is where the Lord will find us. This is the path of humility.

Christian humility is not within the virtue of saying: 'I am not important' and hiding our pride. No, Christian humility is telling the truth: 'I am a sinner'. Tell the truth: this is our truth. But there is another truth: God saves us. He saves us when we are on the margins; He does not save us in our certainties. Let us ask for the grace of having the wisdom to put ourselves on the margins, for the grace of humility so that we may receive the Lord's Salvation."

6. Salvation is a gift to be received with a humble heart, just like Mary

"Salvation cannot be bought or sold, it is a gift to be received with a humble heart, like that of Mary." *This was Pope Francis message on **Tuesday, March 25**, at Mass on the occasion of the Solemnity of the Annunciation. Pope Francis dwelt on the theme of how Mary's obedience untied the knot of Eve's disobedience. [\(VIDEO\)](#)*

The Pope focused his homily on Adam and Eve, who in yielding to the seduction of Satan, believed themselves to be like God. "That pride of self sufficiency resulted in them being expelled from Paradise. But the Lord did not abandon them on their journey, He promises them redemption and to always walk with them. The Lord accompanied humanity on this long journey. He made a people. He was with them. And that path that began with disobedience, ends with obedience, with Mary's 'yes' to the Announcement of the angel. The knot Eve tied with her disobedience according to St. Irenaeus of Lyons - was dissolved by Mary with her obedience. It is a journey in which the wonders of God multiply.



The Lord walks with his people. And why does He walk with His people, with so much tenderness? To soften our hearts... He explicitly says: 'I will make your heart of stone a heart of flesh'. He softens our hearts to receive the promise He had made in Paradise. Sin entered through one man, salvation through another. And He helped us all on this long journey to have a more human heart, closer to God, not so proud, not so self-sufficient.



And today, the liturgy speaks to us of this stage in the journey of restoration. It speaks of obedience, obedience to the Word of God. **Salvation can not be bought, it cannot be sold: it is gifted. It is freely given.** We can not save ourselves: salvation is a gift, totally free. It cannot be bought with the blood of bulls or goats: it cannot be bought. All we need to enter into this salvation is a humble heart, a docile heart, an obedient heart. Like that of Mary. On this journey of salvation, our model

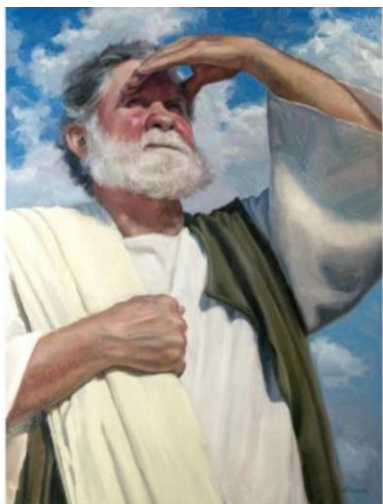
is God, his son, who did claim it as an inalienable right, to be equal with God, as Paul says.

The path of humility, humiliation... This means simply saying: **I am a man, I am a woman and you are God, and go before the presence of God, with obedience, docility of heart.** And for this, let us celebrate: celebrate this journey, from one mother to another mother, from one father to another father. Today we can embrace the Father, thanks to the blood of his Son, He has become one of us, He saves us. This Father is waiting for us every day... Let us look at the icon of Eve and Adam, let us look at the icon of Mary and Jesus, look at the course of journey of History with God and His people. Let us say, 'Thank you. Thank you, Lord, because you say to us today that you gift us salvation'. Today is a day to give thanks to the Lord."



7. God always forgives, celebrates every person's return to him

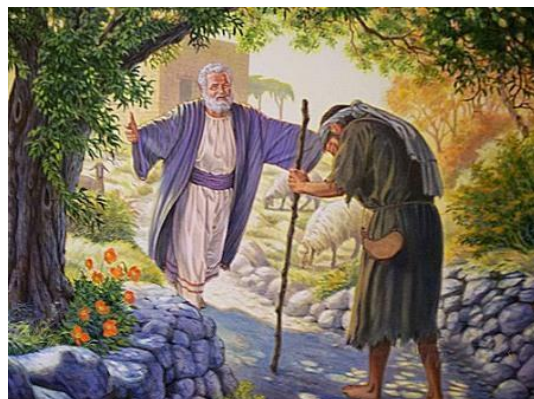
“God always forgives and does not know how to do otherwise”, said Pope Francis in his homily at mass **Friday March 28**. “The Lord always waits for us and forgives us, He is the God of forgiveness and he celebrates every person's return to him”, he said.



The Pope went on to say “God longs for us when we distance ourselves from him.” Drawing on the day's first reading from Hosea, he observed “The Lord speaks to his people with tenderness. Even when God invites us to conversion and uses stern words, God's words always include this loving longing and the exhortation of the Father who says to the son: “Come back. It is time to come back home.” [\(VIDEO\)](#)

This is the heart of our Father. God is like that: he does not tire, he does not tire. And God did this for many centuries, with so much apostasy... among the people. **And he always returns because our God is a God who waits.** Adam left paradise with a punishment but also with a promise. And ... the Lord is faithful to his promise because he cannot deny himself. He is faithful. And, in this way, he waited for all of us, throughout all of history. He is the God who waits for us always.

The Gospel of Luke tells us that the father saw the prodigal son from afar because he was waiting for him. The father went on to the terrace every day to see if his son would return. He waited. And when he saw him, he went out in haste and ‘threw himself on his neck’. **The son had prepared some words to say but the father did not let him speak; his embrace covered his mouth.** This is our Father, the God that waits for us. Always...



“But father, I have so many sins, I do not know if he will be happy” the Pope said, suggesting a conversation between a priest and a person fallen from God. “But try! If you want to know the tenderness of this Father, go to him and try. Then come and tell me.” The God who waits for us. ..God who waits and also God who forgives. He is the God of mercy; he does not tire of forgiving. We are the ones who tire in asking for forgiveness, but he does not tire. Seventy times seven, always... Let us go forward with forgiveness. And from a business point of view, the balance is negative. He always loses: he loses in the balance of things but he wins in love. **God is the first to fulfil the commandment of love. He loves and does not know how to do otherwise.**



The miracles that Jesus did with many sick people were also a sign of the great miracle that every day the Lord does with us when we have the courage to get up and go to him. When people return to God, God celebrates not like the banquet of the rich man, who had the poor Lazarus at his door. He holds banquet, like the father of the prodigal son. Every person who has the courage to approach God will find the joy of the feast of God. May this word help us to think of our Father, who waits for us always and who always forgives us and celebrates our return.”

8. Don't be 'tourists' on the spiritual journey of faith

Where are you on your spiritual journey? Are you wandering aimlessly like a tourist? Have you stopped or lost your way? Or are you heading straight for your destination? Those questions were at the heart of Pope Francis' reflections during his homily at Mass in the Casa Santa Marta on **Monday, March 31.** [\(Video\)](#)



*Reflecting on the day's readings from Isaiah and St John's Gospel Pope Francis distinguished between **three different types of Christians** and how they live their spiritual lives. "Before God asks anything of us", the Pope said, "He always promises us a new life of joy, so the essence of our Christian life is always to journey in hope and trust towards those promises.*

But there are many **Christians whose hope is weak** and while they believe and follow the commandments, **they have come to a standstill** in their spiritual lives. God cannot use them as a leaven among his people because they have stopped and they're no longer moving forward.

Secondly, there are those **among us who have taken the wrong turning and lost our way**. Of course, we all sometimes take the wrong road, but the real problem arises if we don't turn back when we realize that we've made a mistake. **The model of a true believer** who follows the promises of faith is the royal official from today's Gospel reading, who asks Jesus to heal his son and does not doubt for a second when the Master tells him the child has been cured.



But unlike that man, there are many Christians who deceive themselves and wander aimlessly without moving forward. These people are perhaps the most dangerous group because they wander through life like **existential tourists without a goal** and without taking God's promises seriously. But the Lord asks us not to stop, not to lose our way and not to wander through life. He asks us to journey on towards his promises like the official who believed what Jesus told him.



promises of our faith.

Despite our human condition as sinners who take the wrong turning, the Lord always gives us grace to turn back. Lent, is a good time to consider whether we are journeying forward or whether we have come to a standstill. If we have chosen the wrong road, we should go to Confession and return to the right way. If we are a theological tourist wandering aimlessly through life, we must ask the Lord for grace to head off again on the journey towards the

9. Homily of Pope Francis to the Italian Parliamentarians on Thursday, March 27: (Please find Homily in Newsletter, March 31.(Vol 2, No. 6) [\(VIDEO\)](#)