

Pope Francis' Message for Lent 2023: 'We Need to Listen to Jesus'

Using the story of Jesus' Transfiguration as a launching point, Francis addressed both the journey of Lent and the Catholic Church's ongoing Synod on Synodality in the message released Feb. 17.

Hannah Brockhaus/CAN [Vatican](#) February 17, 2023

In his message for Lent 2023, Pope Francis encouraged Catholics to listen to what Jesus wants to tell them through the Scriptures and through others.

Using the story of Jesus' Transfiguration as a launching point, Francis addressed both the journey of Lent and the Catholic Church's ongoing Synod on Synodality in the message released on Feb. 17.

The Pope recalled "the command that God the Father addresses to the disciples on Mount Tabor as they contemplate Jesus transfigured. The voice from the cloud says: 'Listen to him.'"

"The first proposal, then, is very clear: We need to listen to Jesus," he said. "Lent is a time of grace to the extent that we listen to him as he speaks to us."

"During this liturgical season," he continued, "the Lord takes us with him to a place apart. While our ordinary commitments compel us to remain in our usual places and our often repetitive and sometimes boring routines, during Lent we are invited to ascend 'a high mountain' in the company of Jesus and to live a particular experience of spiritual discipline — asceticism — as God's holy people."

Pope Francis said one of the ways Jesus speaks to us is through the word of God, which we can hear at Mass.

But if one cannot attend Mass during the week, it is a good idea to still read the daily readings of the liturgy, the Pope encouraged.

"In addition to the Scriptures, the Lord speaks to us through our brothers and sisters, especially in the faces and the stories of those who are in need," he added.

Francis' second suggestion for Lent was to confront the difficulties of ordinary life, remembering that Lent is a period that leads to Easter.

"Do not take refuge in a religiosity made up of extraordinary events and dramatic experiences, out of fear of facing reality and its daily struggles, its hardships and contradictions," the Pope said.

"The light that Jesus shows the disciples is an anticipation of Easter glory, and that must be the goal of our own journey, as we follow 'him alone,'" he said. "Lent leads to Easter: The 'retreat' is not an end in itself, but a means of preparing us to experience the Lord's passion and cross with faith, hope and love, and thus to arrive at the Resurrection."

Pope Francis compared the journey of Lent and the Church's ongoing Synod on Synodality to a "strenuous mountain trek."

While we hike up the mountain, we must keep our eyes on the path before us, but at the top, we are rewarded by the beautiful panorama that confronts us.

"So, too, the synodal process may often seem arduous," he said, "and at times, we may become discouraged. Yet what awaits us at the end is undoubtedly something wondrous and amazing, which will help us to understand better God's will and our mission in the service of his kingdom."

The Vatican's Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development announced Feb. 17 that it will hold a communication campaign based on Pope Francis' Lenten message. Beginning on Ash Wednesday, the dicastery will present every week, via its website, a new "step" on the journey of Lent. The campaign, "With Him on the Mountain: Lenten Penance and the Synodal Journey," will include reflection questions based on Scripture passages and the Pope's message.

"The Lenten journey of penance and the journey of the synod alike have as their goal a transfiguration, both personal and ecclesial," Pope Francis said, "a transformation that, in both cases, has its model in the Transfiguration of Jesus and is achieved by the grace of his paschal mystery."

The Pope also spoke about the newness of Christ and his fulfillment of the ancient covenant.

"In a similar way, the synodal journey is rooted in the Church's tradition and at the same time open to newness," he said. "Tradition is a source of inspiration for seeking new paths and for avoiding the opposed temptations of immobility and improvised experimentation."

Francis said a Lenten penance "is a commitment, sustained by grace, to overcoming our lack of faith and our resistance to following Jesus on the way of the cross."

"To deepen our knowledge of the Master, to fully understand and embrace the mystery of his salvation, accomplished in total self-giving inspired by love, we must allow ourselves to be taken aside by him and to detach ourselves from mediocrity and vanity," he encouraged. "We need to set out on the journey, an uphill path that, like a mountain trek, requires effort, sacrifice and concentration."