

# REFLECTION

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This year the whole month of March falls in the Lenten season, starting with the 2nd Sunday of Lent on March 1st and leading us to the Holy Week which begins with the Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord on March 29th. The Lenten season invites us to meditate more on the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, and that can enable us to recognize

the suffering Lord in other suffering people. Lenten penitence is expressed through prayer, fasting, and almsgiving, and that urges us to show compassion and be charitable to all who experience any kind of suffering, poverty, want, injustice, or persecution. St. John Paul II made some reflection on it during his general audience on April 11, 1979:

## In the Words of

# ST. JOHN PAUL II

*The call to special and exceptional solidarity with suffering Christ is felt towards the end of the Lenten period. It is felt when the attitude of spiritual conversion, and especially the sense of solidarity with all our suffering brothers, has already matured in us. This corresponds to the logic of the revelation: love of God is the first and greatest commandment, but it cannot be fulfilled outside love of man. It cannot be fulfilled without it.*

*2. At the same time the deepest and most powerful impulses of love must spring from this Week, in which we are called to a special and exceptional, solidarity with Christ, in his passion and death on the Cross. "For God so loved the world"—man in the world—"that he gave his only Son" (Jn 3:16). He gave him to suffering and death. Contemplating this revelation of love, which starts from God and goes towards man in the world, we cannot stop, but must take "the way back": the way of the human heart which goes towards God, the way of love. Lent—and above all Holy Week—must be, in every year of our life in the Church, a new beginning of this "way of love". Lent is identified, as we see, with the culminating point of the revelation of God's love for man.*

*Therefore the Church exhorts us to linger in a quite, special and exceptional way beside Christ, alone near him. She exhorts us to endeavour—like St. Paul—*

*(at least in this week) to "Know nothing ... except Jesus Christ and him crucified" (1 Cor 2:2). The Church addresses this exhortation*

*to everyone: not just to the whole community of believers to all followers of Christ, but also to all the others. To stop before Christ who is suffering, to find solidarity with him in oneself again—this is the duty and need of every human heart, this is the verification of human sensitivity. Man's nobility is manifested in this. Holy Week is therefore the time of the Church's greatest opening to humanity and at the same time the peak time of evangelization: through everything that the Church thinks and says of Christ in these days, through the way in which she lives his passion and death, through her solidarity with him, the Church returns, year after year, to the very roots of her mission and her proclamation of salvation. And if in this Holy Week the Church, more than speaking, is silent, she does so in order that Christ himself can speak all the more. That Christ whom Pope Paul VI called "the very first and the greatest evangelizer".*

