Lent is a time of grace, a call to conversion, deep reflection, and renouncing the superfluous to embrace what is essential: our relationship with God. In a world where noise, consumerism, and immediacy trap us, the Church invites us to pause, make silence, and rediscover the true richness that only Christ can give us.

The Origin of Lent: A 40-Day Journey to Easter

Lent has roots in both Sacred Scripture and the Tradition of the Church. The number 40 is symbolic in the Bible: it represents a time of preparation, trial, and encounter with God. Moses spent 40 days on Mount Sinai before receiving the Law (Exodus 24:18), the people of Israel wandered for 40 years in the desert before entering the Promised Land (Numbers 14:33-34), and, above all, Jesus spent 40 days in the desert fasting and praying before beginning His public ministry (Matthew 4:1-2).

From the early centuries of Christianity, Christians prepared for Easter with a period of penance, fasting, and prayer, especially those who were to receive Baptism at the Easter Vigil. Over time, this practice was consolidated and formally established in the universal Church.

Austerity: A Bridge to True Richness

In today's society, austerity is often seen as an undesirable deprivation, a heavy burden, or even a setback. However, in the Christian perspective, austerity is not a loss but a gain. The voluntary renunciation of material goods and unnecessary distractions does not impoverish us; rather, it enriches the soul and prepares it to receive divine grace.

Saint John Paul II said: *"It is not the one who has much who is rich, but the one who needs little."* Lent reminds us that the greatest wealth is not in accumulating goods but in the ability to detach from them to gain something infinitely superior: God's love.

Fasting: Hunger for God

Fasting is not just a practice of physical deprivation; it is a spiritual exercise that helps us strengthen our will and remember that *"man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God"* (Matthew 4:4). By fasting, we experience in our own bodies the need for something greater than food: the need for God.

Pope Francis invites us to a fast that goes beyond the material: *"Fast from hurtful words and*

speak kind words. Fast from discontent and be filled with gratitude. Fast from worries and trust in God." Thus, Lenten austerity not only involves renouncing certain foods but also attitudes that distance us from Christ.

Prayer: A Dialogue That Transforms Us

Austerity is not just about external renunciation; it is, above all, an inner disposition. Prayer allows us to reorient our hearts towards God and discover that He is our true wealth. In a world that constantly pushes us to act, Lent invites us to pause and listen to God's voice.

Almsgiving: A Shared Wealth

In the logic of the Gospel, true wealth multiplies when shared. Almsgiving is not simply giving money to the needy but living charity in all its dimensions: offering our time, our talents, our listening, and our understanding to those around us. Jesus reminds us that *"there is more joy in giving than in receiving"* (Acts 20:35).

Lent in Today's World: An Antidote to Spiritual Emptiness

We live in an age of material abundance but spiritual poverty. We have never had so many technological resources, consumer goods, and entertainment, yet the human soul remains thirsty for meaning, transcendence, and God.

Lent is the answer to this emptiness. It invites us to step away from the noise to rediscover what is essential. It teaches us that austerity is not a limitation but a path to freedom. It reminds us that true treasure is not in what we possess but in who we are before God.

Conclusion: Recovering True Richness

If Lent is lived authentically, it leads us to a great Christian paradox: by renouncing what is temporary, we find what is eternal. By stripping away the unnecessary, we discover what is indispensable. By emptying ourselves, we are filled with God.

This liturgical season is a unique opportunity to rediscover the richness of a simple life, the joy of giving, and the beauty of a converted heart. It is not just about abstaining from meat on Fridays or making external sacrifices but about living a true inner change that prepares us for the great event of the Resurrection.

May this Lent be a time of grace for you, a journey towards the true richness that only Christ can offer. As Saint Paul tells us: *“For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich”* (2 Corinthians 8:9).

May we experience in this Lent the joy of this enriching poverty, this liberating austerity, and this path that leads us to fullness in Christ.