# Tuesday of the Second Week of Lent

**Gospel text (*Mt* 23:1-12):** Jesus spoke to the crowds and to his disciples, saying, “The scribes and the Pharisees have taken their seat on the chair of Moses. Therefore, do and observe all things whatsoever they tell you, but do not follow their example. For they preach but they do not practice. They tie up heavy burdens [hard to carry] and lay them on people’s shoulders, but they will not lift a finger to move them. All their works are performed to be seen. They widen their phylacteries and lengthen their tassels. They love places of honor at banquets, seats of honor in synagogues, greetings in marketplaces, and the salutation ‘Rabbi.’

As for you, do not be called ‘Rabbi.’ You have but one teacher, and you are all brothers. Call no one on earth your father; you have but one Father in heaven. Do not be called ‘Master’; you have but one master, the Messiah. The greatest among you must be your servant. Whoever exalts himself will be humbled; but whoever humbles himself will be exalted.”

***“You have but one teacher, you have but one Father, you have but one master, the Messiah”***

Fr. Gerardo GÓMEZ
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Today, more than ever before, we have to work for our personal and collective salvation, as Saint Paul states, respectfully and purposefully, for “on the day of salvation I helped you.” (2Cor. 6:2). Lent offers us a sacred chance, granted by our Father, so that with an attitude of profound conversion, we may invigorate our personal values, become conscious of our own blunders and repent from our sins, with the intention that our life becomes —through the action of the Holy Spirit— a fuller and riper life.

For our behavior to conform to that of our Lord Jesus, a gesture of humility is fundamental, as Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI said: “I recognize myself for what I am, a fragile creature, made of earth and destined to the earth, but also made in the image of God and destined to Him”.

In Jesus’ time there were many “role models” who prayed and acted just to be seen, to be revered: sheer fancy, gloomy characters, which could not stimulate either the genuine growth or the development of their neighbors. Their attitude and behavior did not illuminate the pathway to God: “but do not follow their example. For they preach but they do not practice.” (Mt 23:3).

Modern society also displays infinite behavior models, heading us to a dizzying, crazy existence,

weakening our awareness of transcendence. Let us not allow these false models make us lose sight of the true Master: “You have only one teacher, you have only one Father, you have but one master, the Messiah” (Mt 23:8-9-10).

Let us, therefore, take advantage of Lent to invigorate our own convictions as Jesus’ disciples. Let us try to have some sacred “desert” moments, when we may rediscover ourselves and we may meet the true Model and Master for our lives. And in front of those specific situations when we wonder how to act, let us ask ourselves: what would Jesus say? How would Jesus behave?

## *Thoughts on Today's Gospel*

- “It is better for a man to be silent and be [a Christian], than to talk and not to be one. It is good to teach, if he who speaks also acts.” (Saint Ignatius of Antioch)

- “Today more than ever, the Church is aware that her social message will gain credibility more immediately from the witness of actions than as a result of its internal logic and consistency.” (Saint John Paul II)

- “Scandal takes on a particular gravity by reason of the authority of those who cause it or the weakness of those who are scandalized (...). Scandal is grave when given by those who by nature or office are obliged to teach and educate others. Jesus reproaches the scribes and Pharisees on this account: he likens them to wolves in sheep's clothing (Cf. Mt 7:15).” (Catechism Of The Catholic Church, Nº 2285)

## *Other comments*

### *“Do not follow their example. For they preach but they do not practice”*

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Today, Jesus exhorts us to bear witness to our Christian life through our example, the consistency of our life and the honesty of our intentions. Our Lord says, when referring to the masters of the Law and to the Pharisees: “Do not follow their example. For they preach but they do not practice” (Mt 23:3). It is indeed a terrible charge!

We all have experience of so much evil and scandal —souls' disorientation— created by the counter-testimonies, i.e. bad examples. At the same time, we all remember the good we have experienced through the good deeds we have seen occur in our lives. Let's not forget the popular saying “an image is worth a thousand words”. In short, “today, more than ever before, the Church will be credible with the testimony

of works, rather than by its coherence and internal logic" (Saint John Paul II).

And, an especially harmful example for Evangelization is the lack of coherence in life. An apostle of the third millennium, who feels he is called to saintliness in the midst of his temporary human affairs, must bear in mind that "only the relationship between a true statement consequent with itself and its fulfillment in life, may cause to shine the evidence of faith longed for by the human heart; only through this door [of coherence] will the Holy Spirit enter in the world" (Benedict XVI).

Finally, Jesus bewails of those "All their works are performed to be seen" (Mt 23:5). The authenticity of our life as Christ's apostles requires honesty in our intentions. We must behave, above all, for the sake of our love for God and the glory of the Father. As we can read in the Catechism of the Church, "God created everything for man but man in turn was created to serve and love God and to offer all Creation back to Him." Here lies our greatness: to serve God as His sons!