



8. March 2026
LENTEN SPIRITUAL RETREAT
Day 19: “A way to a pure heart” (Part II)

In yesterday’s meditation, we began a short series on the theme of the conversion of the heart. I thought it appropriate to address this topic within the framework of our Lenten journey for two reasons. First, because, in imitation of Christ, it is always necessary to deepen our conversion so that our lives may be as fruitful as possible in the service of our beloved Father and so that we may never cease on the path of following His Son. Second, because the deepest conversion of our hearts is a spiritual weapon in the fight against discord and war. Later, I will explain this aspect in more detail, because in this way we can confront the “*evil spirits in the air*” (Eph 6:12), who are always ready to take advantage of humanity’s evil inclinations for their wicked plans.

In this spirit, let us continue today with the theme of the conversion of our hearts.

With the willingness to perceive one's depths before the loving Lord, a double realism arises: one recognises both the dark side in oneself and at the same time encounters the mercy of God. One understands that God does not reject and punish because of the impurity that comes from the heart, but that His love has set out to bring light into the darkness.

So it is in no way a matter of integrating into our lives the shadows we perceive within ourselves—as, for example, so-called “depth psychology” proposes—by considering our “dark side” as part of our personality. This cannot be a way to transform the heart. A correct view of “integration” of the “shadow” is the recognition of the fact that there are abysses in the heart and that these should not be repressed. The shadow, however, does not essentially belong to man, but is the deformation of his very being, the inheritance of the “old Adam” who, turned away from God, fell under the dominion of sin (cf. Rom 5:12). It distorts the image of God, which God in His goodness wants to restore. For this process, the purification of the heart is essential.

Therefore, as a prerequisite, one must make a clear decision of the will not to tolerate or relativize anything in ourselves that does not accord with love and truth. In order for us to see that we have to take responsibility for what happens

within us, we need only remember that word of Jesus which tells us that the sin of adultery begins with the impure look and not only with the act itself. (cf. Mt 5,27-28).

On the way to a pure heart we must not compromise, we must not tolerate half measures. To make this decision, it is necessary to have experienced what is called the “first conversion,” which leads us to want to obey God in all things. From there, we set out on the path toward the “second conversion,” which we can also call the “conversion of the heart.”

This firm decision of the will, which we have to make clearly and consciously and maintain, is our essential contribution so that the transformation of the heart can take place. When we have fallen behind in what we had set out to do, we must remember and reaffirm this fundamental decision.

But the decision of our will will not be enough, especially in view of our human weaknesses, which are well known to the Lord. The main work of inner transformation is done by the grace of God. Therefore, there are two significant words of the Holy Scripture: “*make yourselves a new heart*” (Ezek 18:31) and “*I shall give you a new heart*” (36:26).

The concrete way is that I carry to God in prayer everything I discover in myself that does not agree with the way of the Lord. Because of our extensive blindness for our own faults and wrong attitudes, we have to ask the Holy Spirit again and again to show us what still needs transformation, what does not agree with the way of holiness.

Let's take evil thoughts as an example to better understand how we should deal with our evil inclinations.

If they arise from our heart, we must pray to God immediately, call upon the Holy Spirit and confront them in this way. St. Benedict teaches that we should smash evil thoughts on the “rock of Christ”.

It would be important to distinguish whether these are thoughts that recur again and again. This would indicate that they are not simply satanic attacks, but that they sit deeper within us and are connected with certain feelings. If we perceive this, then it is usually not enough to reject them decisively once, but to carry them persistently, again and again to the Lord - if possible, before the tabernacle

- and ask Him for healing and liberation.

Let us take an example: Whenever I see a certain person, evil thoughts and feelings rise up in me. I know by now that these thoughts are wrong and against love and I fight against them. I also succeed in getting rid of the thoughts, which in itself is a victory. But they keep coming back, almost every time I see this person.

This can be an indication that I still have something in my heart against the person, perhaps I have not forgiven him, I bear a grudge against him, and so on. Therefore it is necessary to bring these inner feelings permanently to God, to speak them out before Him, to enter into conversation with Him about them, to ask Him to heal these feelings through the Holy Spirit and to free me from them. In this situation, it can be helpful to either pray for the person in question or entrust them to God's grace if it is better not to think about them too much.

Thus, I will be working on two levels: on the one hand, counteracting the current bad thoughts, not indulging them and turning my will away from them. On the other hand, we also address the deeper cause: the bad thoughts and feelings may have been rooted in the heart for quite some time. Then, the current rejection of the other person can always "fall back" on this potential, so to speak, if it has not been healed and liberated by the Lord.

As the flower of today's meditation, we gather the purpose of being willing to recognize our shadows and sincerely present them to God.

Tomorrow we will continue with the third part of this theme...

Meditation on the Gospel of the Day:

<https://en.elijamission.net/2025/01/16/>