



9. March 2026

LENTEN SPIRITUAL RETREAT

Day 20: “The Transformation of the Heart” (Part III)

This short series, which aims to show us the importance of the conversion of the heart, must also be understood in a supra-personal dimension. This means that our efforts to attain a pure heart not only serve our personal sanctification, but are also a weapon in spiritual combat. St. Paul makes it clear that our struggle is against *“the principalities, against the powers (...), against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.”* (Eph 6:12) They take advantage of our evil human inclinations and reinforce them. Once our hearts have been darkened, it becomes easier for them to involve us in their rebellion against God or, at least, to weaken or incapacitate us for the true fight against these spirits.

On the other hand, a heart that—thanks to the influence of the Holy Spirit—becomes increasingly pure and in which God’s grace flows is unbearable to them. Just think of the most pure Heart of the Virgin Mary, from whom they must flee. In addition, such a heart becomes increasingly inflamed with love for God and for human beings, and places itself completely at the service of the heavenly Father. Therefore, it will fight against anything that seeks to tarnish the glory of God and will carry the message of the Gospel to others. This, in turn, weakens the power of the Evil One, so that every pure heart becomes a threat to him—not only because it does not allow itself to be led astray by his machinations, but because it actively combats them with the power of the Lord. Thus, we can take our place in the army of the Lamb, cooperating through our prayer and our struggle for holiness so that the peace of Christ may come to humanity and the power of His love may drive away the darkness.

These reflections can motivate us to work on purifying our hearts with the help of the Holy Spirit. Let us now look at another vice that greatly darkens our hearts, so that we can overcome it in the light of God. I am referring to envy.

This is a very persistent malice, which we must face with determination. Envy closes our hearts to God and to other people and darkens our whole being. If we renounce envy—if we direct our will toward willingly granting to others what God has given them and thank the Lord for it—then we will have taken the right direction. Here we will be in great need of the help of the Holy Spirit, so that, on the one hand, this act of the will becomes constant, and on the other, that the source from which this envy springs—our heart—is touched.

Envy comes from darkness. Scripture speaks of the “*envy of the devil*” (Wis 2:24). Therefore, it darkens our hearts. When we allow ourselves to be carried away by it, our hearts become evil, and envy becomes the driving force behind evil actions. Thus, it is destructive in every way and kills love.

The Holy Spirit, on the other hand, is the very love that has been poured into our hearts (cf. Rom 5:5). Through Him, our heavenly Father wants to establish His throne in us. Love does not envy anyone anything. On the contrary, love gives itself and makes us recipients—beneficiaries—who, just as they receive gifts from God, also want to treat others well. So, if we begin to distance ourselves from darkness instead of letting ourselves be carried away by its impulses, we will be renouncing evil with our will. Such an act already has the support of the Holy Spirit, because without Him we would not even be able to identify envy, much less renounce it.

By specifically and persistently invoking the Holy Spirit over the darkness of envy, He will touch this darkness within us and transform it, because darkness must retreat before the light.

In other words, God’s love can now enter our hearts more fully at this point, snatching them from the clutches of evil and setting them free. The narrowness of evil is replaced by the breadth of love.

It is worth clarifying that, in general, this will be a long battle. Again and again, we will have to perceive envy within ourselves. But perhaps after a while we will notice that it has diminished, as God’s love has found more room in our hearts. To this end, we will have to repeatedly perform acts that counteract envy. We will suffer from the fact that we still perceive it in our hearts, even though we have already distanced ourselves from it with our will. This suffering is good and healthy. It is a sign that love is growing in our hearts. We suffer increasingly under our inclination to evil, and how we would like to change and be as God wants us to be.

What I have explained with regard to envy also applies to all the other vices that, according to the words of the Lord, come from the heart of man (Mk 7:14–23). We must perceive them in our hearts, turn away from them, seek virtues, and ask the Holy Spirit to heal and free us in a concrete process of interior transformation.

This is a path we can take to cooperate in the conversion of our hearts. In order not to fall into discouragement, we must never forget that all this happens in the presence of a

loving Father who desires our sanctification. As far as possible in our earthly life, the fullness of holiness to which He calls us should dwell in us (cf. Mt 5:48). However, God is a Father who knows our weaknesses and relapses, and He lifts us up again and again. The sacraments are an invaluable help to us, especially Confession and Holy Mass.

So we are called to this true and noble combat, and with Holy Confirmation we have already been sacramentally strengthened. This is the essential combat, because it takes us to the heart of the matter. I remind you again that the powers of darkness want to take advantage of man's evil inclinations to plunge him into misfortune. Therefore, it is not a struggle that we wage solely for our own sanctification; it is also an important contribution to our Church and its mission in this world. This battle is an essential part of our vocation as Christians if we want to belong to the "army of the Lamb" and fight on His side against the dragon.

What is at stake is our heart. Does it truly belong to the Lord (according to the first commandment), or is it being dragged down into the abyss? Achieving purity of heart will be a great victory.

In this battle to which we are called, we can count on the help of the Virgin Mary, whose Immaculate Heart will triumph over the powers of darkness.

We, as weak human beings, can only resist in this combat with the grace of God. He will grant it to us and assign us our place in the "multitude of the Lamb."

As the flower of today's meditation, let us seek to obtain a pure heart so that it may be a weapon of light.

Meditation on the reading of the day: <https://en.elijamission.net/2022/03/21/>

Meditation on the Gospel of the day: <https://en.elijamission.net/2021/03/08/>