11. March 2026
LENTEN SPIRITUAL RETREAT
Day 22: "The Fear of the Lord"

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Today we have reached day 22 of our Lenten journey. Perhaps some of you have gathered a "spiritual bouquet" with the flowers I have been suggesting at the end of each meditation. In fact, we have already formed a fairly large bouquet, and each of its flowers will help us find the thread that guides us throughout Lent.

Let me remind you that this year I have decided to base myself on the readings of the day according to the traditional liturgical calendar. Most of you are probably accustomed to the "ordinary form of the Roman rite." That is why we always indicate the reading and Gospel of the day so that you can read them in their entirety, while in the meditations I usually quote only certain excerpts.

A brief "floral display" will help us remember the resolutions we have made in this first half of Lent. Today we will list the flowers from the first 11 days, and tomorrow we will continue with those from the next 11.

Day 1: Begin Lent with humility, seriously embark on the path of conversion, and store up treasures in heaven.

Day 2: Offer our supplications and petitions to the Lord with humility, friendship, and great faith.

Day 3: Adopt fasting in our lives according to our possibilities and ask God for the grace to love our enemies.

Day 4: Beg our Father to heal us of all blindness so that we may recognize His glory and act upon it.

Day 5: Take advantage of the time of grace and fight against pride.

Day 6: Internalize how God feeds His sheep as a good shepherd and put ourselves at His service by caring for all the people He entrusts to us.

Day 7: Learn to listen very attentively to the Holy Spirit and allow ourselves to be purified by Him on the path to holiness, thus offering resistance to evil, both within us

and around us.

Day 8: Ask the Lord to enlighten us, to move forward on our path strengthened by His nourishment, and to give authentic witness to Jesus Christ and His Church.

Day 9: Consciously assume responsibility for our life before God, regardless of whether we have favorable or unfavorable hereditary predispositions, and ask the Lord to continually broaden our horizons and make us docile, so that we may learn to integrate new and unexpected circumstances into our journey after Him.

Day 10: Ask for perseverance and fidelity in following the Lord to the end, and understand the hierarchy of God's action, without becoming legalistic where the Holy Spirit wants to broaden our vision.

Day 11: Try to acquire joy in God, seek prayer, and turn our hearts into a garden of gratitude.

Today we will pause to read the Old Testament (Ex 20:12–24), which reminds us of God's commandments, so fundamental to our lives. Those who obey them are promised eternal life. We all know that today God's Law is increasingly broken, starting with the first commandment to love Him with all our heart, with all our mind, and with all our strength, through the commandment not to kill or steal, to all the Lord's instructions for our lives to prosper with His help. Outside of God's commandments, there is only chaos. As I have repeatedly emphasized, true peace cannot reign if this condition is not met.

The Israelites, to whom the Lord's commandments were announced, were frightened by the signs that occurred while God was transmitting them. This is how today's reading recounts it:

"Now when all the people perceived the thunderings and the lightnings and the sound of the trumpet and the mountain smoking, the people were afraid and trembled; and they stood afar off, and said to Moses, 'You speak to us, and we will hear; but let not God speak to us, lest we die.' And Moses said to the people, 'Do not fear; for God has come to prove you, and that the fear of him may be before your eyes, that you may not sin.'" (vv. 18–20)

Here we encounter an aspect that is less and less understood today. In fact, there is such a thing as positive fear: the fear of not living a life in accordance with God's

commandments. It is a fear that should keep us from falling into sin. And if one has even the slightest idea of what it means to violate God's Law, then it is good to fear doing so.

It is true that, in the proclamation of the Good News, God's love and mercy overcome everything. However, truth demands its right, because without it, neither love nor mercy can be properly understood. This does not mean that we should be afraid of God, but rather that we should be aware of the seriousness of our life and our responsibility before Him and before men. Our heavenly Father has entrusted us with the precious treasure of our life, and we can squander it.

We know that one of the seven gifts that the Holy Spirit grants us is the fear of the Lord, which teaches us to avoid anything that could offend Him. This is how divine love begins to manifest itself in its initial phase, teaching us to respect God, our neighbor, and ourselves. The spirit of fear educates us to choose our words and actions in the light of God. As one of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, it transforms us inwardly into the image and likeness of God.

As a spiritual flower from today's meditation, let us ask the Holy Spirit for the gift of the fear of the Lord, which is extremely important for living with vigilance and responsibility without losing sight of God.

Meditation on the reading of the day: https://en.elijamission.net/2021/03/10/

Meditation on the Gospel of the day: https://en.elijamission.net/2024/06/12/