



26. March 2026

## LENTEN SPIRITUAL RETREAT

### Day 37: “Now we follow you with all our hearts”

Following the joy of the election of the Blessed Virgin Mary, which we celebrated yesterday, our Lenten journey presents us today with the moving prayer of Azariah (Dan 3, 3–22), one of the three young men who, thanks to divine intervention, emerged unharmed from the fiery furnace.

Azariah, who lives in exile in Babylon alongside his people, first expresses his deep lament at having lost everything that once constituted the center of his life, while at the same time acknowledging the people’s guilt: *“For we, O Lord, have become fewer than any nation, and are brought low this day in all the world because of our sins. And at this time there is no prince, or prophet, or leader, no burnt offering, or sacrifice, or oblation, or incense, no place to make an offering before thee or to find mercy.”* (vv. 14–15a).

How important it is to acknowledge reality with such depth! Israel feels the consequences of having turned away from God and realizes that it has brought this upon itself. In this prayer, no one and nothing is blamed for the suffering and misfortune that have befallen the people; rather, one’s own guilt is acknowledged in a simple and sincere manner.

Where do we find such an attitude today? It is certainly very rare, since there is an ever-diminishing awareness that we must give an account to God for all our actions. Consequently, the underlying reason for the dangers looming over the Earth is not understood either. And if not even the leaders of the Church—who should point out the right path in God’s name—properly establish the connection between sin and its consequences, the call for true conversion will barely be heard, and only a few voices will remain to offer guidance.

In reality, the path Azariah shows us is simple: to acknowledge our faults and turn to the Lord with a contrite heart.

*“Yet with a contrite heart and a humble spirit may we be accepted, as though it were with burnt offerings of rams and bulls, and with tens of thousands of fat lambs; such may our sacrifice be in thy sight this day, and may we wholly follow thee, for there will be no shame for those who trust in thee. And now with all our heart we follow thee, we fear thee and seek thy face.”* (vv. 16–18).

It is trust in God's goodness that allows us to receive his grace once more. This step strengthens us inwardly so that, with renewed courage and full awareness of our weakness, we may say with Azariah: *"Now with all our heart we follow thee."*

This is what should drive us when we have fallen into sin, when we have neglected our spiritual path, when we have been more concerned with ourselves than with the Lord, when we have paid too much attention to worldly and insignificant things, or when we have let the opportunity to perform the works of mercy that presented themselves to us slip away. With the support of divine grace, we can always take the first step or renew our resolutions. Thus—and I will never tire of repeating this—we not only work toward our own sanctification, but by better responding to our vocation to be the light of the world (Mt 5:14), we serve humanity as a whole.

Two days ago, in the meditation for March 24, I invited our audience to join us in prayer, asking the Lord to intervene in the disastrous war in the Middle East and put a stop to the unjust violence. I hope that many are participating in this prayer and thus countering this destruction.

However, we must not delude ourselves. Even if the impure fire of unjust violence were to be extinguished and God were thus to have mercy on so many people, that would still not mean that those responsible and those affected have come to recognize their faults and to the conversion that is so necessary. We must pray especially for this to happen, so that what Azariah prayed amid the flames of the fiery furnace may come true: *"Now with all our heart we follow thee."*

In this regard, I would also like to share with you a prayer for true peace, the only peace that can truly change the situation on Earth. Indeed, only when we understand that we humans will never find personal peace or peace among nations unless we live according to God's will will the door open that leads us to true peace.

This brief prayer is intended precisely for this purpose:

*"Beloved Father, we ask for the peace that flows from Your Heart, the peace that touches and transforms the hearts of men, so that Your Kingdom may spread throughout the whole Earth. We ask this through Christ, our Lord. Amen."*

As the fruit of today's meditation, let us resolve to follow the Lord with all our hearts and pray for true peace.

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Meditation on the reading of the day: <https://en.elijamission.net/the-faithfulness-of-the-lord/>