



Ordine della Madre di Dio

P A X C H R I S T I

Dear Brothers,

in the holy season of Lent the Church invites us to return into the desert, the biblical place of essentiality and of listening. It is not a geographical space, but a spiritual condition: the heart placed once again before God.

The Word that inaugurates Lent – “Return to me with all your heart” (Jl 2:12) – is not a simple moral appeal, but a theological call: the heart is the place of the covenant, the unifying center of the person, where the deep orientation of life is decided. Lenten conversion is always a return to the heart, because it is in the heart that the Word asks to be welcomed, safeguarded, and verified.

In his Message for Lent 2026, entitled “Listening and fasting. Lent as a time of conversion,” Pope Leo XIV strongly recalls the need to “make our ear more attentive to the voice of the Lord,” because every authentic path of conversion is born from docile listening to the Word that precedes us and transforms us. This perspective also sheds profound light on the practice of the examination of conscience: it is, first of all, an act of listening.

I therefore wish to invite you to rediscover with greater care, in this favorable time, the daily practice of the examination of conscience, as our Constitutions and our tradition hand it on to us.

The Constitutions remind us: “religious are to persevere in the conversion of the soul to God and also attend to the daily examination of conscience” (88), explicitly linking this practice to sacramental confession and to the ecclesial dimension of penance. The Rules (75) place the examination within the concrete rhythm of the day, together with common prayer and Compline, highlighting its communal and prayerful dimension. It is therefore not an optional devotion, but a structural element of our form of life.

The examination of conscience is not an introspective exercise nor an interior tribunal. It is a theological act: the believer, in the light of the Word, allows himself to be scrutinized by God. “The word of God is living and effective... and discerns the thoughts and intentions of the heart” (Heb 4:12). The examination is a response to this Word that precedes and judges in truth. It is not we who enlighten ourselves, but we allow the Holy Spirit to enlighten our memory, purify our gaze, and once again orient our will.

In the same Lenten Message, the Holy Father emphasizes that authentic fasting is also purification of desires and of words: a path that educates the heart to discern what dwells within it. This indication harmonizes deeply with the dynamic of the daily examination, in which we



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learn to recognize desires, resistances, consolations, and closures, allowing the Spirit to interiorly order our freedom.

The tradition of the Church, from the Desert Fathers to Ignatian discernment, has always understood that the spiritual life is played out first of all in the interior movements of the heart. Evangelical vigilance – “Watch and pray” (Mt 26:41) – is attention to what is born within us: desires, thoughts, attitudes. Lent is the time in which this vigilance becomes more conscious and more humble.

For us OMD religious, the daily examination also possesses a clear apostolic dimension. When the heart is not guarded, even the apostolate loses transparency: the gaze grows heavy, listening weakens, relationships risk becoming functional. Pope Leo XIV recalls that the Lenten journey must render communities places in which the other feels listened to and welcomed. A heart purified by a faithful examination makes our presence among the people clearer, our way of serving more evangelical, our witness more authentic. Missionary fruitfulness is always born from a reconciled and unified heart.

Personal conversion is never a private matter. As the Apostle reminds us, “If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together” (1 Cor 12:26). What is purified in the heart of the individual contributes to the holiness of the entire Body of Christ. The Message for Lent 2026 also insists on the communal dimension of listening and fasting: conversion is always ecclesial.

From the time of the Founder, the evening examination, lived together and accompanied by the recitation of the Litany of the Saints, strongly expressed this communal and penitential dimension. After the reform of the Second Vatican Council, with the insertion of the examination into Compline, the choice was oriented toward a more explicit integration into the liturgical prayer of the Church. In both cases its paschal meaning remains clear: to entrust the day to God means to pass each evening through a small passage of death and resurrection.

I therefore encourage you to live the daily examination in this Lenten time with greater depth:

- beginning with thanksgiving, recognizing the prevenient grace of God;
- re-reading the day in the light of the Word that was listened to;
- discerning with truth what calls for conversion;
- entrusting everything to the mercy of the Father.

A community that each evening allows itself to be enlightened by the Word becomes more united, more free, more evangelical. A religious who guards his own heart also renders his mission more transparent.



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Let us entrust this journey to the Virgin Mary, who “kept all these things, pondering them in her heart” (Lk 2:19), and let us ask for the grace of a Lent that is authentically paschal.

I carry you in prayer and bless you from my heart.

Rome, 16 February 2026



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