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## **Ash Wednesday - “Lent: a time of penance”**

Coming closer to God means being ready to be converted anew, to change direction again, to listen attentively to his inspirations -- those holy desires he places in our souls -- and to put them into practice.  
(The Forge, 32)

February 18

We are at the beginning of Lent: a time of penance, purification and

conversion. It is not an easy program, but then Christianity is not an easy way of life. It is not enough just to *be* in the Church, letting the years roll by. In our life, in the life of Christians, our first conversion — that unique moment which each of us remembers, when we clearly understood everything the Lord was asking of us — is certainly very significant. But the later conversions are even more important, and they are increasingly demanding. To facilitate the work of grace in these conversions, we need to keep our soul young; we have to call upon our Lord, know how to listen to him and, having found out what has gone wrong, know how to ask his pardon.

“If you call upon me, I will listen to you,” we read in this Sunday's liturgy. Isn't it wonderful how God cares for us and is always ready to listen to us — waiting for man to speak? He hears us at all times, but

particularly now. Our heart is ready and we have made up our minds to purify ourselves. He hears us and will not disregard the petition of a “humble and contrite heart.” (Christ is passing by, 57)

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