

Dear Friends in Christ, in his Lenten reflection for 2018, Pope Francis reminds us that the season of Lent is “a sacramental sign of our conversion,” which God offers us in preparation for the season of Easter. It is a wonderful time during which a person can look within the depths of his/her heart in order to discern what requires changing. We often need to recalibrate or re-orientate ourselves after having been led astray by various “false prophets” within our lives.

How do these false prophets manifest themselves? According to the Holy Father, “They can appear as ‘snake charmers’, who manipulate human emotions in order to enslave others and lead them where they would have them go. How many of God’s children are mesmerized by momentary pleasures, mistaking them for true happiness! How many men and women live entranced by the dream of wealth, which only makes them slaves to profit and petty interests! How many go through life believing that they are sufficient unto themselves, and end up entrapped by loneliness!...

False prophets can also be ‘charlatans’, who offer easy and immediate solutions to suffering that soon prove utterly useless. How many young people are taken in by the panacea of drugs, of disposable relationships, of easy but dishonest gains! How many more are ensnared in a thoroughly ‘virtual’ existence, in which relationships appear quick and straightforward, only to prove meaningless! These swindlers, in peddling things that have no real value, rob people of all that is most precious: dignity, freedom and the ability to love. They appeal to our vanity, our trust in appearances, but in the end they only make fools of us. Nor should we be surprised. In order to confound the human heart, the devil, who is ‘a liar and the father of lies’ (Jn 8:44), has always presented evil as good, falsehood as truth. That is why each of us is called to peer into our heart to see if we are falling prey to the lies of these false prophets. We must learn to look closely, beneath the surface, and to recognize what leaves a good and lasting mark on our hearts, because it comes from God and is truly for our benefit.” As we continue our Lenten journey, let us walk it with great resolve and enthusiasm. Let us ask the Lord to send forth His Holy Spirit upon us and the gifts of wisdom and understanding so that we may uncover whatever “false prophets” might be leading us away from God and His love.

*Pax Christi, Fr. Thomas*