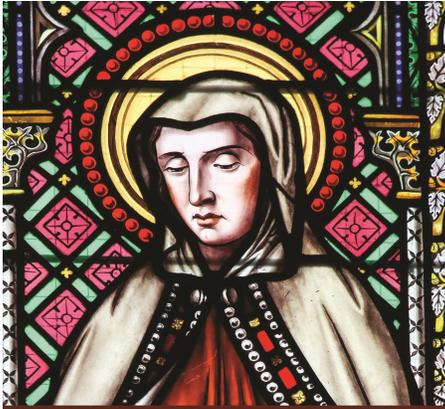


FROM FR. JASON



St. Frances
OF ROME
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Dear Brothers and Sisters,

In this Lenten time, as we walk together rediscovering the immense gift of our Baptism, the Church places before us on March 9 the figure of St. Frances of Rome, a woman who lived the faith not by fleeing from the world, but by allowing Christ to transform her daily life, her marriage, her family, and her home, making it a true domestic church, a sign of communion.

Frances was born in Rome into a noble family, and from her childhood she felt the call to give herself totally to the Lord. She desired to enter religious life, to consecrate herself in a convent, but her parents arranged her marriage at a very young age. How many of us have experienced this clash: our own plans against what life, what the Lord permits through circumstances, through obedience to parents, to the Church?

Frances suffered greatly. She fell ill, almost to death, because her heart resisted. But in that moment of trial, the Lord spoke to her: she understood that her vocation was not to escape marriage and family, but to live holiness right there, in the midst of the world, in the concreteness of daily duties. She accepted her husband Lorenzo, she became a wife, a mother of three children, and she discovered that God was calling her precisely through that state of life to love with a greater freedom, a greater surrender.

In her home she opened the doors to the poor, to the sick, during times of famine and plague. She gave everything: food, clothes, and even the family's resources, trusting that the Lord would provide. And He always did, in miraculous ways. She lived the cross: for example, the death of children and the humiliation of her husband's capture in war. Yet she never lost faith; she never stopped seeing in every suffering the face of Christ crucified, who calls us to love without measure.

After her husband's death, Frances could finally live more fully the charism the Lord had given her: she founded, with other women, the Oblates of Tor de' Specchi, a community of consecrated women living in the world, dedicated to prayer and service to the poor, without leaving their ordinary life. For years she had seen her guardian angel visibly accompanying her, guiding her steps in the dark streets of Rome at night. The angel was a sign of God's constant presence, even in the midst of family chaos, social duties, the apostolate among the marginalized.

Brothers and sisters, what does St. Frances say to us today? She shows us that Baptism is not an abstract idea: it is a call to live as new men and women right where we are. In marriage, which so often is wounded by selfishness, by loneliness, by the destruction of families in our society, she shows us that Christ can rebuild communion. In the family, where children are raised, where husbands and wives must forgive each other daily, she shows us that holiness is possible through forgiveness, through service, through opening the home to others. The family is not a private affair; it is called to be a community that proclaims the Gospel through love and unity. "By this all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." Frances lived this: her home became a sign for the poor, for the Church, for Rome.

During this Lent, let us ask the Lord, through the intercession of St. Frances of Rome, to convert our hearts. Let us allow Him to heal our resistances, our fears in living the faith in the midst of the world. Let us rediscover in our families the power of Baptism: to die to ourselves so that Christ may live in us, making us credible witnesses of His Resurrection.

Peace,