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Benedict XVI: Don't Lose the Opportunities God Gives

Says a Return to Love Must Be Immediate

ROME, MARCH 7, 2010 ([Zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org)).- God's mercy is patient, but we should not let pass by the opportunities he gives us, says Benedict XVI.

The Pope made this reflection today when he celebrated Sunday Mass at one of the parishes of Rome, San Giovanni della Croce in Colle Salario.

The Holy Father's homily drew Lenten lessons of conversion from the Gospel reading.

"During Lent each of us is invited by God to bring about a change in our lives, thinking and living according to the Gospel, correcting something in our way of praying, of acting, of working and in our relations with others," he said.

The Pontiff affirmed that Jesus makes this appeal to us because "he is concerned about our good, our happiness, our salvation."

Christ's appeal, he continued, must be answered with "a sincere interior effort, asking him to make us understand those particular things about us that we need to change."

Not enough

Benedict XVI said the conclusion of the this Sunday's Gospel -- wherein Christ recounts the parable of the fig tree that does not bear fruit -- shows the "necessity and the urgency of the return to God, the renewal of life according to God's will."

He observed: "The dialogue that develops between the owner and the gardener manifests, on one hand, God's mercy, which is patient and allows man, all of us, time for conversion; and, on the other hand, the necessity of immediately making the interior and exterior changes of life so as not to lose the opportunities that God's mercy offers us to overcome our spiritual laziness and to return God's love with our filial love."

The Pontiff noted that St. Paul in his first letter to the Corinthians similarly affirms that conversion is necessary.

"It is not enough to be baptized and be nourished at the same Eucharistic meal," he said, "if one does not live as a Christian and is not attentive to the signs from the Lord."

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