



# A SLOW-MOVING BIKE AND A RACE

## Lenten Reflection

**T**hat's how I think Lent begins: a heavily-burdened person on a slow-moving bike. The burdens are those we've accumulated during the year: spiritual and physical exhaustion, plus a lot of anxieties. What kind of anxieties? Well, every person has his/her own. For example, the fear of losing one's job. Of not being good parents. Of not being fervent religious.

I don't know if the world can be divided into "good" and "bad" people, but what is sure is that at the end of the day we are all in the same boat: the boat of worry, to be precise.

Of all the burdens human beings have been steadily accumulating since leaving the Garden of Eden, fear is the heaviest to bear, the most dishuman, because we were not created to tremble with anxiety.

The devil, who divides, has sent an earthquake rumbling across the continent of Hope, making us believe that no matter where we are God is always somewhere else. But with the eyes of Easter, we discover that the continent of Hope is solid and God is never far from any of us.

Does God know we are afraid? Yes. And his every meeting with human beings is characterized by the words, "Don't be afraid": "Don't be afraid, Mary, because you have found favor with God." "Don't be afraid, Zechariah. Your prayer has been heard." "Joseph, son of David, don't be afraid to take Mary as your wife." "It is I! Don't be afraid!" "Why were you frightened? Do you still lack faith?" "Have courage! It is I. Don't be afraid."

"Have courage" and "don't be afraid": words that are able to penetrate distracted hearts in this noisy era in which many people are desperately seeking God. John Paul II saw this very clearly and his reassuring words, "Don't be afraid," put him in instant tune with the world, offering people the "vaccine" against every kind of desperation.

When we were children, our catechism teachers helped us begin Lent with a raft of good resolutions. And now that we are adults? We begin Lent without catechism teachers, without words and without resolutions. We begin the season on a slow-moving bike but we can end it like John on his way to the tomb of Jesus—running. Because Easter transforms us. When? When we get off our bike and start to run? When we lay down our burdens and once again experience what it means to be free and light? How do we attain this miracle of freedom? For the disciples on the way to Emmaus, it happened at a specific moment: the breaking of the Bread. I have to find the right moment in my life and in my Lenten journey so as to begin my own race.

*Rosario Carello*