



# A Garden Flourishing in Times of Trial: A Reflection on the Lenten Letter 2025 From Fr. Tomaž Mavrič, CM.

Humans have a natural tendency to seek the meaning of life in comfort, stability and control. However, it is the most difficult trials that test the authenticity of our faith and reveal to what extent we have learned to trust in God. When we find ourselves in extreme situations of suffering, when all seems lost and we feel completely abandoned, the question arises: Where is God?

Throughout history, many have experienced the profound sense of helplessness in the midst of adversity, but they have also discovered that it is precisely in those moments that God is most present. Although at first glance suffering seems contrary to the will of a loving God, in the lives of many saints and believers we find the same witness: in the darkness of trials, the soul can blossom with an unknown beauty.

St. Vincent de Paul, a man who devoted his life to the poor and abandoned, lived an experience of spiritual transformation that led him to cultivate within himself a garden with five beautiful flowers: simplicity, humility, meekness, mortification and zeal for the salvation of souls. These five virtues, which he himself called “the five cleanest stones,” did not arise from comfort or success, but from an encounter with Christ in the midst of daily struggle and self-giving.

## Five flowers in the garden of the soul

Each of these virtues can help us understand the meaning of suffering and how we can transform our trials into a road to God.

- **Simplicity** invites us to live truthfully, without masks or double intentions, presenting ourselves before God and others as we are. In times of trial, simplicity helps us not to make ourselves complicated with unnecessary explanations or justifications and reminds us that God loves us just as we are.
- **Humility** teaches us that we are not all-powerful or self-sufficient. In adversity, we discover our limits and understand that only in God do we find true strength. Learning to depend on Him is an act of profound humility.
- **Meekness** helps us to face difficulties without resentment or inner violence. When we suffer, it is easy to be filled with bitterness or despair, but meekness allows us to accept God’s will with confidence and peace.
- **Mortification** invites us to detach ourselves from what binds us to this world in a disordered way. In difficult times, we are called to renounce the superficial and to focus our lives on what is essential: our relationship with God and our love for others.
- **Zeal for the salvation of souls** impels us not to remain enclosed in our own pain, but to transform our suffering into a living witness of faith and dedication.



These five virtues are the means to face any trial, transforming pain into a path of spiritual growth.

## From despair to mystical experience

Despair is a real temptation when we face suffering. However, if we open our hearts to God, we can experience an inner transformation that leads us to discover his presence in the midst of trials. As expressed by some believers who have gone through extreme situations, there is a moment when faith is no longer just words but becomes a real, living experience.

Jesus did not promise us a life without suffering, but he did assure us that he would be with us until the end of the world. In adversity, his voice is present in the depths of our hearts, guiding us along a path of light. In prayer, in communion with others, in contemplation of creation, we can discover that God is there, speaking to us and sustaining us.

## Lent: a time to flourish

Lent is a privileged time to reflect on the meaning of our life and our relationship with God. We are invited to review our priorities, to divest ourselves of what distances us from Him and to strengthen our spirit to face trials with faith.

This season challenges us to ask ourselves: What are the five flowers blooming in my inner garden? Am I cultivating simplicity, humility, meekness, mortification and zeal for the salvation of souls? Am I willing to let God transform my suffering into an experience of encounter with Him?

God calls us to move from desolation to life, to allow our inner garden to flourish even in the midst of trials. May we open ourselves to his grace this Lent, so that when Easter arrives, we may rise with Christ and see how in our hearts the most beautiful flowers ever imagined have been born.

## Prayer

Lord,  
You who never forsake us,  
teach us to trust in your presence,  
to discover beauty in the midst of trial,  
and to cultivate in our hearts the flowers  
that bring us closer to you.

Grant that, even in suffering,  
we may experience the peace that only you can give,  
and that our faith may be strengthened to bring light  
to those who are going through difficult times.

Amen.



## Questions for personal and group reflection:

1. What have been the most difficult moments in your life and how have they transformed you?
2. Have you ever felt abandoned by God, and how did you find his presence in the midst of the trial?
3. In what ways can you cultivate in your life the five flowers mentioned above (simplicity, humility, meekness, mortification and zeal for salvation)?
4. What situations have compelled you to step out of your comfort zone and rethink your faith?
5. How do you understand the idea that trials can be an opportunity to experience God in a deeper way?
6. What are the “stones of David” in your life that help you overcome spiritual and personal challenges?
7. What role does community play in strengthening faith during difficult times?
8. How can you help others discover the beauty of their “inner garden” in the midst of their difficulties?
9. What teachings of St. Vincent de Paul can inspire you to live this Lent more deeply?
10. How can you make this Lent a time of authentic conversion and growth in committed love?