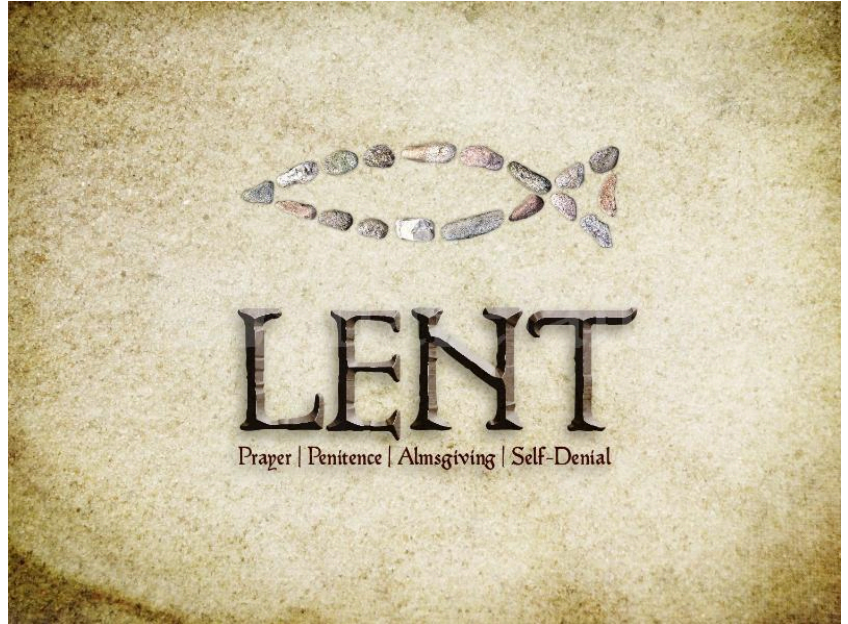


Lent – A Season of Self-Denial and Self-Renewal

We are gifted with one more Season of Lent in our life-time in this pilgrim land. It is a time given by the Lord in order to repair our past sinful ways through a life of deeper prayer, fasting, penance and alms-giving. By controlling the passions of our body,



we can free our souls for deeper prayer. By refraining from eating, we can set aside food or money that we can give to the poor and needy. The Church is not forcing us to practice these spiritual exercises, but it is intended to bring about a revival in our relationship to God and to our fellow beings. It is a time of self-denial and self-renewal. We can fast not only from food, but also from television serials, from idle talk and gossip, from judging others, from telling lies, from indulging in lustful passions...and the like. Our fasting indicates or symbioses our decision to give up the 'dead works in us so that we may serve the living God' (Heb.9.14).

We can see in the Old Testament and New Testament examples of fasting and prayer when people became aware of their sins against God or when they needed to get guidance and strength from God. 40 days of fasting and prayer reminds us of the 40 days of flood in Noah's time (Gen.17), 40-year journey of the Israelites in the desert to the promised land (Exodus), Moses' 40 days on the mountain with God (Ex. 34.28), King David's

rule for 40 years, 40 days of journey of prophet Elijah to reach Mount Horeb, (1 Kg. 19), 40 days of fasting and penance of the people of Nineveh (Jon. 3.4-10) and Jesus' fasting and prayer for 40 days in the desert (Mt. 4. 1-10). It will only do good if we spend little time every day reflectively going through these Scriptures in order to understand the significance of these incidents.

God overlooks our times of ignorance, 'but now he calls on all people to change their ways' (Acts. 17.30). "He allows those who repent to return; he comforts those whose hopes are fading" (Sirach. 17.24). In the Eastern Rite Catholic Churches, the Liturgy of Mass ends thus: 'We do not know whether we will come again for the celebration of Mass". Yes, our life is so fragile and indefinite. Any moment we can be knocked down by a vehicle, or get a paralysis or a heart attack...; thus the door opens before me to say good bye to this earthly life. Let us not forget the truth that we are living in the End Times; 'in the time of Revelation' as Mother Mary revealed to Sr. Lucy, the Seer of Fatima. God, in his goodness and kindness has given us one more time of grace in order to repair the damages and afflictions in our lives and to restore our original 'God-like image' in us (Gen.1.26,27). Thus our eternal life in the kingdom of God can be guaranteed. But we need to cooperate with his grace. The Holy Spirit reminds us through St. Paul: "Are you taking advantage of God and his infinite goodness, patience and understanding, and do you not recognize that his kindness is meant to lead you to conversion?" (Rom. 2.4)

Prayer: God of mercy and compassion, we come to you seeking your pardon for our iniquities. Send your Holy Spirit upon us and convict us of all that is not of your kingdom. We place our lives in your hands and seek your will in everything. Let this Lenten Season be a season of complete transformation of our lives. Sweet Holy Spirit of God, touch our hearts and set us on fire for love of you.

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