

Renewal of our Covenant with God in Christ

 *Transportation of the Ark of the Covenant Containing the Tablets of the Law" Luigi Ademollo – 1816*

The Church has entered into the third week of Lent, reminding us of our Covenant Relationship with God. "I am the Lord your God", says the Lord God who brought His people out from the slavery of Egypt. Then in order to lead His people to the promised land, Canaan, where milk and honey would flow (symbolic of God's blessings), God gives the Ten Commandments to His people; thereby they can prove their loyalty and faithfulness to the Covenant Relationship and come out victorious. (We have reflected on the significance of Covenant Relationship in the article on the Page Gospel in June 2011.

Let us on this Lenten Season declare once more our commitment to the God of the Covenant- in the Old Testament, and in the New Testament where Jesus came as the Lord of the New Covenant. (He sealed the New Covenant with His blood: "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood". Lk 22. 20). When a rich young man came to Jesus and asked "what shall I do to inherit the kingdom of God, Jesus said: "Obey the commandments" (Mt.19.17). So Jesus made it clear that the commandments are given to us like sign posts, following which we reach our eternal home.

Reflecting on Ex. 20.1-17, let us see our lives in the mirror of the Word of God.

- Do I give more importance in my life to God than anybody or anything? OR *Do I prefer more, a person, a thing, an ideology, my status, good namemore than God?* "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and

with all your soul, and with all your mind" (Mt.22.37)

- Do I give due reverence to the name of God? Or *do I misuse His name for my own selfish motives, manipulations ...?*
- Do I keep the Sabbath day holy and give prime importance to attending the Holy Mass and other spiritual pursuits? OR *do I keep that day like any other day, busy with my work, business, hobbies and picnics, spending most of the time on recreations on TV and computer? God assures His blessings "If you refrain from trampling the Sabbath, from pursuing your own interests on my holy day; if you call the Sabbath a delight and the holy day of the Lord honourable; if you honour it, not going your own ways, serving your own interests, or pursuing your own affairs" (Is. 58.13).*
- Do I honour and obey my parents, respecting the Covenant Directive of the Lord? Lawful authorities of the Church **"With all your heart honour your father, and do not forget the birth pangs of your mother. Remember that it was of your parents you were born; how can you repay what they have given to you? (Sir. 7.27,28) Also see Sir.3. 1-16; Eph. 6.1-3).** OR *do I follow the irreverent, secular attitude of declaring independence, disrespecting and rebelling against the parents?*
- Do I give love and joy to people by respecting them? OR *do I 'kill' the peace of mind, good name, fortune of others through my word or deed? Am I a murderer by hating my brethren (cfr.1. Jn. 3.15), or by killing the unborn in the womb through abortion or pill?*
- Do I consider my call to holiness a serious commandment, coming from God, my Creator? **"This is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from fornication; that each one of you know how to control your own body in holiness and honour, not with lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God; that no one wrong or exploit a brother or sister in this matter."** (1.Thess. 4.3-6). How far am I trying to keep myself holy and also

help others to be holy, through my words, behaviour, dress pattern, life style? OR *Do I take the secular rule and culture or the life style of the majority as a defence for my breaking of this Directive of God? (by exhibitionism, civil marriage without sacramental marriage, cohabitation, premarital sex, adultery, rape, prostitution, gay marriage and the like)* “The women should dress themselves modestly and decently in suitable clothing” (1.Tim. 2.9). Also see Mt.18.6,7)

- Do I keep up honesty and straightforwardness in my dealings with others at home, in the place of study and work, in the church? OR *do I cheat, lie and manipulate for profit or to accomplish one's own plans?* **“You shall not follow a majority in wrongdoing?”** (Ex. 23.2).
- Do I give respect and honour to others as an image of God, and brother and sister in Christ Or *do I put down the good name of others by criticising, judging, accusing, ridiculing, condemning and bearing false witness? Do I show partiality between people because of colour, sex, race, economic status, and the like?*
- Am I satisfied with the one with whom God has joined me, in the Sacrament of Marriage? May you rejoice in the wife of your youth (Prov. 5.18), Do not let anyone be faithless to the wife of his youth (Mal.2.15)) Or do I covet other's *partner?*
- Am I satisfied with the things I have? Or *do I covet others' things and positions? Am I jealous of others who have things which I do not have?* **“Contentment with what you have is a great gain ... (1 Tim 6.6)**

For the modern man, **obeying these commandments of God** is considered *foolish according to the world*, but they are the wisdom of God. Modern man may consider obeying God and His commandments as *weakness*, but they make us strong and fit enough to enter the kingdom of God. **“For God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than**

human strength.”(1 Cor.1.25)

The Church also brings to our attention the ‘cleansing of the temple’ by Jesus. (Jn.2.13-20). **We are the temple of the Holy Spirit.** As Jesus chased the ‘unwanted elements’ which were not fitting to the holiness of the house of God, *let us also try to cleanse us from all the unwanted elements from our life* . The significance of fasting and abstinence is nothing other than this ‘giving up’ of *all dead works in us* ; giving up a good thing to attain a spiritual goal. So we need to fast not only from certain food and drink, but also to *fast from our anger, bitterness, rebellion, lust, pride, greed, self-righteousness and the like which are not fitting us*, because we are the temple of the Holy Spirit. It is for each one of us to recognise, chase out all that is not worthy of a Christian.

“I urge to live a life worthy of your calling you have received” (Eph. 4.1).

And the promise of God **“I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people”** (Jer.31.33; Heb.10.16) ; **“I will be your father, and you shall be my sons and daughters”** (2 Cor.6.18) will be fulfilled with regard to our lives.

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