

INTRODUCTION

We continue this week our Lenten journey, 40 days in the desert with Jesus. It is a period of penance that must be related to the inner conversion. We are encouraged to return to God with our whole heart as the bible says "Return to me with your whole heart, with fasting and weeping, and mourning; rend your hearts, not your garments." We are reminded of the greatness of our vocation --- to be ambassadors of Christ. We experience how God is calling us to live as his own people -- how JESUS is leading us through the desert so that we are able to listen HIS voice asking the exclusivity of our hearts to him. What is the place of God in our hearts? Does he occupy first place in us? Is he the treasure in our hearts? This is very vital because **whatever our treasure is, there are our hearts too.**

Walking the journey of Lent is a call to experience how God purifies the deepest intentions of our hearts so that we can all belong exclusively to HIM as HIS people chosen for his own. We are given three timeless ways to live out our salvation and to guide us on our Lenten journey --- almsgiving, prayer and fasting which in some ways help purify the fundamental relationships with others. Jesus speaks clearly and tells us not to give alms in the sight of others --- **"Keep your deeds of mercy secret so that your Father who sees in secret will repay you."**

In prayer Jesus advises us: **"Go to your room, close the door, and pray to your Father in private. Then your Father, who sees what no man sees, will repay you."** On fasting, our LORD suggests, **"When you fast, to see to it that you groom your hair and wash your**

face! In that way no one can see you fasting but your Father who is hidden; and your Father who sees what is hidden will repay you."

Let us try to learn from Jesus as we enter into this period of Lent. He went to the desert for us and for our salvation. He was not simply tempted, but in every way, and he overcome. Let us ask for the grace of a radical dependency on God, to grow in trust, and for the strength to be vigilant in the Lenten battle in the desert. Let us make good use of these tried and tested weapons -- prayer, fasting and almsgiving and to do it with a smile.

MONDAY

God is calling us to live as his own people.

"On this day, Yahweh, your God, commands you to fulfill these norms and these commandments. Obey them now and put them into practice with all your heart and with all your soul. Today Yahweh has declared observing his norms, his commandments and his laws, and listening to his voice. Today, Yahweh has declared that you will be his very own people even as he has promised you, and you must obey all his commandments. He, for his part, will give you honor, renown and glory, and set you high above all the nations he has made, and you will become a nation consecrated to Yahweh, your God, as he has declared."

(Deuteronomy 26: 16-19)

Our Lord is ever faithful; in calling us to live the life that HE has designed for us --- a life of service, humble surrender to HIS WILL, So we need to come at the foot of the cross to ask for guidance. As Mathew had said, "Ask and you will receive, seek and you will find; knock and

the door will be opened. So, do to others whatever you would that others do to you: there you have the Law and the Prophets." Today, in silence, listen to the call of the LORD. What does GOD want you to do?

TUESDAY

He is leading us through the desert

Then Jesus was led by the Spirit out into the desert to be put to the test by the devil. ² He fasted for forty days and forty nights, after which he was hungry, ³ and the tester came and said to him, 'If you are Son of God, tell these stones to turn into loaves.' ⁴ But he replied, 'Scripture says: Human beings live not on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.' ⁵ The devil then took him to the holy city and set him on the parapet of the Temple. ⁶ 'If you are Son of God,' he said, 'throw yourself down; for scripture says: He has given his angels orders about you, and they will carry you in their arms in case you trip over a stone.' ⁷ Jesus said to him, 'Scripture also says: Do not put the Lord your God to the test.' ⁸ Next, taking him to a very high mountain, the devil showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendour. ⁹ And he said to him, 'I will give you all these, if you fall at my feet and do me homage.' ¹⁰ Then Jesus replied, 'Away with you, Satan! For scripture says: The Lord your God is the one to whom you must do homage, him alone you must serve.' ¹¹ Then the devil left him, and suddenly angels appeared and looked after him. **(Matthew 4:1-11)**

Jesus went to the desert for our salvation. If you faithfully follow Jesus as you carry your cross on the narrow road, you too will be led through the desert.

Prayer will sustain us and help us endure the journey. As St. Aphonsus Ligouri once said: "God knows how useful it is to be obliged to pray, in order to keep us humble, and to exercise our confidence; and he therefore permits us to be assaulted by enemies too mighty to be overcome by our own strength, that by prayer we may obtain from his mercy aid to resist them." Bend your knees and bow your head today. Surrender to the Father's Will and PRAY. May the LORD give you the needed courage and strength as you go through the desert --- of pain, tribulations and sorrows of life.

WEDNESDAY

Listen to him

⁵ He was still speaking when suddenly a bright cloud covered them with shadow, and suddenly from the cloud there came a voice which said, 'This is my Son, the Beloved; he enjoys my favour. Listen to him.' ⁶ When they heard this, the disciples fell on their faces, overcome with fear. ⁷ But Jesus came up and touched them, saying, 'Stand up, do not be afraid.' ⁸ And when they raised their eyes they saw no one but Jesus. "When you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, who love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on street corners so that others may see them. Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you pray, go to your inner room, close the door, and pray to your Father in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will repay you. **(Matthew 17:5-8)**

Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI in one of his Lenten passages made a comment on the Lord's transfiguration which said that " it is the invitation to

take a distance from the noisiness of everyday life in order to immerse oneself in God's presence. He desires to hand down to us, each day, a Word that penetrates the depths of our spirit, where we discern good from evil, reinforcing our will to follow the Lord."

"Get up; don't be afraid as Jesus had said. We need to listen to those words of reassurance from the Lord in our struggles and challenges. Mother Teresa of Calcutta once said "The good you do today, will often be forgotten. Do good anyway. Give the best you have, and it will never be enough. Give your best anyway. In the final analysis, it is between you and God. It was never between you and them anyway." Listen to Jesus today and do not be afraid to go against the current. Be transfigured in the ways of the WORD.

THURSDAY

Exclusive for him

Yahweh said to Abram, 'Leave your country, your kindred and your father's house for a country which I shall show you; ² and I shall make you a great nation, I shall bless you and make your name famous; you are to be a blessing! ³ I shall bless those who bless you, and shall curse those who curse you, and all clans on earth will bless themselves by you.' ⁴ So Abram went as Yahweh told him, and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he left Haran. **(Genesis 12:1-4)**

In 2002, Pope John Paul II said "Because we live in a sinful world, Lent itself must become a kind of separation. We are called to leave behind our old ways of sin, which make our lives sterile and condemn us to spiritual death. Yet

these sinful ways are often so deeply rooted in our lives that it is painful to leave them behind and set out for the land of blessing which God promises. This repentance is difficult; but it is the price that must be paid if we are to receive the blessing which the Father promises to those who listen to the voice of Jesus."

In this season of Lent, Jesus invites us to be exclusive for HIM --- to surrender our very being to the WORD. With this, we need to leave behind our greed, selfishness, anger, envy, lust and many others evil wrongdoing in order to follow HIM. Are you courageous enough to do so?

FRIDAY

The treasure in our hearts

¹⁹ Do not store up treasures for yourselves on earth, where moth and woodworm destroy them and thieves can break in and steal. ²⁰ But store up treasures for yourselves in heaven, where neither moth nor woodworm destroys them and thieves cannot break in and steal. ²¹ For wherever your treasure is there will your heart be too.

(Matthew 6:19-21)

An old tale was once told of a saint who was at the wake of a very rich man. The saint noticed that the rich man's heart was missing. He told the servants to look for the rich man's treasure box. They opened the said box and was very surprised to see that the rich man's heart was inside the treasure box. What are the things on which we spend our energies, about which we dream and feel proud? Which riches do we keep safe at home? Which are the beloved riches do we keep safe in our memory for the enjoyment of reclaiming

them? St. Therese of Avila once said, "God alone will suffice." Does your whole being say that Jesus is the greatest treasure? Ponder on it today.

SATURDAY

Purifying what is within

"Have mercy on me, O God, in your constant love. In your great compassion, blot out my sin. Wash me thoroughly of my guilt; cleanse me of evil for I acknowledge my wrongdoings and I have my sins ever in mind. Against you alone have I sinned; what is evil in your sight I have done. Create in me, O God, a pure heart; give me a new and upright spirit. Do not cast me out of your presence nor take your Holy Spirit from me. Give me again the joy of your salvation and sustain me with a willing spirit. O Lord, open my lips, and I will declare your praise."

(Psalm 51:3-6, 12-14, 17)

The psalmist proclaims his hope. Purify of heart is not an impossible dream since beyond all evil, there is GOD's forgiveness --- beyond all evil forces. There is the Power of God who created us by giving us his spirit. This can recreate and renew humans. The only requirement is that we acknowledge our sinfulness. During this Lenten season, find time to partake of the sacraments that Jesus gives us. May it purify you on what is within.

SUNDAY READINGS

2nd Sunday of Lent.

First Reading –Genesis 12:1-4

Psalm – Psalm 33:4-22

Second reading – 2 Timothy 1:8-10

Gospel – Matthew 17:1-9

Verbum Dei

GUIDELINES FOR PRAYER

"For your heart will always be where your riches are."

(Luke 12:34)

March 10-16, 2014



Objective of the week:

- To be able to listen from God asking us the exclusivity of our heart for him.
- To know in our heart what place God has in us.
- To experience purification of the heart as we walk this journey of lent.