

## **'LENT' AT 'LENGTH'**

### **(An Introspection and Guide in Preparation for Easter)**

“Who am I?”

I am one who is baptised in Christ, called by name while yet in my mother’s womb, God’s chosen one. YES! I am His creation.

Then why am I so consumed by daily routines – in a rut, running a never-ending race? Why is there no real fulfilment? Why, at the end of the day, do I feel so incomplete? What is my purpose in all this?

Perhaps, I need to think about this at LEN(G)T(H), and what GOD wants for me. This will give me the right direction on how to live: for myself, for others, for HIM. I am, after all, God’s gift, and what I make of that gift, is my gift to God!

All of us lose our way, and need to find the way back; hurt, and need time to heal; thirst, and need to be refreshed. And this is why the Church gives us LENT – to be able to reflect at LENGTH! We have 40 days from Ash Wednesday to the Saturday before Easter, for our inner healing and renewal. And no matter how burned-out we may feel, if we truly make this a time for personal introspection and change, we will be prepared – after walking with Christ from Gethsemane to the Cross - to meet our risen Saviour with renewed minds and hearts.

Lent is the journey which will take us back to our roots - children of God - through **Prayer**, **Fasting** and **Almsgiving**.

#### **PRAYER**

***“Keep trusting God, never stop praying.” (Proverbs 3:5-6)***

Prayer is a way of freely communicating with God. The way one talks with one’s best friend, opening up without any hesitation and with confidence, knowing that you will get a patient hearing! Even better, no phonenumber, wi-fi or 4G needed; connection is instant and free, and available 24x7. And when you pray, “...go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.” (Mt 6:6)

When you pray, remember to lift up your family, friends, community, city, country, leaders, all those who serve. Include those who, perhaps, have no one to pray for them. And also keep in mind God’s wonderful Creation – the ecosystem which sustains life. If you make it a habit to spend time, in a quiet place, before prayer, reflecting on all that God has done for you, and gathering your thoughts on what you need to pray for, you will find that your prayer life bears abundant fruit.

## **FASTING**

*“Being unwanted, unloved, uncared for, forgotten by everybody is a much greater hunger, a much greater poverty than the person who has nothing to eat.” (St Teresa of Calcutta)*

Is cutting down on non-vegetarian food, tea, coffee, alcohol, smoking or a one-time meal really going to benefit anyone? Perhaps not! On the other hand, avoiding gossip, staying off Social Media (*Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat*, etc.), and refraining from endless browsing, could free up more time to spend with God and family. Sacrificing daily soaps, or a movie/series on Netflix, Amazon Prime, Hotstar, Sony Live, etc. can be substituted with more meaningful engagement in real-time social outreach and sharing.

Fasting from all that takes us away from our true purpose will help us to focus on who we are and what we could become – the builders of God’s Kingdom in the here and now.

## **ALMSGIVING/AID**

*“But when you give alms, let not your left hand know what your right hand does.” (Matthew 6:3).*

Almsgiving as it is sometimes practised – charity without love – will perpetuate poverty. Not just physical poverty, but spiritual poverty as well. When almsgiving is a gift of self – time, talent, sharing of resources without counting the cost – it restores the marginalised to society as people worthy of respect. We can reach out first within our families, and then to those who need our help, and in so doing, set in motion an ever-widening circle of love. And don’t wait for others to show the way; step out of your comfort zone to meet Christ in “the least of His brothers and sisters” in all humility, as Christ did.

## **Questions for Reflection**

- No time? Perhaps I need to rethink my priorities?
- When people look at me, do they see a reflection of Jesus?
- Do I readily reach out to my family members and those whom I encounter in my everyday life?
- How can we live the Gospel?

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