



LENTEN REFLECTIONS



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SEASON OF LENT

"We beseech you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God".

-- 2 Cor 5:20-21

As we start the season of Lent, it is a time when we return to the Father's embrace. It is a time to fast from discontent, anger, bitterness, self-concern, despair, guilt, suspicion and laziness and it is a time to feast on gratitude, forgiveness, compassion, hope, truth, commitment, patience and the mercy of God..



OUR LENTEN OBSERVANCES

Lent is a Time for Prayer:

Pray without ceasing, for this is the will of God! Prayer is nothing but silent communion with God. By prayer, we acknowledge God's Power and Goodness, and our own neediness and dependence. Lent is an excellent time for drawing ourselves closer to God, and to make reparation for the many times we have neglected Him in our lives. Praying can take many forms - the simple heartfelt prayer or the more structured form of praying during Lent, such as meditating on the Stations of the Cross, or reciting the Litany of the Passion, saying the Rosary, etc. Whatever, Lent offers us so many opportunities, both individually as well as communally, to grow in our faith. The hope is to emerge at Easter, renewed in the image of Jesus.

Lent is a Time for Fasting:

We always think of the word fasting in connection with Lent. Lent has always meant denying ourselves the unnecessary pleasures of life, of denying the things we can do without. We fast to remind ourselves that we have to be in control of ourselves and that no 'thing' should ever dominate our lives. Fasting is also a way of praying and praising the Lord. Our fast becomes a way of saying that the Lord is more important than anything else for us. We love Him more than anything else and we therefore fast to honour Him. Fasting is also medicinal because it restores good health to parts of our spirit and body that are troubled or sick. The gossip tries to be quiet, the glutton practices moderation and the lazy become more motivated. Fasting brings us closer to the poor and suffering because in a small way we experience what the majority of our brothers and sisters are always living with: the pangs of hunger, pain and deprivation. However, we must be sure that the fast we choose should result in making us more loving and more like Jesus, because, otherwise it is a waste of time.

Lent is a Time for Feasting:

Lent is a time of goodness and a time to be lavish in sharing the gifts of the Spirit with ourselves and the world. We should not be distracted by the colour of the Lenten purple because Lent is also a season of passion and the renewal of our love with the great Love itself. The great feast of Lent grows from our feasting on the Love of God and it grows into a feast of gratitude as our hearts praise the Lord for all the blessings in our lives. We feast on forgiveness as we forgive ourselves and all who have hurt us. We feast on compassion as we have a new heart for the suffering and pain of the human family. We feast on hope because we believe in the goodness of our world and the goodness of people. We feast on commitment as we say 'yes' to the Lord and to the call He has given to us. We feast in sharing the truth of Jesus as we give our lives as Jesus did for what is just and right. We feast on patience because it can never be an excuse for laziness and indifference, but a real acceptance of our weakness and the need to believe in ourselves. And lastly, we feast on the great mercy of God, whose very being is to love and forgive and who will never withdraw His promise or His invitation to the abundant Feast of Life.

Lent is a Time for Almsgiving:

We hear about almsgiving more frequently during Lent, but it is a practice that belongs in our lives throughout the year! In Lent, however, it becomes a worthy companion to holy and spiritual fasting. It embraces under the single name of mercy, many excellent works of devotion. The angels sang: *Glory to God in the highest, and peace to His people on earth.* The person who shows love and compassion to those in any kind of affliction is blessed, not only with the virtue of goodwill but also with the gift of peace. Suggested forms of almsgiving include: giving a small portion of your income to charitable organisations and people in need; giving regularly; giving anonymously and besides the giving of financial support, giving time and talent to others. Once developed during the season of Lent, the practice of almsgiving will become an important part of our life. It will connect us to the wider human community, and reaffirm our faith in God's Providence.

Lent is a Time of Conversion:

At the Easter Vigil, we will make our profession of Faith. From the start of the season of Lent till Easter, we undergo the process of change in our lives to become another Christ. Our relationship with Jesus must start growing and we then learn what it means to change for the Lord. We begin to understand the love of God and we are able to respond to God's call. This conversion must force us to reflect on our own faith, it must challenge us to look into our hearts and to question ourselves about how we have used the gifts that this loving God has given us. What did I do to make the world a better place? How much better is my family or my Church because of me? Conversion is not about changing our religion, it is about us becoming better Christians, it is about accepting and living all the wonderful gifts that our Lord has already given us because there is nothing new the Lord has to give us, but what is important for us is living and using what He has already given us for ourselves as well as for others.

Lent is a Time for Reconciliation:

In a dangerously divided world, the Christian Gospel speaks of RECONCILIATION, with God, and with each other. "God has reconciled us to Him through Christ, and He has enlisted us in this service of reconciliation" (2 Cor 5:18). With reconciliation, all separation and loneliness are gone. We are united with God. We, the branches, are connected to Jesus the vine. We abide in Christ and He abides in us. The sacrament of reconciliation (confession) is for the faithful "the ordinary way of obtaining forgiveness and the remission of serious sins committed after Baptism." Through this sacrament, we are once again happily united to God. All members of the Catholic Faithful are encouraged to avail themselves of the sacrament of reconciliation (confession) all through the year and especially during Lent, since it is a true encounter with the loving, forgiving Saviour, Who takes away the burden of our sin, forgives our failing and is the source of peace and joy. The real grace of this

sacrament is not only in our reconciliation with God but also with others. The parable of the prodigal son is seemingly one of the greatest parables in the Bible, because it speaks of reconciliation. Through it, Jesus tells us to be ready to forgive others and to seek reconciliation with those we have offended. Finally, the Church teaches us to forgive ourselves. We must not forget this! God has forgiven us; the Church has forgiven us. When you finish the ritual of the sacrament of reconciliation, be reconciled with yourself by not dwelling on the past, but be present to God's healing love in your life.

Lent is the Time to Embrace the Cross:

Each of us has a cross to carry and it is time to come to terms with it. Crosses come to us because of circumstances in our lives and events beyond our control. We have dealt with sickness or death of a loved one, we have seen sufferings or emotional crises. The cross is no stranger to a disciple of Jesus. At times of crises like these or others, we must be able to unite ourselves with the sufferings of the Lord on the Cross so that we can get through them. We may feel that life on the cross is very unfair. Some feel that their crosses are heavy and difficult, some never seem to get out from under the weight of their crosses and some feel that their lives are meant to be nothing but suffering and pain. There are so many unhappy marriages, there are some who cannot stay in a marriage. Parents see children stray, children see parents separate. For some the cross is always present, the disabled, the person with Aids or cancer, the unhappy priest or nun, the unfulfilled single person. But during Lent all those special and beloved friends of Jesus must look at the cross and believe that Jesus loves them. They must know that Jesus bears their pain and that Jesus is there for them to have life and hope because we who experience the saving mercy of Jesus become saviours and healers to others.

Picture of the Cross:

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