

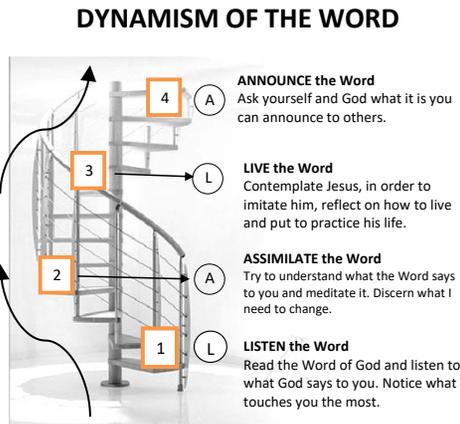
## INTRODUCTION

In one of Pope Benedict XVI's Lenten message, it is said "Lent is the invitation to take 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 (Cf. Hebrews 4:12) reinforcing our will to follow the Lord.

This second week of Lent, we are reminded of fasting, one of the three timeless ways to live out our salvation and to guide us on how to immerse oneself in God's presence. Through fasting we are made to remember that our spiritual nourishment is far more important than material food. As found in **Matthew 4:3-4** that said "If you are God's Son, order these stones to turn into bread." But Jesus answered, "The scripture says, Human beings cannot live on bread alone, but need every word that God speaks." It is very clear that we must observe fasting in order to enjoy the sumptuous feasting of the Word. The Word that will nourish to the depths of our spirit. The "word" that Pope Francis describes in his Lenten letter to us, that it is a "Gift" that will renew our encounter with Christ.

Jesus is inviting us this week that we don't make fasting as an obligation or a mere activity. Instead, to put it into our hearts that it is a Christian duty to love, where we don't do it with a long face. Our Lord suggests that "when you fast, 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."

Fasting in particular is a great way to remind ourselves everyday that God is there and that we can follow Him because every time we give something up, we are reminded of "who" we are, "for what" we are doing this, and "why" we are fasting. We are making a small sacrifice as an imitation of Christ who made the ultimate sacrifice of his life so that we could have eternal life. Often in our fasting we can think of material things like food, TV, shopping, or leisure activities. But we can also fast from other things that separate us from Jesus and prevent us from loving others. Like our moods, selfishness, gossiping or judging others. This time is a great opportunity to contemplate what the Lord is asking us to fast from. Where we can be more closer to Him in this Lenten journey and for the rest of our days as Christians and as VD disciples. Are we now ready to go? Remember it is not the sacrifice that the Lord is asking from us, but our LOVE.



## MONDAY

**FASTING IS A CELEBRATION OF THE PRESENCE OF JESUS WHO IS SO CLOSE TO US.**

**Matthew 9:14-15** <sup>14</sup> Then John's disciples came to him and said, 'Why is it that we and the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not?' <sup>15</sup> Jesus replied, 'Surely the bridegroom's attendants cannot mourn as long as the bridegroom is still with them? But the time will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast.'

*Fasting and abstinence is a means for being so close to Jesus. He is encouraging us not to be lazy in doing it in all the days of Lent. Why? Because Jesus desires that we may always experience His presence. He hopes that we don't consider fasting as a mere activity or a burden, instead a celebration of his presence in our life. What is the Lord asking you to fast from?*

## TUESDAY

**FASTING IS RECOGNITION OF THE COMPASSIONATE JESUS IN OUR LIFE.**

**Galatians 4:19-20** <sup>19</sup> My children, I am going through the pain of giving birth to you all over again, until Christ is formed in you; <sup>20</sup> and how I wish I could be there with you at this moment and find the right way of talking to you: I am quite at a loss with you.

*How nice to recognize the concern of Jesus for us. Jesus is so compassionate. He is worried and sad if we become distant from him. Have you listened to how He is begging us to remain faithful to Him as He is so faithful to us? Jesus didn't want us to be astray. His heart is wide open in giving His merciful love for us.*

## WEDNESDAY

**FASTING IS A PRAYER FOR OTHERS AS THE PATH IN LOVING.**

**Philemon 1:4-12** <sup>4</sup> I always thank my God, mentioning you in my prayers, <sup>5</sup> because I hear of the love and the faith which you have for the Lord Jesus and for all God's holy people. <sup>6</sup> I pray that your fellowship in faith may come to expression in full knowledge of all the good we can do for Christ. <sup>7</sup> I have received much joy and encouragement by your love; you have set the hearts of God's holy people at rest. <sup>8</sup> Therefore, although in Christ I have no hesitations about telling you what your duty is, <sup>9</sup> I am rather appealing to your love, being what I am, Paul, an old man, and now also a prisoner of Christ Jesus. <sup>10</sup> I am appealing to you for a child of mine, whose father I became while wearing these chains: I mean Onesimus. <sup>11</sup> He was of no use to you before, but now he is useful both to you and to me. <sup>12</sup> I am sending him back to you -- that is to say, sending you my own heart.

**Philemon 1:17** <sup>17</sup> So if you grant me any fellowship with yourself, welcome him as you would me;

*At this time of Lent, we are also reminded that our fasting is a prayer of thanksgiving to God. Thanking Him of His love to us through the people around us who loves and cares for us. We also have to thank Him for giving us a community, especially the Verbum Dei Missionary Family. We are invited to pray for each other because it is a means to gain strength against temptation and sin. Praying for others will show oneness in spirit as God's Family. How are you in*

prayer? Are you offering prayers for all the people around you? Remember, praying for others is loving in secret.

#### THURSDAY

##### **FASTING IS THE OPPORTUNITY TO REMAIN FAITHFUL TO CHRIST**

**1 John 3:6** <sup>6</sup> No one who remains in him sins, and whoever sins has neither seen him nor recognised him.

**1 John 3:13-16** <sup>13</sup> Do not be surprised, brothers, if the world hates you. <sup>14</sup> We are well aware that we have passed over from death to life because we love our brothers. Whoever does not love, remains in death. <sup>15</sup> Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you are well aware that no murderer has eternal life remaining in him. <sup>16</sup> This is the proof of love, that he laid down his life for us, and we too ought to lay down our lives for our brothers.

*Again, we are reminded to remain united to Christ Jesus. He does not want us to commit sin for this is the greatest hindrance in being close to Him. Jesus is inviting us to love others more deeply for in this way we can be united to Him deeply. Do we consider that every person we meet in school, in our workplace, and in our homes are gifts? Are we aware that many persons are entrusted by Jesus in our hands for us to love and care?*

#### FRIDAY

##### **FASTING IS THE ACT OF HUMILITY TO TRANSFORM US TO BECOME LIKE CHRIST.**

**1 Peter 2:21-25** <sup>21</sup> This, in fact, is what you were called to do, because Christ suffered for you and left an example for you to follow in his steps. <sup>22</sup> He had done nothing wrong, and had spoken no deceit. <sup>23</sup> He was insulted and did not retaliate with insults; when he was suffering he made no threats but put his trust in the upright judge. <sup>24</sup> He was bearing our sins in his own body on the cross, so that we might die to our sins and live for uprightness; through his bruises you have been healed. <sup>25</sup> You had gone astray like sheep but now you have returned to the shepherd and guardian of your souls.

**1 Peter 3:1-2** In the same way, you wives should be obedient to your husbands. Then if there are some husbands who do not believe the Word, they may find themselves won over, without a word spoken, by the way their wives behave, <sup>2</sup> when they see the reverence and purity of your way of life.

*How are you as a Catholic Christian? What is your signature image or trademark as a follower of Christ? Humility is our signature image to become like Christ in loving. Today we are invited to recognize the beauty of humility, this is the greatest image that Jesus has done for us. He is now reminding us to do the same. Humility is an act of fasting where we can make it as our thanksgiving to God allowing Jesus His Son to save us on the cross.*

#### SATURDAY

##### **FASTING IS THE ACT OF SERVICE THAT WILL LEAD US TO REAL HAPPINESS.**

**Hebrews 13:15-17** <sup>15</sup> Through him, let us offer God an unending sacrifice of praise, the fruit of the lips of those who acknowledge his name. <sup>16</sup> Keep doing good works and sharing your resources, for these are the kinds of sacrifice that please God. <sup>17</sup> Obey your leaders and give way to them; they watch over your souls because they must give an account of them; make this a joy for them to do, and not a grief -- you yourselves would be the losers.

**Hebrews 13:20-21** <sup>20</sup> I pray that the God of peace, who brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great Shepherd of the sheep, by the blood that sealed an eternal covenant, <sup>21</sup> may prepare you to do his will in every kind of good action; effecting in us all whatever is acceptable to himself through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

*How wonderful to see the concern of Jesus for us to be really happy. Are you happy of your discipleship? What makes you happy in your following of Christ? Jesus is very happy when he sees us working in the mission as a Verbum Dei Disciple and as Christians. Let us be thankful to God for giving us the VD community leading us where to put our service out of love for God through the mission.*

#### SUNDAY

##### **3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Lent**

**1st Reading:** Exodus 17:3-7  
**Responsorial Psalm:** Psalm 95  
**2nd Reading:** Romans 5:1-2, 5-8  
**Gospel:** John 4:5-42

# Verbum Dei

## GUIDELINES FOR PRAYER

### **“LOVE, NOT SACRIFICE”**

*(cf. Hosea 6:6)*

March 13-19, 2017

**General Theme:** "I Will Bring Them Back To You"

#### **General Objectives:**

To take this Lenten season as the opportune time to encourage to bring our brothers and sisters back to the Father through the Word. The Word is a gift. Persons are gifts. (Cf. Pope's Lenten Message 2017)



#### **Objective of the week:**

To live the real fasting in order to win others to the kingdom.