

INTRODUCTION

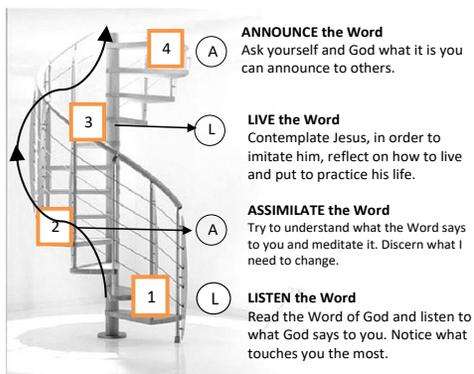
We are now in the first week of Lent, a season of prayer, repentance and fasting. It reflects the 40 days Jesus spent in the desert where he prayed and fasted and was tempted by Satan. "Then the tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, order these stones to turn into bread." But Jesus answered, "Scripture says: 'One does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" (Mt.4:3-4) Jesus made a choice. This is also a link to our forty days of our lenten journey, where we are all encourage to pray with the Word. As Pope Francis said in his Lenten message for this year: "The word of God is alive and powerful, capable of converting hearts and leading them back to God. When we close our hearts to the gift of God's word, we end up closing our hearts to the gift of our brothers and sisters." Jesus is calling us to deepen our spiritual life by listening and pondering more deeply His Word. His words are spirit and life.(cf.Jn.6:63b).Our Lenten journey can be full of temptations and faced it all the time but if we spend more time to pray, especially with the Word of God, we can resist them.

In this season of Lent, Jesus is encouraging us to pray without ceasing (1 Thes.5:17). He is encouraging us to listen to His call, to dialogue, and to converse with Him. To take this time as a special opportunity to grow in our relationship with God and deepen our commitment to repent, to fast and to be generous to those in need. Without prayer, fasting and almsgiving are merely obligations, duties, actions that we do out of tradition, without meaning. Through praying with the Word, we find the courage to repent, to fast, to develop a much closer, intimate relationship with God. Because of this relationship we have with the Father, it will make us eager to give to those in need. The Master is calling you, calling us. Listen to His voice. The voice of the One who is loving us in spite of all that we have done. The voice of the One who is

waiting for our return. The voice of the good shepherd who left the other sheep in order to look for us, for the rest.

As we journey this Lent, let us allow Jesus to tell us His dream for each one of us and ponder and pray how we can collaborate with the dream of God, to bring our brothers and sisters back to Him.

DYNAMISM OF THE WORD



MONDAY OF THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT

"Get up, leave everything and follow Me"

Luke 5:27-32

27 After this, Jesus went out and saw a tax collector named Levi, sitting in his office. Jesus said to him, "Follow me." 28 Levi got up, left everything, and followed him. 29 Then Levi had a big feast in his house for Jesus, and among the guests was a large number of tax collectors and other people. 30 Some Pharisees and some teachers of the Law who belonged to their group complained to Jesus' disciples. "Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and other outcasts?" they asked. 31 Jesus answered them, "People who are well do not need a doctor, but only those who are sick. 32 I have not come to call respectable people to repent, but outcasts."

Praying with the Word of God invites us to get up from the fall of sins, leave everything that enslaves us and follow Him. For Jesus did not come for the righteous but for the sinners. The proof of it was the insistence of Jesus to be in communion with sinners, being around the table, which was a forbidden thing. Jesus' gesture causes anger among the religious authority for it was forbidden to sit at the table with sinners because to sit with someone meant to treat him as a brother. Jesus is calling us now, to do the same to our brothers and sisters. To unite the dispersed people, to reintegrate those who are excluded, to reveal that God is not a severe judge who condemns and expels, but rather He is a father or mother who accepts and embraces us. To help others to stand again after the fall, to repent and start following Jesus.

TUESDAY OF THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT

"Go and reconcile with your brothers and sisters"

Matthew 5:23-24

23 So if you are about to offer your gift to God at the altar and there you remember that your brother has something against you, 24 leave your gift there in front of the altar, go at once and make peace with your brother, and then come back and offer your gift to God.

Matthew 6: 14-15

14 "If you forgive others the wrongs they have done to you, your Father in heaven will also forgive you. 15 But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive the wrongs you have done.

Praying with the Word of God leads us to reconcile with our brothers and sisters. Jesus is inviting us, in order to observe fully the season of Lent, it is necessary to uproot from within everything which is, in one way or another, can lead us to sin

against God and against others, like anger, hatred, revenge, insult, exploitation, greed, selfishness, etc. To repent and to be sorry for our sins does not come from what we do for God: prayer, fasting and almsgiving, but rather from what God does for us, in accepting us as His child. We will become the children of God again when we try to accept and forgive others as God accepts and pardons us, in spite of our defects and sins. The perfect worship which God wants is to remain united to Him and so it is necessary to reconcile oneself with others.

WEDNESDAY OF THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT

"Be holy because I am holy"

1 Peter 1:14-16, 21-22

14 Be obedient to God, and do not allow your lives to be shaped by those desires you had when you were still ignorant. 15 Instead, be holy in all that you do, just as God who called you is holy. 16 The scripture says, "Be holy because I am holy." 21 Through him you believe in God, who raised him from death and gave him glory; and so your faith and hope are fixed on God. 22 Now that by your obedience to the truth you have purified yourselves and have come to have a sincere love for other believers, love one another earnestly with all your heart.

The Word of God is the great instrument of a sinner's purification. Praying with the Word of God purify our hearts and enable us to love God and one another constantly, with sincerity and extensively. When we love others, we are living holy life. Holiness is God's desire and should be our goal in living our Christian life. Many heard the truth but were never purified by it because we didn't submit to it nor obey it. As we go through this journey of Lent, we continue to assimilate more the good news for our spiritual renewal.

THURSDAY OF THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT

“My grace is enough for you”

1 Timothy 1:12-16

12 I give thanks to Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength for my work. I thank him for considering me worthy and appointing me to serve him, 13 even though in the past I spoke evil of him and persecuted and insulted him. But God was merciful to me because I did not yet have faith and so did not know what I was doing. 14 And our Lord poured out his abundant grace on me and gave me the faith and love which are ours in union with Christ Jesus. 15 This is a true saying, to be completely accepted and believed: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. I am the worst of them, 16 but God was merciful to me in order that Christ Jesus might show his full patience in dealing with me, the worst of sinners, as an example for all those who would later believe in him and receive eternal life.

2 Corinthians 12:9

9 But his answer was: “My grace is all you need, for my power is greatest when you are weak.” I am most happy, then, to be proud of my weaknesses, in order to feel the protection of Christ’s power over me.

The apostles were the first great sinners converted to Christianity. They were converted, and obtained mercy, for the sake of others as well as of themselves; they were patterns for us and for others. The greatness of our sins is not a reason enough not to say “Yes” for Jesus’ mission. Why are we afraid to follow Christ? Jesus pours His grace, enough to be qualified, to be fit and to persevere for the call, which we ought to give thanks. Christ gives not only ability, but fidelity, to those whom he puts into the ministry. He only wanted our faithfulness in imitating him so that others may follow him. Our conversion and salvation are graces of Christ that will encourage others to repent and to believe.

FRIDAY OF THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT

“They too will listen to My voice”

John 10:14-16

14-15 I am the good shepherd. As the Father knows me and I know the Father, in the same way I know my sheep and they know me. And I am willing to die for them. 16 There are other sheep which belong to me that are not in this sheep pen. I must bring them, too; they will listen to my voice, and they will become one flock with one shepherd. 17 “The Father loves me because I am willing to give up my life, in order that I may receive it back again. 18 No one takes my life away from me. I give it up of my own free will. I have the right to give it up, and I have the right to take it back. This is what my Father has commanded me to do.”

Hebrews 3:12-14

12 My friends, be careful that none of you have a heart so evil and unbelieving that you will turn away from the living God. 13 Instead, in order that none of you be deceived by sin and become stubborn, you must help one another every day, as long as the word “Today” in the scripture applies to us. 14 For we are all partners with Christ if we hold firmly to the end the confidence we had at the beginning.

Our missionary identity comes from our daily encounter with our God; that also brings our daily humble conversion not only for ourselves, for our own sanctification but more so, of others as well. (Cf. FaMVD 26) The Master is calling you...listen to His voice. The voice of the Good Shepherd who desires to gather us. The goal of Jesus that He wants us to attain is be one flock with only one Shepherd. But there are still other sheep not in the sheep pen. For they have not yet heard the voice of Jesus. Can we be the voice of Jesus? The voice of a

converted sheep, who only speaks about the truth and whose interest is that others may have life. Thus, leading others to Him so that they, too, can hear the voice of the Good Shepherd who gives life, and follow Him.)

SATURDAY OF THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT

“They have heard and will believe”

John 4:28; 39-42

28 Then the woman left her water jar, went back to the town, and said to the people there, 39 Many of the Samaritans in that town believed in Jesus because the woman had said, “He told me everything I have ever done.” 40 So when the Samaritans came to him, they begged him to stay with them, and Jesus stayed there two days. 41 Many more believed because of his message, 42 and they told the woman, “We believe now, not because of what you said, but because we ourselves have heard him, and we know that he really is the Savior of the world.”

What a fruit it brings in having encountered Jesus in prayer as it happened with the Samaritan woman! It can lead us to share it to others. We have saved someone when we have taught him/her to pray. Christ will have a new disciple when he through prayer, “comes to know Him” personally, not by hearsay but by personal experience. (Const.FMVD 48)

SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT

1st Reading: Genesis 12:1-4a

Responsorial Ps: Psalm 33

2nd Reading: 2 Timothy 1:8b-10

Gospel: Matthew 17:1-9

Verbum Dei

GUIDELINES FOR PRAYER

“The Master is calling you”

March 6 - 12, 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 take this time of lent to deepen and grow in our relationship with God and with the people around us whom we desire to bring to that same experience of having encountered God’s loving mercy.