

WIND THROUGH THE OLIVES.

LENT : “Less and less of self. More and more of Christ”

The above words are a divine message communicated to me by one of my friends. It touched my heart and made me think of the need to examine and analyze my life before the Lord.

We are all busy with our own engagements and activities for survival. In order to secure our place in the society in which we live, we try our level best to fit within our situation. The busy schedules of individuals, organizations, offices and other groups have brought human beings to a situation where they hardly find time to relax and be comforted. We patronize drive-through restaurants, instant coffee, fast food and capsule food; we prize immediacy. We can check our email on our cell phone as soon as it hits our inbox. We send and receive SMS and we hold close to our hearts the breath of e-tablets. We rush to grab lunch, download live-streaming news with the click of a button. We are a nation of busy professionals, parents and students living under the banner of “no time”. This “now and get-rich-quick” syndrome certainly has advantages. It motivated us to work hard and invest fully in whatever we are doing. However, a preoccupation with the present also diminishes our ability to see the seasons, to observe the unfolding of time by reflecting on the past and anticipating the future. Immediacy often hinges on convenience, and convenience is all about shortcuts and quick and easy solutions. While enjoying the modern amenities of life, we sometimes fail to recognize the necessity to stop and analyze the things that happen to us and around us.

In the middle of the Lenten season, we now find ourselves in a period of waiting, of inconvenience, and even self-denial. Lent is an integral part of the liturgical church year, which traditionally commemorates days and seasons in order to remember the events in the life of Christ as we live through the year. This period of self-examination, prayer, and fasting has lengthened into a forty-day period to reflect on Jesus’s journey from His fasting and temptation in the desert, the Garden of Gethsemane and to the cross. It begins with Ash Wednesday, serving to humble us and remind us that “we are dust, and to dust you will return” (Gen. 3:19), and concludes with the agony of Good Friday, the silence and sorrow of Holy Saturday, and the jubilant victory of Easter Sunday.

The Bible gives no direct command to observe Lent; it is a man-instituted tradition. But I believe the real reason for this season is our benefit as both individual believers and as a church body. As we intentionally commemorate the events in the life of Christ, we align ourselves with God’s unfolding story of redemption. We purposely pause and find a special time for self-examination, correction and renewal.

As we walk through the Lenten season, we can identify with the suffering of Christ leading up to His crucifixion, so that we can fully comprehend our celebration that “He is risen indeed!” on

Easter morning. I also believe that observing Lent can have great benefits for our family life. If Lent is a time of walking with Christ and humbling ourselves before Him, imagine how it would strengthen your family to make that journey together! Scripture demonstrates that God moves powerfully on behalf of those who seek His Name together (2 Chron. 7:14, Matt. 18:20), and seeking God together with your spouse and children through prayer, scripture reading and meditation, and even fasting will bring you closer to each other as you draw closer to God. Probably the first thing about Lent that comes to mind is fasting. Many people participate in fasting by giving up meat, chocolate, or processed foods during these forty days. The heart of fasting is in giving up something you rely on or enjoy in order to better understand your daily reliance on Christ. I think fasting from technology is a fascinating idea, as a way to put away distractions and refocus on spiritual realities. We can even think about reducing the use of mobile phones, SMS, computers, videos, entertainments, lavish spending and limit our time on social media sites during the lent and find ourselves looking forward to the time when the partner gets home, so that we can invest in our relationship rather than spend time on-line and impersonal things. We can also decide to read a devotional portion together as families and pray together. I am also going to take time to reflect on my own life, and carefully consider the ways God is calling me to change.

We shall pray to God first to reveal to us that areas in which we have deviated from God's will in our life and then make our confession to Him and ask for His forgiveness. Please consider these Lenten days as holy days and bring yourself to the House of the Lord as a better sacrifice.

Kurian Peter Achen