

My dear Sisters,



We have just stepped into the Lenten Season with our foreheads being marked with the ashes reminding us that we are made of dust and to dust we shall return; hence, calling us to repent and believe in the Gospel. It calls us to get back to the essentials of Christian life through prayer, fasting and almsgiving. As we begin this great Season, in preparation for a still greater event the Easter, which marks the very core of our faith, our life and our earnest hope for the life to come; let us pause for a while and ask

few questions to ourselves:

How many years have I witnessed this great, significant event in my life? What is my personal understanding of Lenten observances and Easter glory? How have I lived or personalised those moments apart from the traditional practices? What have I made of those great opportunities and how have they influenced my life? How these occasions have helped me to work for my own salvation and that of my neighbour?

Why this Season of Lent?

Lent is a journey which leads us towards our own salvation, it is a time to look inwards and introspect one's life and see if it is ready to receive this gift of salvation. Our personal salvation is at the very centre of all our Lenten practices. The whole of creation is redeemed by the death of Jesus on the cross in loving obedience to His Father's will and His redeeming love on the cross has to be subjectively personalised by each one of us in our personal life.

During Lent, I am invited to remember the price that Jesus paid for me! How much Jesus suffered for me? Cross has to become a souvenir to make me realise my own sinfulness. While I remember the sins of my past, I also remember the mercy of God. Even my past sins become an opportunity in recalling and re-experiencing the mercy of God.

How do I arrive at this salvation?

In St. John's Gospel we read, "*And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent*" (17:3). Therefore, I can be saved and inherit eternal life only by knowing my Saviour and this knowledge has to guide me ***in correcting my sinful attitude and behaviour in order to sanctify myself and to resemble Jesus more profoundly.*** This becomes more important for a Claverian Sister who is engaged seriously in cooperating with the mission of the Church entrusted by Christ to save souls. How much steadfast can we be in realizing this mission, if we do not work for our own sanctity and salvation in the first place? The invitation that we find in the Sacred Scriptures should continuously resound in our hearts: "*For I am the Lord your God; sanctify yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am holy.*" (Lev. 11, 44). Again, in the same book it is written "*you shall be Holy, for I the Lord your God I am Holy*" (19:2). The Gospel of Mathew says, "*be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect*" (5:48). In the letter to the Ephesians we read "*we are chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him in love.*" (1, 4). And finally, it's written in the letter to the Hebrews that "*it's impossible to see God without being holy*" (12:14).

Holy Father is facilitating our Lenten journey by placing before us a few questions that could help us to a great extent to introspect ourselves: *how is my heart in front of the people/sister? How do I behave with people/my own community members, in my work place?*

One destructive reality that the Holy Father is bringing to our attention is the human inclination to gossip and to spread false rumours about others, we engage in talking maliciously about someone, who differs from us. The Pope proposes that we need to inculcate a habit of prayer if we are to avoid the inclination to gossip.

If I am inclined to gossip and criticise others, it is a sign that I have not yet begun working on my own sanctification. I remain at a very shallow level and tend to look at others superficially, judging them according to my own narrow human viewpoint and limited perspective. It is good to look at what St. Luke says about the attitude of Mary. “*One thing is needed Mary has chosen the better part*” (10, 42). We are invited to sit at the feet of Jesus and to allow ourselves to be sanctified by Him. We are called to focus on what is essential and growth promoting because clarity is essential to achieve the desired goal.

Remember my dear sisters that love draws us closer to God but when we grow in Holiness, God makes His dwelling within us. As a consequence, we live in truth and truth sets us free.

Love compels me to go to God and holiness compels God to come to me!

Love compels me to suffer anything for God but holiness compels me to be a recipient of nothing but God. Perfect sanctification cannot exist without humility which helps in the annihilation of false self along with its sinful nature and inordinate attachments to self, people, things, positions and possessions. When we attain sanctity of life, none of our prayers will go unheard. Remember there wasn't an occasion in which Jesus' prayer was denied, because His concern was only to do the will of the Father.

Three Phases of Preparation during the Lenten Season:

1. Introspection – to examine and analyse one's life journey, am I able to find the salvific moments in the daily happenings of my life? Which are the areas of my life which I need to work on as I look forward to the Easter glory. Letting the awareness I have about myself to guide me towards making decisions for a better journey which is more consistent.
2. Decision in life – to make right choices which will help me to bring about a radical change in my life, my behaviour, my attitudes which are not appropriate for the way of life I have chosen.
3. Practice on the daily basis the resolutions that each one has taken to improve the quality of life, trying to distance oneself from all that is destructive with great consistency and determination.

Sanctification consists in attaining the nearest possible likeness of God which is attainable to me and you. Therefore let us not miss this chance in bringing about a radical change in our life dear sisters; let us not add up to the sinfulness rather let us pave the way towards our own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in each of us, so that we may be blameless and innocent, children of God.

I wish you all a fruitful Lenten Season!

With great affection,

Sr. Selin Karikkattil

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Superior General