



அள்ளித் தந்த
வானமும்...சொல்லித்
தந்த பூமியும்...

விண்ணின்
தந்தையே

தன் அன்பின் மகனை
மண்ணிற்காக, மக்களுக்காக
கையளிக்கத் துணிந்த- உன்
அன்பு எத்துணை பெரியது!

இயேசு என்று பெயரெடுத்து
மனித இயல்பைக் கொண்டு
புனித வாழ்வை இந்த
பூவுலகிற்கு அறிமுகம் செய்த-
உன்
பெருமை எத்துணை பெரியது!

மரியின் மடியிலே தவழ்ந்து
அழகிய சிறுவனாய் வளர்ந்து
தந்தையின் திட்டத்தை ஏற்று
வாழப் பணிந்த- உன்
ஆற்றல் எத்துணை பெரியது!

கடவுளின் மகன் என்ற ஆற்றலிலும்
மனிதன் மனமாற்றம் அடையவும்
உடல் நலமும் காத்து
நோயிலிருந்து மீட்ட- உன்
புதுமை எத்துணை பெரியது!

ஆம்...
வாழ்வின் ஆயிரம் தேவைகள்
நாளும் ஒவ்வொரு கனவுகள்
இவையாவும் நிதமும் நிறைவேற
ஆசிரவதிக்கும் இறைவன்! -
அவனே
அள்ளித் தந்த வானம்!...

நித்தம் ஒரு பாவத்தையும்
நினைவில் வரும் வன்செயலையும்
நம்மிடம் களைய... நம்மை மீட்க
கையளித்த பொறுமை பித்தன்-
அவனே
நல்வாழ்வை சொல்லித்தந்த
பூமி!...

அனைத்தும் அள்ளித்தந்த
வானுக்கு
தலை வணங்குவோம்!
அன்பைச் சொல்லித்தந்த பூமியை
முத்தமிடுவோம்!

- Agnes Matilda

My sacrifice, O God, is a contrite spirit; a contrite,
humbled heart, O God, you will not scorn. (Psalms 51:19)

- Agnes P. Raj



LENT

The Christian season of Lent begins with Ash Wednesday. On Ash Wednesday we receive ashes in our forehead. For us Christians, ashes are a symbol of being sorry for things we have done wrong and intend to get rid of it. The marking on the forehead with ash, marks the commitment to God. It is also a reminder to us that we all come from ashes, and to ashes we all will return. Receiving the ashes as a member of the church community helps us recognize that we are an important part of the Catholic community and are united with the Church in its Lenten preparation. Lent is a wonderful season of reflection and preparation. It marks the beginning of six and a half weeks of repentance, fasting and abstinence in preparation for Easter. Jesus reminds us that the sacrifices and prayers called for in Lent are between God and us. The Church suggests three special practices of penance for Lent: Pray, Fast, Alms giving.

Prayer:

Prayer is the opening of our heart to God. Prayer is essential for our faith life. A person who prays, grows in spirit and life. Jesus has taught us how and when to pray through his own life. There isn't just one right way to pray - what works well for one person may not for another. When we pray we come before God and offer our self or we can sit in silence in a quiet place like in the adoration or we can go to Mass or pray in groups in public. Paul said, "Pray without ceasing." (1 Thessalonians 5:17). Prayer can be of our own words or it can be a written one or a rosary or reading the Bible. Sometimes when we don't know what to pray for, the Holy Spirit will guide us and present our requests to the Father in perfect accord with God's will. (Rm 8:26,27). Our prayers need not be lengthy or long list of petitions. It can be just the "Lord's Prayer". "...Your Father knows what you need before you ask him. This is how you are to pray: Our Father who art in heaven..." (Mt 6: 7-15)

Fast

Fasting normally mean restricting the food that we eat. We can fast between meals, by not eating snacks, or we can fast by abstaining from all food for a day. It is a spiritual discipline to control our soul and body for prayer. By fasting, the food or the money we have, we give to the poor. It is also a way of doing penance for our past sins. How God really wants us to fast? The prophet Isaiah tells us the God's desired form of fasting: "Is this the manner of fasting I wish, of keeping a day of penance: That a man bow his head like a reed, and lie in sackcloth and ashes? Do you call this a fast, a day acceptable to the Lord? This, rather, is the fasting that I wish: releasing those bound unjustly, untying the thongs of the yoke; setting free the oppressed, breaking every yoke; sharing your bread with the hungry; sheltering the oppressed and the homeless; clothing the naked when you see them, and not turning your back on your own." (Is 58: 5-7) This is a time for us to

renew our commitment to finding God in others by providing food for the homeless, donating our time to those in need.

Repent

The dictionary defines repent as "to feel sorry for sin and seek forgiveness." But The parable of the "prodigal son" (Lk15:11-32) illustrates the process and meaning of "repentance." The process began when the younger son turn away from his wrongdoing, he feels sorry, he was ready to confess to his father and he takes responsibility for his action by willing to work as his father's 'hired servant'. The parable of the "prodigal son" also teaches us that we are sinning against God if we waste our life that we have received. Repentance is not just an intellectual exercise of "feeling sorry" for sins. Repentance involves change in life.

Forgive

In the parable of the "unmerciful servant" (Matthew 18:23-35) Jesus talks about forgiveness. In this parable, when a servant failed to pay what he owed the king, the servant fell down on his knees and asked for the king's "patience." The king had mercy on the servant and forgave him of his large debt. But this same servant refused to show mercy and forgive a fellow servant who owed him a small debt. The king condemned the servant who refused to forgive his fellow servant. If we repent, God will forgive us and rejoice in us like the father in the parable of the prodigal son. Jesus made it clear in the prayer that Jesus taught his disciples, "And forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us" (Luke 11:4).

Alms giving

In the book of Tobit (12:8-9) we read, Why is alms giving better than prayer and fasting? Because it is prayer, and it involves fasting. Alms giving is a form of prayer. It is also a form of fasting because it demands sacrificial giving. Jesus presented alms giving as a necessary part of Christian life: "when you give alms, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by men. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing" (Mt 6:2-3). We Christians do alms giving by following the practice of the Old Testament, that is giving one tenth of our earnings. But in practical we can also give this to poor, to parish, to charitable institutions or rehab organization. We prepare our lives and our hearts for Lent by praying, fasting, repenting, forgiving and alms giving. It is in this moment that Jesus will take us by the hand and raise us from the hole onto which we have fallen. We feel his love and his kindness.



Receiving Rewards

- *Leenus Rich*

Being a human we all are very much interested to receive rewards no matter what it is. Rewards may be in terms of money, praise or fame. Whatever it may be, study indicates that human brain is more pleased when receiving rewards. Jesus also mentioned we will get rewards from our Father in Heaven for our Fasting, Praying and Alms but there is a difference in the judgments how God the Father judges and how human being judge. To receive rewards from human we have to prove to the public that we are having extraordinary talents but to receive rewards from the Father we have to do the opposite. That is we should not show our talents to be seen by others but only to the Father as Jesus mentioned below.

“Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven.

“So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

“And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell

you, they have received their reward in full. But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. (Matthew 6:1-8)

“When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show others they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to others that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. (Matthew 6:16-18)

Lent is the season of fasting, praying and alms. So let us give more importance to these three at least during the Lent. Also as we read our fasting, prayers and alms should get us rewards from the Father. If we want rewards from the Father we should not practice them before men then only we will receive rewards from the Father.

If we receive rewards from human then God the Father will say “You already got for what you have done and I don’t have any rewards for you”.

So let us pray that our fasting, praying and alms should be seen only by the Father and should get us rewards from Him.



ST. JOSEPH OUR FATHER

Saint Joseph was the husband of Mary and foster Father of Jesus.

Betrothed to Mary, Joseph decided to divorce her quietly when he found out that Mary was pregnant with a child, but an angel of the Lord told him to take her as his wife, since the child was the "Holy One" of God. Joseph listened to the will of God. Joseph was with Mother Mary praying with her during Jesus' birth in Bethlehem. An angel warned him in his dream, and he immediately listened to God's words again and fled with the infant and the mother to protect both of them. They settled in Nazareth, a small town in Galilee. There Joseph, a carpenter, helped Mother Mary to raise Jesus, sharing the many hours of his trade with his young son. During these growing years, the people of Nazareth saw Jesus simply as "the son of Joseph, the carpenter."

As a person of faith, "a just man," Joseph followed God's call in the mysterious circumstances surrounding the coming of Jesus. And God entrusted this gentle, humble man with the unique privilege of raising his only son.

People have honored Joseph and sought his guidance and protection for many years. The novena, a nine day prayer, is a way of praying with perseverance with our petitions to St. Joseph. It is modeled after the nine day period the apostles prayed before Pentecost. Let us pray to St. Joseph Our Father, for nine days starting today and be prepared to celebrate his feast on March 19.

Prayer:

We come to you, O Blessed Joseph, having sought the help of your Most Blessed Spouse; we confidently implore your assistance too. We humbly beg that, mindful of the dutiful affection which bound you to the Immaculate Virgin Mother of God, and of the fatherly love that you bestowed on child Jesus, lovingly watch over our families and guide us. Please give us the strength and courage you had in following the word of the Lord. Protect and guide us to listen to the will of God and be united as a family following your example as a hard worker and a humble servant of God.

- *Shanthi Raja*

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