

Dear Brothers and Sisters



On Ash Wednesday, our Lent began the moment ashes were placed on our heads. Lent is a preparation for Easter; the way we live Lent will determine the way we live Easter. Just as the Resurrection of Christ is preceded by his death, Lent invites us to voluntarily accept some form of suffering, some form of death. This is only possible because the Resurrection of Christ awaits us.

We received ashes accompanied by one of two formulas: "Remember you are dust and unto dust you shall return" or "Repent and Believe the Gospel."

Repentance, or Teshuva, or Metanoia, means a turning away from sin, acknowledging the times we have fallen in the face of temptation, the times we have chosen not to accept suffering. The good news is that there is a Gospel: Jesus Christ was tempted in the same way we are, and that he has overcome these temptations for us.

He faced the temptations of bread, of idols and of history (not accepting his life). We too face these temptations every day; but Lent comes to by giving us the spiritual weapons of fasting, almsgiving and prayer; to combat the temptations of bread, idols and accepting our life, our history.

Jesus fasted for 40 days and nights, and he was hungry, he experienced suffering. The devil is there waiting, watching, counting the days, 1,2, 3....10...15... 20...30...35...37,38,39... and then he appears when Jesus is at his weakest. The devil never tempts us when we are on our game, when we feel strong, but waits for the moment we are at our lowest. Why should you be suffering like this, why should you experience want and need? He says.

We are tempted to not put God first, but to look for bread: which means to base our life just on getting good grades, going to a good college, having a successful career, securing financial security, having enough money to live comfortably. These are the most important things in life, the devil says. Not that any of these things are bad in themselves, but thinking that life is only based on them is false.

The enemy of our soul says: 'Once you have these things you can then listen to the Word of God, but let's get things straight, your career, prestige, money and well being are the most important'.

Jesus answers this temptation by fasting: It's not true that my life, my security comes from bread! My life comes from God, he is the one who sustains me, he is the one who is present even in the moments of want and need, and to prove it I am going too fast.

We too are invited to fast this Lent, to voluntarily mortify our flesh, in secret. In doing so we disarm the lies of the devil.

We can fast from Netflix, or social media, or a favorite food or drink.

In voluntarily accepting to suffer in our flesh, we will experience the presence and consolation of God. The

Church calls this time The Joyful Season of Lent. We will experience through the Lenten observance that the Word of God -Christ himself- is truly the source of our life. Happy fasting!

Fr. Sean