

Reflection for Lent

Greetings of peace and love! Today we have begun our Lenten season. As we are aware, it is a unique time for deep prayer, reflection, examination, re-evaluation. It is a process of renewal. This process of renewal must take place at two levels – personal and collective, as Pope Francis states in his Lenten message of 2022. He states “Lent is a favorable time for personal and community renewal, as it leads us to the paschal mystery of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ”.

The church places on us three important demands during this Lent

“Let us not grow tired of praying”, “Let us not grow tired of uprooting evil from our lives” ...and “Let us not grow tired of doing good in active charity towards our neighbors”.

1. “Let us not grow tired of praying”. God is our root, basis and foundation of our life. We are nothing without God. As faithful followers of Christ, we are supposed to come more and closer to God by our deep prayer life. However, as human, it is possible that we fail. Due to various factors, our prayer life both at the personal and community level is marked by laziness, tiredness, sluggishness, weariness, fatigue, and lethargy. This should not happen. It is prayer that brings us closer to God. It is prayer that brings different individuals together. It is through prayer that we experience God. Intense prayer can achieve impossible things. Without regular prayer, our life will become empty and shallow. As such, prayer is fundamental to Christian life and let us not grow tired of praying.

2. “Let us not grow tired of uprooting evil from our lives”

Every human person is called upon to live a life of holiness. St. Francis De Sales in his “Introduction to the Devout Life” extensively speaks about holiness for all human persons. We are called to live a praiseworthy life. We are called upon to remove all the bad things, all our bad characters, wrong and sinful actions etc. This is not a onetime act. Removing our sins and evils

cannot be achieved once for all. It is a lifelong process. Human as we are, we tend to fail repeatedly. But we must keep on getting rid of our sins, vices and evils tirelessly and constantly. Lenten season is an apt occasion for us to do it.

3. "Let us not grow tired of doing good in active charity towards our neighbors".

Doing good to others is fundamental to Christianity. God gave his only son to be our redeemer and savior. Our Lord Jesus Christ gave his own life for our sake. So, giving and doing good to others is very essential to our Christian life. As such, we are called upon to do good to others. Not just once or few times. We should keep on doing good and charitable works to those who are in need. As religious, apart from our spiritual animation of our faithful, we must both collectively and individually, dedicate ourselves wholly to do charitable works for the poor and the needy and involve in the service for the downtrodden and the marginalized. We should never grow tired of doing this. **Amen.**

Give Up during Lent.

GIVE UP grumbling! Instead, "In everything give thanks." Constructive criticism is OK, but "moaning, groaning, and complaining" are not Christian disciplines. GIVE UP 10 to 15 minutes in bed! Instead, use that time in prayer, Bible study and personal devotion.

GIVE UP looking at other people's worst points! Instead concentrate on their best points. We all have faults. It is a lot easier to have people overlook our shortcomings when we overlook theirs first.

GIVE UP speaking unkindly! Instead, let your speech be generous and understanding. It costs so little to say something kind and uplifting. Why not check that sharp tongue at the door?

GIVE UP your hatred of anyone or anything! Instead, learn the discipline of love. "Love covers a multitude of sins."

GIVE UP your worries and anxieties! Instead, trust God with them. Anxiety is spending emotional energy on something we can do nothing about: like tomorrow! Live today and let God's grace be sufficient.

GIVE UP TV one evening a week! Instead, visit some lonely or sick person. There are those who are isolated by illness or age. Why isolate yourself in front of the "tube?" Give someone a precious gift: your time!

GIVE UP buying anything but essentials for yourself! Instead, give the money to God. The money you would spend on the luxuries could help someone meet basic needs. We are called to be stewards of God's riches, not consumers.

GIVE UP judging by appearances and by the standard of the world! Instead, learn to give up yourself to God. There is only one who has the right to judge, Jesus Christ. (Craig Gates, Jackson, MS, "What to Give up for Lent")