

Lent: 40 Days focused on *Metanoia* - 'conversion of heart'

We have entered Lent, the sacred season- with Ash Wednesday Celebration: 40 days of preparation towards the great feast of Resurrection.

40 days of "desert experience"; like that of Moses on the mount, of the people of Israel (40 years), of Jesus. Today's 1&2 readings affirm, 40 days of rain and flood, ending with the rainbow- sign of God's covenant with man; "the waters will never again destroy the world".

The Ark of Noah, floating in the water, but protecting him and family during the flood; the bow-*rainbow*-that God sets in the cloud as a sign of protection from above. It is a sign that Salvation is a collaboration between God and man; through God's gratuitous salvific grace as well as man's wholehearted acceptance of God's will/grace and his actions, accordingly, make it possible.

St. Peter states: Like Noah in the ark, "put to death in the flesh, but brought to life in the Spirit". A pre-figuration of our baptism, setting pace to the new life in the risen Christ, at the celebration of the Easter.

St. Mark is very brief in his narration of Jesus' temptation in the desert, without any details. But Jesus' preparation -40 days-of prayer and fasting to confront and overpower Satan is what matters to us during Lent.

Pope Francis has a few recommendations for us to live the Lent fruitfully:

- Fight the "*globalization of Indifference*" to God and neighbor, individually and collectively. Indifference represents a real temptation to many Christians. We are called to be '*islands of mercy*' in the 'ocean of indifference'. God's boundless mercy, revealed in his sacrifice on the cross-which is at the heart of our Lenten reflection- can help us in turn to be merciful; because it transforms human heart, and enables us to be committed in works of mercy and forgiveness.

-Lent as a moment of “ascension and transformation”. It’s an invitation to ascend the mountain with Jesus, (to spend time in the *desert*), to live a particular experience of spiritual discipline. This is made easy through the ‘soothing remedy of prayer, almsgiving and fasting’.

-Lent, as a favorable season to spend time with the Word of God. If, at the root of all evil was the failure to heed God’s word, careful listening of the word is the basis of everything good we do: so we are invited to listen and ponder more deeply. Lent is always a favorable time for our conversion, which should never be taken for granted.

-As St. Paul exhorts us, ‘let us ever get tired of doing good, for in due time we shall reap the harvest. While we have opportunity, let us do good to all, in active charity towards our neighbors and never give up’(Gal 6:9)

- Pope also underlined the fact of Lenten journey of penance and the journey of the Synod implementation-by walking together in faith through small groups- having as their goal a transformation and conversion of heart, both personal and ecclesial. As the Synod celebration is *a process on the reflection on the future of the Church*, we all need to be engaged in this journey, making ourselves part of it, as it involves the universal Church, the Church all over the world.

In conclusion, friends, therefore let us make some good decisions at the very beginning of Lent: a) *Liturgy & Sacraments*: not to skip the Sunday mass for silly reasons. Let’s free ourselves from the slavery of laziness. B) *Works of Mercy*: let us excel in goodness and kindness within, to fight against devil’s tricks, within and around us. C) *Silence*: create moments of silence, (Cfr. book *Holy Moments*) amidst the noisy world around, to listen to the Lord’s words deeper in our heart.

May the Lord grant you the grace to live a Fruitful Lent. Amen