



BELIEVERS EASTERN CHURCH

Office of the Metropolitan, Synod Secretariat, St.Thomas Nagar, Thiruvalla, Kerala, India.

SHEPHERD'S LETTER

February, 2019

✠Glory be to the Father the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

The Bible says that as long as the earth remains, there will be seasons in our life. And as a church we are approaching the season of the Great Lent – a season where the church encourages all to increase their time of prayer, both as an individual and a community, while at the same time inviting us to refrain, abstain and fast from certain things.

The end goal of this discipline is to strengthen our spirit, so that our mind and heart to think about heavenly things and not just things of the world. Increased prayer and fasting are encouraged by the church during the Great Lent as a means to purification and preparation of our soul – to renew the health of our soul.

This year the 50 days of the season of Great Lent is from 3rd March (Sunday) to 21st April. We have Ash Wednesday (March 6th) Palm Sunday (April 14th) and Holy Week (April 15th to 21st) - including Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter Sunday, celebrated specially during this season.

Here are some suggestions to make Lent meaningful to us.

1. Prayer and Reading the Bible:

I am sure that most of you have listened to and heard my message on Quiet time and having Family Prayer. I have heard encouraging reports of many of you starting the habit of family prayer. I'm so glad for you. While keeping that as a habit, let us use this time to develop and strengthen the discipline of a regular prayerful life.

- Strengthen a discipline of morning and evening prayer and Bible reading each day, besides that for regular family prayer.

- Hours of Prayer: Set apart 10 minutes for prayer in the morning, in the afternoon and in the evening; put a halt to everything you do during those 10 min and spend the time in reading God's word and prayer.
- Lenten Bible reading: Our church has produced a 'Lent Daily Scripture Reading' booklet. It is attached with this letter. Each day, 4 passages are given. As a family and individuals spent time in reading and meditating those scriptures daily.
- Other than individual prayers, commit to participating in all prayer activities in your parish during this season.

2. Fasting:

Fasting to an Orthodox Christian is what physical and mental exercises are to a professional athlete who's goal is to win the medal or trophy. Fasting of mind and body, based on the obedience of prayer, renews the health of the soul, and strengthens it.

Great Lent is not a season of sadness and gloominess, but it is a time of happiness and purification. We are called to anoint our faces and to cleanse our bodies as we cleanse our souls.

Embracing a simpler lifestyle, by giving up things which take away our time, money and energy.

Let us create time to focus on things which can strengthen our spiritual life. Here are some suggestions to follow.

- *Fast* once a week or one meal a day or more frequently as your physical health can sustain.
- *Give up* certain food items - like meat, tea, chocolate, soft drinks etc.
- *Restricting* the use of
 - Television and Mobile Phone
 - Social media like Facebook, WhatsApp etc.

Remember - the time we gain by giving up these activities should be used for other spiritual activities. The money we save by not eating meals, or not eating or drinking certain food or drink can be used for helping others in need.

3. Showing Kindness and Alms-giving:

Historically, the church always used the season of Lent to help those in need. One practical way to find money to help is using the money we save by not eating meals or abstaining from certain food during our meals.

- Find widows, older people or homeless people in your community who need your help. Bring a cooked meal for them or buy some vegetables, rice or other food items for them.
- Go to the slums or leprosy colonies or areas in your neighbourhood where you know people who are poor stay. Bring them cooked food or food items and pray with them.
- As a local parish, collect food items or cook food together and take it to needy families or individuals.

God has called us to be His witnesses and as we go through this season of the Great Lent, let us get ready to tell His story to the world around us. We as Believers Eastern Church, believe in continuing the traditions handed to us by the Apostles and Church Fathers and what an opportunity to do just that!

May Gods riches blessings be upon each one of you, your family and your parish.

In the Name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen✠

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Note: Instructions for those who read it.

- *Before reading it to your congregation, read this letter several times yourself, so that you become familiar with the letter and its contents.*
- *While reading to your congregation, make sure you read it slowly and carefully, so that everyone who's attending the church will be able to listen and understand.*