

MISSIONARIES OF ST FRANCIS DE SALES



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Provincial Circular JK.08

February 22, 2012

Beloved Confreres !

We are already in the holy season of Lent. Our Mother Church reminds us of the true way of salvation – the way Jesus trod on our behalf. We are also invited to walk with Jesus the same way – the way of solitude, silence, suffering and sanctification; the only way that will lead us to the true final destiny. Lent is the reminder of the path we need to take in our lives.

Usually we associate the season of Lent as a time of penance, mortification, more demanding pious practices etc. Why do we consider Lent as a *miserable* time? Lent is not a time of sadness or misery. It is not a time of self-inflicted suffering. It must be a joyful time of walking with the Lord. No matter what we experience during the journey, everything is a matter of joy for us, everything has a reason to make us happy for we are with the Lord. In other words, Lent is a time of being with the Lord in an intensive manner.

This intensive being with the Lord helps us to know the Lord behind the curtains. There are many things that we tend to ignore in Jesus: the human struggle of endurance, discernment, experiences of being abandoned, betrayed and so on. The glorified Jesus is easily understood, proclaimed and followed.

We are not guests but true members of the Church / Community

When we go to a family or a community merely as a visitor often we do not get the true picture of the state of affairs of that family or community. The host will try to make us happy, giving us always a positive picture of the things. Even if there is lack of certain things, the host will make every effort to make up for that in order to make the guests feel at home. There is a difference between the actual state and the one presented to us.

We are not guests but true members of the church. In every aspect of the life of the Church we are partakers. Church has no particular aspect in her life than those aspects of Jesus himself. In this respect we need to be fully involved the life of the Church. This implies living fully Jesus in his totality in our lives.

Lent: An invitation to share in the mission of the Church

There are people who live in the Church as guests all the time without any permanent commitment. They want to be always at the receiving end. A total involvement demands from us total commitment which in turn involves many challenges and sufferings. We become part of the life and mission of the hosts. We become sharers in their mission.

How do we share in the mission of the Church? It is by being fully involved in the mission of the Fransalian family entrusted to our community. Just as true shepherd knows the sheep, a true missionary will know one's mission. He will love the mission, live for the mission and will be even ready to die for the same mission. He understands his mission as given by Jesus; implemented for the sake of Jesus; enabled by Jesus himself.

Hence beloved confrere, the season of Lent invites us to love our mission, our apostolate of being Christ-like, having his attitude and doing what he did. It invites us to endure the sufferings on our way. Our patron reminds us: *"Suffering is the royal path and the most assured road to heaven."*

Lent: A Season Joy and Freedom

There are times we get the impression that the Church places before us many restrictions especially during Lent. In fact, Church does not impose on us restrictions. On the other hand she offers us many possibilities. Mother Church teaches us that the way of Christ is the way for Christians. Our general tendency is to choose what we like from among the matters of the way of Christ. The meaning of Lent challenges us to think objectively than following mere tendencies.

We find in Jesus the fine blend of paradoxes. Silence and Speaking; away from the people and with the people; with the sinners and against the sins; compassionate dealings and getting wild at times; meek like a lamb and fierce like a lion; total submission to the father yet discerning for himself each moment; poor yet having the possibility to have everything; and above all the suffering servant and the glorified master. These paradoxes challenge us for in everything there is something that we like and something that we do not like.

Sufferings: The only way to our true destiny

Lent invites us to live Jesus in our lives – in the totality. Not the one sided version that we like or prefer but living HIM totally. When we move by mere human tendencies, we prefer the cozy ways. But way of Jesus was different. Our Patron St. Francis de Sales teaches us: *"The proof of our loyalty lies in our capacity to suffer rather than in our propensity to action."*

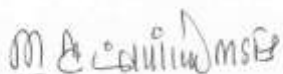
My dear confreres, sometimes a moment of silent suffering in love is nobler than multitude of noisy actions devoid of love. *"A bed of suffering is nothing else than a school of humility where we learn all about our misery and weakness, and how vain delicate and weak we are"*. Says our beloved patron.

If Easter is a reason for Joy and what precedes Easter must be also be reason for joy. True Easter joy cannot be attained without the readiness to accept joyfully all that come on our way, no matter pleasant or unpleasant. Let us love Jesus as HE IS. *"We want the best of everything: the benefits of Calvary and the consolation of Tabor,"* exhorts our patron.

May our life, our attitudes, our words and deeds be agents of Good News to many. May we have the heart to endure suffering even silently. Let us be totally involved in our mission being ready to endure and face everything that might come on our way.

I wish you a grace filled, joyful and inspiring season of Lent.

United with you in the Eucharistic Lord,



Fr. Johnson Kallidukil msfs
(Provincial Superior MSFS East Africa Province)

My son, if you come forward to serve the Lord,
prepare yourself for afflictions.

Sirach 2:1