

Be with Him and be like Him

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We hope and wish that we all walk with our Lord in this Great and Salvific Lenten Season. As we go forward, it comes in this month, according to the liturgical calendar readings, more events of spiritual purifications and transformations that happened in lives who took refuge in Christ. So let us also observe this Lenten Season meaningfully and try to experience Christ in our lives too.

The first Sunday of March is been called *M'shario*(paralytic). Jesus Christ, the Healer, heals a paralytic man, who was brought to Him by others. The event is well explained in St. Luke 5: 17 -26 and St. Mark 2: 1 -12. Jesus heals a person because of the faith and prayers of people who brought the sick one near to Him. Are we able to bring the sick people and also our sickness in front of Him? Jesus says to the paralytic that your sins are forgiven! To receive healing we need forgiveness of sin. Sin and sickness is so connected. Hence Jesus forgives him first and then gave him deliverance. Following this principle, the Church is recommending the Holy Confession to the believers to receive Grace and Mercy of our Lord. This lesson teaches us how much it is important the forgiveness of sin for a healthy life. A life-style with out repentance and forgiveness brings both physical and spiritual sickness. So let repent and confess our sins during this Lenten Season.

The second Sunday of the month is known as *Knanaitho*(Canaanite Woman). The event is well narrated in St. Mark 7:24-37 and St. Matthew 15:21-28. Here the prayer of a mother helps her daughter to receive healing. The mother in this event is a gentile woman, according to Jewish law. The conservative Jews were always against to the idea that God will save gentiles. It seems the conservative Christians too are thinking in the same line! But Jesus corrects them through this wonderful incident. Knowing her faith in Him at heart, Jesus took this opportunity to teach the issue of Salvation to the gentiles. He taught them that it not that you a Jew or gentile makes you receive the Grace of God, rather your faith in Christ. He admires her faith and says: "O Woman, great is your Faith!" Can we too have a witness like this from Him? Yes, if we believe in Him and do His will as a conformation of our faith.

On 14th of the month we reach to the Mid-lent day. The Eastern Orthodox Church has a very significant liturgy to mark this day. There are special prayers, readings from the Scripture, a procession with Cross and hoisting it in the midst of the church-building and concludes with Holy Eucharist. What does all these means? When we reach to the mid of Lent, a real follower of Lent will be exhausted with many sort of temptations and passions. Remember, Satan was running behind even Christ during this time. So we need more strength in Christ to defeat Satan and his forces and to say him: "Satan, go behind me." Since we take refuge in Christ, the Cross, the perfect symbol and icon of Christ, comes down from the Alter and staying amidst of us! Christ says in St. John, "Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, and that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life." (St. John 3: 14 -15) Through this liturgical event, the Church teaches symbolically that God is with us always and He dwells in midst of His followers, especially in the time of trails and temptations.

The third and fourth Sundays, respectively known as *Kpiptho*(Crippled Woman) and *Samiyo*(Blind Man). The Healing Ministry of our Lord is meaningfully noted by the Gospel writers in these incidents also. The fourth Sunday happens on 25th of March this year, which also the Feast of Annunciation to Mary about the Salvific Incarnation of our Lord. It also the Sunday we celebrate as the Catholicate Day in the Indian

Orthodox Church. We have to receive a real spiritual opening of our eyes, as a Church and community, in this Sunday. We should receive the Grace of God, likewise in case of Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, on this day.

Towards the end of March, on 30th, we reach to the completion of Forty days of Lent, hence there is special liturgy to thank God. And then we continue our journey with Him to Bethany, the event of Lazarus, and to mount Olive and from there to the Temple of Jerusalem. So are we ready to follow Him till to Jerusalem, till to Golgotha to be crucified with Him? Then only we will be able to witness the resurrected Christ. Let us pray to Lord to make worthy to follow Him during this Great Lenten Season; and wish to each other the status of to BE WITH HIM AND to BE LIKE HIM.

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