



BELIEVERS EASTERN CHURCH

Office of the Metropolitan, Synod Secretariat, Thiruvalla, Kerala, India.

SHEPHERD'S LETTER

February 2018

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

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

We, along with thousands of fellow believers in Christ all over the world, are starting our journey towards one of the most important time of the church calendar—the Season of Lent. In my earlier letter to you (November 2017) I had mentioned about the church calendar and how the Christian church has long used the church calendar as an opportunity to celebrate the Christian faith in worship. Following that calendar, we have finished the season of Advent and are now entering into the Season of Lent. In this letter, I would like to draw your attention to this season, its importance both personally and as a church, some guidelines to practically celebrate it and the blessing which accompanies it.

Whether you live in a city or in a village, whether you work in an office, workshop or in the paddy field; our lives are usually busy. We are busy with many things: taking care of our family, our children, our animals, our farms, our house—the list can go on. In the midst of all this busyness, we seldom get a chance to think about our spiritual life. Yet, remember that we are spiritual beings; we need to take care of our spiritual needs. Lent is a season in the church calendar that is set apart to specifically, slow down, look into our spiritual lives, spent more time in prayer, in fasting and helping others and thereby becoming more alive in our spiritual lives.

Lent is a season in the Christian calendar, starting with Ash Wednesday on 14 February, going through Palm Sunday, the Holy Week and ending Easter Sunday on 1 April. The major focus and purpose of this season is to provide us an opportunity to reflect on our spiritual lives in the context of life of Jesus Christ our Saviour—

especially His suffering, sacrificial death, burial and resurrection and the Great Commission.

Here are some suggestions to make Lent meaningful to us.

1. Prayer and reading the Bible

This is a season where we give more time for prayer and gather more frequently for prayer, both individually and as a parish. Lent is a perfect time to develop and strengthen the discipline of a regular prayerful life.

- Start or strengthen a discipline of morning and evening prayer and Bible reading each day, and besides that, of regular family prayer.
- Hours of Prayer: if possible, set apart ten to fifteen minutes in the morning, before noon, in the afternoon and in the evening; put a halt to everything you do and spend the time in prayer.
- Other than individual prayers, commit to participating in all prayer activities in your parish during this season.
- Set apart time to read and meditate on passages from the Bible as given in the Lectionary and the Daily Schedule for the Lenten season. If you can't read the Bible yourself, please have someone in your family read it to you.

2. Fasting and giving up

Sometimes when we hear the word fasting, we only think about fasting from food. Fasting is not related to food alone, but can be extended to others things and is geared towards embracing a simpler lifestyle. By giving up things which take away our time, money and energy, we can 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.
- Try and *give up* certain food items—like meat, tea, chocolate, soft drinks, etc.
- *Restricting* and *regulating* use of

- Social media like Facebook, WhatsApp, etc.
- Electronic items like television and mobile phone

Remember—the extra time we gain when we give up activities should be used for prayers, reading the Bible or 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 giving alms

The Bible tells us that true religion is serving widows and taking care of the orphans (James 1:27), and historically, the church worldwide 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 or 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 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.

My dear brothers and sisters; what a privilege we have with thousands of fellow believers in Christ to be on this journey—a journey of spiritual renewal and rejuvenation. God has called us to be His witnesses and as we go through this season, 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 as we enter into this Season of Lent.

May God's richest 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.✠

✠Dr K.P. Yohannan Metropolitan