



EN/01/January-February/2024

BELIEVERS EASTERN CHURCH

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

SHEPHERD'S LETTER

January/February 2024

Blessings and greetings to all the Archbishops and Bishops, Priests and Deacon Fathers, Evangelists and Order of Sisters, and all the Faithful of the Believers Eastern Church world-wide, in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen!

Dearly beloved in Christ,

Christ is with us!

It brings me immense joy to write to you as we approach the most significant season in the holy church. This is the 'Season of Great Lent' beginning from February 11 till March 31, 2024.

This season is observed as a time of fasting and prayer in which the faithful remember the last days of Christ on earth that led to His death, burial and triumphant resurrection. As followers of Christ and members of His holy church, we look forward to this season because it helps us to prepare ourselves to observe the 'Feast of Easter' in a worthy manner. During this season, we also make a deliberate choice to slow down and pause to examine our lives with true humility and brokenness to be spiritually renewed.

In addition to that, there are **three pillars of Lent**, which are intended for all the faithful members of the Church.

Prayer: During Lent, we are called to pray more. The more we pray, the more we change to fulfil God's will in our lives, as in Heaven. We pray and seek the Lord's mercy to forgive our sins and make us more like Him so we become bearers of fruits of righteousness in our day to day lives.

Fasting: We must fast not only from food, but also from sinful habits. We shouldn't surrender to our passions, but overcome with God's mercy and grace to become partakers of the divine nature. As we abstain from certain foods, let us also abstain from negative thoughts, words, and actions. Transform your home into a sanctuary of prayer and reflection, fostering an environment that nurtures spiritual growth.

Almsgiving: As the scripture says in Isaiah 58:7, our fasting pleases God when we care for the poor and oppressed. When we fast from food during Lent, we intend to save money and other

resources to share with the needy. Sharing with those in need pleases God. As a family and also as a parish it can be practiced during this season of Great Lent.

The two vital parts of observing Great Lent are the actions we take as individuals and the activities we engage collectively as a parish. Both components hold equal significance.

Individually, we make a commitment to follow the disciplines of fast, self-evaluation and personal time of prayer and meditation. On the other hand, the call for us corporately is to seek to participate in as many liturgical services as possible, along with our families. The joy is that we are not alone in this journey. Our parish becomes a spiritual family, supporting and uplifting each other, for it is in our shared commitment that we find strength and encouragement.

Additionally, I urge you to give emphasis for the following things as well:

1. **Use all the Lent resources of the Church:** From the Holy Synod, you will receive several spiritual aids like Daily Scripture Readings, Daily Lenten Meditation, Daily Prayer Liturgy and guidelines on fasting in order to make our journey through the days of Great Lent meaningful.
2. **Home Prayer Altar:** Lent is the time for increased prayer and this must occur in our homes as well. Let us make sure that the family altar and prayers at home continue without fail during the Lent season.
3. **Pray the Jesus Prayer:** “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner” is one prayer that we can throughout the day. If you have prayer rope, pray this prayer as many as times you can.

May I encourage all of us not to ignore this invitation of the holy church! As your spiritual father, I will also join with you in this journey and together let us earnestly look forward to be blessed by our Lord.

Christ is with us! He is and always shall be, Amen.

Your Father in Christ,



Athanasius Yohan I Metropolitan

Date : 15 January 2024

Place : Holy Synod

P.S: Please make sure this is translated into all regional languages and read in all parishes for the encouragement of the faithful.