

# *Worshipping the Lord God Alone*

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The Season of Lent calls us for repentance and conversion, starting a right relationship with God and each other. The church wants us to exercise three disciplines: praying, alms giving, and fasting. Such exercise is meant to help us transform our life and affect behavior. The primary disposition to attain such virtues is believing the presence and providence of God through the word of faith preached to us. The people of Israel are constantly reminded that God's active presence and intervention throughout their history, especially in dire situation such freeing them from the oppressive hands in Egypt and captivity in Babylon. God does not want the people of Israel to forget God's liberating intervention and care. Therefore, to bring offerings to God and giving alms to the poor is an act of gratitude to God's providence.

The scripture readings invite us let God be God in our life, acknowledging our limitation in the words of the Psalmist, "My refuge, and fortress, my God in whom I trust." Due to our past hurts or taken advantage of by somebody, for most of us, trusting is not accessible commodity. Humanly speaking, trusting could be equated with being naive or gullible. In God's wisdom trusting is a childlike vulnerability and total dependence on his/her parents (Luke 11:9-13). St. Paul states, "No one who believes in him will be put to shame." How trusting are we that God will respond to us whenever we call upon him. The Season of Lent is the proper time to call upon the Lord to enhance our faith through the tools the church has set before us, praying, alms giving and fasting.

The first example of spiritual discipline is Jesus according today's Gospel reading, "Filled with the Holy Spirit, Jesus returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the desert for forty days, to be tempted by the devil." It is when we are physical, emotionally, or mentally weak or vulnerable that the devil tries to take advantage and prevail over us. He wants to keep us astray from Jesus, who is "the way, the truth and the life." The devil tempted Jesus in the following three areas of our everyday life: greed, power and pride. In our time they can be expressed as materialism, power, and fame. **Materialism**, expressed in unbridled consumerism by excessively hoarding of things while others are deprived of basic needs to live. **Power** acquired illegitimately leads to abuses, controlling fellow human beings to the point taking away the God given life. **Fame**, to be popular and known at any cost. In the sacred Season of Lent, we are invited for self-emptying from these three temptations Jesus faced and prevailed.

Assessing our time, America is the driving engine of material consumerism; TVs and social medias are saturated, washing our brains, turning us into consumer machines. Hunger for power has turned our world on the brink of self-destruction and nihilism. Currently, we are witnessing in horror Russian invasion of Ukraine, and the civil war in Ethiopia, where of 6 million people are at the verge of starving to death. Even the USA, the beacon of democratic ideals has experienced how dangerous, and damaging is the urge for illegitimate political power. USA is the biggest producer of fame and idol worship. The “American Idol” production epitomizes the meaning of fame and our societal vanity. Prosperity Gospel and feel-good values idealized in our time are contrary to what Jesus overcame in the desert through prayer and fasting. The scripture is not ambiguous telling us, “You shall worship the Lord, your God, and him alone shall you serve.” Let us listen to the call to which says, “The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart.” Therefore, it is time to be like Mary, to ponder the word in our hearts and direct our actions, setting our priorities right.