



Lent: 3 / 40

A Reflection on Three Practices of Lent

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The 2nd Event of Faith in Action was held on Wednesday, February 28. The main theme of the programme, titled as Lent = 3/40, appeared as a mathematical equation which puzzled many of the parishioners. But for those who are familiar with the Church Liturgical calendar or Catholic catechism can solve the equation with their religious instinct - 3/40 means that the Three Practices of Lent, Praying, Fasting, and Almsgiving, should be put into action during the 40-day Lenten period.

The evening programme began with the theme song of Faith in Action “As the flame of faith is carried” followed by Rev. Paul Chu’s opening prayer. Rev. Paul Chu’s sharing on the preparation of Jesus Christ’s crucifix, death and resurrection through the Three Practices by which we could see how salvation happened on us. The song “Lord, I am Here” invited the congregation to respond to God’s calling.

All participants, around 120, were split into groups of families, adults and teens. Each group was led by facilitators to reflect on the Three Practices through scripture reading, prayers and sharing. The members of the Family groups were invited to develop a Family Lenten Pledge whereas the members of the other groups worked out their Personal Lenten Pledge.

The first practice, Praying, has always been regarded as the ‘soul’ of our spiritual lives. All of the synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) tell us that Jesus was led by the Holy Spirit into the desert where he fasted and prayed for 40 days. St. Paul always stressed the importance of praying and he called his disciples to “pray always”. All these remind us that Lent is a time when we concentrate our prayer on the double meaning of the season: conversion from our sinful ways and renewal of our baptismal promises. It was suggested that participating in the Eucharist and praying over the Scripture readings, on a weekly or even daily basis, would be helpful to prepare one entering into the season. Praying could be in forms of private prayer, family prayer and communal prayer, all of which work together to deepen our prayer life.

The second practice, Fasting, is an integral part of Lent. According to the Church’s tradition, parishioners need to reduce

the amount of food they eat and to abstain from meat. Our physical hunger reminds us of our spiritual hunger, our need for God. For that reason, our Lenten fasting is modeled on Jesus’ 40-day fast in the desert. He fasted in preparation for his baptism in the Jordan and his public ministry. As Catholics, we fasted to remind ourselves of our baptismal commitment and need for renewal. Apart from reducing the amount of food and abstaining from meat, fasting can take many forms. We can fast from enjoyable activities or bad habits such as unnecessary buying, accumulating, and wasting, from excessive TV viewing etc. The purpose of fasting is to turn our attention to both God and others. Fasting reminds us not only of our dependence on

God, but also of the needs of the hungry and poor. By fasting, we place ourselves in solidarity with suffering people everywhere.

The third practice, Almsgiving, is an essential Lenten Practice. It reminds us of the prophet Isaiah’s address in the Old Testament “releasing those bound unjustly, untying the thongs of the yoke; setting free the oppressed, breaking every yoke; sharing your bread with the hungry, sheltering the oppressed and the homeless; clothing the naked when you see them, and not turning your back on your own” (Isaiah 58:6-7) As Lent is a time for action, we are called to serve those in need and use our wealth, gifts, time, and talents to create a promising world that Jesus envisioned. For Catholics, Lent is a time to cultivate a spirit of gratitude for what we have - friendship, health, love etc. All these are the gifts from God.

The Event came to climax at the last part as participants finished working on the Family as well as their Personal Lenten Pledges. During the end-up session at the church, they wrote their names on a piece of heart-shaped paper and offered it to our Father of All-mighty as a symbol of commitment to their future actions stated on the pledges. The gathering ended with a Lenten Song “Hosea” and the participants took their Home Kits in which they could find useful and reflective materials for reference during their Lenten journey.

The next event of Faith in Action will be held on Saturday, May 28 and its theme will be on Corpus Christi - “The Presence of Christ in Eucharist.”

