**THE GREAT LENT**

The syriac wordfor Lent is *Soumo*, in Latin it is Quadragesima which means forty. In English the word ‘Lenten’ refers to the days growing longer during the season of spring. Forty days has multiple significance in the Scriptures. Moses, Elia and our Lord fasted for forty days. Fasting and overcoming temptations is a way of purification and strengthening us for our earthly missions. Moses and Elia spoke to our Lord at his transfiguration about his coming passion and death. For Orthodox Christians Lent begins eighteen days after the three days Nineveh fasting and ends on the fortieth day which is the Friday before Palm Sunday. During the following ten days we commemorate the events preceding and including the Passion of our Lord. The Orthodox Church observes fifty days in preparation for the Resurrection of our Lord.

During the Lenten Season we meditate on the essential meaning of our lives. Not like a former Air Force colleague who remarked “When the world ends my black pepper plantation, my uncle’s daughter and the merchant at Alappuzha will be sufficient for me”.

We meditate on the three temptations of Jesus. The God of all creation took on our human form and was tempted like any one of us. He is tempted by the devil. The word “devil’ comes from the Greek *DIA BALLO* which means to divide or to separate. The devil wants to divert or separate Jesus from his mission to proclaim “The Kingdom of God”. By his death on the Cross he unites us with the Father. Let us meditate on those three temptations in our human condition.

1. **Passion**: He was hungry (Mt. 4:2). Hunger is an essential need of the body. Whilst we have to take care of our body’s needs we also have to be aware of a deeper spiritual hunger? When my brother is hungry that is a physical need for him but it is also my spiritual hunger to take care of his needs. “When I was hungry you fed me” Mt. 25:35. My self-disciplining should liberate my inner self to share from what I have with those who do not have. Giving up some of our physical comforts may serve as a well spring of self-giving. We need to differentiate between our essential needs and our wanting to have everything.
2. **Position**: The devil sets him on the pinnacle of the temple (Mt. 4:5). This represents the desire for high position in the work place, society, community and even in our place of worship. This includes wealth, position, promotions, reputation, honors in society and so on. This is the sin that caused the fall of the angels: “pride”. The devil tells Jesus “Jump and you will be safe”. Remember he is a liar and the father of lies.
3. **Possession:** The devil shows Jesus the kingdoms of the world and their glory and states “I will give you all these if you bow down and worship me” (Mt. 4:9). We live in a competitive world largely governed by greed and selfishness. A world of haves and have nots. We naturally wish to be among the haves rather than the have nots. But let not our desire for possession overpower the image and likeness of God that lives within us. So do not let our possessions alienate us from the love of God and our awareness of the needs of our brothers and sisters.

Therefore, dear brothers and sisters, let us walk through this Great Lent mindful of God’s grace that helps to guide us through the temptations that assail us and to keep us on the right path to His Kingdom. Let our journey through the great Lent prepare us to pass through the Passion of Christ to a glorious resurrection. I wish you a victorious Soumo that is the great Lent.

Your’s in Christ

Alakot Achen