



“They are trees planted by streams of water; they bear fruit; their leaves do not wither; in all that they do they prosper.” Ps 1:3

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The Theme for 2017: “Watch and Pray” Mathew:26:41

CONTENTS

- *Watch and Pray – Theme explained*
- *Divine Mercy in my life – A testimony*
- *Personal Prayer Outline*
- *Fasting – Soul of prayer*
- *Quiz*

WATCH AND PRAY

Mt 26:41 – “Watch and pray so that you will not enter into temptation. For the Spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

God knows the innermost thoughts, desires and the needs of every person. He knew that great trials are coming, it is necessary therefore, to stay awake be on your guard, therefore watch, seek aid from God in view of the trial (Mt 26:38). If there ever was a time when we need to be watchful, alert and pray it is in the present time.

We are called to be watchful.... to be constant in prayer, lest we fall into temptation, but instead we sleep, if the disciples had known how

desperately they would need the spiritual strength that only prayer could give them, they would have been WIDE AWAKE, on their knees, praying fervently and intensely, imploring God to give them His power and His protection in the battle that was about to begin.

Watch, is more than merely being awake, it means to be alert, to scan eagerly, to observe in order to look after, protect or guard. Watch – means to have the alertness of a guard at night. A night watchman must be ever more vigilant than a daytime guard. A night watchman must be hyper vigilant, suspecting danger at any moment. That's the type of watching Jesus spoke about.

Young and old, need to be on guard. They should not ask God to do for them what He expects them to do for themselves. There are some things God expects us to do, and when we do our part, He will do his. We are easily disturbed by the world, our fleshly needs and desires and the schemes of the enemy. We can only remain faithful when we are in prayer. In Nehemiah 4:17- “Those who were rebuilding the wall and those who carried burdens took their load with one hand doing the work and the other holding a weapon. As we watch we will discern dangers from within and without. Watching reveals those dangers to us, and prayer reveals the remedy.

Ezekiel 33:6-8 “on the other hand when the sentinel sees the sword coming and does not blow the trumpet, the people are not warned and some are killed. In that case I will hold the sentinel responsible and he will answer for the victims' death. For your part, son of man, I have set you as a watchman for Israel, and when you hear my word, you must give them my warning. When I say to the wicked: 'Wicked man, you shall die for sure,' if you do not warn the wicked man to turn from his ways, he will die because of his sin, but I will also call you to account for his blood.” Through this verse we can clearly understand the seriousness and the responsibility that is placed on each of us to be watchmen. A story is told about a village in Africa where all the people had become Christians, these first time Christians were very serious about Watchful prayer. Each believer had their own special place outside the village where they could go alone to pray in solitude. They walked through their own private footpath through

the bush. The moment the other members see weeds, grass growing on the footpath which the villager travelled they knew the person was not praying. The elders used to visit the person and gently remind him of his commitment to watchful prayer. As prayer group members let us make every effort to watch over the prayer partner that is allocated to us, and also to watch over those areas that we are called to watch over.

1. Watch over our words – Mt 12 :36 we are to give account of every word
2. Watch over our thoughts - Proverbs 4:23 be careful how you think, your life is shaped by your thoughts.
3. Watch over our appearances – if we wear a dress because I am comfortable it is ok, but because I want others to see me then it is wrong. Check your motives.
4. Watch over our associations –the best example is the story of the prodigal son. His friends were there when he had money, when he lost everything there was nobody to support him.
5. Watch over our recreation – how we spend the time, what we watch on T.V.
6. Watch over our habits – I used to sit, lying on the sofa with leg stretched for personal prayer it became a habit, until a few days back I got a stiff back and neck pain.
7. Watch over our readings, what we read & see
8. Watch over our Financial dealings- am I faithful in giving my tithe... Malachi 3:10
9. Watch over our Bible Study & prayer time – the evil one will try everything to keep you busy.
10. Watch for the signs of time – situation in prayer group, in your place of residence.

God has blessed us with this theme “Watch and Pray” because He knew we need it at this point of time. Let us make a commitment and dedicate a specific time to pray for the prayer group’s needs and the needs of the prayer group members every day. We can do this by joining the WhatsApp Intercessory Group. May the Lord Jesus Christ guard our hearts and make us true “Watchmen” for his Kingdom.

-Core team

"Lenten practices of giving up pleasures are good reminders that the purpose of life is not pleasure. The purpose of life is to attain to perfect life, all truth and undying ecstatic love – which is the definition of God" . Fulton J. Sheen

TESTIMONY: DIVINE MERCY IN MY LIFE

The year of Mercy had just begun, and unaware of its grace, my friends and I went about our usual college activities of the 3rd year. We began preparing for our final exams that were scheduled to be held in the month of December 2015. I remember clearly that it was the day of a minor exam, and I happened to carry my phone to the exam hall. Minutes before entering, I received a call to hear the dreadful news, that my close friend's dad and uncle had met with an accident that morning. His uncle died instantly and his dad was in a critical state with a serious head injury. I stood there in shock, just able to mutter to my friend, that I had an exam to attend. He apologized and asked me to meet him later at the campus chapel. At that moment, all I could do, was call on Jesus' name, for a miracle. "He will be well" was the reply that struck me. Afterwards, I rushed to the chapel to find my friends gathered, praying the Divine Mercy chaplet, with tears in their eyes. As I was praying for my friend's dad, the image of an old man with a bandage on the right side of his head, laughing, flashed through my mind, and the words, once again, resounded, "He will be well". Minutes later, it was indeed an injury that his dad had sustained to the right side of his head, so much that, a part of his skull had to be cut to relieve the swelling of the brain tissue. My roommate, a firm believer, boldly told us after prayer, that "He would be healed in no time". I somehow, seemed to doubt her words then.

Visits to the ICU ensued, along with fervent prayer requests, one of which was, asking my mom to inform the MIPC intercessory ministry to intercede for Uncle's speedy recovery. Slowly but steadily, uncle seemed to be making progress, and I saw the power of prayer manifest four months later, when we visited uncle in hospital, who was sitting comfortably, and smiling at us, a drastic transformation from his coma-like state. As we walked back to college, we met a Nurse whom we knew from before, who worked in that hospital. Our friend had not shared much about his situation, but she then, told us, the actual inside story, of how his dad arrived in a pretty bad condition, and that even the best doctors hesitated to operate on him, saying that the best chance of recovery of a youngster in that situation would take a minimum period of 6 months, let alone a 65 year old man.

And in a span of four months, Uncle had improved faster than human understanding. As I crossed the road, a voice struck me, "This is, my 'NO TIME'!!". The doubt I had earlier, was replaced by conviction and praise and overwhelming awe for this mighty God, who never fails to answer anyone in need. I may not be faithful in a lot of things, but the Chaplet of Divine Mercy is now, etched in my life. I am grateful to all those whose prayers have made this possible. All praise and glory to God Almighty!

- *Amanda Lobo*

PERSONAL PRAYER OUTLINE

- Personal Prayer is your meeting with your Creator, Lord and Father alone.
- There are no fixed rules or set patterns that one must follow in personal prayer.
- We need to be sensitive to the Holy Spirit who will teach us to pray and will lead us in new and creative ways in our time with the Lord.
- It will be helpful to maintain a prayer diary where you can enter in what the Lord is saying to you in prophecy or a spiritual truth or sin area he has convicted you of in your prayer time, etc.

The following is only a guideline "Personal Prayer Pattern"

I. Start :

1. You could begin by thanking the Lord in faith that He is going to meet with you in this time of prayer.
2. Surrender yourself totally and every aspect of your being – mind, will, emotions, body and spirit.
3. In faith, sprinkle the blood of Jesus over yourself and the place where you are praying asking the Lord for protection during this time.
4. If you feel a spirit of condemnation or heaviness or guilt, confess conscious sins and remind yourself that you are coming before the Lord on the basis of His blood and not on your own righteousness.
5. You may find it helpful to begin your prayer time by praying aloud in tongues for 5 minutes or reading a Psalm out loud and praising the Lord.

6. In order to minimize distractions, talk to the Lord about all that is in your mind, surrender all your thoughts and you will be able to focus better. (If you do not have the gift of tongues yet, you can pray in any other known language.)
7. Invite the Holy Spirit (through prayer or a song) to fill you and lead you in this time of prayer.

II. **Thanksgiving** : Ps 100 tells us that we are to enter his gates with thanksgiving:

1. We can thank the Lord for every blessing that we can remember in our lives for everything that he has helped us to do on the previous day, things that we otherwise take for granted, like good health, food, clothing, shelter, family, etc.
 2. We should thank the Lord in faith for every problem, trial and the things that did not work out well in our lives (1 Thes 5:16-18)
- (Take an appropriate posture. If you find yourself sleepy, it may help to stand and thank and praise the Lord or even walk about).

III. **Praise** : (Ps 100:4 says that we enter his courts with Praise)

1. It is good to Praise God audibly. You should be able to hear yourself praising.
2. Praising God is turning our focus from ourselves and our problems to God. We praise him for his greatness, love, mercy, etc.
3. It should be a time of spontaneity where we express ourselves freely. (eg: Lord I love you; You are my strength and my fortress; You are a mighty God; You are the King of Kings, Praise the Lord; etc.). We should spend as much time as possible in such free praises.
4. You can also sing regular songs and praise and clap and dance to the Lord.
5. You may also find it helpful to praise in tongues for an extended time – (say around 10-15 mins at a stretch)

IV. **Repentance & Forgiveness & Surrender** :

1. Repent and confess all sins you are conscious of and ask the Lord to wash you with the Blood.

2. Ask the Holy Spirit to search your heart and reveal all unconfessed sins. Pray in tongues and wait on the Lord.
 3. Then specifically surrender your mind, thoughts, speech and ask the Lord to cleanse these areas.
 4. It is helpful to list down in your prayer diary all your sins and weaknesses. Eg: Anger, pride, anxiety, etc. Then surrender all these areas and ask him to forgive you and take charge of these areas and change them.
 5. Surrender all the things that you hold dear to yourself, remembering that the Lord must be given first place. Eg: Lord I surrender my husband, wife, children, job, etc)
 6. Forgive all those who have hurt you in obedience to God's Word and then surrender your hurt feelings to the Lord and he will replace them with his love.
- V. **Worship : By worship we acknowledge God's holiness.** It is a time of deep intimacy with the Lord where we totally abandon ourselves and come in complete adoration of Him.
1. Worship includes not just our words but our entire beings, our whole body. Taking an appropriate posture aids us in expressing our worship. Eg: **Standing in His presence, lifting up our hands, kneeling, bowing our heads, crouching, or prostrating before God.**
 2. As the Spirit leads us we could sing songs of worship and pray or sing in the Spirit.
 3. An important part of worship is to remain silent in the presence of the Lord, and drink deeply of His love and presence.
- VI. **Listening to the Lord :** When we spend time in silence after worship, the Lord may speak to our hearts or bring a scripture verse to mind. However, there will be times when we will not hear anything specific, but the Lord ministers to our spirits.
- VII. **Word of God :** We need to read Word of God systematically and apply it to our lives. We can begin by making a prayer asking the Holy Spirit to open our eyes and give us understanding of the Word. It is helpful to read the Word immediately after Worship, if possible.

VIII. **Intercessions & Spiritual Warfare** : When we intercede, we lift up the needs of others.

1. It is helpful to maintain a prayer list and put down various intentions, as well as answers to prayer. We can also make a note of any scripture verse or promise we have claimed for a particular request. We must always remember to make our requests known, with thanksgiving.
2. Our prayer list should include prayer for the salvation of souls and prayers for people in authority. (Read 1 Timothy 2:1-4)

- *Compiled*

FASTING –THE SOUL OF PRAYER

Fasting is a willing abstinence or reduction of one’s intake of food for a period of time.

The Catholic Church while observing the disciplines of fasting and abstinence on certain days of the year, teaches us that all people are obliged to God to perform some penance for their sins, and that these acts of penance are both personal and corporeal. Fasting is to reaffirm to oneself what Jesus said to satan when he tempted Him at the end of His forty day fast, **“One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.”** (**Mathew 4:4**). The **Bible** teaches us right from the Old Testament about people who fasted and prayed. Be it **David, Judith or Daniel**-- they all fasted and prayed and saw the glory of the Lord. In the book of **Tobit**, we read about the angel Raphael, a messenger of God, who appeared to Tobit and his son Tobias, and said to them, **“Prayer is good when accompanied by fasting, almsgiving and righteousness.”** (**Tobit 12:8**)

Jesus himself fasted and prayed. (**Mathew 4:2**) And after teaching his disciples to pray the “Our Father”, he said, “Whenever you fast do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that they may be seen by men. But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, so that your fasting may be seen not by others, but by your father who sees in secret, will reward you “ (**Mathew 6:16-18**).

"Fasting confirms our utter dependence upon God by finding in Him a source of sustenance beyond food."

Fasting is indeed the soul of prayer. And prayer is what our soul needs, every moment and in every situation.

The purpose of fasting is **spiritual focus, self discipline, imitation of Christ and performing penance.** Fasting and penance is usually associated with **lent.** **Lenten fast** is observed in the Catholic Church to commemorate the forty day fast observed by Christ. The days and times of penance for the Universal Church are, each Friday of the whole year and the entire season of lent. (**Canon 1250**). Abstinence and fasting are to be observed on **Ash Wednesday and Good Friday.** (**Canon 1251**). But it is not enough to fast only on obligatory days or only during lent. In today's challenging world with the problems, temptations and trials we face, fasting can be a highly beneficial tool.

Daniel saw visions and received revelation from God after fasting for three weeks (**Daniel 10:3**). He was thrown into the lion's den, but the lions did not do him any harm. God protected him.

St Augustine said, "Fasting cleanses the soul, raises the mind, subjects one's flesh to the spirit, renders the heart contrite and humble, scatters the clouds of concupiscence (strong sexual desire), quenches the fire of lust, and kindles the true light of charity."

Pope Benedict XVI said, "The ultimate goal of fasting is to help each one of us to make a complete gift of self to God."

The **Scriptures** clearly show that fasting is not man-made, but instituted by God and that it has many benefits for the soul. Fasting is most intimately connected with prayer. **Fasting confirms our utter dependence upon God by finding in Him a source of sustenance beyond food. The early Christians, Apostles and prophets** fasted and prayed and the Holy Spirit worked wonders in their lives. (**Acts 13:2-3**) (**Acts 14:23**)

Here are some of the Spiritual benefits of fasting:

- It makes prayer more effective.
- It disciplines the mind, body and soul.
- It can help fight temptations.

- It makes one humble down before God. (**Psalm 69:10**)
- It helps achieve control over bad habits and break the chains of bondages. (**Isaiah 58:6**)
- It's a way of putting God above our own needs or desires.
- It gives us an opportunity to share our food with the hungry. (**Isaiah 58:7**)
- It can bring about deliverance from evil.
- It can bring about a strong anointing of the Holy Spirit.
- It helps those in the Lord's ministry by **strengthening** their **spiritual power**. Jesus cast out a demon from a boy, while His disciples had tried and failed. When they asked Him why they could not do it, He replied, "This kind can come out only through **prayer and fasting**". (**Mark9:29**).

Fasting should not be taken as an **undesirable compulsion**, but as a **voluntary decision**. It may seem difficult at first, but when we seek the Lord's help, His grace is sufficient for us, and when we actually have a sincere desire to fast, no food or drink will come as a temptation, but even hunger pangs will be driven away by the grace of the Holy Spirit. My personal experience with fasting has been a very fulfilling one. It used to seem very difficult at one time, but with the Lord's grace all things are possible.

There are different kinds of fast. Complete or absolute fast, partial fast like a Daniel fast, black fast or an intermittent fast. The health condition of the person should be taken into consideration and all those with **medical illnesses** need to consult their physician before taking up a fast. The law of **abstinence** binds those who have completed **fourteen years** of age. And the law of **fasting** binds those who have attained majority (**eighteen years**), until the beginning of their **sixtieth year (Canon 1253)**. Pastors of souls and parents of those who are not bound by the law on account of their age should ensure that they are taught the true meaning of penance.

Fasting is not about "not eating anything at all". One can avoid any **one meal**, either **once** or **twice** a week on a **regular basis** or for a **certain period** of time, for a **particular intention** on advice of a **Spiritual**

director. Fasting can be avoidance of meats, or foods or drinks which we like the most or crave for. Or whenever we feel like eating something in between meals, we can abstain from it and offer that sacrifice for an intention. A Daniel fast is followed for three weeks wherein one does not eat any meat or animal products but only fruits and vegetables. What is more important is the desire to offer up a sacrifice to God in silence, willingly and without complaining and even if we cannot live up to the commitment.

to be continued.....

QUIZ CORNER - Lenten Quiz

Tick (√) the right answer

1. Where did the first Passover take place?
(a) Jerusalem (b) Egypt (c) Nazareth (d) Upper room
2. Which Gospel does not mention the Last Supper?
(a) Mathew (2) Mark (c) Luke (d) John
3. When Pilate found no guilt in Jesus, for what reason did the Jews say that Jesus should die?
(a) He claimed to be of heaven (b) He said he would destroy the temple of God (c) He claimed to be their King (d) He claimed to be the Son of God
4. Which gospel does not mention about Simon of Cyrene
(a) Mathew (2) Mark (c) Luke (d) John
5. According to the Gospel of Mathew who was the high priest Jesus first led away to?
(a) Annas (b) Vitellius (c) Caiaphas (d) Josephus
6. Only one gospel says Simon, a Cyrenian, "was the father of Alexander and Rufus". Which one is that?
(a) Mathew (2) Mark (c) Luke (d) John

7. Only one gospel mentions that " the Lord turned and looked at Peter". This look of Jesus leads to Peter's weeping bitterly over his denial. Which gospel is that?
 (a) Mathew (2) Mark (c) Luke (d) John
8. Which is not a name for the place Jesus was crucified?
 (a) Calvary (b) Golgotha (c) Gethsemane (d) The Skull
9. According to the Gospel of Mathew, what time of day did Jesus die on the cross?
 (a) Noon (the sixth hour) (b) 3 PM (the ninth hour)
 (c) 6 PM (the twelfth hour) (d) 9 PM (the fifteenth hour)
10. Who provided the tomb for Jesus' burial ?
 (a) Nicodemus (b) Joseph of Arimathea (c) Simon of Cyrene
11. Which Prophet prophesied "And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the value of a man with a price on his head, a price set by some of the Israelites, and they paid it out for the potter's field" : which even today is called "the Field of Blood "
 (a) Isaiah (b) Jeremiah (c) Hosea (d) Joel

ANSWERS FOR THE CHRISTMAS QUIZ

- 1) Lk 2:4 2) Mt 1:24 3) Lk 2:10 4) Lk. 1:32 5) Mt 2:10 6) Lk:1:56
 7) Mt:2:23 8) Lk:1:76 9) Mt 2:21 10) Lk 2:32.

Hearty congratulations to Susana Pinto, Ethel Fernandes, Ivy Pacheco, and Renato Gomes for the correct answers. We also appreciate Glen Brooks for participating.



***MIPC Prayer Meeting: Every Thursday at 8:00 pm in the Parish Hall.
 General Intercessory Meeting: Last Monday of every month at 8:00 pm.***