



“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 2018: “LISTEN AND OBEY” Jas:1:22 & Lk:8:21

CONTENTS

- *Listen and Obey – Theme explained*
- *Cast your burdens unto Jesus – A testimony*
- *Why do Catholics use incense in worship*
- *Quiz*

LISTEN AND OBEY

It has been rather easy to remember the theme for the year 2017 because we have to remember just two key words, like “Watch and Pray”. The Lord seems to be telling us that it is not enough just to watch and pray, we need to learn to wait on him, listen to him and above all obey him.

Normally everyone prays, but listening and then obeying is much more difficult than just praying. We have around us so many gadgets that keep us busy all the time so much that to remain free for sometime is very difficult. As such waiting on the Lord and listening to him has become much more difficult. I believe it is precisely for this reason that God gave us this theme - “Listen and obey” for this year 2018. We have two key scripture references connected to this theme: James 1:22 - “Be doers of the

word, and not hearers only” and Luke 8:21 – “My mother and brother are those who hear the word of God and do it”.

Both listening and obeying go hand in hand. Let us take one example from scripture, in Exodus 17:4 God told Moses – “strike the rock and water will come out of it, so that the people may drink “. Moses listened and obeyed God’s instruction. Second time when the people grumbled against God in Numbers 20:8 God told Moses to speak to the rock, this time Moses listened but did not obey God, instead of speaking to the rock, he struck the rock twice. God heard the prayer, water came out, but Moses had to bear the consequence of disobedience, Numbers 20:12 says "You did not trust me nor treat me as the holy one in the sight of the Israelites; because of that you shall not lead this community into the land that I am giving you.". The consequence of Moses disobedience was that he lost the chance to lead the people to Promised Land.

In Mathew 7:24-27 speaks of 2 men who hear God’s word. One man hears God’s words and acts on them. The Lord likens him to a wise man who built his house on rock. The 2nd one though he heard God’s words did not act on them is like a fool who built his house on sand. Though both heard the word of God, only one understood and obeyed it. Obviously, one who builds the house on sand is a fool. We may laugh at such a person. But in reality, most of the time we are like him. For example. we all know that prayer and word of God is very important to keep us alive and active, but still we fail to be faithful to our personal prayer and scripture reading. Aren’t we building our house on sand when we do that? Because when storms come in our life and problems arise we lose our patience, temper and burst out. There is always consequence for disobedience, we see this throughout the Bible, but at the same time there is a blessing of obedience. In Deuteronomy 28:1-6 “Well now, if you obey in truth the voice of Yahweh, your God, practicing and observing all the commandments which I give you today, Yahweh, your God, shall raise you high above all the nations of the earth. Then all these blessings shall reach you and come upon you for having obeyed the voice of Yahweh, your God: Blessed shall you be in the city and in the field. Blessed shall be the fruit of your body and the fruit of your land, the young of your asses, the offspring of your cattle and sheep. Blessed shall be your basket and your bowl of dough.

Blessed shall you be when you begin and when you finish. When we hear and obey, we inherit fourfold blessings that are mentioned here . 1. Blessings of prosperity 2. Victory over sin 3. Victory over death 4. Blessings of good health. Obedience is of two kinds : Natural obedience and spiritual obedience, Natural obedience is something which we are naturally called to obey, like you should not put your hand in fire, to remain healthy we need to do exercise these things come under the category of natural obedience. Spiritual obedience is obeying what God says through different instruments, like elders, Word of God, our Inner voice and so on.

Let me give a personal example. Each morning while jogging, after some distance my legs say “stop jogging and walk now “, but the spirit says “no finish it”, complete your scheduled duration.

Another example, we performed a skit on “Listen and Obey” on our 37th MIPC Anniversary. In that skit in one scene I said we should not use any gadgets while having our family meal. At home, each time I take my food and come to the hall, I am tempted to switch on the TV. The words of the skit come to my mind. Though in the natural there is nothing wrong in watching TV, but from the spiritual point of view I need to keep my word, I need to obey the prompting of the spirit.

All of us listen to the word of God through different channels: at prayer meeting, daily mass, teachings listened through the media, personal scripture reading/study etc. If we do not make the word of God our home and our strength, then we are not doers of the word, but hearers only. When we listen and obey our God we are doing the will of God. I pray that we in MIPC will receive the blessings that come from listening and obeying the word of God.

- *Core Team*

“The gifts of the Master are these: freedom, life, hope, new direction, transformation, and intimacy with God. If the cross was the end of the story, we would have no hope. But the cross isn't the end. Jesus didn't escape from death; he conquered it and opened the way to heaven for all who will dare to believe. The truth of this moment, if we let it sweep over us, is stunning. It means Jesus really is who he claimed to be, we are really as lost as he said we are, and he really is the only way for us to intimately connect with God again.”

Cast your burdens unto Jesus... A testimony

It was 20th February 2018 a day we were all awaiting anxiously, the event.. an International Student's Convention. Our anxieties were building up with each of us praying and hoping all will be well. The previous day 19th February I was down with high fever, fear gripped me and I was afraid I would not be able to attend on 20th February.

The first day it was important, I was there setting aside my body ache and fever as I had to be there. I tried to be calm but there was so much happening around I had to be involved. Everything went well we even handled some unexpected incidents well. My part for the entire day was to collect information of all the activities of the day and prepare a script to comper for the award ceremony that evening. It was really trying, the results flooding in, the fear and anxieties building up to get everything right.

It was time to make the announcement, I was a nervous wreck my hands were trembling and there was a quiver in my voice, yet I went on to do the compering. I had managed but I was not satisfied. Day 1 had come to an end.

21st February 2018 – day 2 brought in new challenges. I was in charge of an event and one of the judges backed out due to an emergency. The event was to start at 12noon I had no one until 9am I panicked and prayed and my prayer was answered, my colleague found someone who was ready to come at the last moment we were ever so thankful. As I was in charge of this event I had to look into every detail. It was then that I realized that no tables were set aside for the judges. My HOD got upset with me and I just didn't know how to handle the situation. The judges sat in the VIP seats to judge. Just before the event you could tell from the look on my face I was a nervous. At that moment my HOD said something that made me just break down. She said, "When you are nervous you show it on your face and in your voice". She asked me if I would be able to speak. It really broke me and I wept, my colleagues who were around tried to calm me and I said I will be ok. I tried to calm myself to be ready to speak to start the event. It was the same situation my hands trembling and voice quivering. Somehow

this event also went by.

My day didn't end here I had another huge hurdle to overcome I was to comper for the Gala dinner at Crowne Plaza with these two events being a disaster I was a bundle of nerves. I sat with my colleague to practice our lines for the evening till 3:30pm we didn't get time to go through the entire script. I left to get ready for the evening and another problem arose, no transport to report to Crowne Plaza at 5pm. I called my husband and asked him to find me transport. I reached home and knew I had to calm my nerves I put on a hymn and sang along it was my prayer I didn't bother about my hair or makeup I needed to be calm. I cried out to the Lord and made this prayer 'Dear Lord forgive me, if I have never asked you this before but I need you today, to take away my nervousness please Lord do not embarrass me in front of all those people, calm my nerves and make me confident.' There were tears rolling down my cheek. It was truly a prayer from my heart in desperation to the Lord.

My husband managed to get me transport, thanks to one of my MIPC brothers I was there in time at the Crowne Plaza. At the back of our minds my colleague and I knew we had not gone through the entire script we didn't want the limelight but there we were on the stage with lights beaming at us. Just before the event my colleague said let's pray I called one of our MIPC members who had been coming to our school to help out, the three of us held hands and prayed and I believe that the Lord took control of the situation.

There I realized that on previous days I was trying to do things on my own strength. How foolish I had been not to unburden myself before the Lord.

That evening if I received any appreciation it's all praise to God. I had never before been so composed and calm on stage. My God saved me from being embarrassed. He took control and saw that all went well. All praise, glory and thanks to our God who takes care of us when we cast all our burdens at His feet.

- *Revathi Torres*



Why do Catholics use incense in worship

At Mass and other liturgical services we see priests and altar servers swinging censers, sending clouds of incense wafting through the air. Is it to make the place smell nice, or is it just to encourage some people to cough at the mere sight of it? In Catholic liturgy, everything symbolizes a theological truth. So, what does incense symbolize? why do we use incense in the church and during the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass?

Incense has been used in Christian liturgy from its earliest centuries. In fact, it was a part of the Jewish tradition that came before it, a use that was commanded by God himself and recorded in Sacred Scripture.

Incense in the Old Testament

God commanded Moses to make an Altar of Incense for worship in the Tabernacle: You shall make an altar to burn incense upon.....a perpetual incense before the Lord throughout your generations. (Ex: 30:1-10) God also commanded how the incense should be made, a “holy recipe”: And the Lord said to Moses, “Take aromatic substances,..... This incense shall be treated as most sacred by you.. (Ex: 30:34-36).

From these passages and others we infer that incense was part of a ritual cleansing and purification of the sacred space of the Tabernacle, making it a worthy place for the worship of God – according to His terms. In fact, frankincense, mentioned in the Bible, is now known to have antiseptic and disinfectant properties.

God gave these specific instructions to Moses because worship of God by Israel in His earthly Tabernacle was a pattern of the worship of God by the angels in His heavenly throne; that is, worship on earth was to be unified with the worship in heaven.

Incense in the New Testament

The use of incense is also recorded in the New Testament. Frankincense was one of the precious gifts that the Three Kings brought in homage to the Baby Jesus, which was a sign of his role as priest in addition to prophet and king.

“A man who was completely innocent, offered himself as a sacrifice for the good of others, including his enemies, and became the ransom of the world. It was a perfect act.

- M.K Gandhi

In his apocalyptic visions of heaven, St. John the Apostle recorded that he saw incense being used in God's heavenly throne: Then I saw standing in the midst of the throne Each of the elders held a harp and gold bowls filled with incense, which are the prayers of the holy ones (Rev 5:6-8)

In the above passage, incense is identified with the prayers of the saints. Not only does the smoke symbolize the prayers of the faithful drifting up to heaven, incense actually creates the ambiance of heaven. Hence, incense connects us to God's altar in heaven and allows us to utilize all of our senses in our prayer.

In Rev 8:3-4 incense is added to the prayers of the saints by an angel, highlighting the mediation of the angels in our worship of God: " Another angel came and stood at the altar, holding a gold censer..... The smoke of the incense along with the prayers of the holy ones went up before God from the hand of the angel".

Incense in Christian liturgy

From the Catholic Bible passages above in both the Old and the New Testaments, we can see that incense is an important part of the worship of God on earth, first by the Jews, and continued by the Christians. During the Mass we incense both things and people. In the scriptures, ritual incensing of objects, people and places was for their purification or for making the object or person holy and worthy of God. So the purpose of incensing and the symbolic value of the smoke is that of prayer, blessing, purification, and sanctification.

It is one of the outward signs of spiritual realities, and that is why it has its place in Christian liturgy. These two purposes reveal a deeper truth that prayer itself purifies and sanctifies us, making us worthy of worshiping God in heaven for eternity with all the angels and saints.

Many Bible commentators show how the Tabernacle in the Old Testament is a pattern of us, human beings, as temples or dwelling places of the Holy Spirit. Before we can dwell with God in eternity, there is a need for our purification and sanctification, the removal of sin. One of the ways this

Easter was when Hope in person surprised the whole world by coming forward from the future into the present.

happens is through prayer. This spiritual meaning is evident in the Wisdom books of the Old Testament, where prayer is connected with purification, making our prayer a sweet aroma rising up to God: Let my prayer be incense before you; my uplifted hands an evening offering. (Ps 141:2). Listen to me, send forth fragrance like frankincense,bless the Lord for all his works. (Sirach 39: 13-14)

Incense calls us to prayer

When we see incense being used in our churches, it is meant to remind us of heaven, and that our worship of God in the Christian liturgy is divine in origin. It also reminds us to pray, and that our prayer rises to God like the smoke from the censer, purifying our worship of God, and allowing his Spirit to work in us to make us holy.

“The usage of incense adds a sense of solemnity and mystery to the Mass. The visual imagery of the smoke and the smell remind us of the transcendence of the Mass which links heaven with earth, and allow us to enter into the presence of God.” – Father William Saunders

The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass transcends space and time, and the use of incense helps the worshiper to enter into this eternal reality through the use of the external senses.

When and why we use incense:

According to the General Instruction of the Roman Missal incense may be used during the entrance procession; at the beginning of Mass, to incense the altar; at the procession and proclamation of the Gospel; at the offertory, to incense the offerings, altar, priest and people; and at the elevation of the Sacred Host and chalice of Precious Blood after the consecration.

Incense the Altar:

The Altar represents Christ and his five wounds indicated by the five crosses on the altar top. When we incense the Altar it also reconnects us to the original dedication of our church and to the angels and saints in

" Let the resurrection joy lift us from loneliness and weakness and despair to strength and beauty and happiness."

heaven. This is a visual connection to the use of incense in the Book of Revelation. Just as the angels offer incense as a sacrifice at the altar of God, so do we offer our prayers and sacrifices upon God's new altar. It also connects us, in the most perfect sense, to those gathered around the great altar in heaven. Furthermore, when we incense the altar at the beginning of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, we directly connect with Christ's Holy Sacrifice, for this is Christ's Altar of sacrifice containing his five wounds upon which his precious body and blood will be offered.

Proclamation of the Gospel:

What are we expressing with this incensing of the Gospel? It is a sign of devotion toward these holy words of and about our Savior, which have been preserved for nearly 2000 years, in reverence and love. Catholics firmly believe Christ is present in His word proclaimed, and so we bless and honor that Word who will imminently be present through His words, the Holy Gospel. As the sweet smoke rises toward and surrounds the holy book, we are acknowledging: these are the words that God spoke when He became man and walked on this earth; this is the story of our salvation; here is the promise of everlasting life; here is the testimony of God's love for us.

Offertory:

During the offertory (the preparation of the gifts) incense is used:

1) To bless and to pray for the purification of the bread and wine as well as the spiritual gifts the people have mentally placed on the altar. We offer all our prayers, our joys, our needs, our grief, as well as our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving.

2) To bless the Crucifix and Altar (again)

3) To anoint, to bless, and pray for the purification and sanctification of the priest and the congregation. So as the priest and deacon prepare the gifts, the people are also properly prepared and blessed. The incense is pure myrrh which the women carried when they went to the tomb to anoint Jesus' body. So in a very real sense when we are incensed during Mass our

bodies have been anointed with the myrrh, and we ourselves have become a purified offering to God as we offer our gifts, our spiritual sacrifices, our bodies, our entire being to God through His Son Jesus Christ who will soon become present on the Altar.

After this beautiful blessing, anointing, and offering of prayer in action, all through incense, we are all now standing as the priest says : *Pray brothers and sisters that our sacrifice may be acceptable to God the Almighty Father.*

Elevation:

It is possible to use incense at the consecration during Mass. The thurifer must move into place during the Sanctus (Holy, Holy, Holy) and remain in a kneeling position until the Great Amen and incense only when the celebrating priest elevates the consecrated host or chalice. This gives a sense of our special reverence for the Eucharist, and the importance of the Eucharist to our prayer life, for incense is prayer in action.

Benediction and Eucharistic processions:

It is Christ whom we honor in Eucharistic Adoration and Christ whom we follow in a Eucharistic procession. Saint Paul writes: *Thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession, and through us spreads in every place the fragrance that comes from knowing him. For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing (2 Cor. 2:14-15).* The fragrance of incense in procession symbolizes the fragrance of Christ Himself. Incense is used during adoration as blessing and prayer which is described above.

Funeral Masses:

The priest may also incense the Crucifix and the Paschal Candle. During funeral Masses, the priest at the final commendation may incense the coffin, for two reasons:

1) As a sign of honor to the body of the deceased which became the temple

If Easter says anything to us today, it says this: You can put truth in a grave, but it won't stay there. You can nail it to a cross, wrap it in winding sheets and shut it up in a tomb, but it will rise

of the Holy Spirit at Baptism. That is a very important concept for Catholics. When the women went to the tomb to anoint Jesus Body they took with them myrrh. Which also gives honor to the dignity of the human body especially when considered in the context of the women at the tomb.

2) As a sensual sign of the faithful's prayers for the deceased rising to God. It is that beautiful sign of prayer in action.

- *Compiled*

QUIZ CORNER - QUIZ ON EASTER

Tick (✓) the right answer

1. What day does Easter fall on every year.
 - a. The first Sunday after the first full moon after the vernal equinox.
 - b. Second Sunday after the first full moon after the vernal equinox
 - c. Fourth Sunday after the first full moon after the vernal equinox
 - d. Second Sunday after the harvest moon
2. The idea of the Easter bunny was originated in the 1700s in which country?
 - e. a. France b. Poland c. Germany d. Great Britain

Refer John ch. 19-21 of the Catholic New Revised Standard Version Bible for the following questions.

3. What did Pilate say to the Jews on the preparation day for Passover, and it was about noon?
 - a. Here is your King b. Where are you from c. Behold, the man.
4. On what day of the week did Mary Magdalene come to the tomb?
 - a. first day b. last day c. second day
5. Where did Mary stand weeping?
 - a. outside the tomb b. inside the tomb c. at the garden
6. At what sea did Jesus show himself to the disciples?
 - a. the Sea of Tiberias b. red sea c. sea of Galilee

- 7.. “Cast the net on theof the boat and you will find something.”
a. right side b. left side c. back
8. How many times did Jesus appear unto the disciples, after he was risen from the dead?
a. 2 b. 3 c. 4
9. At the shore Jesus took bread and did what?
a. gave it to them b. broke it c. gave thanks
10. How many angels were guarding the tomb?
a. one b. two c. four
11. What question does Jesus ask Simon Peter when he meets him on the shore?
a. Who do you say that I am? b. Do you understand why these things have happened? c. Do you love me?
12. What is the name of the disciple who met Jesus on the road to Emmaus?
a. Cornelius b. Crispus c. Cleopas

ANSWERS FOR THE CHRISTMAS QUIZ

1) Caesar Augustus 2) three 3) Pope Julius I 4) Herod 5) House of Bread 6) Feliz Navidad 7) Pere Noel 8) Turkey 9) Germany 10) 1843.

Unfortunately no correct answers were received. However we appreciate Glen Brooks, Jessie Fernandes, Juliet D'Souza, Susana Pinto, Ethel Fernandes, Lauren Fernands and Kimberly DSouza 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.***