



“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

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Quench Not the Holy Spirit

The feast of Pentecost is not only an inspiration to all Christians to be part of the Church but also is a call to live our life empowered by the Holy Spirit .

As humans we have various kinds of needs and we want these to be met so that we are happy. We also desire many things though some are not easily fulfilled. While it is quite normal to desire for gifts and blessings there is a question we have to answer – “Do I really desire for the best gift of all, that is the Holy Spirit”?

Possessing what the world has to offer costs us lot of hard work, resources and time. But the Holy Spirit, the best gift of all is available to every person who believes in God and receives his Son Jesus as Saviour and Lord.

On the day of Pentecost God poured out the Holy Spirit freely on all who were present. The Holy Spirit came upon the apostles with such power that they became bold witnesses. Through the Sacrament of Baptism, and Confirmation we receive the Holy Spirit. This is the same Spirit that came upon the apostles and transformed their lives. Then the question we have to answer for ourselves is “why is that I am living as if I don’t have this power?” Why is it that we don’t allow the Holy Spirit to work in us? Are we quenching the Holy Spirit?

1 Thes 5:19 *Quench not the Holy Spirit*, which means do not oppress or stop the Holy Spirit from working. So does it mean we have dominance over the Holy Spirit. What does it mean? It simply means God has given all of us freedom and with this we make good and bad (right and wrong, holy and unholy) choices. When we make wrong choices the Holy Spirit is quenched. That is the time we obstruct the Holy Spirit to work in us.

What are the things that quench the Holy Spirit?

The first is, when we make a **choice of being unbelieving people**. When we make a choice of not to have faith, that is when we quench the Holy Spirit. Though we are baptised, received holy communion and have been confirmed and yet we decide with full knowledge and full consent not to believe, not to have faith in God, not to have faith in his Word, not to have belief in the teaching of the church, in the sacraments, and the gifts it has to offer, we quench the power of the Holy Spirit. Like the Pharisees and Scribes we close our eyes and ears and refuse what the Spirit is saying.

What are the things that lead us to becoming unbelieving people? There could be many occasions but we address only two here, the first being:

We could turn from believing to non-believing people, especially when we suffer.

When suffering comes our way there is a possibility of unbelieving or doubting the presence of God and his love for us. We can’t keep the cross away from Christ. Every person has some sort of suffering in this world. We can’t choose a life where there is no suffering. When we find our suffering too difficult let us remind ourselves that our Lord Jesus had to suffer, mother Mary had to suffer, the apostles and saints have to suffer.

How can we Christians who are followers of Christ cannot accept suffering, cannot accept our cross? Suffering is part of life, in fact suffering is part of Christianity. In fact Jesus said, If you wish to be my disciple pick up your cross and follow me. What does the cross represent – it represents suffering.

Jesus suffered, he encountered death and only after the death came resurrection and salvation to mankind. When we offer our suffering to the suffering of Jesus it becomes redemptive and will be fruitful. If we don't suffer the way God wants us to suffer, then our suffering can make us nonbelievers. And once we start becoming unbelieving people the Holy Spirit is quenched.

It is not just the suffering in itself that matters but the way we suffer makes all the difference. A lame man in a local train was singing a Christian hymn in Hindi. A Christian in that same train happened to hear him singing was surprised and asked him if he was a Christian. He said I am not. But I stand outside every Saturday and Sunday at a particular church and hear them sing this hymn. I liked it and I sing it. Then I asked him you sing it only because you like it or believe that God is good. He said," I believe God is good". Even if I am living a lame life and in poverty every step that I take I believe God is with me and I sing his praises.

A lame man can sing Gods praise though he is lame and poor. The orphans, blind and deaf can sing praises even though they are blind and deaf how much more should we sing when we are suffering. Suffering should not become an excuse for us to be non-believers. We might be tempted to become non-believers or leave the church just because we are hurt or humiliated or encounter a scandal. Let us be practical, that till we are in this world we will encounter humiliations and scandals often.

In life we encounter humiliation, insults and scandals at various places like home, work place, society or even church. This should not make us quit and give up on our faith in God or church. As the church is the body of Christ made up of human beings who are imperfect and weak, there will always be shortcomings, weaknesses, scandals and humiliations. But if we quit because of these, we quench the Holy Spirit and hurt the Spirit of God.

1 Thes 5:18 says - Give thanks at all moments, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Whether you are suffering, humiliated or hurt by scandals, give thanks to God in all circumstances.

There was a devout family having only one son. Suddenly one day their 17 year old boy died in his sleep. He was fit, athletic and had no ailment. The mother was upset because she was a devout and prayerful woman. Her question was "How could God do this to me?" For six months she did not go to church and did not pray. But after six months a priest persuaded her to attend a retreat. With great difficulty she got convinced. While she was praying, in the vision she saw Jesus and her son walking and coming towards her. The boy asked, "Mother, why are you hurt, why are you crying and why are you upset and why are you suffering? Can't you see I am with Jesus, I am happy, please don't cry. The lady at that moment cried out and said, "Jesus, I am sorry for having blamed you for my son's death. What you have given to my son, I as a mother could not earn that for my son, that is heaven." From that day this mother in all circumstances praises God and she reaches out to all those parents who have lost children at an early age.

We are called to praise God in all circumstances. We are called to believe in God in all circumstances and when we do this, the Holy Spirit works within us. In the midst of suffering, humiliations, scandals if we still keep holding to God and to the church, then our faith is true, our faith is deep, and exemplary. In our suffering we are called to be the extended hands of Jesus and reach out to those suffering.

The second occasion where we quench the Holy Spirit is when we justify sin in our life.

What does the world speak of sin: "There is no such thing as " sin". Everything is part of life". The world has become blind to sin and with the world we have become blind to sin. Then the world will lead another blind to a ditch, to a valley of death. When the church speaks of sin and when we refer to what the bible speaks of sin we say "it is to legalistic, it is man - made, it is overreacting." So when we think like this, the Holy Spirit is grieved in us.

Whenever we lie or try to defend anything that offends God that is a sin. For God, “sin” is a “sin”, be it big or small. But our merciful God is ever ready to forgive us.

If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 1 John 1:9

Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be like snow;

Though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool. Isaiah 1:18

When we sin and justify sin, the power of Holy Spirit within us is oppressed and quenched.

We are called to desire for the power of the Holy Spirit and ask the Holy Spirit to give us the fruits and gifts. Let no suffering, let no scandal, let no humiliation take us from God but make us stronger and go closer to God. Let us avoid sin so that the spirit may work within us. We have a call not to quench the spirit, but we are called to quench the fire of evil that is burning within and around us.” Brothers and Sisters let us pray for the power of the Holy Spirit, he is there within us and he is around us .

- *Core Team*

DISCERNING THE VOICE OF GOD

The word discernment sounds lofty and as if reserved for the very spiritual. But on the contrary it is something that every Christian ought to be familiar with. **In simple terms discernment means knowing God’s will in a particular situation and then doing as he directs.** The lord tells us plainly that we are not to be “infant” Christians but he desires that all of us **grow up** and learn to listen and hear HIS voice when making daily choices and big decisions. Therefore, if we are unable to hear from the Lord , or if there is confusion then we need to take a deeper look ... **Maybe we are listening a miss.....**

‘Listening a miss’ – means to listen wrongly or think we are hearing GOD’S voice but actually it is our own imagination , our own mind. Our mind can often mislead us and play tricks with our thoughtsespecially if our thoughts are not taken captive and made obedient to Jesus. We need to bring every thought under the Lordship of JESUS.

Therefore we need to have a certain **disposition** to be able to hear the promptings of the HOLY SPIRIT or the VOICE OF GOD. **You need to be submitted or yielded to the Holy Spirit and have a humble heart !**

So how do I know if I have a humble heart.....?????

A person with a HUMBLE HEART.....

- is not easily affected by criticism , correction ,
- does not take offense easily, and is able to overlook the faults of others
- does not get upset if the plan changes – He goes with the flow
- is a channel of grace even if he has been hurt ; is quick to forgive
- has no agenda of his own rather the Lord’s agenda is his agenda
- submits to the authorities in his life

We need to practice the skill of Listening and obeying in the small everyday moments of life. The Word of God says “ My sheep hear my voice, I know them, and they follow me” John 10 : 27 - 28.

Do we practice listening to and obeying the soft urges and promptings of the Holy Spirit ? When we hear the Lord directing us to do something that is contrary to what we want to do ; are we quick to obey ? or do we turn a deaf ear to that still soft inner voice ? Well , if we don’t practice listening and obeying in the small everyday moments and choiceswe will never hear God Speak for the big decisions. What’s worse is that the gentle voice of the Holy Spirit will be gradually silenced altogether !!!

What are the possible blocks to listening ?

- Self-indulgence blocks the voice of the Holy Spirit.
- Disunity at any level blocks us from hearing the voice of GOD.
- Unconfessed Sin and repeated disobedience prevents us from hearing God
- A murmuring and grumbling spirit will act as a block .
- A mind filled with the clutter of this world (Social Media)will be a distraction
- An overburdened and busy schedule is a block to listening.

What will help us stay tuned into the voice of the Holy Spirit ?

- A consistent daily **prayer time** of Praise and Worship
- Daily reading and **renewing our mind with God's Word**
- Avoiding works of the flesh
- Regular repentance and receiving the sacrament of reconciliation and the Holy Eucharist.
- Knowing that you are **much loved** by The Father who is just longing to speak to you ...

.....so invest in the things of God , spend time in his presence , don't be in a hurry and HE WILL TAKE YOU FROM GLORY TO GLORY !!!!

- *Ann Pinto.*

QUIZ CORNER - Book of James Chapters. 1 to 4

Refer the New Revised Standard Version Catholic Edition Bible

Tick (✓) the right answer

1. How does James identify himself?
a. Apostle b. Brother of Jesus c. Servant of God d. Prisoner of the Lord
2. **What object does James use to illustrate a double-minded man?**
a. Waves of sea b. Mirror c. Fruit tree d. water
3. **What is the source of every generous act and every perfect gift?**
a. Hard work b. Inheritance c. Prayer d. The Father of Lights
4. **What should man be quick to do?**
a. See b. speak c. listen d. React
5. **What object is used to illustrate the concept “Be doers of the word and not hearers only”?**
a. Fruit tree b. Mirror c. Wave of sea d. Vapor
6. **What is called the royal law?**
a. Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord b. Do unto others as you would have them do unto you c. You shall love your neighbor as yourself d. Do not commit adultery
7. **What object or illustration does James use to show that faith without works is dead?**
a. Body without the spirit b. Cloud without water c. Fruit tree without fruit d. Meal without food

8. **James said that the man who makes no mistakes in speaking is what kind of man?**
 a. Great b. Noble c. Perfect d. Wise
9. **What object did he use to illustrate the inconsistency of an uncontrolled tongue?**
 a. Cloud without water b. Meal without food c. spring pour forth from the same opening both fresh and brackish water d. Wandering stars
10. **What words did James use to describe the wisdom that descends NOT from above?)**
 a. Earthly b. unspiritual c. Devilish d. A, B & C
11. **What is the source of conflicts and disputes, whether between nations or individuals?**
 a. Anger b. Hatred c. Cravings d. All of above
12. **What did James say is at enmity with God?**
 Dishonesty b. Friendship with the world c. Hate d. Satan

ANSWERS FOR THE QUIZ ON EASTER

- 1) a. The first Sunday after the first full moon after the vernal equinox 2) c. Germany 3) a. Here is your King 4) a. first day 5) a. outside the tomb 6) a. the Sea of Tiberias 7) a. right side 8) b. 3 9) a. gave it to them 10) b. two 11. c. Do you love me? 12. c. Cleopas

Hearty congratulations to Susan Pinto, Judith Lobo and Brenda Netto, for the correct answers.

We also appreciate Jessie Fernandes, Juliet D'Souza and Yohan Yesudas for participating.



MIPC Prayer Meeting: Every Thursday at 8:00 pm in the Parish Hall.

General Intercessory Meeting: First Monday of every month at 8:00 pm.