



“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 2020: “BE A TRUSTWORTHY DISCIPLE”

Jn::8:31

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Be a Trustworthy Disciple : John 8: 31 : Theme 2020

Dear Brothers, sisters and children, may the grace and peace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with each and every one of you and your household. I can only imagine how time flies and before I realize I’m already into days, weeks, into the 3rd month of this new year 2020 to be precise.

From themes such as Love the Lord your God, Blessed is the one who trust the Lord, Seek and serve the Merciful Lord, Watch and Pray, Listen and obey and grow in Holiness, God has been speaking to the community and leading us year after year in a path that He wants us to tread. If you analyze last 6 years' themes as mentioned above, there is a clear direction as God has been preparing us for this year’s theme since long in order that we yield ourselves to His Will and plan to become His Trustworthy disciples and make others too.

All through the last year, the Lord has been speaking through different members of the community and the core team in a very specific and directional way. Among many messages He gave us, the Lord went on encouraging us to trust and believe in Him along with a call to be a fruitful witness. Furthermore, when the whole community prayed and waited on the Lord, He directed us to trust and serve Him as a witness, spread the good news and bear fruit. Summarizing all above messages, the core group along with ex core group members, cell and ministry leaders sought the Lord for further direction, and once again the message was to trust the Lord in bearing fruit by being in service to God's people. Thereafter the Core team along with the word and Intercessory ministry waited in prayer for two weeks in order to get the theme confirmed as per God's plan and purpose for MIPC.

Well, its with great joy, accountability and responsibility we in the core team are pleased to announce the theme for the year 2020. "Be a Trustworthy Disciple". John 8 : 31.

If we analyse themes for the last 6 years and messages all through 2019, all that the Lord was asking us of is to Trust Him and be His instruments without any fear or anxiety. Gospel of John 8: 31-32 wherein we read Jesus told the Jews who believed in Him, " if you continue in my Word you are truly my disciples, you will know the truth and the truth will set you free".

We have three Circles of Christianity. In the Centre we have our Lord Jesus, Followed by 2nd circle which is close to our Lord, that is disciples/apostles and the third circle consists of general crowd. Like anyone else, before Christ encountered us, we were in the crowd. Crowd represent masses who are easily affected by healing, miracles, signs and wonders of Jesus, but who easily get carried away with the world. All that they do is sit passively (spectators) rather than becoming active participants in the work of salvation.

Then who is a disciple or what is discipleship?

A disciple is one who decides to move out of the crowds and move towards Jesus. He is one who has made his personal decision for Jesus. One who has accepted Jesus as his personal saviour and Lord. Disciple or discipleship is Christian's lifelong commitment to the person, teaching and Spirit of Jesus Christ. Life under the Lordship of Jesus involves progressive learning, growth in Christ-likeness, application of biblical truth and responsibilities for sharing Christian Faith.

Finally to sum up, a disciple is a reflection or a living image of His Master.

In Matt 5: 1 Jesus taught the disciples and not the crowd. He often preached to the crowd. Let's see a few aspects of what Jesus taught the disciples in contrast to what he preached to the crowd.

Disciples - He taught	Crowds - He preached
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Taught them how to pray - Taught them about Beatitudes - Taught them about commandments - Taught them about Love of God & Neighbour - He was very serious and firm with them - Disciplined them - Commissioned them to go out and teach - No instance of healing among apostles. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Always preached - Healed them of their sickness - Delivered them from their bondage/evil spirits - Met their physical needs - Fed them with food. - No instance of teaching/prayer - No instance of disciplining them - No instance of seriousness

By preaching usually one gets informed. however, by teaching one gets formed and finally transformed.

Difference between a disciple and someone in the crowd:

A disciple or would be disciple will always be serious, eager to learn, always prepared to act, prepared to take risk, moves with expectant faith, positive attitude, expect great things to happen, encourages others, carries other's along, has burden for others and lost souls, reaches out to the needy with his time, talent, possessions and resources.

For Example: Mother Mary - When she heard the message of her

conceiving, she said “let it be done according to your Word” and went about ministering to her cousin Elizabeth. Another example of a disciple is Martha’s sister, Mary, who sat at the feet of Jesus listening to Him.

A disciple of Jesus says “Lord lead me according to your Word and Way, your plan and your Will” (Mathew 6:33). A disciple of Jesus prays according to the prayer taught by Jesus, glorifies the Father in heaven, prays for His Kingdom to come and His Will to be done in his or her life. A disciple will say – "Lord what do you want of me? I will do whatever you wish, I will go wherever you lead me". A disciple waits upon the Lord in prayer.

Someone in the Crowd:

Always casual, not willing to learn, not prepared to act and take risk, shallow faith, negative attitude, doesn’t expect anything great to happen, discourages others, no concern or burden for others, doesn’t reach out to the need, selfish and self-centered.

Jesus knew that the crowds too often followed him in search of personal blessings and that was not enough to make them his true disciples. The language "someone in the crowd" is different from that of a "disciple". Someone in the crowd will say, “Jesus I love you, but please use my plan for my happiness, do it my way, give me this and give me that”. This is self-centered prayer, only concerned about receiving and not giving.

Illustration of a Disciple - John 8: 31-32. Who sets us free ?- Jesus/Truth. Who is the Truth ?- Jesus. Who knows the Truth? - A disciple. Who is a disciple ?- One who continues in His Word.

Who continues in God’s Word? – One who believes in Jesus.

Discipleship is a process. Learning continuously. After we moved out of the crowd and moved towards Jesus, saved by Jesus, we ought to make Jesus our Lord and Master in order to be His disciples. Since we are weak and being constantly attacked from all sides, we need to renew ourselves daily and remain under God’s grace. There are many ways to renew ourselves and grow in discipleship.

- Cells and Ministries (where one gets mentored, grows in prayer and faith)
- Self Bible study, online Bible study and Group study

- Partaking regularly in prayer meetings and community prayer service
- Fellowship with believers, daily prayers, scripture and testimonies.
- Frequenting sacraments.
- Attending growth retreats, regular fast, ministering to others and evangelizing.

To be continued.....

Your word is healing to my flesh... A testimony

I will go back 5 years, where I was healed by Our Mighty Lord from chronic acidity for which, I had done 3 times an endoscopy and each time the reports were normal. Praise God!!!

It happened that I started feeling the acidity reflux again in June 2019, I thought it was due to stress (the most common word used for any sickness - now a days) so I went to the doctor, I took medicines, prayed and it was gone. I forgot about it!

But to my surprise, the acid reflux erupted again in last October with its pain and distress. I had to avoid eating anything spicy or a stomach full meal and so on. For me it so happened that I could not even drink more than 3 sips of water at one go, infact, water is the best medicine for acidity but in my case I could not have even that – and it was now that fear stepped in, the episodes of what I went through 5 years back started filling my mind and increased my fears. I started getting more and more worried as medicines were on but the symptoms persisted, to the extent that even water, as I said gave me a reflux. During all this pain I was praying but the battle between prayer and fear was on. Now, it happened one night as we were getting ready to go to bed I suddenly felt very thirsty and without thinking about the reflux I just took up a full glass of water and at one go drank it and with it came the hydrochloric acid trickling up my food pipe to the tip of my throat and with that came tears as I felt immense burn and pain!! I did not want to wake up my husband. In my pain, I called on to The Lord for mercy, just then I happened to see my Bible beside the bed. I just picked my Bible and as tightly as I could, placed it at the tip of my throat and I spoke to Jesus, “Lord, the woman who was bleeding for 12

years came up to you in her suffering with faith and touched the fringe of your cloak and was healed instantly, I too with the same faith place the Holy Bible which is You for me in person and I plead for healing, Lord your Word also says – have faith as small as a mustard seed and you can move mountains...Lord, please have mercy as I cannot take this burn anymore". And brother and sisters Our Lord is great I could instantly feel the acid move back from my food pipe to my stomach, with tears I thanked THE LORD AND NEVER AGAIN DID I GET THE REFLUX ATTACK and I believe I will not get it again.

-Reshma Desouza

Lent : a second chance to return to God

Do we look forward to Lent like Advent? Often we don't. Childhood memories of giving up chocolate/ candy/ meat, or kneeling through weekly Stations of the Cross come immediately to mind. Words like "sacrifice," "discipline," and "self-denial" are often used in ways that suggest that Lent is something to be endured rather than a time of grace and spiritual growth.

Have you ever thought of Lent as a yearly second chance? Each year the Church gives us six weeks to take a long, loving look at our lives to see if our values and priorities are in line with God's desires for us. Since all of us find that we've wandered from God's path, Lent becomes that second chance, or do-over, to "return to God with our whole heart."

Many of us have pious, traditional, creative and out-of-the-ordinary Lenten practices. As we journey through this annual second chance may each of these practices bring us closer to the welcoming arms of our loving God. The church has shown us how we can make this Lenten season meaningful time of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving for ourselves, our loved ones, and our communities.

How do we want our relationship with God to change in these 40 days? How do we want to be different on Easter morning? Why does God love us and call us back to Him time after time? Lent is a season of repentance and conversion leading us to contemplate our mortality. We will only be on

To one who has faith, no explanation is necessary. To one without faith, no explanation is possible.

this earth for a finite amount of time. What do we want our life to proclaim? Are we willing to turn away from our sin, so that we might turn more fully toward God? It is only by the road of conversion that we can enter the Kingdom. Let not our sin hold us back from entering. The act of putting on ashes symbolizes fragility and mortality, and the need to be redeemed by the mercy of God. Let's cling to God's grace and mercy. CCC:1434: states "The interior penance of the Christian can be expressed in many and various ways. Scripture and the Fathers of the church insist above all on three forms, *fasting*, *prayer*, and *almsgiving*, which express conversion in relation to oneself, to God, and to others".

Fasting is one of the three pillars of our Lenten practice. It is the practice of denying ourselves from some material good, typically food, entertainment etc in order to focus on Christ. It is a biblical way to truly humble ourselves in the sight of God. Fasting was an expected discipline in both the Old and New Testament eras. Fasting goes very well with prayer. One reason is that by fasting we deny our human appetites, both literally and figuratively, and can focus more intensely on our prayer. CCC 1438 states "by controlling the passions of the body, we free our souls for prayer. And by refraining from eating, we free up food or money that we can give to those less fortunate than ourselves". It also enables the Holy Spirit to reveal our true spiritual condition, resulting in brokenness, repentance, and a transformed life. Fasting and prayer can restore the loss of the "first love" for our Lord and result in a more intimate relationship with Christ.

Almsgiving : CCC 2402 - says that the "goods of creation are destined for the whole human race," and that the "appropriation of property is legitimate for guaranteeing the freedom and dignity of persons and for helping each of them to meet his basic needs and the needs of those in his charge." Everything that we have is a gift from God and has been made for everyone. Yet some have much more than others. As Christians we are called to share what we have been given with others who are in need. It is an important practice during Lent. It calls us for sharing. It also reminds us that what we have is a gift from God. Beyond just giving money, we are also called to do works of mercy to serve our brothers and sisters in need.

Almsgiving as charity to the poor is common practice for the Jewish

culture. In Tobit 4:7-12 we read: “Give alms from your possessions. Do not turn your face away from any of the poor, so that God’s face will not be turned away from you. Give in proportion to what you own. If you have great wealth, give alms out of your abundance; if you have but little, do not be afraid to give alms even of that little. You will be storing up a Godly treasure for yourself against the day of adversity. For almsgiving delivers from death and keeps one from entering into darkness. Almsgiving is a worthy offering in the sight of the Most High for all who practice it.” Our identity is based on the belief that we are created in God’s image and likeness. Being created by God and for God means that “we are not our own and that we have been purchased at a price.” If we belong to God then all that we have belongs to God as well. We have the responsibility of giving back what has been given to us by God.

Prayer is the most important of the three pillars of Lent. It is what ties all three together and keeps our sacrifices focused on Christ. The three spiritual disciplines of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving go hand in hand, and the Church calls us to practice all three together.

Lent is not simply about saying “no.” Lent is also about saying “yes.” We say yes to loving God with our whole heart. True, this does involve saying “no” to certain things we may be attached to, but more than anything else, it is a “yes” to God. In refusing to “gratify the desires of the flesh” we choose to live a life devoted to Christ. May this lent richly nourish our souls.

Member – Publication Ministry

A Testimony of God’s Faithful Love !!!

“Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.” (Mark 11:24). I may never have known the true meaning and power that dwells in these words had I never been through the hardship to find a job. My whole life is a testimony that God still works miracles. HE is the same yesterday, today and forever. When I look back to where I started and to where I am today and to where God is taking me, all I can say is “Thank You Jesus!” My life is indeed a testimony that God still performs miracles.

When I joined my husband here in Oman in February 2007, I got an opportunity within 15 days to work on a leave vacancy for a very reputed company and I was thankful to God for it. This post was for a secretary to the GM and it was only for a period of one month. Upon completion of this leave vacancy I got another opportunity. This again was a leave vacancy at the same group but for another division.

Although I always wanted to work as an office secretary, God had other plans for me. As in Jeremiah 29:11 “For surely I know the plans I have for you”, says the Lord, “plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope”. After working for close to 7 months on leave vacancies for this organisation, I did get an opportunity in 2008 to work permanently but had to turn down the offer since my husband had committed to move to Sohar to look after the new branch in the company where he would be based. In Sohar too I got an opportunity once again to work as an executive secretary on a leave vacancy for four months. Here too whenever I felt that I would get a permanent job of an office secretary, obstacles would come up. Then I got an offer from a bilingual school in Liwa. Although I had 6 years of teaching experience back in India, this wasn't a placement of my liking, but still I took up teaching just to keep myself occupied. While in this job I was looking out for secretarial jobs in various other companies. But as I mentioned, God knew best what was good for me. When we went for our daughter's admission to Indian School Sohar, the principal requested me to come for a panel interview as they were looking out for teachers for the primary division. Although I didn't have any teaching certificate, God was gracious to me and I was selected as one of the primary teachers and worked there for two years.

Then once again in 2013, we had to change base from Sohar to Muscat. After moving back to Muscat, I went through one of the most difficult phases in my life. I was struggling to find a job here. Having worked in Indian School Sohar, I approached ISWK as it was of the same management as that in Sohar, but in retrospect, I guess God still wanted me to pray more and come closer to him. I even approached the company where I worked before but due to the new labour rules of employment they couldn't employ me. Despite trying in many places, I wasn't able to get any job offers and this really made me feel very low. I even started to

question in my heart if God even existed - and if he did, then why was he making me go through all these struggles... But then I remembered that Our God is a Great Bookkeeper, and has a reason and time for everything. God works through people and uses them as angels. For me and my family, a couple in the community were like angels in our life. They invited us to come for the MIPC meetings every Thursday. The same sister in the community also really helped me improve my prayer life. I learnt to thank and praise God in every situation and that helped me a lot. Soon after joining the MIPC, within a few days I got a call from ISWK to work on a leave vacancy. By now I had got used to this intermittent working on leave vacancies!

Also, my husband was going through a difficult phase at his workplace, so I decided to take up this offer of ISWK as it would provide some additional income and moreover, it would give me an opportunity to prove myself.

Two months after completing this leave vacancy, I was called for another interview in the same school and this time I was selected to work in the school on an ad-hoc basis. I was under observation for a few months. During this time whenever I prayed, I regularly claimed the following verse from Phil 4:19 – "And God will fully satisfy every need of yours according to his Riches and Glory in Christ Jesus". I was supposed to go through a panel interview but although each time I was well prepared, the interview got postponed thrice. Suddenly one day, I was informed that I had to attend the panel interview on a particular date. I wasn't prepared but having faith in God that he would get me through, I went in for the same. When I reached the main school I saw that all other teachers were preparing for the interview. Now in fact, since I have never been used to revise or study last minute, I just surrendered everything to God and just kept confessing the verse from Phil 4:13 – "I can do all things through him who strengthens me". God was so gracious because the panel didn't ask me many questions and the interview went very well. From the 10 of us who went for the interview, only 3 were selected and I was one among the three! Praise the Lord !! But there was one hurdle: I didn't have a teaching degree or certificate, as I had not considered teaching a career option initially, But since I had cleared my panel

interview, I was allowed to begin and to continue working in the school.

To keep in line with the labour regulations, one day the school management asked not to come for work until the stamping of the visa. Once again I got upset and started questioning God, ‘Why was he doing this to me!’ After spending some time in prayer, God made me realise that I needed to keep my faith strong in him and not let the evil one take control of me. I had to stay home for more than a month but this was all God’s plan. The Lord allowed this so that I could do a teaching course which would certify me and during this break, I got the opportunity to answer my exams and complete my course. I got a call again to rejoin work. Once I received my certificate, I submitted all my documents to the school so that they could process my visa. Finally on 15th May 2019 I got the school visa stamped on my passport. All Praise and Glory be to God! No more leave vacancies, no more temporary jobs ! But most of all I thank my Lord Jesus for drawing me closer and increasing my faith through these challenging times!

“Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding, in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight. Proverbs 3: 5-6

- *Vanessa Travas*

QUIZ CORNER - Quiz on John Ch. 1 to 5

Tick (✓) the right answer

Refer the Catholic New Revised Standard Version Bible

1. Who came to testify to the light ?
a. John b. Moses c. Jesus
2. Who was the father of John, the writer of the Gospel?
a. Joseph b. Zacharias c. Zebedee
3. “Here is truly an Israelite in whom there no deceit!” Jesus said these words about whom? a. John b. Nathanael c. Philip
4. We all know John 3:16, to whom was Jesus speaking when he said this verse? a. Nicodemus b. The Pharisees c. Peter

5. During which feast Jesus cast out of the temple the money-changers and traders. a. Feast of Weeks b. Feast of First fruits c. Passover
6. What was the name of the pool where Jesus healed a man who had an infirmity for thirty-eight years? a. Shiloh b. Bethesda c. Siloam
7. Which one of the following characters mentioned only in John's Gospel? a. Salome b. Nicodemus. c. Zacchaeus
8. When and where did Jesus stop to rest after His long walk through Samaria? a. about noon in Sychar b. at noon in Galilee c. at the sixth hour in Judea
9. In ch. 5 what does Jesus say to search that testify on his behalf? a. Eternal life. b. Prophets c. the scriptures
10. In ch. 4: Many more believed in him because of..... a. the words of the woman b. His word c. words of Apostles
11. What was the second sign Jesus performed at Cana. a. Healing of royal official's son b. Changing water into wine c. Healing of the crippled

Answers for the Christmas Quiz 2019

- 1) a. Isaiah 2) b. chief priests and the scribes 3) c. no mention of Innkeeper 4) a. Isaiah 5) b. Micah 6) a. Hosea 7) a. shepherds 8) b. Anna. 9) b. Simeon 10) c. Jerusalem 11) c. O come all ye faithful. 12) a. Little town of Bethlehem 13. a. Away in a manger .

Hearty congratulations to Juliana Alphonso and Susana Pinto for the correct answers. We also appreciate Juliet D'Souza, Jessie Fernandes, Yohan Yesudas and Brenda Netto 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.***