



Moving On – A brief tête-à-tête with Choicers

March 2004



Season of Lent – A Call for a Total Change of Heart

In America, the much talked about controversial movie, “The Passion of the Christ” opened to rave box office success. It’s opening coincided with Ash Wednesday, which is also the start of the Lenten season – one of the most revered and holy seasons for Catholics. It is perhaps appropriate to screen a movie reminding us of Christ’s suffering and to help us reflect on the sacrifice he had made for us. In Singapore, we will have to wait a little longer to catch the movie but until then, let us not forget the 40 days of Lent where prayer, fasting & abstinence and charity works are the orders of the season.

So, what is Lent about?

Historically, Lent is the forty day period before Easter, excluding Sundays, which began on Ash Wednesday and ended on Holy Saturday (the day before Easter Sunday). In recent years, this has been modified so that it now ends with evening Mass on Holy Thursday, to prepare the way for Triduum. Sundays, being the day Christ arose, is deemed an inappropriate day to fast and mourn our sins. On Sunday we must celebrate Christ's resurrection for our salvation and therefore, historically, Sundays are excluded from the forty days of Lent.

To think of Lent only as a time of penance is to do it an injustice. While the traditional practice of "doing something" for Lent is praiseworthy, there is much more to this wonderful season than just additional practices of piety or acts of penance and mortification. In Lent, the Church calls us to *metanoia*.

The word *metanoia* connotes a change of mind and heart, altering one's mind-set toward whole new ways of thinking and acting. This involves taking a look at where we are and trying to see where we ought to be. It involves testing our values and discerning how they stack up against the values that Jesus offers his followers. Fortunately, *metanoia* is not something we have to do all by ourselves. God's word gives us a lot of help in the process, as does the example of our brothers and sisters in the Lord who are engaged, during these weeks, in the same exercise.

Lent is also the season of final preparation for those who will be baptized at the Easter Vigil. The Church invites its members to pray for these catechumens, but also to renew our own commitment to the life that began with the Lord, when we were baptized and so became members of God's people.

Finally, Lent prepares us for Holy Week, for those most sacred days in the Church's year when we celebrate the suffering and death of Jesus, the Lord's gift of himself in obedience to the mission he received from his heavenly Father. Of course, the suffering and death of Jesus—and his resurrection—present questions and challenges to each of us in the context of our own mission as followers of Christ and so in our process of *metanoia*.

So as Choicers, are we going through this process of *metanoia* this Lent? Or are we again simply going through the motion of avoiding meat on Fridays and fasting on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday, without a pure change of heart and mind? Perhaps it is an opportune time during this season to reflect on your answer...

*The above incorporates an article by Rev Daniel E. Pilarczyk, **Lent: More Than Penance, from Lenten Lunches: Reflections on the Weekday Readings for Lent and Easter Week**. Rev. Daniel E. Pilarczyk is archbishop of Cincinnati and is the past president of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops in USA.*

Akan Datang...

◆ **The Choice Migration Rally & House Blessing on April 18th, 2004.**

If you have not signed up for the Migration Rally, please do so. The Rally will start at 0700 hours from ME House to our very own Choice Retreat House. Help us make this event a memorable one by joining in our migration from the past and into our future. We will be forming 2-km rallies from ME House to Choice Retreat House and we need you to join in. Archbishop Nicholas Chia will be celebrating Mass and blessing the Choice Retreat House at 1500 hours, followed by a Tea Party – so come join us!

To register, please contact Terence & Stephanie at yogiboo@singnet.com.sg or call David at 9666 2881.

◆ **Our next Choice Weekend for 2004, held at the Choice Retreat House, is from April 23rd to April 25th, 2004.**

If you know of any friends who may be interested to attend this weekend, please encourage them to contact Terence & Stephanie Ho, our registration couple, at 9695 6599 / 6219 0291 or email to choicewk@singnet.com.sg



What We Behold On The Cross... by Augustine of Hippo (c. 354-430)

"As they were looking on, so we too gaze on his wounds as he hangs. We see his blood as he dies. We see the price offered by the redeemer, touch the scars of his resurrection. He bows his head, as if to kiss you. His heart is made bare open, as it were, in love to you. His arms are extended that he may embrace you. His whole body is displayed for your redemption. Ponder how great these things are. Let all this be rightly weighed in your mind: as he was once fixed to the cross in every part of his body for you, so he may now be fixed in every part of your soul."