This past Wednesday, many Christians (Protestants and Catholics alike) celebrated Ash Wednesday. This marked the beginning of the season of Lent, which is a season of **Preparation**, **Meditation** and **Reflection** leading all the way up to the Holy Week. During these 40 days, not including Sundays, some may choose to surrender certain “privileges” in life or things that we enjoy. But it’s not about those worldly things, but about our relationship with God. Worldly things don’t bring us any closer to God. Others may take on some new experiences or a new spiritual focus or direction in seeing things from a fresh new perspective….God’s perspective rather than our own.

**The season of Lent is a humble reminder and a reality check for us that our earthly living is trivial compared to the greater glory and the eternal life that God has offered to us through our faith in Jesus Christ.**

On Ash Wednesday we are reminded that ***“from dust we come and to dust we shall return.”*** The imposition of the ashes signifies our human frailty and brokenness and that we **stand in the need of personal repentance through God’s universal grace**. We are NOTHING but dusts and ashes that get scattered and drifted away when we stand before the presence of our Almighty God.

These 40 days of Lent also invite us to examine our own sinful nature that’s embedded in our thoughts, our actions and our living. Often times we fail to admit our own flaws because we think we are self-worthy and righteous. We examine our lives to see how far we have fallen short of God’s glory. When it comes to Sin, one definition that we often hear is **“Missing the Mark”**. As a matter of fact, the Greek word for Sin (a`marti,a) was derived from the [root word](http://www.city-data.com/knowledge/Root__linguistics_.html) which was an archery term that means "missing the mark" or “missing the target”. In other word, when we commit any form of sin, whether it’s a minor sin or a major, we have essentially **“missed the target”** at the Bull’s Eye **–** with Christ being at the center. We’ve alienated ourselves and have gone astray and drifted further and further apart from Christ and God’s intended purpose in our lives.

These 40 days of Lent also signify the days that Jesus spent out in the wilderness, when he was the most vulnerable and the loneliest. Christ withdrew himself from this world to be drawn closer to the Father, as he was about to do what seemingly unimaginable according to our standard but not so according to God’s, as he began his journey to the cross, fulfilling his missional calling.

During those 40 days, Jesus was tempted, just like any one of us would, out of his physical needs of food, authority, and ultimately his allegiance to His Heavenly Father. He was tempted by Satan whether he would be able to follow through with the mission that he was set to carry out. Throughout his prayer walk with God, the Holy Spirit was with him in order to protect Him from evil. He was never alone!

Come to think of it, all of us also have our share of temptations that we must overcome in our everyday lives, don’t we? When we yield into these forms of temptations, they draw us away from God and lead us into various form of sins. Small sin propagates into larger sin with one lie covers up the next, one excuses after another in justifying ourselves into thinking that it’s all right and acceptable. The cycle gets to be repeated over and over again….

As we read earlier from the Old Testament reading earlier from Genesis, we saw how evil existed since the days of Adam and Eve. Sin occurs when we succumb to the force of evil and allow it to take over our thoughts, our mind, our actions, and eventually our lives! Adam and Eve violated the trust and accountability that God had placed upon them. Their disobedience led to irreversible rebellions against God. Sin got passed on to their son – Cain in the form of jealousy and hatred, and eventually the murder of his own brother Abel.

But interestingly as we notice in our New Testament reading in the book of Romans, Paul never named Adam explicitly by name for his trespass and disobedience. Some scholars believed that perhaps Paul did this intentionally so that we do not delineate Jesus with Adam, and to affiliate Jesus as the mere counterweight to Adam’s disobedience and the fall in the garden.[[1]](#footnote-1)  In other word, it’s not fair for us to contrast Jesus and Adam on the same scale or to mention them within the same sentence, even though we know that’s exactly the reason why Jesus was sent to us. He was on his mission to right the wrong of the past and to restore new order for the Kingdom of God.

One man’s act of righteousness is not equivalent to one’ man’s act of disobedience. This by no mean is a fair comparison at all. No, not at all. But that’s exactly the point…It doesn’t make sense that Christ was willing to sacrifice himself with all the weight of humanity’s sins upon his shoulder. One man’s obedience outweighs all of humankind’s disobedience. One for ALL and ALL for one!!! This is part of God’s radical, unfathomable LOVE. God’s ultimate love for us does not make much sense at all, at least not by our own human standards.

Furthermore, because of our sinful nature, human beings have fallen into a slippery slope of eternal damnation. Every time we “Miss the Mark”, Satan claims yet another small victory! As scripture reminded us, Satan is constantly lurking behind waiting for the next “opportune” time to strike.

**The ultimate goal of Satan is to distract our focus and derail our relationship with God, causing us to “miss our mark” altogether.**

**Temptations and evils make us more aware of our own human weaknesses and shortcomings**. We make ourselves vulnerable while journeying through the wilderness of life. Like Jesus, we might be alone in the wilderness but we are never too far away from God. In moments of our trials and challenges in life, **Christ calls upon us to cast our burdens and worries upon Him. *“Come unto me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."[[2]](#footnote-2)***

Interestingly our text today stops short of the central message of what Paul was trying to communicate to the church then and to us today. Verses 20-21 tell us “***where sin increased, grace abounded all the more****, so that, just as sin exercised dominion in death, so* ***grace might also exercise dominion through justification*** *leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”* In other world, God’s grace counteracts and nullifies our human sin, and calls upon us to repent and to reconcile with one another and with God. **Without repentance and confession, God’s grace is simply meaningless and cheap.**

As Paul tells us “*just as one man's trespass led to condemnation for all, so one man's act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all. For just as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous.[[3]](#footnote-3)*

During this season of Lent, God has invited all of us to go on a journey with Him - a journey that ultimately lead us to the foot of the cross where Christ would triumph at the end and claim the final victory over the death of sin. Jesus said, ***"If anyone want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.”* [[4]](#footnote-4)**  Christ has already done the heavy lifting for all of us upon his shoulders, all we have to do is carry our own crosses and follow the path that Jesus has already trotted and is leading us on our journey to the cross.

**Throughout this journey, God invites us to listen and discern attentively to what the Spirit is telling us…sometimes it may not be what we want to hear.** And that is OK!! But **trust in the Spirit’s leading through our meditation of God’s word**, as the Psalmist reminded us that “*God’s word is the lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path*.[[5]](#footnote-5)

**In our humility and faithful obedience, Christ invites us to lay down our lives before Him and to check ourselves at the table that our Lord has prepared for us.** This is what the season of Lent all about…it is a time to **Reflect,** a time to **Rekindle** and a time to **Reconnect** our passion with Christ.

May we rediscover our intimacy with Christ once again through our constant prayers and meditations throughout this season of Lent. Thanks be to God. In the name of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, Amen.

1. *Barreto Eric D. Connections, Year A, Volume 2 p.33* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. *Matthew 11:28-30* [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. *Romans 5:18-19* [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. *Matthew 16:24* [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. *Psalm 119:105* [↑](#footnote-ref-5)