

# LENT

The season of Lent in the Armenian Church is referred to as MEDZ BAHK — GREAT FAST. It is the 40 day period which precedes the greatest feast of the Christian year, commemorating the greatest event in the history of mankind, the victory of Christ over death, which we celebrate at Easter. Lent corresponds to the 40 day period which Christ spent in preparation for His public ministry. You can read about this in the Holy Scriptures, in the Gospel according to St. Matthew, chapter 4, verses 1 through 11.

Lent is a time of limiting our intake of food or eliminating certain foods completely. This is called FASTING or ABSTINENCE. During this time, we are also called upon to give up certain pleasures. All of this is simply to remind us that the only ESSENTIAL for life is ultimately Almighty God.

Lent is also a time of penance. That is, it is time to sorrow for past which we may have committed, which making a firm resolution and effort not to repeat them.

Lent, too, is a time of reconciliation. It is a time for getting things right between ourselves and our fellow human beings.

Our Armenian Church takes us through Lent, Sunday by Sunday, by bringing out and emphasizing a particular spiritual truth each and every Sunday. All of the day's Scriptural reading stress this same lesson. Let's now look at these, Sunday by Sunday.

The first Sunday of Lent is known as the SUNDAY OF GOOD LIVING. Its lesson is that as God's children, His sons and daughters, we can only be truly happy and fulfilled when we are living in accord with His will and His commandments.

The SUNDAY OF THE EXPULSION, as the second Sunday Lent is known, reminds us that when we sin by ignoring God's will or breaking His commandments, it is we who suffer, just as Adam and Eve suffered when they disobeyed Him in the Garden of Eden. It is we who expel ourselves from God's presence by our own actions.

When we reach the third Sunday of Lent, the SUNDAY OF THE PRODIGAL SON, we are shown that whenever we decide to repent and return to our loving Father, who is Almighty God, He will receive us with love and forgiveness. However, since we are the real prodigal sons and daughters, it is up to us to willingly return to our Father.

The great lesson of the fourth Sunday of Lent, the SUNDAY OF THE STEWARD, is that we are ultimately respon-

sible to Almighty God for every aspect of our lives. We are responsible to Him for everything we think, or say. We are responsible to Him for the use of all that He has given to us. One day, we will be called to give an accounting of ourselves and our life to Almighty God. We are advised to always be ready.

The fifth Sunday of Lent is known as the SUNDAY OF THE JUDGE. Here, the great lesson which we have to learn is the lesson of perseverance. We must practice Christian virtues; we must pray; we must worship continually. We are admonished to remain steadfast and constant in our total Christian life.

On the sixth Sunday of Lent, the SUNDAY OF THE ADVENT, we are shown that just as everything begins with Almighty God, everything will one day end with Him. On this Sunday, we are looking forward to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. We are shown that He stands as complete Lord and Sovereign of the past, the present and the future. We are reminded of the closing words of the Book of Revelation in the Holy Scriptures: "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end." [Rev. 22:13]

When Lent finishes, we are then looking forward to the joyous celebration of Palm Sunday when we remember our Lord Jesus Christ's triumphant entry into Jerusalem. We then enter Holy Week (Avak Shapat = Great Week) when we recall our Lord's last days on earth: His sufferings; His mock trial; His crucifixion; His death; His burial; and His wonderful and glorious triumph over death.

Since we are in one of the most important seasons of the Church year during Lent, we should quite seriously ask ourselves one of the most important questions of our life; ARE WE GOING TO USE THE UNIQUE OPPORTUNITIES WHICH ARE GIVEN TO US DURING LENT IN ORDER TO REALLY, GENUINELY IMPROVE OURSELVES? OR, ARE WE SIMPLY GOING TO LET DAYS PASS AND BE SUBSTANTIALLY NO DIFFERENT AT THE END OF LENT THAT WE WERE AT THE BEGINNING? When Easter comes and our Lord rises from the dead, will we also rise with Him as a new person, a new creation, or will we still be in the grave and tomb of our old selves?

We now have an opportunity during Lent to make a decision, we now have an opportunity, with God's help, to make a change. Will we take the opportunity which Lent affords us, or will we lose it?

Let us remember the words of the Holy Scriptures which tell us: "You are dust, and to dust you shall return." [Gen. 3:19]

As we think about this, perhaps we will be better able to make a proper decision.

[from STEP BY STEP by Rev. Fr. Vartan Kasparian]

## LENT

The Lenten season is a time of spiritual growth and renewal. It is a time when we are called to examine our lives and to seek forgiveness for our sins. The Lenten season is a time of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. It is a time when we are called to be more like Christ and to love our neighbors as ourselves.

The Lenten season is a time of reflection and contemplation. It is a time when we are called to be more aware of our thoughts and feelings. It is a time when we are called to be more sensitive to the needs of others and to be more compassionate towards them.

The Lenten season is a time of hope and joy. It is a time when we are called to be more optimistic and to be more confident in our faith. It is a time when we are called to be more joyful and to be more grateful for the blessings of life.

The Lenten season is a time of love and kindness. It is a time when we are called to be more loving and to be more kind to others. It is a time when we are called to be more generous and to be more helpful to those in need.

The Lenten season is a time of peace and harmony. It is a time when we are called to be more peaceful and to be more harmonious with others. It is a time when we are called to be more patient and to be more understanding of others.

The Lenten season is a time of faith and trust. It is a time when we are called to be more faithful and to be more trusting in God. It is a time when we are called to be more obedient and to be more obedient to God's will.

The Lenten season is a time of grace and mercy. It is a time when we are called to be more gracious and to be more merciful to others. It is a time when we are called to be more forgiving and to be more forgiving of others.