

## The Second Stage of Contemplation

### REPENTANCE—RECONCILIATION WITH GOD AND MAN

Teaching for Sept.28<sup>th</sup> Prayer Session

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#### Introduction

Last week's theme was the first stage in prayer, namely, experiencing God's love. Reflecting on the initial words of the Lord's Prayer—addressing God as “Father”—we learned that experiencing the tremendous love of God is the beginning of contemplation. We learned that it is to give us this privilege that Jesus came into this world and as well as to reconcile us with the Father. He did this by his suffering unto death. We learned that this first stage of prayer involved a practical method consisting of four steps: (1) to sit in the lap of God the Father as a little child sits in its mom's bosom, (2) to enjoy the loving embraces and kisses of God just as the little child does, (3) to listen to God's passionate utterances of fondness with overwhelming joy, (4) and to entrust all our worries and cares to Him with an absolute confidence in God's caring love.

We saw that it is the tremendous love shown in the gift of Jesus that we celebrate in the bosom of God the Father and by this the love of God is poured out into our hearts ever more through the Holy Spirit.. I hope that you definitely tried to experience this Love of God several times this week. Those who haven't attended the last session must go through the teaching note prayerfully and start practicing it earnestly. The necessary outcome of this Love-experience is repentance.

#### Repentance, response to God's love

The book of Isaiah gives a moving account of this unique God-experience of prophet Isaiah: *“In the year King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a high and lofty throne, with the train of his garment filling the temple. Seraphim were stationed above; each of them had six wings: with two they veiled their faces, with two they veiled their feet, and with two they hovered aloft. “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts!” they cried one to the other. “All the earth is filled with his glory!” At the sound of that cry, the frame of the door shook and the house was filled with smoke. Then I said, “Woe is me, I am doomed! For I am a man of unclean lips, living among a people of unclean lips; yet my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!” Then one of the seraphim flew to me, holding an ember which he had taken with tongs from the altar. He touched my mouth with it. “See,” he said, “now that this has touched your lips, your wickedness is removed, your sin purged. ...*

” ( Is. 6:1-7).

See the prophet's response to his vision of God! *“Woe is me! For I am lost ; for I am a man of unclean lips and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips”*. In front of God he sees himself in an entirely different way with a new awareness of his sinfulness,—*“I am a man of unclean lips”*! He also becomes thoroughly conscious of the evil that surrounded him: *“I dwell in the midst of unclean lips”*. The prophet himself gives the specific reason for this new perception : *“for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts”*. Yes, it is the vision of God that led the prophet to an even deeper conviction of his unworthiness.

St. Peter is another typical example. He didn't feel any sense of guilt in denying the Master at first. His repeated denial itself is the proof. He could have also justified his sin showing that he was in immediate danger of death. But all on a sudden something happened when the infinite Love looked at Peter. The gospel says: *“The Lord turned and looked at Peter and Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said to him, “Before the cock crows today, you will deny me three times.” He went out and began to weep bitterly”* ( Lk. 22:62). Obviously it was that affectionate gaze of Jesus that reminded him of Jesus' loving warning and plunged him into deep, agonizing sorrow over his unfaithful conduct. In front of that pure Love Peter's wretchedness became crystal clear to him. In other words, in the light of Jesus' tremendous love for Peter, Peter could see that he had only peripheral love for his Master. It was this realization that led Peter to weep bitterly.

In fact, later when Our Lord asked Peter to confess his love three times in front of other disciples it was another chance given to him to express his repentance in a positive and public way. There, the repentance took the form of love! He dared to shout out in front of all that he loved the Lord more than everyone or anything else.

The experience of the prophet Isaiah and Peter is to be understood in all its implications. What did the prophet see in his vision and Peter before his very eyes? God! God is love. Obviously what both of them experienced was God's infinite love for them. It was such a shaking experience that made them compare their love for God with the love God had for them. It was because the difference was so terrible that the prophet was driven to utter: "Woe me I am lost" and Peter to cry so bitterly"

### Repentance—brings in abundant blessings

This new awareness of sin and repentance resulting from a deep experience of God's love is not something negative, leading to a sense of guilt. Rather it opens up free access to God's loving action of purging the soul from its filth completely and filling it with Divine love and holiness. This is very obvious in the case of prophet Isaiah. As soon as he said "Woe is me, I am doomed! For I am a man of unclean lips, living among a people of unclean lips", what happened once was, the Scripture says: "Then one of the seraphim flew to me, holding an ember which he had taken with tongs from the altar. He touched my mouth with it. "See," he said, "now that this has touched your lips, your wickedness is removed and your sin purged. Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send? Who will go for us?" "Here I am," I said, "send me!" And he replied: Go and say to this people: Listen carefully... " As soon as the prophet admitted his sins, the angel began his operation of purification. Besides, God appointed him the prophet of the people of God. Similarly, Peter was appointed the shepherd of the whole people of God as he professed his repentance.

This is what exactly happens in our contemplative prayer. As we sit in the lap of God the Father, enjoying the gift of Jesus and the Holy Spirit, we automatically become aware of our superficial love for God. A comparison of our love for God with God's love for us leads us to a deeper knowledge of sin. In affirmation of my identity: "You are my beloved son", I probe deeper and deeper into my heart while I sit in the bosom of the heavenly Father, and I feel very, very sorry for not living up to such an extravagant privilege. While I celebrate the gift of Jesus sitting in the lap of the Father it dawns upon me that Jesus suffered and died as ransom for my debts of sin. Then the gravity of each sin will be revealed in its true intensity. Things once considered very small loom large and become serious and frightening because in the light of God's love every thing becomes transparent.

But this awareness is only the beginning of innumerable other blessings to follow: It leads to true liberation. Jesus said: "You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." ( Jn. 8:32). The knowledge of how much far away I am from the standard of life which I am obliged to live, really gives me freedom from spiritual pride and self complacency. It makes me really humble. Moreover, it increases a thirst for getting more and more purified, which will lead to a rapid growth in holiness. That is why when King David received the first gift of repentance through Nathan's (God himself through Nathan) rebukes and declaration of God's punishments, instead of getting frustrated or despaired, he thirsted for more and more purification, which he expressed well in his repeated petition for cleansing:

*"Have mercy on me, God, in your goodness; in your abundant compassion blot out my offense.  
Wash away all my guilt; from my sin cleanse me.  
For I know my offense; my sin is always before me  
Cleanse me with hyssop, that I may be pure; wash me, make me whiter than snow.  
Turn away your face from my sins; blot out all my guilt.  
A clean heart create for me, God; renew in me a steadfast spirit.  
Do not drive me from your presence, nor take from me your holy spirit.*

*Restore my joy in your salvation; sustain in me a willing spirit” ( Ps. 51:3-5, 9-14).*

Again, this kind of deeper repentance leads to higher degree of happiness, peace and joy that surpasses any other joy in this life. King David testifies to this fact from his own experience: *“Happy the sinner whose fault is removed, whose sin is forgiven. Happy those to whom the LORD imputes no guilt, in whose spirit is no deceit. As long as I kept silent, my bones wasted away; I groaned all the day. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength withered as in dry summer heat. Then I declared my sin to you; my guilt I did not hide. I said, “I confess my faults to the LORD,” and you took away the guilt of my sin” ( Ps. 32: 1-5).*

It is to clarify this amazing reward that springs from true repentance that Jesus used the parable of the prodigal son. There, what is highlighted is the Father’s incredible joy in his son’s return. It was so great that the elder son could not approve of it. Each word and action of the Father in the parable substantiates this fact very clearly: “While he was still a long way off, his father caught sight of him, and was filled with compassion. He ran to his son, embraced him and kissed him. His son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you; I no longer deserve to be called your son.’ But his father ordered his servants, ‘Quickly bring the finest robe and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Take the fattened calf and slaughter it. Then let us celebrate with a feast, because this son of mine was dead, and has come to life again; he was lost, and has been found.’ Then the celebration began....

The father’s words to the furious elder son, reaffirm this again: *‘My son, you are here with me always; everything I have is yours. But now we must celebrate and rejoice, because your brother was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found.’*

### Repentance heals the wounds of God, increases the depth of prayer

Confession of each sin again and again in prayer with tears is a great act of love towards God. It heals the deepest wounds we have inflicted upon the heart of God. It really is the right reparation for our sins. King David expressed that very clearly: *“For you do not desire sacrifice; a burnt offering you would not accept. My sacrifice, God, is a broken spirit; God, do not spurn a broken, humbled heart” ( Ps. 1:18-19).* Since we do the proper restitution to the injustice we have done to God who loved us to the extent of sacrificing his only Son, by means of genuine repentance, a new relationship is established with God. On ever deeper and closer friendship with God develops paving the way for a deeper prayer life.

This is the reason why, the greatest prayer, the Liturgy of the Eucharist, starts with the Rite of reconciliation—**“I Confess.....”** The Church seems to teach that it is only through the Act of true repentance that we can enter into an enduring relationship with God and to taste the great love of God which is going to be unveiled in the suffering and death of Jesus that is re-enacted on the Altar during the Consecration. The more the repentance, the more fruitful turns the Mass !

### Consciousness of sin, necessary for a real repentance

The main impediment to proper repentance is the inadequate knowledge of sin. The ways of God and His value system are vastly different from those of the world: *“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, says the LORD. As high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are my ways above your ways and my thoughts above your thoughts” ( Is. 55:8).* Jesus reaffirmed this truth very emphatically: *“You justify yourselves in the sight of others, but God knows your hearts; for what is of human esteem is an abomination in the sight of God” ( Lk. 16:15).* The Lord says in Proverbs: *“Sometimes a way seems right to a man, but the end of it leads to death!” ( Prov. 16:25).*

Therefore, it is almost impossible to know what is right and wrong in the sight of God, without special revelation from God. This is why God Himself chose to write by His own hands. His Laws on stone tablets and gave them and to mankind through Moses. And it to interpret this Law of God perfectly that Jesus came to this world: *“Do not think that I*

*have come to abolish the law or the prophets. I have come not to abolish but to fulfill. Amen, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or the smallest part of a letter will pass from the law, until all things have taken place. Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do so will be called least in the kingdom of heaven. But whoever obeys and teaches these commandments will be called greatest in the kingdom of heaven” ( Mt. 5:17-19). The teaching of Christ lays down the true standards to measure right and wrong. In this respect, chapters 5, 6, and 7 of St. Mathew’ gospel deserve our special attention. And it is only to the apostolic Church that has inherited this authority from Jesus. “The eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had ordered them to go. When they saw him, they worshiped but still they doubted. Then Jesus approached them and said to them, "All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age” ( Mt. 28:16-20).*

From the above facts it is very clear that the Ten commandments, the exposition of Jesus in the gospels and the interpretation of Jesus’ mind by the Apostolic Church—all these are to be taken into account in shaping our attitudes and promoting our actions as touch-stones of actions to judge right or wrong. So only a detailed analysis of our life will guide us into a perception of morality and only that can lead us to deeper repentance.

To crown all this, it is the Holy Spirit who awakens us to the true gravity of each sin and how much it offends the Lord: “*But I tell you the truth, it is better for you that I go. For if I do not go, the Advocate will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you. And when he comes he will convict the world in regard to sin and righteousness and condemnation: sin, because they do not believe in me; righteousness, because I am going to the Father and you will no longer see me; condemnation, because the ruler of this world has been condemned” ( Jn. 16:8).*

Catechism of the Catholic Church comments on the need of this long process for real knowledge of sin and repentance thus. “As St. Paul affirms, Where sin increased, grace abounded all the more”. But to its work grace must uncover sin so as to convert our hearts and bestow on us righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Like a physician who probes the wound before treating it, God by his Word and by his Spirit, casts a living light on sin” ( CCC 1848).

Only if we strive in this way to gain a total knowledge of our sins, we can achieve full repentance. Since this needs more time we will deal with it in the next phase of this course, which we plan to start in the beginning of Lent, the most appropriate time for it. But, for the time being we shall try to examine our conscience on the basis of what we know at present about God’s Laws and repent for all our transgressions and beg forgiveness from God, who is ever eager and earnest in dispensing it.

## The Second Stage: Repentance and Reconciliation. contd....

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### Other factors that necessitate repentance

Of course, most importantly, it is our love for God that prompts us to repent about our sins. At the same time, there are few other important factors that necessitate repentance and plea for forgiveness from God. They are the horribleness of sin and its consequences.

The first thing we need to know about the horribleness of sin is that it is more frightening than we can ever think of. Understanding of sin as it is, is beyond our capacity. Sin is comprehensible only in terms of holiness of God, because sin is just the opposite of God's nature. Therefore only God can see **sin** as it is. Let us take an example to illustrate our inability to understand how terrible is sin. A man who is born blind will not understand the horribleness of darkness as one who once had sight and later became blind do. It is because we know what is the brightness of the day that we are able to have the perceptibility of the darkness of the night. In the same way, only if we are really holy we will be able to understand how terrible sin is. So it is very clear that we the sinners can never understand fully the horribleness of sin. Even the angels can't have a full perception of sin because even they are not holy compared to God. The Scripture reminds this fact very well in the book of Job: "*What is a man that he should be blameless, one born of woman that he should be righteous? If in his holy ones God places no confidence, and if the heavens are not clean in his sight, How much less so is the abominable, the corrupt: man, who drinks in iniquity like water!*" ( Job. 15:14-16). Yes, even the angels, the holy ones of God or the whole heavenly court are not holy enough for God!! This indicates how great is God's holiness. The saints feared sin than death because they had some perception of sin because they had reached some stage of holiness.

Therefore, since we are unable to understand how horrible sin is, the only prudent thing to do is to believe what God has revealed about the horribleness of sin and its consequences. We can take these revelations literally because God never lies or exaggerates anything. Let us see some episodes from the Sacred Scripture:

### Un-repented sin of Adam and Eve.

Even though that was their first sin and only sin of Adam and Eve, their sin was considered very serious and horrible consequences followed. A) They lost the original proximity with God. They were completely alienated from God!—they who were privileged to walk with God in the garden of Eden were thrown out from Eden. Even before they were thrown out they themselves choose it by hiding themselves in the shade of trees when God sought them affectionately. B) They got separated among themselves. Once so close between themselves to the extent of speaking of the spouse "the bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh" lost that oneness and began to find fault the other for ones own fault.! C) They got alienated from the Nature—the earth and all its powers became hostile to them. D) Crowning of all these there came self-alienation. Cain expressed it very well: "*Cain said to the LORD: "My punishment is too great to bear. Since you have banished me from the soil, and I must avoid your presence and become a restless wanderer on the earth, anyone may kill me at sight. Not so!" the LORD said to him. "If anyone kills Cain, Cain shall be avenged sevenfold." So the LORD put a mark on Cain, lest anyone should kill him at sight. ."* ( Gen. 4:13-15).

### Sin of Moses and Aharon:

Moses and Aharon were God's most intimate friends. And they had to go through incomparable sufferings to accomplish God's desire to deliver God's people from Egyptian slavery. To narrate their sacrifices is impossible. God respected Moses so much that when Miriam spoke against Moses, God instantly intervened with rebukes and punishment. "*Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses on the pretext of the marriage he had contracted with a Cushite woman. They complained, "Is it through Moses alone that the LORD speaks? Does he not speak through us also?" And the LORD heard this. Now, Moses himself was by far the meekest man on the face of the earth. So at once the LORD said to Moses and Aaron and Miriam, "Come out, you three, to the meeting tent." And the three of them went. Then the*

*LORD came down in the column of cloud, and standing at the entrance of the tent, called Aaron and Miriam. When both came forward, he said, "Now listen to the words of the LORD: Should there be a prophet among you, in visions will I reveal myself to him, in dreams will I speak to him. Not so with my servant Moses! Throughout my house he bears my trust: face to face I speak to him, plainly and not in riddles. The presence of the LORD he beholds. Why, then, did you not fear to speak against my servant Moses?" So angry was the LORD against them that when he departed, And the cloud withdrew from the tent, there was Miriam, a snow-white leper! When Aaron turned and saw her a leper"(Numbers. 12:1-10).*

*"When Korah and company spoke against Moses, they also had to face terrible punishments: "Korah, son of Izhar, son of Kohath, son of Levi, (and Dathan and Abiram, sons of Eliab, son of Pallu, son of Reuben) took two hundred and fifty Israelites who were leaders in the community, members of the council and men of note. They stood before Moses and held an assembly against Moses and Aaron, to whom they said, "Enough from you! The whole community, all of them are holy; the LORD is in their midst. Why then should you set yourselves over the LORD'S congregation?" When Moses heard this, he fell prostrate. No sooner had he finished saying all this than the ground beneath them split open, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them and their families (and all of Korah's men) and all their possessions. They went down alive to the nether world with all belonging to them; the earth closed over them, and they perished from the community. But all the Israelites near them fled at their shrieks, saying, "The earth might swallow us too!" ( Numbers. 16:1-4, 32-35).*

In spite of all these respect and love for Moses, when he failed one time to trust in God becoming to God's greatness, Moses was punished—he was denied entrance to Canan, to where he led the people for 40 years through wilderness!

Sin of David:

David was the apple of God's eyes. God himself said about David: " I have found in David a man according to my heart". God was so pleased with him that he was chosen from other 7 "smart" sons of Jesse to the king of Israel. God anointed him with the Holy Spirit in an unusual way : *"Then Samuel, with the horn of oil in hand, anointed him in the midst of his brothers; and from that day on, the spirit of the LORD rushed upon David" ( I Sam. 16: 13b).* God gave him more fame and victory than the then king Saul.

But when David committed sin one time, God's anger turned against him and punished him thoroughly: *"Now, therefore, the sword shall never depart from your house, because you have despised me and have taken the wife of Uriah to be your wife.' Thus says the LORD: 'I will bring evil upon you out of your own house. I will take your wives while you live to see it, and will give them to your neighbor. He shall lie with your wives in broad daylight. You have done this deed in secret, but I will bring it about in the presence of all Israel, and with the sun looking down.'"*

*Then David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the LORD." Nathan answered David: "The LORD on his part has forgiven your sin: you shall not die. But since you have utterly spurned the LORD by this deed, the child born to you must surely die." Then Nathan returned to his house. The LORD struck the child that the wife of Uriah had borne to David, and it became desperately ill. David besought God for the child. He kept a fast, retiring for the night to lie on the ground clothed in sackcloth. The elders of his house stood beside him urging him to rise from the ground; but he would not, nor would he take food with them. On the seventh day, the child died" ( II Sam. 12: 10—18).*

It is to be noted here well that God did not spare even his most intimate friends for their sin. And this explains the need for Jesus' horrible suffering and death on the cross in atonement for the sins of whole humanity. The horribleness of sin can be fully understood only if we understand the suffering of Jesus. Book of Sirach says: *"Do not plot to repeat a sin; not even for one will you go unpunished" ( Sirach. 7: 8).* Jesus very clearly spoke about it: *"I tell you, on the day of judgment people will render an account for every careless word they speak" ( Mt. 12:36).* At that time some people who were present there told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with the blood of their sacrifices. He said to them in reply, *"Do you think that because these Galileans suffered in this way they were greater sinners than all other Galileans? By no means! But I tell you, if you do not repent, you will all perish as they did! Or those eighteen people who*

were killed when the tower at Siloam fell on them --do you think they were more guilty than everyone else who lived in Jerusalem? By no means! But I tell you, if you do not repent, you will all perish as they did!" ( Lk. 13: 1-5).

## The Good News

The good news is Jesus took away all our sins. He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the whole world. *him you were also circumcised with a circumcision not administered by hand, by stripping off the carnal body, with the circumcision of Christ. You were buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead. And even when you were dead (in) transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, he brought you to life along with him, having forgiven us all our transgressions; obliterating the bond against us, with its legal claims, which was opposed to us, he also removed it from our midst, nailing it to the cross; despoiling principalities and the powers, he made a public spectacle of them, leading them away in triumph by it.* ( Col. 2:11-15). Yes, by Jesus' death we all have free forgiveness of sins. But with one condition—**repentance!** *"The blood of his Son Jesus cleanses us from all sin. If we say, "We are without sin," we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we acknowledge our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from every wrongdoing. If we say, "We have not sinned," we make him a liar, and his word is not in us"* ( I Jn. 1:7-11).

So it is very clear it is not enough that Christ died for my sins. I too have a part to do. Though it is most simple compared to what Jesus did for me, it is inevitable. Each person has to acknowledge his sins humbly, repent and give them up. If so, what a blessing it is to repent? And how important it is for our salvation? In fact is there anything more important than this to become worthy of salvation and all other blessings from God? See what the Scripture says about what was asked of the first Christians: *"Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and they asked Peter and the other apostles, "What are we to do, my brothers?" Peter (said) to them, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the holy Spirit. For the promise is made to you and to your children and to all those far off, whomever the Lord our God will call."*

Therefore, let us take very seriously the second stage of prayer and do it every day with love in our heart for the most loving God. The more we will enjoy more God's love as we see in the parable of prodigal son and in the episode of woman washing Jesus' feet with her tears. She had no merit or any virtue to get so much affection from Jesus except her public repentance. And Jesus proclaimed in front of Simon and other Pharisees- the holy people of the society—that she loved Jesus more than they do. Let us too become overnight "millioners" in grace by deep repentance.

## Certain Biblical examples of Repentance

### **Moses**

"Then, as before, I lay prostrate before the LORD for forty days and forty nights without eating or drinking, because of all the sin you had committed in the sight of the LORD and the evil you had done to provoke him. For I dreaded the fierce anger of the LORD against you: his wrath would destroy you. Yet once again the LORD listened to me"( Deut. 9: 18-19).

### **Joshua**

"Joshua, together with the elders of Israel, rent his garments and lay prostrate before the ark of the LORD until evening; and they threw dust on their heads" (Joshua 7: 6).

### David

" O Loving and kind God, have mercy. Have pity upon me and take away the awful stain of my transgressions...I admit my shameful deed—it haunts me day and night"(Ps. 51:1, 3).

For the leader; with stringed instruments, "upon the eighth." A psalm of David.

Do not reprove me in your anger, LORD, nor punish me in your wrath. Have pity on me, LORD, for I am weak; heal me, LORD, for my bones are trembling. In utter terror is my soul-- and you, LORD, how long...? Turn, LORD, save my life in your mercy rescue me" ( Ps. 6:1-4).

## **Ezra**

“While Ezra prayed and acknowledged their guilt, weeping and prostrate before the house of God, a very large assembly of Israelites gathered about him, men, women, and children; and the people wept profusely” ( Ezra. 10: 1).

## **Israelites under the leadership of Nehemiah**

“On the twenty-fourth day of this month, the Israelites gathered together fasting and in sackcloth, their heads covered with dust. Those of Israelite descent separated themselves from all who were of foreign extraction, then stood forward and confessed their sins and the guilty deeds of their fathers. When they had taken their places, they read from the book of the law of the LORD their God, for a fourth part of the day, and during another fourth part they made their confession and prostrated themselves before the LORD their God” ( Neh. 9: 1-3).

## **Daniel,**

I turned to the Lord God, pleading in earnest prayer, with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes.

I prayed to the LORD, my God, and confessed, "Ah, Lord, great and awesome God, you who keep your merciful covenant toward those who love you and observe your commandments! We have sinned, been wicked and done evil; we have rebelled and departed from your commandments and your laws. We have not obeyed your servants the prophets, who spoke in your name to our kings, our princes, our fathers, and all the people of the land. Justice, O Lord, is on your side; we are shamefaced even to this day: the men of Judah, the residents of Jerusalem, and all Israel, near and far, in all the countries to which you have scattered them because of their treachery toward you. O LORD, we are shamefaced, like our kings, our princes, and our fathers, for having sinned against you. But yours, O Lord, our God, are compassion and forgiveness! Yet we rebelled against you

and paid no heed to your command, O LORD, our God, to live by the law you gave us through your servants the prophets. Because all Israel transgressed your law and went astray, not heeding your voice, the sworn malediction, recorded in the law of Moses, the servant of God, was poured out over us for our sins. You carried out the threats you spoke against us and against those who governed us, by bringing upon us in Jerusalem the greatest calamity that has ever occurred under heaven” ....I was still occupied with this prayer, when Gabriel, the one whom I had seen before in vision, came to me in rapid flight at the time of the evening sacrifice. He instructed me in these words: "Daniel, I have now come to give you understanding. When you began your petition, an answer was given which I have come to announce, because you are beloved. ( Daniel. 9: 1-12, 21-23).

## **Message through Joel**

“Yet even now, says the LORD, return to me with your whole heart, with fasting, and weeping, and mourning; Rend your hearts, not your garments, and return to the LORD, your God. For gracious and merciful is he, slow to anger, rich in kindness, and relenting in punishment” ( Joel. 2: 12-13).

## ***Message of the Apostles***

“Repent, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be wiped away, and that the Lord may grant you times of refreshment and send you the Messiah already appointed for you, Jesus” ( Act. 3:19-20).

## **Message of the book of Revelation**

“Those whom I love, I reprove and chastise. Be earnest, therefore, and repent.

Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, (then) I will enter his house and dine with him, and he with me. I will give the victor the right to sit with me on my throne, as I myself first won the victory and sit with my Father on his throne” ( Rev. 3:19-21).