

## Freedom in God's Presence

*by Fr. Dominic Borg, OCD*  
*lenten message to the OCDS members, February 2005*

Dear Brothers and sisters in Carmel,

The New Year has come and we are already in the third part of February, yet, I am still struggling to find some way to express myself without being pushed or under pressure. I am not complaining about the history that the Good Lord in His love for us gives to every one of us; no, what I want to make clear is the fact that the high season of Lent finds us in Egypt, waiting eagerly for the FREEDOM that only God can grant us.

The promise that was made to the patriarch Jacob: I will go down with you to Egypt and I will bring you back, is there for each one of us who are very much in tune to the history that the Lord is giving us: a history of salvation. Many are those who enter the season of Lent with eagerness to pray more, fast more, give more, and perhaps read more Scripture. But the questions remain: What does it mean to pray more, to fast more, to give more, and to read more Scripture?

Allow me to spend a couple of sentences of reflection on the expression: to fast more. Fasting in the Bible can, and does, have a positive and a negative aspect. The negative is the abstaining from something, such as food, drink, or some leisure. But what I would like you to concentrate on is the positive aspect of fasting (binding) which we encounter in the Bible. In the Book of Deuteronomy and the Book of Joshua we read:

"... those of you who held fast to the Lord your God are all alive today." (Deut. 4.4)

"You shall fear the Lord your God; him alone you shall worship; to him you shall hold fast, and by his name you shall swear." (Deut 10.20)

"If you will diligently observe this entire commandment that I am commanding you, loving the Lord your God, walking in all his ways, and holding fast to him." (Deut 11.22)

"The Lord your God you shall follow, him alone you shall fear, his commandments you shall keep, his voice you shall obey, him you shall serve, and to him you shall hold fast." (Deut 13.4)

"...loving the Lord your God, obeying him, and holding fast to him; for that means life to you and length of days, so that you may live in the land that the Lord swore to give to your ancestors, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob." (Deut.30.20)

"Take good care to observe the commandment and instruction that Moses the servant of the Lord commanded you, to love the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways, to keep his commandments, and to hold fast to him, and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul." (Joshua 22.5)

The word fast in the above quotes does project in front of us the positive aspect of fasting: to bond ourselves to the Lord. When we look at the discipline of Lent in a positive way, it becomes a joyous journey that leads us to meet Easter with the great manifestation of the God who introduced the Ten Commandments by these words: I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the land of bondage. Yes, Our God is a God who comes to our rescue to liberate us from the burden and enslavement of our Egypt.

Lent and Easter Season, together set before us the reality that the way Jacob in the Old Testament needed God to go with him to Egypt, and get him out; so too, we need to become conscious that the very events that seem to enslave us are at the same time the tools that God uses to liberate us.

The month of February, this year, brought with it the news of a new Fr. Provincial: Fr. Victor Mallia, OCD. We, the OCDS, the Nuns and the Friars here in Canada wish him God's blessing and our support and prayers. We look forward to having him with us for the upcoming Congress in October, 2005. I encourage every one of you to work hard and to invite others to join you for the Congress so that we will all benefit from what the Lord has

in store for each one of us.

In the name of all the OCDS, Nuns, and Friars, I wish to express our gratitude to Very Rev. Fr. Alfred Grech, our Provincial for all the encouragement, and support that he has manifested toward our Canadian Foundation. May the Good Lord and Our Lady of Mount Carmel continue to shower him with Their Blessings.

May we never lose sight of the words of Our Lord: "Pray to the Lord of the harvest to send more labourers into His harvest". We continue to pray for vocations to the priesthood and religious life, especially in our family of Carmel. We take this opportunity to congratulate the new Mother for the Community of our Sisters of the Infant Jesus in Markham: Rev. Mother Therese. May God bless you and all the Community.

We, the Friars, thank all of you who work so hard and express your support for the Canadian Foundation in a very tangible way. May Mary our Mother continue to guide us and inspire us to put into action the words of Her Son, St. Teresa, Our Mother and St. John of the Cross will always continue to be there to teach us how to live our call and manifest to those around us the charism of Carmel. May we always bear in mind what the Jewish people say: There is no sadness in God's presence.

Yours in Carmel,

Fr. Dominic Borg, OCD