



# Empowered to Live a New Way

Lent is a forty day period of time set aside by the historical Church to pay particular attention to our natural condition labeled *sinfulness*. This unfortunate nature of ours dates back to the beginning of human time when according to the message in the story of Adam and Eve there was a serious, unmitigated disruption of the relationship between God and humanity. Countless efforts have been exerted to explain the intricacies of this disruption, all of which have left something to be desired.

My purpose in focusing on this Biblical account is solely to document the reality of our sinful nature, which issues from some original disruption of the relationship between God and humanity. It gives a label to the inner struggle we all experience throughout life.

Another way to focus on this disrupted relationship is to look in the mirror. There you see the far reaching result of this catastrophe. We are what we have become as the

result of being born into a calamitous situation in which our relationship with God has been horribly distorted. The news we hear and see every night reveals the effect of this breach. Evil abounds in our world and try as we may we cannot extricate ourselves from its power or its effects. We are bound by its shackles.

That is why we confess in our worship that we are *sinful and unclean* and that we have *sinned against God by thought, word, and deed*. We are convicted.

It is also why we profess that we *flee for refuge into God's infinite mercy*, seeking the Grace of the Holy One to do something about our miserable and hopeless plight. Try as we may, we cannot change anything ourselves.

Against that backdrop we can accept the sinful nature of our very being and thereby understand the reason for our unfortunate miscues on a daily basis. It is about the nature of our being.

It is only when we come to grips with who and how we truly are at our core that we can begin to appreciate what God has done via Jesus to set us free from this trap in which we are all caught and from which we cannot free ourselves.

Jesus has released us from this trap so that we are free. Concomitantly, the Holy Spirit has empowered us to live in a new way that brings hope and joy into our lives and through us into the world.

We are given (underscore given) a new lease on life. Although our old nature is always nipping at our heels, and sometimes overtakes us, we remain basically free to live in this new way of hope and joy. What a gift.



Lent is our time to reflect on this scenario of sin vs forgiveness, entrapment vs. freedom, not as a theological principle, but as a spiritual experience.