

# Wellspring Fransalian Center for Spirituality

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Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Almsgiving has been one of the traditional practices of Lent. The word “Alms” derives from the Greek “eleemosyne”, meaning “mercy”. Almsgiving has an important place in all religions and a special place in Jewish and Christian Spiritual practices. The Hebrew Scriptures use the word “sedaqa” meaning “justice” and “mercy” implying that almsgiving restores justice, God’s right order in society. Israelites were to give one tenth of their produce (a tithe) to support the Levites, immigrants and the poor (Det. 14:28-29) and they let their fields lie fallow every seventh year to benefit the poor (Ex. 23:11).

There is much about almsgiving in the New Testament writings. Jesus advised, “sell your belongings and give alms (Luke 12:33; Mathew 19:21). Almsgiving, like prayer and fasting, is to be done without fanfare (Mathew 6:2-4). Jesus and the disciples gave alms (John 13:29). Early Christian communities practiced almsgiving in the organized distribution of food in Jerusalem (Acts 6). Paul encouraged offerings from gentile communities for the poor of the Jerusalem Church (Acts 24:17; Romans 15:25-26; 1 Corinthians 16:1-5; 2 Cor. 8:1-15; Gal. 2:10).

Medieval monasteries and Cathedrals used alms from the faithful to maintain hospices and food programs for the poor, refugees and exiles. The mendicant (begging) religious orders of later middle ages sought alms of food, goods or money for maintaining their communities. Francis of Assisi considered living on alms as a way of imitating the life of Jesus. In modern times almsgiving has become organized: special collections in Churches, personal gifts to programs and projects that care for the poor, donations to organizations that provide support for the underprivileged nationally and internationally, etc.

Almsgiving has often been understood only as the charitable giving of money, food, or goods to people in need. It must be understood in its deepest and fullest meaning as its root word in Greek “eleemosyne” or the Hebrew “sadaqa” implies. It must be about justice and mercy. In its true sense, it is about Generosity and generosity is not about an act of giving things, but a quality of spirit. Your generosity does make a difference in the world. Reflect on generosity at work, at home, in your community, in your local grocery store, anywhere and everywhere...

May this season of Lent enable you to be generous with all the gifts God has given to you. May generosity become an integral part of your daily life.

Fr. Gus Tharappel, msfs

# Fourth Week of Lent

March 20-25, 2023

## March 20 – St. Joseph, Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary

**“Steadfast love will be built up forever;  
in the heavens you will establish your faithfulness.”**

(Psalm 89:3)

### **2 Samuel 7:4-16**

David had a deep desire to build a house for the Lord. He felt that he lived in a palace and the Lord deserved better. Nathan had a vision in which the Lord revealed to him that it was not up to David to build a house for God and that God would establish an enduring, lasting Kingdom for David....it was God's doing and not David's...God would continue to bless him and make his kingdom great and prosperous. David, in all his power, could never do what God had done for him and for his people.

**Be humble! Prayerfully discern God’s plan for you and surrender to his plan!**

This excerpt teaches us that we cannot contain the presence of God in a temple, a tent, an ark, a tabernacle or any other work of human hands. During their journey in the desert, the tent symbolized God’s abiding presence with his people on the move. The temple, eventually, did become a unifying force in the life of Israel. A temple that is stationary or a tent that is on the move, both represent God’s faithful and constant presence among his people. God cannot be contained in any structure. God has chosen to live among us and within us. He has chosen to be present in the lives of his people.

**Look beyond what you see, beyond the structures, the rituals and the worship forms. Look deep within you.**

**Rediscover the presence of the sacred, the presence of the God of love and compassion deep within you.**

**Psalm 89 - The favors of the Lord I will sing forever...**

### **Romans 4:13, 16-22**

God promised Abraham that he would become a great nation and that in him all the earth would be blessed. This promise was not on the merits of Abraham, but on the grace of God in

answer to Abraham's faith. The promise depended on the Grace of God and the faith of Abraham and not on keeping the law or doing the good works the law prescribes.

**Trust in God's Grace and His gift of Faith.**

**Luke 2:41-52**

This excerpt from Luke's Gospel is about the parents of Jesus finding him in the temple after a search for three days. Joseph and Mary anxiously searched for their lost son, found him in the temple, took him to the safety of their home where he grew in wisdom and knowledge and age. It is in the safety of an ordinary home, in a safe and loving environment that children have an opportunity to grow up to be mature, free, joyful, faith-filled, virtuous and wise men and women.

**Be Safe. And be a safe person to be with. May your home be safe. Make your home a safe place, a sanctuary for yourself, for your spouse, for your children, for your parents, for your neighbors. Be safe! And look out for each other's safety!**

**Be grateful.... grateful for your family, however imperfect or broken it may be, be grateful. Be grateful for your spouse, for your children, for your parents.....just be grateful!**

**Please Note:**

**The feast of St. Joseph is ordinarily on March 19. Since this year March 19<sup>th</sup> was the fourth Sunday of Lent, Feast of St. Joseph was moved to today, Monday. Below are the saints who are ordinarily remembered on this day.**

**Saint of the day, March 20 - Saint Salvator of Horta and 20 other saints are remembered this day**

Salvator of Horta was born Salvador Pladevall i Bien sometime during December 1520 in Spain where his parents worked as servants. Orphaned at age 14, he moved with his sister Blasa to Barcelona, where he worked as a shoemaker to support them both. When his sister got married, he felt free to follow a religious calling he had felt. He first entered the famed Benedictine Abbey of Santa Maria de Montserrat, near Barcelona, to explore monastic life. Apparently not feeling drawn there, and desiring a more humble way of life, he entered the novitiate of the Observant branch of the Order of Friars Minor in Barcelona as a lay brother on and made his profession of vows in 1542.

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## **March 21 – Tuesday, Fourth Week of Lent**

**For as high as the heavens are above the earth,  
so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him; as far as the east is  
from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us.**

(Psalm 103:11–13)

### **Ezekiel 47:1-9, 12**

Ezekiel had a beautiful vision of a temple-centered land with life-giving waters flowing from beneath the threshold of the temple. He envisions a temple-centered people fed by life-giving waters from the threshold of the temple and becoming fruitful. Temple was the symbol of “God’s Presence” among his people. His vision translates into a vision of a God-centered people.

**We are invited to contemplate the vision of Ezekiel, the vision of a “God-centered” people, nourished by life-giving water, living godly lives and becoming fruitful in God’s way.**

### **Psalm 46 - God is our refuge and our strength...**

### **John 5:1-16**

A man, who was sick for thirty-eight years, waited for the movement of waters in the pool of Bethesda to get in and be healed. He couldn’t get healed because he had no one to plunge him into the pool. Jesus came along and healed him, and the man began to walk. This happened on a Sabbath and the Jews became angry and began to persecute Jesus because the Sabbath law was violated.

A desperate man found hope in the word of Jesus. He waited thirty-eight year, patiently, without any one to help and support. The man wanted to be healed. He was desperate, but he didn’t give up. Hope was alive and Hope kept him alive and desiring to be healed.

“Pick up your mat..... go home.....” the man listened and responded...he did the impossible at the word of Jesus. Hope was his power in his powerlessness. In his powerlessness, he found power in Jesus!

With Jesus he attempted the impossible and what was impossible for thirty-eight years became possible!

**Never give up! Wait patiently! Wait in hope! Trust in the word of Jesus!**

**Saint of the Day, March 21 St. Benedicta Cambiagio Frassinello and 9 other saints are remembered this day.**

Benedetta Cambiagio was born on October 2, 1791 in Langasco in Genoa as the last of six children to Giuseppe Cambiagio and Francesca Ghiglione. Her parents provided her with a proper religious formation in her childhood. She received the gift of a profound mystical experience at age twenty, which left her with the desire to pursue a vocation as a religious. However, in obedience to the wishes of her parents, she married the farmer and carpenter Giovanni Battista Frassinello. They lived together for two years as man and wife.

In 1818 the couple decided to live a celibate life "as brother and sister" more so because he was so impressed with her holiness and her desire for the religious life. They took in Benedetta's sister Maria who was suffering from intestinal cancer and whose husband had left her. When Maria died, in 1825, the two entered religious orders, Benedetta joining the Ursuline Congregation, and Giovanni the order founded by St Jerome Emiliani.

Benedetta was forced to return home because of failing health only a year later but obtained a miraculous cure through the intercession of Saint Jerome Emiliani. Now she felt called to dedicate herself to the education of young girls. She obtained her bishop's approval, and the bishop also requested that Giovanni leave the seminary in order to assist Benedetta with the work. The two took a vow of perfect chastity into the hands of their bishop and set out on their joint task.

Benedetta persevered in following God's will through a very unusual set of circumstances. Her courage and conviction helped to transform women's education in the region. Young women volunteers aided her in her work and she gave them a rule of life that later received ecclesiastical approval. Eventually, Bendetta was able to found the Congregation of the Benedictine Sisters of Providence. In her rule, she stressed the education of girls and instilled the spirit of unlimited confidence and abandonment to Divine providence and to the love of God through Benedictine principles. The order grew at a rapid pace since it performed a much-needed service. Benedetta was able to guide the development of the order until her death. She died in Ronco Scrivia on March 21, 1858.

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**March 22 - Wednesday, Fourth Week of Lent**

**The steadfast love of the Lord is  
from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear him  
(Psalm 103:17)**

## **Isaiah 49:8-15**

“Can a mother forget her infant.....even should she forget, I will never forget you, says the Lord. Isaiah spoke these words to a people who felt that God had forsaken them. The prophet called his people to rejoice and put confidence in the promise of God.

**God had blessed his people with Salvation and Grace and Freedom and prosperity. This is God’s gift of compassion and mercy.**

## **Psalms 145 - The Lord is gracious and merciful...**

## **John 5:17-30**

Jesus broke the Sabbath law and he claimed to be the promised messiah and the son of God. These were bold, fearless and courageous acts of Jesus. The Jews felt that Jesus was making himself equal to God and they were angry and resentful and saw Jesus as a law breaker and blasphemer.

How blessed we are today with the knowledge and experience we have! We are graced with the faith, lived out by many others before us. We are blessed with the theological reflections and the spirituality of the past two thousand years. We are blessed with a heritage of faith. We still have choices to make.

**Be grateful! Rejoice in your spiritual tradition and be faithful!**

We must choose to accept Jesus as our way, our truth and our life.... enter into a personal relationship with him.... listen to His Word.....surrender to him in love and obedience! Acceptance of Jesus means death to self and birth to eternal life. In Jesus we enter into new relationship with God, with others, with ourselves and with all of God’s creation.

**Allow Jesus to be the center and the source of your life. Surrender to him in love!**

**Saint of the day, March 22 - Saint Nicholas Owen and 13 other saints are remembered this day.**

Nicholas was born in Oxford, England, around 1562 into a devout Catholic family and grew up during the Penal Laws (1559-1829) when a series of statutes punished Catholics for the practice of their faith. Over a period of about 20 years, Nicholas used his skills to build secret hiding places for priests throughout the country. His father, Walter Owen, was a carpenter and two of his older brothers became priests. Nicholas was a genius at finding and creating places of safety: subterranean passages, small spaces between walls, impenetrable recesses.

At one point he was even able to mastermind the escape of two Jesuits from the Tower of London. Whenever Nicholas set out to design such hiding places, he began by receiving the holy Eucharist, and he would turn to God in prayer throughout the long, dangerous construction process. After many years at his unusual task, Nicholas entered the Society of Jesus and served as a lay brother, keeping his connection with the Jesuits a secret. Nicholas, familiarly known as "Little John," was small in stature but big in the esteem of his fellow Jesuits.

After a number of narrow escapes, he himself was finally caught in 1594. Despite protracted torture, Nicholas refused to disclose the names of other Catholics. After being released following the payment of a ransom, "Little John" went back to his work. He was arrested again in 1606. This time he was subjected to horrible tortures, suffering an agonizing death. Nicholas Owen was canonized in 1970 as one of the 40 Martyrs of England and Wales.

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## **March 23 - Thursday, Fourth Week of Lent**

**He (the Lord) looked upon their distress,  
when he heard their cry and remembered his covenant,  
and relented according to the abundance of his steadfast love.**

(Psalm 106:44–45)

## **Exodus 32:7-14**

The Hebrews have been liberated from their slavery in Egypt. However, they continued to remain slaves to their own gods, to their idols. Choosing false gods have been part of their continuing journey of life. We are not that different from the Hebrews. We have our own idols while we claim to have deeper knowledge, sound theology, great spiritual traditions, etc. Each of us needs to reflect on the kind of idols that control our lives.

**Reflect on idols in your own life and the need to be free from them. Reflect on the need to restructure your life and center your life on God and God's ways.**

## **Psalm 106 - Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good...**

## **John 5:31-47**

Jesus spoke of John the Baptist as a lamp, a testimony, a witness to who Jesus was. John was a lamp, set aflame and burning bright. Today, it is up to us to be witnesses of Jesus.

**Be aflame with God's love! Fan into flame the spark of love, God's gift of Grace!**

The mission of Jesus was to reveal the Father's love. Jesus is the WORD of LOVE made flesh, real and human for us to experience.

**Reflect on letting God's word become flesh, real in your life...**

Jesus said to his listeners that they had forgotten what God had done for them and how God made them his people. How could a people without memory accept who Jesus was!

**Reflect on the need to remember and be grateful...**

**Saint of the Day, March 23 - St. Toribio Alfonso de Mogrovejo and 12 other saints are remembered this day.**

Toribio was born on November 16, 1538, in Mayorga, Spain. He studied law and became a lawyer and then professor at Salamanca, receiving appointment as chief judge of the court of Inquisition at Granada under King Philip II of Spain. The king subsequently appointed him in 1580 to the post of archbishop of Lima, Peru. After receiving ordination and then consecration, he arrived in Peru in 1581 and soon demonstrated a deep zeal to reform the archdiocese and a determination to do all in his power to aid the poor and defend the rights of the Indians who were then suffering severely under Spanish occupation. He founded schools, churches, hospitals, and the first seminary in the New World. To assist his pastoral work among the Indians, he also mastered several Indian dialects. He died on March 23, 1606. He was canonized in 1726.

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**March 24 - Friday, Fourth Week of Lent**

**Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love; and he relents over disaster.**

(Joel 2:13)

**Wisdom 2:1, 12-22**

This is a call to uphold goodness, virtue and fidelity to God's law. Search for the "hidden counsels" of God - that is, the wisdom of God, which alone can help us rise above ways of

“wickedness” into ways of “holiness”.

**Keep searching for the wisdom of God.**

**Psalm 34 - The Lord is close to the brokenhearted...**

**John 7:1-2, 10, 25-30**

For some time, Jesus had chosen to stay away from situations that were provocative and “dangerous”. This Gospel passage shows us that he, finally, chose to face the malicious gossip and schemes of his opponents rather than stay away from their evil schemes. This is a “discerned choice”, which is practical wisdom.

**Be courageous and strong. But be wise and discerning in your daily choices and actions and relationships.**

Sacred Scriptures offer us contrasts between two ways of understanding reality: the way of the “flesh” and the way of the “spirit”; the way of unbelief and the way of belief; the way of the world and the way of the kingdom; the way of unrighteousness and the way of righteousness; the way of the wicked and the way of the just; the way of hatred and the way of love. The way of the “flesh” sees realities of the flesh, things as they appear. The way of the “spirit” sees reality as it is, beyond appearance.

The crowd around Jesus saw him only as son of Joseph and Mary, the carpenter from Nazareth and he didn’t have a right to give a “God-Talk” which is reserved for the wise and the learned. They couldn’t see beyond appearance.

**Learn to look beyond what you see. Learn to see with eyes of faith, eyes of hope, eyes of love...eyes of the spirit help us look beyond and see beyond...**

**Saint of the Day, March 24 - St. Oscar Arnulfo Romero and 15 other saints are remembered this day.**

Oscar Romero was born in El Salvador on August 15, 1917 and became Archbishop of San Salvador. He was a source of strength and hope for the poor and for the oppressed of his country, working with and for them, taking their struggles as his own. Romero wrote and spoke passionately and publicly of the need for Christians to work for justice, frequently faced with threat and danger from those who opposed his ideas.

On March 24, 1980, while celebrating the Eucharist, Archbishop Romero was shot and killed at the altar by a death squad assassin, paying the highest price for the commitment about which he spoke so often and so eloquently. Because of his courageous stand for justice, he became a martyr not only for poor Salvadorians but for all struggling to overcome oppression and poverty. The example of Romero's courageous life and death continue to inspire those who struggle for human dignity and justice. He was canonized on October 14, 2018

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## **March 25 - The Annunciation of the Lord**

**You will show faithfulness to Jacob and steadfast love to Abraham,  
as you have sworn to our fathers from the days of old.**

(Micah 7:20)

## **Isaiah 7:10-14; 8:10**

Ahaz, a weak and worldly king, during a time of great turmoil, is promised a sign from God: “the virgin shall be with child and bear a son and shall name him Emmanuel, meaning, “God is with us”.

## **Psalm 40 - Sacrifice or oblation you wished not...**

## **Hebrews 10:4-10**

This excerpt tells us that what God desires is not sacrifice and holocausts, but “heart of obedience”.

## **Luke 1:26-38**

This excerpt tells us about the visit of angel Gabriel to Mary with the great news of the birth of Jesus; “You have found favor with God and you shall conceive and bear a son and give him the name Jesus....” Gabriel assured her that it was through the power of the Holy Spirit that she has conceived this child and that “nothing is impossible with God”. Mary surrendered and said to Gabriel, “I am the maidservant of the Lord. Let it be done to me as you say”. Mary and Elizabeth were called to surrender to God’s word and that’s our call today!

**Be still! Listen! Be discerning! Pray for God's wisdom to know and the courage to fulfill and surrender to his plan for you.**

Mary trusted and surrendered to God's word and God's word became flesh in her. God's word comes to us today through the Scriptures, through lived experiences of many people, through our own personal experiences and through many events and situations. We are called to be sensitive, docile, available and attentive to God's word and let God's word become flesh in our life.

**May God's Word of "Love" continue to become flesh, real, tangible, in all of us!**

**Saint of the Day, March 25 - Annunciation of the Lord and 13 other saints are remembered this day.**

This celebration honors the day on which the angel Gabriel visited Mary and announced that God had chosen her to be the mother of his only Son, Jesus. Mary humbly told the angel that she would do everything God asked of her. We celebrate the Annunciation, which means announcement, exactly nine months before the birth of Christ. On this day, we thank God for his loving plan for all people and we thank him for the gift of Jesus and his mother.

The feast of the Annunciation was first celebrated in the fourth or fifth century. It is a celebration and a proclamation of the Incarnation and redemption mankind. Mary has an important role to play in God's plan for our redemption. God called her to be the mother of Jesus, the redeemer of the world. We gratefully remember Mary's generosity in accepting God's call and surrendering to His plan.

Fr. Gus Tharappel, msfs

**If you are depressed you are living in the past.  
If you are anxious you are living in the future.  
If you are at peace you are living in the present.  
(Lao Tzu)**