

# Wellspring Fransalian Center for Spirituality

P. O. Box 440, Whitehouse, Texas 75791

[www.wellspringcommunity.net](http://www.wellspringcommunity.net)

[frgusmsfs@gmail.com](mailto:frgusmsfs@gmail.com)

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Brothers and Sisters,

At the beginning of the season of Lent, thoughts of fasting and abstinence - what to give up and what to abstain from - enter our minds as well as our conversations. They are wonderful Lenten spiritual disciplines. However, they are often seen as burdens and inconveniences. They need not be. They can be very positive and powerful practices for our spiritual growth.

Fasting and abstinence are pathways of self-denial. Lent is a great time for denying ourselves some of the comforts and pleasures of life. The monks in the desert, centuries ago, discovered that fasting caused a tremendous boost to their consciousness. Not only did their bodies go on "alert," but their whole person seemed to be in a more heightened state of attention. The whole purpose of fasting and abstinence was to aid prayer - to make it easier to listen to God more openly, especially in times of need.

Two days in Lent, Ash Wednesday and Good Friday are named as days of fast and abstinence for Catholics and we do it together as a community. On other Wednesdays and Fridays of Lent, we must challenge ourselves to try to fast more intentionally and try to eat very little, small amount of beans and rice or other food items of personal choice. We will experience how powerfully open and alert we feel and how much easier it is to pray and to name deeper desires with intentional fasting and abstinence. This experience can also be a very simple gesture that places us in greater solidarity with the poor, who often have to be content with a little rice and beans each day. Powerful things happen in us when we think about people in the world who have so much less than we do. And it is a great cure for self-pity.

We can let our denials become more meaningful and joyful if we couple denials with engagements. Denial is setting aside our own wishes, needs, or interests for a higher purpose. The higher purpose in the season of Lent is to allow those things in our "self" to die – things that hold us down, make us unfree and burdened. Fasting, abstinence, renunciation, giving up pleasures, etc. are all examples of denials. Engagement is getting involved in positive, affirming, life-giving, creative activities that allow us to rise above those things that hold us down, make us unfree and burdened. It is reaching out to the less privileged in the community to attend to their urgent needs. It is sharing our resources with the poor and the marginalized.

May this season of Lent enable you to deny yourself more meaningfully and joyfully.

Fr. Gus Tharappel, msfs

# **Third Week of Lent**

**March 9 - 14, 2026**

**Lent stimulates us to let the Word of God penetrate our life  
and in this way to know the fundamental truth: Who we are, where we come from,  
where we must go, what path we must take in life.  
(Pope Benedict XVI)**

## **March 9 – Monday, Third Week of Lent**

**A moment of silence, even very brief, is like a minute vacation, a truce from  
worries, a moment of stillness and serenity.**

### **2 Kings 5:1-15**

Naaman, a good man and effective military leader had to surrender to something that he considered “less than” himself to overcome the problems (obstacles) in his life. He had to learn to humble himself before he was freed from his problems. Naaman had two problems in his life: he was a leper and a Syrian. Leprosy was looked on with fear, causing hostility, isolation and separation from the community. Syrians were looked upon with suspicion and fear.

Naaman was an outsider, not part of God’s chosen people, a man to be feared, to be suspicious of and kept apart from the community. Naaman had to listen to his servant girl, then to more servants and give up his pride in order to be healed. The unclean foreigner was cleansed, and he gave testimony to God and God’s power.

**Learn to be humble in your ways. Listen and learn to surrender to the Lord. Welcome God’s ways with real faith and learn to attempt what seems impossible!**

### **Psalm 42**

**As the hind longs for running waters,  
so my soul longs for you, O God.  
Athirst is my soul for God, the living God,  
when shall I go and behold the face of God.**

## **Luke 4:24-30**

Being a Prophet meant many things to many people such as, calling people to purification, a cleansing of life, a conversion of attitude and real repentance; Proclaiming truth; Standing for God and God's law; Calling forth justice; Proclaiming righteousness, God's righteousness; Teaching values; Calling forth virtuous living; Proclaiming unconditional love.....And that is why a Prophet is not acceptable in his own native place.

**Learn to listen to the Prophetic voice coming from unexpected sources. Remember, Naaman had to listen to his servants; Abraham had to listen to strangers; Moses had to listen to a burning bush; Mary had to listen to an angel; Joseph had to listen to his dream; John the Baptist had to listen to a voice from the sky...**

**Let us learn to listen the voice of God and listen with faith...**

**Saint of the Day, March 9 - St. Frances of Rome and 5 other saints are remembered this day.**

Frances was born in 1384 in Rome to a wealthy and aristocratic couple. When she was eleven years old, she wanted to be a nun, but, at about the age of twelve, her parents forced her to marry Lorenzo Ponziani, commander of the papal troops of Rome and member of an extremely wealthy family. Although the marriage had been arranged, it was a happy one, lasting for forty years, partly because Lorenzo admired his wife, and partly because he was frequently away at war.

With her sister-in-law Vannoza, Frances visited the poor and took care of the sick, inspiring other wealthy women of the city to do the same. When her mother-in-law died, Frances became mistress of the household. During a time of flood and famine, she turned part of the family's country estate into a hospital and distributed food and clothing to the poor. Frances used all her money and sold her possessions to buy whatever the sick might possibly need. When all the resources had been exhausted, Frances and Vannoza went door to door begging. Later, Frances' daughter died, and the saint opened a section of her house as a hospital.

Frances' life combines aspects of secular and religious life. A devoted and loving wife, she longed for a lifestyle of prayer and service, so she organized a group of women to minister to the needs of Rome's poor, bound by no vows. They simply offered themselves to God and to the service of the poor. Once the society was established, Frances chose not to live at the community residence, but rather at home with her husband. She did this for seven years, until her husband passed away, and then came to live the remainder of her life with the society—serving the poorest of the poor. She died on March 9, 1440.

**March 10 – Tuesday, Third Week of Lent**

**The most powerful thing you can say is be quiet.... Be still!**

**Daniel 3:25, 34-43**

Azariah prays with a humble and contrite heart. He affirms his confidence that those who follow God's ways and trust in God cannot be put to shame. He prays for God's kindness, mercy and compassion for his people.

**Pray for God's compassion and mercy! Be humble and pray with confidence!**

**Psalm 25**

**Your ways, O Lord, make known to me;  
teach me your paths,  
Guide me in your truth and teach me  
for you are God, my savior.**

**Mathew 18:21-35**

Peter asked Jesus how often he must forgive his brother. The Rabbis taught that a man must forgive his brother three times. Peter was willing to go further than that, suggesting seven times!!! Jesus responded by suggesting seventy times seven – forgiveness without limit!!!

**We have been forgiven much! And we have been forgiven without condition! Learn to forgive from the heart!**

Jesus told them a parable about a servant who was forgiven a great debt. This servant went out and treated a fellow-servant without mercy and his unforgiving attitude was condemned!!!

**Our calling is to forgive others as we have been forgiven, without condition and without limit.**

**May forgiveness be your Easter gift – forgive yourself and others without limit!!!**

**Saint of the Day, March 10 - St. Dominic Savio and 18 other saints are remembered this day.**

Dominic Savio was born on April 2, 1842 in the village of Riva in northern Italy. He was given the name Domenico at baptism. The name Domenico means "of the Lord" and the surname Savio means "wise". His parents had ten children in all. His father was a blacksmith and his mother, a seamstress. They were poor, hardworking and pious. His parents took great care to give him a Christian upbringing. By the age of four, Dominic was able to pray by himself and was occasionally found in solitude, praying. At the age of five, he learned to serve Mass, and would try to participate at Mass every day as well as go regularly to Confession. Having been permitted to make his First Communion at an early age, he had much reverence for the Eucharist.

Dominic joined Saint John Bosco as a student at the Oratory in Turin at the age of 12. He impressed Don Bosco with his desire to be a priest and to help him in his work with neglected boys. A peacemaker and an organizer, young Dominic founded the Company of the Immaculate Conception which, besides being devotional, aided St. John Bosco with the boys and with manual work. All the members except Dominic, would, in 1859, join St. John Bosco in the beginnings of his Salesian congregation. By that time, Dominic had been called home to heaven.

As a youth, Dominic spent hours rapt in prayer. His raptures he called "my distractions." Even in play, he said that at times, "It seems heaven is opening just above me. I am afraid I may say or do something that will make the other boys laugh." Dominic would say, "I can't do big things. But I want all I do, even the smallest thing, to be for the greater glory of God."

Dominic's health, always frail, led to lung problems and he was sent home to recuperate. As was the custom of the day, he was bled in the thought that this would help, but it only worsened his condition. He died on March 9, 1857, after receiving the Last Sacraments. Some thought that Dominic was too young to be considered a saint. Saint Pius X declared that just the opposite was true and went ahead with his cause. Dominic was canonized in 1954.

## **March 11 – Wednesday, Third Week of Lent**

**Being still does not mean you don't do anything.  
It means you do everything gently, quietly and in serenity.**

### **Deuteronomy 4:1, 5-9**

Moses tells the people how special they are to God – so special that God gave them laws, guidance from his heart for his people! God did not leave his people in the wilderness to go their own way without direction! God's people must remember God's teachings and pass them on to their children.

The sign of wisdom and intelligence is that God's people know God's wisdom and they follow God's wisdom.....God is so close to His people that he is there when they call upon him.....

**Keep searching for God's wisdom and be faithful!**

## **Psalm 147**

**Praise the Lord for he is good, sing praise.....he is gracious.....**

**He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.....**

**Great is the Lord.....to his wisdom there is no limit.....**

## **Mathew 5:17-19**

Jesus told the disciples that he did not come to abolish the law but to fulfill the law. He also told them that greatness in God's kingdom depended on faithfulness to God's law.

Jesus came to bring out the meaning and purpose of the law – to fulfill it – to realize it, to achieve its purpose. The real purpose of the law which Jesus came to fulfill is at the heart of the Ten Commandments and the beatitudes. One word that could identify this purpose is REVERENCE or deep respect – reverence for God, for self, for other and for all of God's creation. It is this reverence, deep respect, intimate love that Jesus came to fulfill, to show us in actual life what reverence for God and God's creation means.

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

**Be faithful to God and God's law! Learn to fulfill God's law, to achieve its purpose!**

**Saint of the Day, March 11 - Saint John Ogilvie and 16 other saints are remembered this day.**

Saint John Ogilvie was born in 1579 in Scotland. He was the eldest son of Walter Ogilvie, a respected Calvinist. At the age of twelve he was sent to the European continent to be educated. He attended several Catholic educational establishments, under the Benedictines in Germany and with the Jesuits in Moravia. In the midst of the religious controversies and turmoil that engulfed the Europe of that era, he decided to become a Catholic.

In 1596, aged seventeen, he was received into the Catholic Church at Leuven, Belgium. He joined the Society of Jesus in 1599 and was ordained a priest in Paris in 1610. After ordination he served in Rouen in Normandy where he made repeated requests to be sent to Scotland to minister to the few remaining Catholics in the Glasgow area.

It was his hope that some Catholic nobles there would aid him, given his lineage. Finding none, he went to London, then back to Paris, and finally returned to Scotland in November 1613 disguised as a horse trader named John Watson. Thereafter he began to preach in secret, celebrating Mass clandestinely in private homes.

This ministry was to last less than a year. In October 1614, Ogilvie was discovered and arrested in Glasgow under the orders of Archbishop Spottiswood and was imprisoned. He was initially treated well, but after continually refusing to confess, was tortured by sleep deprivation. John Ogilvie was publicly hanged and drawn on March 10, 1615 in Glasgow.

## **March 12 – Thursday, Third Week of Lent**

**When things don't turn around the way you planned, be still, go slow  
and take time to plan a way to turn things around!**

### **Jeremiah 7:23-28**

The well-being of a nation depends on its spiritual and moral strength more than the abundance of material wealth. There can be no liberation without walking in the ways of the Lord. Our Lenten journey is a journey of self-surrender.

**We are called to walk in loving obedience to God and generous service to our neighbor.**

### **Psalm 95**

**Come, let us sing joyfully to the Lord;  
Let us acclaim the rock of our salvation.  
Let us greet him with thanksgiving;  
Let us joyfully sing praise to him.**

### **Luke 11:14-23**

Slander is a very cruel thing, may be, one of the worst things that you can do to others. Slander often sticks because of the tendency of many to think the worst of themselves and others and some prefer to hear the derogatory rather than the complimentary story.

**Do you have a tendency to think the worst of yourself or others? Do you have a tendency to deliberately impute low motives to someone you dislike? Do you have a tendency to repeat unpleasant or slanderous or malicious stories and hurt the reputation of others?**

One cannot follow Jesus in a half-hearted manner. One is either totally committed to the world or the Lord. We cannot have divided loyalties. There is no neutral position in the Kingdom of God. You have to take a stand. You are either on the way or in the way.

**Is your commitment becoming more and more undivided, complete and whole?**

**Are you on the way? How is your journey progressing? Are you aware of anything on the way that seems to get in your way?**

**Saint of the day, March 12 - St Seraphina/Fina and 13 other saints are remembered this day.**

St Seraphina/Fina was born into a very poor family in the year 1238 in Italy. Her father died when she was very young. As a little girl she learned to sew and spin, spending most of her time at home. After her father's death, she was struck with a strange and paralyzing illness. She became misshapen and ugly, in constant pain, unable to get out of bed or even to move. Her mother took care of her but had to leave her for hours at a time to attend to her work. Seraphina's only consolation was the crucifix and she realized that she was called to imitate the suffering Christ. So, she never complained.

Her mother died and she was left completely destitute. Her neighbors were disgusted by her appearance and her sickness. Her only friend was a girl named Beldia who visited her and brought her food. She had read about the great sufferings of Pope St. Gregory the Great and he became her special saint. She prayed to him, drew strength from the sufferings that he had to endure and prayed that he would obtain for her the patience she needed to bear her own sufferings. She died on March 12, 1253 at the age of fifteen on the feast of St. Gregory (at that time, the feast was on March 12). The whole city attended her funeral and from that moment everyone began to pray to her. On the place where she had lain, her neighbors found white violets growing and even today in the village of San Geminiano where she lived, the white violets that bloom in March are called Santa Fina flowers.

**March 13 - Friday, Third Week of Lent**

**The answer you are searching for does not come when your mind is busy. The answer comes when you are quiet, still and serene.**

## **Hosea 14:2-10**

The Prophet calls his people to turn away from sinful ways and return to the Lord. He proclaims God as a God of compassion, forgiveness and healing. Hosea says to his people that God will make them a new people and bless them with prosperity. He calls them to walk in the path of the Lord in justice and “blossom like the Lilly and the Vine”.

**The season of Lent continues to invite us to listen to the call of Hosea to conversion and new life and new beginnings.**

## **Psalm 81**

**Sing joyfully to God our strength, acclaim the God of Jacob.....**

**Take up a melody and sound the timbrel...the pleasant harp and the lyre.....**

## **Mark 12:28-34**

Jesus sums up the law and the prophets into “LOVE” - love with our whole being. As St. Augustine puts it, it is only in loving God with our whole being that we come to love our life, self and others in the proper way.

**By loving God and walking in His ways, we do not use others to meet our needs or exploit them for our purposes. By centering on God’s love, we are liberated to love everything as God’s gifts. We come to experience ourselves as loved and gifted. We no longer need to prove our worth.**

**We are loved by “LOVE”. We are accepted by Total, Unconditional Acceptance.**

Lent calls us to reflect on our commitments and loyalties. We don’t have to choose between loving God and others. We are to love God, ourselves and others. Commitment and loyalty to God include love of self and others. Love of God does not divide. Love heals, unifies, integrates, brings Wholeness and Holiness.

**Love of God does not turn us away from the world - love opens our eyes to see the world as God’s gift to us. Love gives us a new, clearer and true vision of the world.**

**Saint of the day, March 13 - St. Leander of Seville and 16 other saints are remembered this day.**

Leander was born at Cartagena, Spain around the year 534. St. Isidore and Fulgentius, both bishops were his brothers, and his sister, Florentina, is also numbered among the saints.

Leander's own family was heavily influenced by Arianism, but he himself grew up to be a fervent Christian. He entered a monastery as a young man and spent three years in prayer and study. At the end of that tranquil period he was made a bishop. For the rest of his life he worked strenuously to fight against heresy. The death of the anti-Christian king in 586 helped Leander's cause. He and the new king worked hand in hand to restore orthodoxy and a renewed sense of morality. Leander succeeded in persuading many Arian bishops to change their loyalties. Leander died around 600.

## **March 14 – Saturday Third Week of Lent**

**The most powerful weapon in the universe is silence, stillness, peace  
and serenity.**

### **Hosea 6:1-6**

"It is love that I desire, not sacrifice, and knowledge of God rather than holocausts", with these words Hosea invites us today to turn to the Lord, our God of compassion and Love. Hosea assures his people and us today: "He will come to us like the rain, like spring rain that waters the earth". So strive to know the Lord, turn to him in love.

### **Psalm 51**

**Have mercy on me God in your goodness;  
In the greatness of your compassion, wipe out my offense.  
Thoroughly wash me from my guilt  
and of my sin cleanse me.....**

### **Luke 18: 9-14**

Jesus spoke the parable of a tax collector and a Pharisee at prayer. The tax collector humbled himself before God and prayed for mercy and was blessed with forgiveness, justification and mercy. The Pharisee claimed to be good, better than the tax collector, justified himself before God and went home feeling good about himself.

It is the tax collector who humbled himself before God that went home forgiven and healed while the Pharisee went home feeling good about himself and better than others.

Jesus says: “everyone who exalts himself shall be humbled while he who humbles himself shall be exalted”.

**Be humble! Come before the Lord in humility, sincerity and truth!**

**To be humble is to acknowledge and accept the truth about self. Humility is not a denial of self and self-worth – it is an affirmation and grateful acceptance of all that you are as God’s gift of love.**

**Be grateful and celebrate your life as God’s gift of love!**

**Saint of the day, March 14 - St. Matilda of Saxony and 8 other saints are remembered this day.**

Matilda was born in 895 A.D. at Engern, Westphalia, Germany. She was the daughter of Count Dietrich of Westphalia and Reinhild of Denmark. She was raised by her grandmother, the Abbess of Eufurt convent. She left the abbey in 913 and got married to King Henry the Fowler of Saxony. She was well known for her generosity, teaching the ignorant, comforting the sick, visiting prisoners, etc.. After Henry’s death, she was betrayed by Otto, her son, when he falsely accused her of financial mismanagement and extravagant charities. She devoted herself to building three convents and a monastery. She was left in charge of the kingdom when Otto went to Rome to be crowned Emperor (often regarded as the beginning of the Holy Roman Empire) and spent most of the declining years of her life at the convent at Nordhausen she had built. She died at the monastery at Quedlinburg on March 14, 968.

Fr. Gus Tharappel, msfs

**There are only two days in the year that nothing can be done.  
One is called Yesterday and the other is called Tomorrow.  
Today is the right day to Love, Believe, Do and mostly Live.  
(Dalai Lama XIV)**