

Wellspring Fransalian Center for Spirituality

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March 9, 2025

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

We began our Lenten Journey with a cross traced in ashes on the foreheads of all who came to Church on Ash Wednesday as a declaration of the necessity of repentance, of change of heart and of faithfulness to the Gospel values. The journey that we began in ashes will take us to the cross. The cross tells us that in the love of God nothing is lost. In the cross we meet the one who took away our sins and overcame death in dying for us.

We will meet Jesus in different situations during our journey through lent. We will hear his word; meet him in the wilderness being tempted and rising above the temptations to a new power; meet him on the mountain transfigured in glory and being declared the beloved son of God; we will see him bringing forgiveness and healing for the broken; we will hear his voice about the unconditional and all-embracing love of God for all people; we will see him carrying the cross to death and beyond; and see the many ways that he interacted with the world around him. Sunday after Sunday, we will meet Jesus revealing the amazing, awesome, sacrificial, and unconquerable love of the father for us his wayward children.

Today, the first Sunday of Lent, we meet Jesus being tempted in the wilderness, rising above the temptations to a new power and strength and coming to call people to repentance and new life in the Kingdom of God (Luke 4:1-13). We meet Jesus making a deliberate choice of method to fulfill his mission and rejecting methods contrary to God's Will. Jesus went to the wilderness to be alone. God had spoken to him. He was given a Mission. He had to be alone with God and discern his plans before he began to fulfill his mission.

Certain things must be worked out alone with God. Certain times, a person must stop doing and start thinking and praying. Each person must give himself/herself a chance to be alone with God. Being alone with God, Prayerful discernment, Reflective Living, Solitude, etc. are all values that we must cherish and cultivate. Try to include a few moments into your daily schedule for reflection and prayer during this season of Lent.

During his time in the wilderness, alone with the Father, Jesus was tempted three times. In the first temptation, we find Jesus refusing to use his power to meet his physical need. He had chosen to deny himself the pleasure of satisfying his physical hunger and becoming deeply conscious of his deeper and more urgent hunger and thirst to do the will of his father.... "Man does not live on bread alone but by the word that comes from the mouth of God," he said. He

had renounced his personal need for comfort, benefit, pleasure, etc. and he remained faithful to that commitment. Eventually, he would declare, “My food is to do the will of the one who sent me and to finish his work.” (John 4:34)

In the second temptation, we find Jesus refusing to compromise/negotiate with evil forces and with lesser goals, morals, values, etc. Jesus chose to surrender to the will of his Father. The tempter’s offer was “all the power in the world” and it is “all the power in the world” that Jesus renounced. Eventually, Jesus would declare, “My kingdom does not belong to this world..... my kingdom is not here.” (John 18:36)

In the third temptation, we find Jesus refusing to display his power that comes from his Father’s love. The tempter wanted a proof of the father’s love by a display of power. Jesus chose the way of trusting, confident Love. Eventually Jesus would teach his disciples to surrender to the father’s love just as he himself did, even dying on the cross.

Jesus taught his disciples, and he teaches us today to remain faithful to our commitments even when inconveniences, difficulties, failures, temptations, and other similar situations come our way. From the beginning of his ministry to death on the cross Jesus remained faithful to the Father’s will as he proclaimed, “I came down from heaven not to do my own will but the will of the one who sent me.” (John 6:38)

We are all called to choose God’s way as Jesus did. It is not difficult to recite a creed, or make a profession of faith, but to live the Christian life is demanding and challenging and often difficult. We must make difficult choices to live our faith. Fine words are never substitutes for fine deeds. Full of life and energy or tired and weary, let us choose God’s way and be faithful. Let us strive to be true to ourselves, to be authentic in all we say and do, to be men and women of integrity, to be steadfast in living our faith and let all our choices reflect who we are as followers of Jesus.

I encourage you to take a few minutes each day of this week to be still and to think about how your day has been and on how your choices of the day reflect who you are and whose you are. Remember... you are children of God, disciples of Jesus, and witnesses of the Gospel of Jesus.

May your Lenten days of prayer, penance and almsgiving help you to be reborn in spirit, empower you to love without limits, teach you to pray constantly, help you seek the wisdom of God, enable you to live in compassion, challenge you to become more attentive and sensitive to the needs of the less privileged in your community and help you celebrate the joy of Easter.

May God bless you and your family and keep you safe in His Love.

Fr. Gus Tharappel, msfs

Scroll down to read the reflections on the Scripture readings of today’s mass....

First Sunday of Lent

March 9, 2025

**Lent is not just about giving up our favorite food or comforts or pleasures.
Lent is about giving up things like greed, jealousies, resentments,
anger, unforgiveness, violence and all forms of hatred.
Lent is about cleansing and purifying our hearts and renewing our spirit.
It is our season for conversion and transformation.**

Collect

Grant, almighty God,
through the yearly observances of holy Lent,
that we may grow in understanding
of the riches hidden in Christ
and by worthy conduct pursue their effects.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

Liturgy of the Word

Prayerfully read the first reading and then read my reflections below and spend a few moments of personal reflection. Do the same with Responsorial Psalm and other readings.

**A life without purpose is like a ship without a compass,
drifting aimlessly in the vast sea of existence.**

Deuteronomy 26:4-10

This excerpt tells us the story of how God heard the cry of his people in bondage in Egypt and made them his people.....their cry and the salvific response of God defined Israel as God's chosen people.

Israel called upon God for deliverance from bondage. How shall we call upon God today and for what shall we call upon God? At the beginning of the season of Lent, we remember the cry of Israel. We cry out to God to deliver us from many forces of oppression, to help us grow in

kindness and compassion, to enable us become better husbands, wives, parents, teachers and so on. Take time to reflect on the nature of your “cries” during this season of Lent.

Psalm 91

This is a prayer of someone who has taken refuge in the Lord, possibly within the Temple. The psalmist is confident that God’s presence will protect the people in every dangerous situation. The final verses are an oracle of salvation promising salvation to those who trust in God. The shelter of the Most High: basically “hiding place” but in the Psalms a designation for the protected Temple precincts. The shade of the Almighty, “the shadow of the wings of the Almighty,” - the shadow is an image of the safety afforded by the outstretched wings of the cherubim in the holy of holies

**You who dwell in the shelter of the Most High,
who abide in the shade of the Almighty,
Say to the LORD, “My refuge and fortress,
my God in whom I trust.”**

Romans 10:8-13

Paul tells the Christians in Rome that no one who believes in Jesus would be put to shame! This excerpt tells us that because of the saving death and resurrection of Jesus, “everyone” can call upon God and experience his salvific response.

Paul continues to say that a Christian must believe and confess his belief in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. Christianity involves not only faith but a witness of that faith. The Jews believed that the way to God was through the law. Paul tells them that the way to God was through trust in Christ and that it was open to everyone and not just the Jews. The season of Lent is a wonderful time for us to grow in our faith in Christ and to give witness to that faith through our Lenten penitential practices.

Luke 4:1-13

Luke describes Jesus being tempted in the wilderness, rising above the temptations to a new power and strength and coming to call people to repentance and new life in the Kingdom of God. We meet Jesus making a deliberate choice of method to fulfill his mission and rejecting methods contrary to God's Will. Jesus went to the wilderness to be alone. God had spoken to him. He was given a Mission. He had to plan out before He began the mission. He had to be alone with God.

In the first temptation, Jesus refused to use his power for personal need satisfaction - for personal comfort, benefit or pleasure. In the second temptation, Jesus refused to compromise/negotiate with evil forces - with lesser goals, values, morals, etc. Jesus chose to surrender to the will of his Father. In the third temptation, Jesus refused a "show-off", a display of power. Jesus chose the way of trusting, confident Love.

Have you been giving yourself a chance to be alone with God?

Reflect on testing times (temptations) in your own personal life, even in times of intense search for God and God's ways.

Do you recognize the testing times as opportunities to prove your worth?

Be Still for a few moments!

Pray for your needs and those of your family and community.

Spiritual Communion

Lord Jesus, I believe in your real presence in the Eucharist, the Sacrament of the Altar. I place myself in your presence and adore you, worship you and glorify you. I am unable to receive you in Holy Communion at Mass today. I hunger and thirst for your way, your truth and your life. Come into my heart Lord and satisfy my hunger and quench my thirst. Bless me that I may give witness to your presence in my life. Amen

Be Still for a few moments!

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 Vannozza, 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 Vannozza 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.

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