

Wellspring Fransalian Center for Spirituality

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Dear Brothers and Sisters,

We have just begun the season of Lent and heard a call to “repent and return to the Lord with our whole heart.” It is essentially a call to conversion and transformation of our life in Christ. It is important to remember that “NOW” is the season for conversion, change and transformation and not in some distant future convenient time! On Ash Wednesday, we heard the Prophet Joel proclaiming an urgency for conversion NOW. It is time to sanctify the community, he says. We hear Saint Paul urging us as he did the Corinthians to be reconciled to God NOW. Jesus urges us to purify our motivations and intentions NOW. Let us begin this season of Lent with a deep desire for conversion NOW. We must let our Lenten practices be deliberate, intentional and purposeful.

If conversion and transformation have to happen, we must repent, name the “Sinful and the Unhealthy.” Lent is a wonderful time to name the sinful, the unhealthy and the self-centered patterns of living. We could do a good soul searching, a good examination of conscience, a personal scrutiny of life, a process of discerning what needs change or conversion or transformation in our life.

Sin must be understood as a betrayal of relationship with God or the betrayal of true freedom or the betrayal of one’s true self, the way God made it to be rather than as a mere violation of law. It must also be understood as turning from God to a false sense of freedom and a crippling of the will leading to choices inconsistent with our true nature. Sin is more than unethical or illegal...it is unholy. St. Augustine called sin “estrangement from the creator, the highest good, for the sake of an inferior good”. Sin is self-sufficiency instead of faith; self-will instead of self-surrender; self-seeking instead of benevolence; self-righteousness instead of humility.

During this first week of Lent, let us take a few moments to be still and prayerfully reflect on how our life has been and try to name the sinful and the unhealthy in our life – sinful or unhealthy attitudes, behaviors, actions, feelings, thoughts, etc. Let us do some personal soul searching and discover what aspect of our life needs conversion. Let us take a few moments also to reflect and discern what must be done to make the necessary changes and bring about a conversion of our life. Conversion is a life-long process and not a finished product. We must strive to overcome our imperfections, weaknesses and evil tendencies. Let us commit ourselves to making the necessary changes and pray for God’s grace for making those changes.

Fr. Gus Tharappel, msfs

First Week OF Lent

March 10-15, 2025

**Be a sign of the living Christ, do not be afraid of what the Lord asks of you.
Open yourselves to Christ, listen to Him in the silence of prayer.
Accompany those who are most fragile, take charge of those who are alone.
Be the seed of a more fraternal world! Be families with big hearts!
Be the welcoming face of the Church! And please pray, always pray!**
(Pope Francis)

March 10 – Monday, First Week of Lent

**Purpose is the soul's quest for expression,
a journey that transcends the limits of time and circumstance.**

Leviticus 19:1-2, 11-18

Moses called the people to be holy because the Lord is holy. Such holiness requires not only reverence for God but also deep respect for self and others, even other's property. Moses spells out the details of the Covenant with God. Deep reverence for God must reflect deep reverence for people, deep reverence for self and deep reverence for creation.

Reflect on your sense of reverence for God and for all that is God's!

Psalm 19

**May the words of my mouth and the thoughts of my heart,
Find favor before you, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer.**

Mathew 25:31-46

The final judgment is not how you kept the rules and how many prayers you said. It is about how you treated those in need and why you treated them the way you did.

The good that is done for others is not because others needed your "good" or because there was a reward for doing good but because you couldn't help but do the good. Being good and

doing good, being generous and doing the generous thing, being compassionate and doing the compassionate thing...etc. is your nature, your character, your quality. It just reflects who you are!

There can be no holiness without concern for others, especially the needy, the disadvantaged, the poor...

We cannot love God without loving others in truth. Loving in truth is to love as God loves, to reflect God's love. This means that we must love those who cannot love in return and those who cannot love the way we have learned to love. To be holy is to love. This love is unconditional, non-judgmental and all-embracing. Jesus says love is beyond piety and good deeds. Our love must cross the boundaries and break barriers.

We minister to the Lord when we minister to each other and to all in need, without even realizing that we are ministering to the Lord.

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 – Tuesday, First Week of Lent

A purposeful life is characterized by the influence it has on others.

Isaiah 55:10-11

Chapter 55 of Isaiah invites us to come to God, to listen to God's wisdom, to be fed and nourished on God's word of wisdom, to renounce the way of foolishness and wickedness and to turn to God and God's ways. The prophet says God's ways are not our ways. So, seek the Lord and his ways!

God's word is alive, active and dynamic. God's word is faithful word and the word will become fruitful and life-giving. **Nourish and strengthen yourselves with God's word.**

Psalm 34

**Glorify the Lord with me,
Let us together extol his name.
I sought the Lord and he answered me,
And delivered me from all my fears.**

Mathew 6:7-15

This is how Jesus taught his disciples to pray. Begin prayer by addressing God "Father". Come into the presence of someone who need not be forced to give, but to a Father who simply gives. Reverence to God must be first, before all else.

The first "three" petitions are about reverence for God - holy be your name; your kingdom come; your will be done. God first. All other things will then fall in their proper places.

Prayer should not be our attempt to bend God's will to our desires - but must be a surrender of our will to God's will - bringing our will into harmony with God's will.

The second "three" petitions are about our needs, and they cover all life: praying for the

essential needs (daily bread) for the day; forgiveness for sin of the past; help for meeting the testing times in the future.

Bring the whole of life – your present, past and future - before God.

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 – Wednesday, First Week of Lent

Purpose transforms routine into ritual, making the mundane sacred.

Jonah 3:1-10

The people of Nineveh, king and common folks, repented, changed their ways and turned to God at the preaching of Jonah. God had compassion on the Ninevites.

The season of Lent calls us to conversion, to a change of heart. Reflect on the need for your own personal conversion!

Psalm 51

**Have mercy on me, God, in your goodness;
In your abundant compassion, blot out my offense.
Wash away all my guilt; from my sin, cleanse me.**

Luke 11:29-32

They (Scribes and Pharisees) looked for God in the abnormal - in the extraordinary. Jesus constantly called people to recognize God and God's presence in the ordinary everyday experiences...in little children, in the widow's mite, in the lilies of the field, in the birds of the air.....

Jesus refused to give extraordinary signs and called the scribes and Pharisees and all his followers to find God in the ordinary things of everyday life.

Jesus presented himself, not what he did, as the sign, God's sign. Jesus is God's sign for us just as Jonah was God' sign for the Ninevites and Solomon God's sign for the Queen of Sheba.

The disciple must now become a sign of the Master.....perhaps imperfect, but still a sign that carries the message of the master.....The world must meet the Master in the disciple.

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 – Thursday, First Week of Lent

**In the pursuit of purpose, we discover the profound connection
between our aspirations and the universe.**

Esther 12:14-16, 23-25

Esther, a Jewess, became queen of Persia. King Ahasuerus had fixed the date for the execution of the Jews in the kingdom in a single day. Esther, feeling intensely the pain of her people, pours out the anguish of her soul and that of her people to God in prayer: Be mindful of us O Lord.....she prayed. Esther won favor with God and with God's favor, the king and the Jews were saved.

Reflect on the providential care of God for God's people. Reflect on your own urgent need to pour out your heart and the heart of your people to God!

Psalm 138

**The Lord will complete what he has done for me;
Your kindness O Lord, endures forever;
Forsake not the work of your hands.**

Mathew 7:7-12

“The heavenly father will give good things to those who ask him....” and will not give anything dangerous or injurious to you.....Asking God is an act of trust that God has power over our lives - that God loves us so much that we can trust him with our lives, our lives' concerns, needs, problems, etc.

We place ourselves in the hands of Our Father who knows our needs more than we do ourselves. We stand before him with open arms to receive or to let go. We surrender ourselves to him and remain open to receive His Gifts.

Shortly before bed time, a little boy lost one of his favorite marbles, a large, colorful one. After

searching for it unsuccessfully, the boy approached his father in tears, saying “Can I pray and ask God to help me find my marble?” The father agreed and they both closed their eyes and prayed. The boy prayed with great faith and the father joined him in his prayer: “Dear God, help me find my favorite marble”. The next day, the father was afraid to ask his son if he had found the marble. He was concerned that the boy’s sincere faith would be hurt if he had not found the marble. The father gently asked: “did you find the marble, son?” “No”, the boy replied, “but God made me not to want to care about it anymore.”

God has more ways to answer our prayers than simply saying “Yes” and granting our wish. There may be times when we pray about an issue or a concern and simply come to a place of peace about it.

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 - Friday, First Week of Lent

**Purpose is the north star
that guides us through the vast expanse of possibilities.**

Ezekiel 18:21-28

The prophet says, repent and all will be well! Virtue means strength and life. Absence of virtue means weakness and eventual death. Ezekiel says, the Lord remembers virtuous life and forgets crimes of the past. You are called to live virtuous lives!

Psalm 130

**Out of the depths I cry to you O Lord,
Lord, hear my voice;
Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplication!**

Mathew 5:20-26

In this excerpt, Mathew offers us very challenging messages of Jesus:

- Your holiness must surpass that of the scribes and Pharisees! You are called to live higher standards of life. You are called to live virtuous lives!
- All forms of prayer and worship call forth reconciliation. Sacrifice and worship assume genuine confession of sin, true penitence and forgiveness from the heart. Be reconciled with others! Be reconciled now!
- Be aware of the words you speak. Be sensitive and speak affirming, encouraging, healing, supporting, empowering words!
- Be aware of words that may insult or hurt others. Words could alienate you from the community - they break down relationship. Speak words that bring life and not death.
- Make peace in time and make it now! Now is the time for reconciliation and peace!

Genuine Forgiveness is Unconditional. Learn to forgive from the heart!

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

Matilda was born in 895 C.E. 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.

March 15 – Saturday, First Week of Lent

Purpose is the flame that transforms our potential into a radiant reality.

Deuteronomy 26:16-19

Obedying God's law is what makes us the "People of God". Moses tells his people that they are a people of the covenant, that they have an "agreement" with God and that God has an "agreement with them. Therefore, they must learn to "listen" to God's voice and remain faithful just as God is faithful.

Learn to walk in God's ways! You are a people sacred to the Lord.

Psalm 119

**Happy the person whose way is blameless,
who walks in the law of the Lord.
Happy are they, who observe his decrees,
who seek him with all their heart.**

Mathew 5:43-48

Mathew continues to bring us very high ideals that Jesus placed before his disciples. Your spirituality must rise above that of the scribes and Pharisees. Your life must be more virtuous than the pagans and do more than the pagans do.

Learn to lead noble and virtuous lives. Let your character reflect virtue.

Your love will prove that you are "sons of the heavenly Father". The heavenly Father is impartial to those who love him and to those who do not love him.

Let your love embrace all people – even those who do not love you!

Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect! To be perfect is to be what God made you to be, do what God wants you to do and fulfill the plan, "the will" God has for you.

Listen and keep searching for God's will for you! Be and become discerning people!

Saint of the Day, March 15 - St. Louise de Marillac and 11 other saints are remembered this day.

St. Louise de Marillac was born on August 12, 1591, at Le Meux in France. As a young woman, Louise married a man with a bright future ahead of him. They were both happy in the marriage, but soon her husband developed a chronic illness which worsened over time. After several years, he died.

In 1625, Louise moved to a parish near Paris, and Father Vincent de Paul became her spiritual advisor. As their relationship continued, he realized that Louise could be very helpful in directing his Ladies of Charity who cared for the sick, poor and neglected in his parish community. Louise trained his volunteers and organized their work.

In 1634 Father Vincent and Louise co-founded the Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul. Louise herself professed vows and became Mother Superior. Many women joined her. Mother Louise traveled all over France, placing her sisters in hospitals, orphanages, and other institutions. She encouraged her sisters to treat the poor as if they were serving Christ himself. When she died in 1660, she had established 40 convents. Today, the Sisters of Charity can be found all over the world. St. Louise de Marillac was canonized by Pope Pius XI in 1934.

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