



LENT:

It's the most "Ponder-full"
time of the year! MARCH 2014

THEME/TOPIC OF THE MONTH:

Lent: It's the most "Ponder-full" time of the year!

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES OF THE MONTH:

Genesis 3:19 For you are dust, and to dust you shall return.

Mark 1:15 Repent, and believe in the gospel."

TEACHING OF THE MONTH:

Lent to the Max: Prayer and Fasting/Penance (Parts 1 and 2 of a 3-part series)

DISCUSSION QUESTION OF THE MONTH:

What prayer and fasting practices will I commit to make this Lenten season truly meaningful and fruitful?

SONG OF THE MONTH:

Ashes by Tom Conry <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8dO5kBOGnYA>

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH PARAGRAPHS OF THE MONTH:

CCC 1434-1439: The Many Forms of Penance in Christian Life.

SAINT OF THE MONTH:

St. Dominic Savio

PRAYER OF THE MONTH:

Lenten Prayer

MEDIA (TV/CD/BOOK/MOVIE) OF THE MONTH:

Son of God <http://www.sonofgodmovie.com/videos.html>

(Note: You may want to do a dinner and Son of God movie as a household fellowship activity in one of the 5 weekends of March.)

IPHONE/SMARTPHONE APP OF THE MONTH:

Laudate (This is a repeat from last month to make sure all CFC members upload this free Catholic app)

APPLICATION OF THE MONTH: "FAITH WITHOUT ACTION IS DEAD"

Do at least one of the 7 Corporal Works of Mercy:

1. Feed the hungry.
2. Give drink to the thirsty.
3. Clothe the naked.
4. Shelter the Homeless (classical term is "Harbor the harborless")
5. Visit the sick.
6. Visit the imprisoned (classical term is "Ransom the captive")
7. Bury the dead

March 3, 2014

**Subject: 2014 CFCUSA –
Lent: The Most Ponder-full Time of the Year (ROH#5)**

Dear CFC Family:

Welcome to Lent, the most ponder-full time of the year!

I know, I know...my wife Malou wanted me to change that Lenten tagline as she claims that it sounds too Christmas-y and “un-Lenten”. Too often, our attitude towards Lent is that of doom, gloom and guilt. While we are called during this season to ponder on our lives, repent of our sins, reflect on our relationship with our God, behold His Divine Mercy and re-discover His love, I think that we should also have a healthy, positive and enthusiastic attitude towards Lent. Be excited to make a new resolve, roll up our sleeves, bow down our heads and engage in spiritual house-cleaning. Look forward to new beginnings and spiritual awakenings. Let us all persevere, endure, press forward, and hope!

So, for the next 40 days, let us journey together through the desert of fervent prayer, sacrificial fasting/penance and generous alms-giving as we move toward the Easter celebration of the Resurrection of our Lord, with renewed minds and transformed hearts ready, equipped and excited to fulfill our God-given mission.

I hope that you find the attached March pastoral formation materials helpful in your journey. Happy Lenten travels!

In Christ through Mary,
Bro. Toffee Jeturian

THEME/TOPIC OF THE MONTH:

Lent: It's the Most "Ponder-full" time of the Year!

Lent to the Max: Prayer - Part One of a Three Part Series

Lent starts with Ash Wednesday! The Gospel reading in the Mass of Ash Wednesday gives us the practical program to live out a fruitful Lent that leads to self knowledge, love for Christ, and conversion of life.

The Biblical passage is taken from parts of the Sermon on the Mount. The church takes two parts of the 6th chapter of Matthew: Mt. 6:1-6 and Mt. 6: 16-18. In these few verses, the Church outlines three specific practices that we should undertake with generosity so as to live out a most fruitful Lent that culminates in the triumph of the Risen Lord on Easter! The secret to experiencing the intensity of the joy of the Resurrection on Easter Sunday is to live out intensely the season of Lent, which is an extraordinary gift the Church offers us every year. As an analogy, the secret of success of a CFC activity is the preparation before the actual activity!

In a concrete and simple way, Jesus exhorts us to undertake 3 specific practices, and if undertaken seriously they will lead us to a true "Metanoia"—meaning a true conversion of mind, will, heart, body and life! **GENEROSITY!** The key is a well-disposed and generous heart.

These 3 specific practices are:

- Prayer
- Fasting/Penance
- Almsgiving

The purpose of this short teaching is to give us 5 practical suggestions for each of the 3 categories (prayer, fasting, and almsgiving). Let us now dive in!

PRAYER.

To encourage us to be generous in prayer start by meditating on a sublime teaching of St. Peter of Alcantara on the fruits of a powerful prayer life. “In mental prayer, the soul is purified of its sins, nourished with charity, confirmed in faith, and strengthened in hope; the mind expands, the affections dilate, the heart is purified, truth becomes evident; temptation is conquered, sadness dispelled; the senses are renovated; the drooping powers revive; tepidity ceases; the rust of vices disappears. Out of mental prayer issue forth, like living sparks, those desires of heaven which the soul conceives when inflamed with the fire of divine love. Sublime is the excellence of mental prayer; great are its privileges; to mental prayer heaven is opened; to mental prayer heavenly secrets are manifested and the ear of God is ever attentive.”

5 SPECIFIC PRACTICES THAT WE CAN IMPLEMENT TO PRODUCE A FRUITFUL LENT THROUGH PRAYER

1. HOLY ROSARY.

Our Lady of Fatima appeared six times to the children in Fatima. Every time she appeared she asked for the recitation of the most Holy Rosary. Blessed John Paul II in his document on the Blessed Virgin on the Rosary implored the world to pray the Rosary and especially for two specific intentions: for world peace and for the salvation of the family. Recall the words of the Rosary-priest, Father Patrick Peyton, of immortal memory: ““A world at prayer is a world at peace” and “The family that prays together stays together.” Do just that. Commit to pray the Rosary daily as a family. Meditate on the specific mysteries while praying. Set a specific time and commit to it as a family.

2. DAILY MEDITATION OF THE WORD OF GOD.

Time and time again the saints, Doctors of the Church, as well as church documents encourage us to read and meditate on the Bible, the living Word of God. St. Jerome reminds us, “Ignorance of Sacred Scripture is ignorance of Christ.” We cannot love somebody we do not know! Find the time, place, and good will to meditate on the Word of God. You may want to use some Daily Devotionals to help you. Noteworthy are The Word Among Us, The Magnificat, and our very own CFC publication “Behold and Ponder.” Mary is our example who we find two times in the Gospel of Luke pondering, meditating in her heart. May Mary be our model, guide and inspiration!

3. LECTIO-DIVINA.

Pope Benedict XVI in his Apostolic Exhortation *Verbum Domini* (The Word of God) suggests another way to pray called “Lectio Divina”. He outlines specific steps in this method/process.

a) Lectio--- Read slowly, attentively and prayerfully with the Biblical disposition of heart: “Speak O Lord for your servant is listening.”

b) Meditatio---- Think deeply, ponder, and meditate on the word.

c) Contemplatio---- Use your imagination to pray and picture yourself present to the scene. St. Ignatius in the *Spiritual Exercises* calls this “Composition of Place”. You are really present with Jesus in the scene!

d) Oratio--- Open up your heart in conversation with God over the text.

e) Accio--- Prayer should lead you to action. You are called to be a contemplative in action like the Blessed Virgin Mary who meditated on the Word in her heart and then was moved to share Jesus with St. Elizabeth and St. John the Baptist in her visitation.

f) Transformacio--- If indeed we are praying well and uniting ourselves with God, then there will be a transformation of our lives so much so that with St. Paul we can say, “It is no longer I who live but it is Christ who lives in me.”

4. VISIT THE BLESSED SACRAMENT.

Jesus is longing for your friendship. Pope Benedict XVI in his apostolic letter, “Porta fidei” (Door of faith) insists on getting to know Jesus in an intimate and personal way, as friends get to know each other. Friends like to visit each other frequently. Jesus should be your “Best Friend”. Try your very best (before going to work, during your lunch break or after work) to drop by a church and talk to Him about everything that is going on in your life! Spend some really “quiet time” with Him to LISTEN to him. Remember, we need to be SILENT to be able to LISTEN to his sweet, silent voice.

5. HOLY SACRIFICE OF THE MASS.

Of course the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, full, active and conscious participation in Mass, culminating in the reception of Holy Communion which is the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ is by far the most sublime and efficacious prayer in the universe. The Holy Mass is the source and summit of our life! Therefore, why not make a commitment this holy Season of Lent to try to attend Holy Mass DAILY (bring the family along with you!); if it is impossible every day, at least several days during the course of the week. Check all the daily Mass schedules close to your home and office and see what schedule will work. You will never regret this practice in the here and now as well as in eternity! Just imagine, receiving the God of the Universe every day, Your Mass time will become the BEST and most anticipated part of your day!

Prayer is essential for our sanctification, conversion, perseverance, and eternal salvation as well as the whole world. Be generous and God will infinitely be more generous with you!

Lent to the Max: Penance (Fasting): Part Two of a Three Part Series

FASTING OR PENANCE! The second practice that we should generously undertake is that of fasting or penance! Fasting/Penance added to prayer is equal to forming a powerful prayer warrior for the Lord. Remember Moses elevating his arms in prayer on the top of the mountain overlooking the battle being waged between the Jews and the Amalekites. When Moses arms drooped, the battle would turn sour for the Jews; but when those arms remained elevated towards heaven, the Jews proved victorious with Captain Joshua! Moses both prayed and sacrificed his comfort. Indeed he needed help to maintain those arms lifted on high, but still it was a generous sacrifice. However, it resulted in the victory of the Israelites over their enemies.

Often our prayers are weak, anemic and without any effect in our lives as well as in the life of others. One of the reasons for a weak and ineffectual prayer life is a lack of generosity in the realm of penance.

At Fatima, Our Lady insisted on prayer--- especially the Holy Rosary-- - but also the importance of sacrifice--- another name for penance.

Jesus Himself said that if anyone wanted to be His follower than he would have to renounce himself take up his cross and follow Him. Also, after Jesus resolved a tense situation after the Transfiguration, the Apostles asked Jesus why they could not expel the evil spirit. Jesus responded that some devils can be expelled only by prayer and fasting (penance).

Not only did Jesus preach the importance of penance and fasting, but He also lived it out. Jesus spent 40 days and 40 nights in the desert in both prayer and fasting. Fortified in the spirit by prayer and fasting, Jesus easily conquered the devil and his deceitful ways!

Therefore, as in our teaching on prayer, we will offer five concrete suggestions on how we can live out the call to fasting/penance so as to live the most fruitful Lent in our lives!

**5 PENANCE PRACTICES: SAY “NO” TO SELF;
SAY “YES” TO JESUS!**

1. FASTING FROM MORTAL ENEMY NUMBER ONE: SIN!

First and foremost in our spiritual life we want to make a concerted effort and a strong determination to give up sin. You know your weaknesses, but the devil knows them as well and attacks these head on. Will-power helps but is not enough, pray for the grace to be strengthened by God-power with the Blessed Mother’s intercession to enable you to resist the devil’s attacks. The saints were different in age, temperament talents and abilities, culture and language. However, they all agreed on one thing: sin had to be rejected totally and with a firm determination of the will. The motto of St. Dominic Savio (Read Saint of the month) was, “Death rather than sin.”

2. FASTING OF THE EYES!

The Proverb rings true, “The eyes are the mirror to the soul!” Remember King David! His spiraling into the depths of moral depravity--- adultery, murder and blatant denial of guilt--- all started by wandering eyes onto the beautiful married woman called “Bathsheba”. Spiritual writers remind us time and time again to maintain custody of the eyes. Follow this dynamic, if you will! What goes into the eyes filters into the mind; from the mind into the heart; and from the heart expresses itself in one’s life in concrete actions. “The thought is the father of the deed!!!” This Lent strive to attain “Eye-control!” Let us fix our eyes on all that is pleasing to God and live out the Beatitude: “Blessed are the pure of heart for they will see God.” (Mt. 5:8).

3. FASTING OF THE TONGUE! Start by reading James chapter 3! One of the best chapters in the Bible on the sins of the tongue, James warns us that we should be slow to speak and quick to listen. Also he reminds us that with the same tongue that we praise God we curse our neighbor! This obviously should not be! “Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me.” How so untrue! Wounds from physical hurts may eventually heal but hurtful words, especially from loved ones, may last a lifetime. Guard your tongue and use uplifting words to all you come across, especially your loved one, family, household members, leaders, etc. Start this Lent!

4. FASTING OF THE PALATE AND PLATE! Both Ash Wednesday as well as Good Friday, fasting is obligatory. However Lent is a penitential season in its totality! Examine your eating habits! If you have a tendency to overeat, then Lent is time to curb and conquer the “Glutton” you have within you! As a result of Original sin, Gluttony is a dominant tendency. This means, in many of us, we tend to eat too much, too fast at times, and often foods that we like but may not be beneficial to our health. Remember also that our body is the Temple of the Holy Spirit and it is our obligation to keep it strong for the service of God and for the salvation of other souls. Athletes must curb their impulses, sacrifice themselves and dominate their tendencies for a victory on a human plane. We are athletes and soldiers of Christ fighting for the prize of eternal life. Let us wage the battle and conquer our gluttony and as such achieve and experience the true freedom of the sons and daughters of God! Starting this Lent, let us adhere to our “one solid-one liquid” guideline during our household meetings. If the household meeting falls on a Friday, try fasting (the host will be happy ☺).

5. DAILY OBLIGATIONS DONE WITH PURITY OF INTENTION AND PERFECTION.

Once Lucy asked Our Lady of Fatima what penance would be pleasing to God. Our Lady responded by saying to offer all as a sacrifice, but to start by striving to carry out one's daily duties, daily obligations, one's state of life with greater perfection. Sanctity depends on this. The key to the sanctity of St. Therese of Lisieux is not in doing great things but rather in doing the "ordinary things in one's daily life with extraordinary love." The Key to holiness! Therefore, for Lent in our case, it may not be in adding to our daily schedule, but rather, in carrying out our daily obligations--- mother and spouse, father and worker, son and student--- with greater purity of intention, greater efficiency and greater love. Never forget! God looks into the heart of every individual and will pay him/her according to what he/she has given. St. Paul reminds us in with utmost clarity: "What we sow in this world is what we will reap for eternity!"

We have concluded the second part of our three-part article on how to "Live out Lent fruitfully." Prayer is of the utmost importance to arrive at a deep spiritual life. However, prayer must be accompanied by its brother "Penance/Fasting".

(Part three will be our teaching in April. Stay tuned)

SOURCE: FR. ED BROOM OVM

SONG OF THE MONTH: ASHES by TomConry

1. We rise again from ashes,
from the good we've failed to do.
We rise again from ashes,
to create ourselves anew.
If all our world is ashes,
then must our lives be true,
an offering of ashes, an offering to you.

2. We offer you our failures,
we offer you attempts,
the gifts not fully given,
the dreams not fully dreamt.
Give our stumblings direction,
give our visions wider view,
an offering of ashes, an offering to you.

3. Then rise again from ashes,
let healing come to pain,
though spring has turned to winter,
and sunshine turned to rain.
The rain we'll use for growing, and create the world anew
from an offering of ashes, an offering to you.

4. Thanks be to the Father,
who made us like himself.
Thanks be to his Son,
who saved us by his death. Thanks be to the Spirit
who creates the world anew
from an offering of ashes, an offering to you.

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

PARAGRAPHS OF THE MONTH: CCC 1434-1439

The Many Forms of Penance in Christian Life

1434 The interior penance of the Christian can be expressed in many and various ways. Scripture and the Fathers insist above all on three forms, fasting, prayer, and almsgiving, which express conversion in relation to oneself, to God, and to others. Alongside the radical purification brought about by Baptism or martyrdom they cite as means of obtaining forgiveness of sins: effort at reconciliation with one's neighbor, tears of repentance, concern for the salvation of one's neighbor, the intercession of the saints, and the practice of charity "which covers a multitude of sins."

1435 Conversion is accomplished in daily life by gestures of reconciliation, concern for the poor, the exercise and defense of justice and right, by the admission of faults to one's brethren, fraternal correction, revision of life, examination of conscience, spiritual direction, acceptance of suffering, endurance of persecution for the sake of righteousness. Taking up one's cross each day and following Jesus is the surest way of penance.

1436 Eucharist and Penance. Daily conversion and penance find their source and nourishment in the Eucharist, for in it is made present the sacrifice of Christ which has reconciled us with God. Through the Eucharist those who live from the life of Christ are fed and strengthened. "It is a remedy to free us from our daily faults and to preserve us from mortal sins."

1437 Reading Sacred Scripture, praying the Liturgy of the Hours and the Our Father - every sincere act of worship or devotion revives the spirit of conversion and repentance within us and contributes to the forgiveness of our sins.

1438 The seasons and days of penance in the course of the liturgical year (Lent, and each Friday in memory of the death of the Lord) are intense moments of the Church's penitential practice. These times are particularly appropriate for spiritual exercises, penitential liturgies, pilgrimages as signs of penance, voluntary self-denial such as fasting and almsgiving, and fraternal sharing (charitable and missionary works).

1439 The process of conversion and repentance was described by Jesus in the parable of the prodigal son, the center of which is the merciful father: The fascination of illusory freedom, the abandonment of the father's house; the extreme misery in which the son finds himself after squandering his fortune; his deep humiliation at finding himself obliged to feed swine, and still worse, at wanting to feed on the husks the pigs ate; his reflection on all he has lost; his repentance and decision to declare himself guilty before his father; the journey back; the father's generous welcome; the father's joy - all these are characteristic of the process of conversion, the beautiful robe, the ring, and the festive banquet are symbols of that new life - pure worthy, and joyful - of anyone who returns to God and to the bosom of his family, which is the Church. Only the heart of Christ Who knows the depths of his Father's love could reveal to us the abyss of his mercy in so simple and beautiful a way

SOURCE: CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

SAINT OF THE MONTH: Saint Dominic Savio



Feast day: February 9
Patron of the Falsely Accused
1842-1857 (15 years young)

St. Dominic Savio was born in Italy in 1842. One day when he was just four, he disappeared and his good mother went looking for him. She found the little fellow in a corner praying with his hands joined and his head bowed. He already knew all his prayers by heart! At five, he was an altar boy. When he was seven, he received his First Holy Communion. On that solemn day, he chose a motto: "Death, but not sin!" and he kept it always.

"A teenager such as Dominic, who bravely struggled to keep his innocence from Baptism to the end of his life, is really a saint," said Pope St. Pius X. Yes, Dominic was an ordinary boy with an extraordinary love for God. At the age of twelve, Dominic entered the school run by St. John Bosco. Don Bosco examined him first and at the end of the questions, Dominic asked, "What do you think of me?" "I think you're good material," answered the priest, with a big smile. "Well, then," said Dominic, "You are a good tailor, so if the material is good, take me and make a new suit out of me for Our Lord!"

Everyone in the school saw from the way he prayed that this boy was different. He greatly loved all the boys, and even though he was younger, he used to worry about them. He was afraid that they would lose the grace of God by sinning. One day, a fellow brought a magazine full of bad pictures to school. In a minute, a group of boys had gathered around him to see it. "What's up?" wondered Dominic, and he, too, went to look. Just one peek was enough for him. He grabbed the magazine and tore it

to pieces! "Poor us!" he cried in the meantime, "Did God give us eyes to look at such things as this? Aren't you ashamed?" "Oh, we were just looking at these pictures for the fun of it," said one boy. "Sure, for fun," answered Dominic, "and in the meantime you're preparing yourselves to go to hell!" "Oh, what's so wrong about looking at these pictures anyway?" another fellow demanded. Dominic had a ready answer. "If you don't see anything wrong," he said sadly, "this is even worse." It means you're used to looking at shameful things!" No one said anything after that. They all realized that Dominic was right.

One day Dominic began to feel sick and was sent home to get better. While at home he grew worse, instead, and received the last Sacraments. He was only fifteen then, but he did not fear death. In fact, he was overjoyed at the thought of going to Heaven. Just before he died, he tried to sit up. "Goodbye," he murmured to his good father. Suddenly his face lit up with a smile of great joy and happiness. "I am seeing such wonderful things!" he exclaimed. Then he spoke no more, for he had gone to Heaven.

Dominic is the patron saint of choir boys and of the falsely accused. This latter title was given to him due to the following incident. One time, two boys filled the school stove with snow and garbage during the cold winter months. When the teacher came back into the room, they falsely accused Dominic of doing the "dirty" deed. Although disciplined in front of the entire class, Dominic refused to tell on the two mischievous boys. When the truth was later revealed, Dominic was asked why he didn't confess to his innocence. He remarked that he was imitating Our Lord, Who remained silent during His persecutions and crucifixion.

PRAYER OF THE MONTH: START OF LENT PRAYER

Heavenly Father, you give us these 40 days of Lent to fill, heal, direct, deliver, and empower us by your Holy Spirit. As we enter into our personal desert, show us what we need to see to more fully follow your Divine Will in our lives. What in our lives needs the anointing of your Spirit? What in our lives needs clarity on the direction we are being invited to? What in our lives do we need strength to feel empowered to go out and do in your name?

We seek to be filled, healed, directed, delivered and empowered by your Holy Spirit, O Heavenly Father to overcome the temptations in our own lives as your Son overcame the temptations in the desert. We seek to be filled and directed by your Spirit as we go out into our public ministries, in CFC, in our parishes, as Jesus was directed to do after his time alone with you.

MEDIA (TV/CD/BOOK/MOVIE) OF THE MONTH: "SON OF GOD"

<http://www.sonofgodmovie.com/videos.html>

Los Angeles, Calif., Feb 15, 2014 / 04:06 pm (CNA/EWTN News).- A new movie about Jesus Christ – to be released by the makers of the popular History Channel television miniseries “The Bible” – has drawn praise from several Catholic bishops and leaders.

“It is the biggest, greatest story ever told,” said Roma Downey, a co-producer of “Son of God” who stars as Mary.

“The Story of the Son of God is one of the most-known stories in the history of the world,” added her husband and co-producer Mark Burnett. “And yet it never gets old. And the way we have told it is very connective, very young, very gritty and real. You really feel connected and can see yourself as these characters.”

The movie is based on the Bible and covers the life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ.

Burnett said that teenagers and young people who see the movie are “absolutely connecting with the disciples” and realizing “they were just ordinary people. They did not know they were in the Bible, they were just leading ordinary lives.”

The movie was made in consultation with academics and faith leaders and has drawn praise from several Catholic leaders.

“It is a joy to watch this film bring alive the pages of the Gospel and help us see what those who lived at the time of Jesus experienced,” said Cardinal Donald Wuerl of Washington, D.C. He said the movie helps individuals and families “be inspired all over again with the story of God’s love for us.”

Archbishop Jose Gomez of Los Angeles said the movie “gives us an opportunity to realize God’s presence in our own lives. Each one of us is a son or daughter of God. It is a wonderful, awesome reality.”

Carl Anderson, Supreme Knight of the Knights of Columbus, said the movie “will speak to your heart and nourish your soul. This is a film that does not simply tell you about Christ, but puts you in the midst of his life, allowing you to see firsthand his public ministry, his love for humanity, and the death he suffered that we might have life eternal.”

Cardinal Wuerl has commissioned movie discussion guides and videos for Catholic churches and schools in his diocese. Both Archbishop Gomez and Archbishop Thomas Wenski of Miami are organizing showings of the movie.

In addition, some community leaders are organizing “Theater Takeovers” to show the movie on every screen in a multiplex. These private screenings will begin Feb. 27.

Downey and Burnett said Feb. 13 they hope that the movie means “the story and message of Jesus Christ will reach tens of millions of people nationwide.”

SOURCE: CATHOLIC NEWS AGENCY

IPHONE/SMARTPHONE CATHOLIC APP OF THE MONTH: LAUDATE (FREE)

Laudate combines a large number of Catholic religious resources into a single app, giving you instant access to everything you could need, Bible readings for the day, to prayers, confession prompts, and more. While it won't replace the company and guidance of a Priest in your parish, it will provide a range of tools for praying at home, suggestions for daily readings, and more.

When you open Laudate for the first time, you'll find a list of numerous options including prayers, Stations of the Cross, rosary and chaplet prompts, order of the mass, and much more. You can scroll through these and find anything you need with the tap of a finger, set bookmarks in any of the files (accessible from a separate bookmark menu), or read through the Bible and Vatican documents. Laudate is a solid app that allows you access to a huge range of Catholic information and resources.