

# Wellspring Fransalian Center for Spirituality

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Dear Brothers and Sisters,

The world needs HOPE - Men and Women of Hope! Hope is grounded in our experience of the unconditional, unfailing, steadfast and all-embracing love of God!

Lent is a journey of Hope! We journey in Hope from the ashes of Ash Wednesday to the fire of Easter, not the fire of destruction or terror, but the purifying, life-creating fire that gives light to a dark and despairing world. It is the fire that lights the Paschal candle which proclaims: "the light of Christ". It is the fire that brings us into the light of Christ and lights up our own path!

Our hope is rooted in the unconditional love of God for each human being. God never gives up on anyone. God's love is steadfast, unconditional and all-embracing. The Old Testament breathes an atmosphere of hope throughout — dynamic expectation, not a passive desire or wish. Even Israel's unfaithfulness did not hinder hope. The motive of hope is the past deeds of Yahweh, which gives confidence in God's power to fulfill his promises.

In the New Testament, Jesus announced the arrival of the Kingdom, the reign of God, in the world. The believer lives in hope. Jesus' resurrection is our most radical sign of hope. It means that the power of sin and death has been overcome (1 Corinthians 15) and that we share in the freedom of the resurrection. We share in it as individuals and as a people. Believing in the resurrection means making a commitment to live in hope despite the injustices that we are aware of, despite the acts of violence that we read about or, perhaps, have experienced.

Hope is not an idea, not a concept and not a doctrine. It is a dynamic, moving force in life. Being a dynamic force, hope is both a sign of power and a sign of powerlessness. So much so, Hope is our power in our powerlessness. We are, in the most profound sense, creatures of hope. Real hope is not crushed by disappointment. Hope is often born in difficulties.

Hope means, a continual looking forward to the eternal. It does not mean that we are to leave the present world as it is. If you read history, you will find that the Christians who did most for the present world were just those who thought most of the next. It is since Christians have largely ceased to think of the eternal that they have become so ineffective in the present. Aim at Heaven and you will get earth 'thrown in'. Let us strive to become men and women of hope, speak language of hope, become optimistic and bless the world.

Fr. Gus Tharappel, msfs

# **Third Week OF Lent**

**March 24-29, 2025**

**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 24 – Monday, Third Week of Lent**

**In the pursuit of purpose, we find not only what we seek  
but also the profound discovery of who we are meant to be.**

### **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 and listen with faith...**

**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

**March 25 – Annunciation of the Lord**

**Purpose gives meaning to life,  
and life is best lived when it's driven by purpose.**

**Isaiah 7:10-14**

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;  
But ears open to obedience you gave me.  
Holocausts or sin-offerings you sought not;  
Then I said, "Behold, I come".**

## **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.

## **March 26 – Wednesday, Third Week of Lent**

**A life driven by purpose is one lived with clarity and focus.**

### **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**

**How good it is to sing praises to our God,  
how pleasant and fitting to praise him!  
The LORD builds up Jerusalem;  
he gathers the exiles of Israel.  
He heals the brokenhearted  
and binds up their wounds.**

### **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 26 - St. Catherine of Genoa and 17 other saints are remembered this day**

Catherine was born in Genoa in 1447, the last of five children of Jacopo Fieschi and Francesca di Negro, members of the nobility in Genoa. At 13, she attempted to become a nun but failed because of her age. After this Catherine appears to have put the idea aside without any further attempt. At 16, she married Julian, a nobleman who turned out to be selfish and unfaithful. For a while she tried to deal with her disappointment by a life of selfish pleasure.

One day in confession she had a new sense of her own sins and how much God loved her. She reformed her life and gave good example to Julian, who soon turned from his self-centered life to a life of generosity. Julian's spending, however, had ruined them financially. He and Catherine decided to dedicate themselves to charity work in a large hospital in Genoa.

After Julian's death in 1497, Catherine took over management of the hospital. She wrote about purgatory which, she said, begins on earth for souls open to God. Life with God in heaven is a continuation and perfection of the life with God begun on earth. She died on September 15, 1510, exhausted by her life of self-sacrifice and was canonized in 1737.

## **March 27 – Thursday, Third Week of Lent**

**Living purposefully ensures that every moment is meaningful.**

### **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 27 - St. Lazarus and 7 other saints are remembered this day.**

Lazarus was the friend of Jesus, the brother of Martha and Mary. Jesus raised him from the dead and of him, the Jews said, "See how much he loved him." We have very little historically accurate knowledge of Lazarus. There are many legends about him after the death and resurrection of Jesus.

Lazarus is supposed to have left a written account of what he saw in the next world before he was called back to life. Some say he followed Peter into Syria. Another story is that despite being put into a leaking boat by the Jews at Jaffa, he, his sisters, and others landed safely in Cyprus. There he died peacefully after serving as bishop for 30 years.

A church was built in his honor in Constantinople and some of his reputed relics were transferred there in 890. A Western legend has the oarless boat arriving in Gaul. There, he was bishop of Marseilles, was martyred after making a number of converts, and was buried in a cave. His relics were transferred to the new cathedral in Autumn in 1146.

It is certain that there was early devotion to the saint. Around the year 390, the pilgrim lady Etheria talks of the procession that took place on the Saturday before Palm Sunday at the tomb where Lazarus had been raised from the dead. In the West, Passion Sunday was called Dominica de Lazaro, and Augustine tells us that in Africa the Gospel of the raising of Lazarus was read at the office of Palm Sunday. Devotion to Lazarus was commonplace in the early Church.

## **March 28 – Friday, Third Week of Lent**

**When you are inspired by some great purpose,  
all your thoughts break their bounds.**

### **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 28 - St. Catherine of Bologna and 12 other saints are remembered this day.**

St. Catherine was born on September 8, 1413, in Bologna, Italy to an aristocratic family. Her father, a diplomat to the Marquis of Ferrara, sent her to court when she was 11 to be a companion to the Marquis' daughter, Princess Margarita. At the time, the city of Ferrara was becoming a cultural center, and so the young girls had an excellent education in music, literature, painting, and dancing. Catherine particularly excelled at miniature painting, Latin, and the viola.

When Margarita became engaged, she wanted Catherine to remain her companion, but Catherine felt called to the religious life. At 14, she became a Franciscan Tertiary, an order of lay women who followed the ways of St. Francis. A few years later, dissension in the community led Catherine and others to join the Poor Clares, a contemplative order founded by St. Francis and St. Clare of Assisi. Catherine willingly served in the humbler roles at the convent, including laundress, baker, and caretaker to the animals.

In 1456, she and 15 other sisters were sent to establish a Poor Clare monastery in Florence. As abbess, Catherine worked to preserve the peace of the new community. Her reputation for holiness drew many young women to the Poor Clare life. She continued in her artistic pursuits, playing the viola (even on her deathbed), painting religious pictures (her painting of St. Ursula hangs today in a gallery in Venice), copying out and illuminating her breviary (once belonging to Pius IX and now on display at Oxford), and writing spiritual guides and poetry.

At age 49, she became gravely ill and died on March 9, 1463 in Bologna. As was the custom of the Poor Clares, she was buried without a coffin. She was exhumed 18 days later after visitors noticed a sweet smell coming from her grave and some experienced miracles. Her body was found to be flexible and uncorrupted. Six hundred years later, her body remains intact. Her skin has blackened from exposure to oil lamps and soot, but still she sits, clothed in her nun's robes, on a golden throne behind a glass case in the Church of the Saint in Bologna. She was canonized in 1712.

## **March 29 – Saturday Third Week of Lent**

**Accept yourself, your strengths and your weaknesses  
and know what resources you have  
and need to fulfill your purpose.**

## **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 29 - St. Ludovico of Casoria and 13 other saints are remembered this day.**

Ludovico was born Arcangelo Palmentieri in Casoria, near Naples, on March 11, 1814. He apprenticed as a cabinet maker in his youth. He entered the novitiate of the Order of Friars Minor on July 1, 1832, taking the name Ludovico. He was ordained a priest five years later and was appointed to teach philosophy, mathematics, and chemistry to the younger members of the Order at the Franciscan priory of San Pietro in Naples.

In 1847, he had a mystical experience which he later described as a cleansing. After that, he dedicated his life to the poor and the infirm, establishing a dispensary for the poor, two schools for African children, an institute for the children of nobility, as well as an institution for orphans, the deaf, and the speechless, and other institutes for the blind, elderly, and for travelers. In addition to an infirmary for friars of his province, he began charitable institutes in Naples, Florence, and Assisi.

To help continue these works of mercy, in 1859 he established the Gray Brothers, a religious community composed of men who formerly belonged to the Secular Franciscan Order. Three years later, he founded the Gray Sisters of St. Elizabeth for the same purpose.

Toward the beginning of his final, nine-year illness, Ludovico wrote a spiritual testament which described faith as “light in the darkness, help in sickness, blessing in tribulations, paradise in the crucifixion, and life amid death.” The local work for his beatification began within five months of Ludovico’s death. He was beatified in 1993 and canonized in 2014.

Fr. Gus Tharappel, msfs

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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)**

