

Rekindle the Gift of our Faith. Fulfill your Lenten Ministry.

FEBRUARY 2018



SCRIPTURE PASSAGE OF THE MONTH:

JOHN 3:16

For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him might not perish but might have eternal life



HOUSEHOLD TEACHINGS OF THE MONTH:

Rekindle the Gift of our Faith. Fulfill your Lenten Ministry.
Fulfill your Lenten Ministry by Sis. Marivie Dalman



SONG OF THE MONTH:

At The Cross (Love Ran Red) by Cris Tomlin



SAINT OF THE MONTH:

St. Valentine



PRAYER OF THE MONTH:

A Lenten Prayer



JOKE OF THE MONTH:

Lenten Sacrifice?



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

1-Pray HARDER

2-Be faithful to your Lenten Sacrifice

3-Be more generous in your tithes, contributions and sponsor an ANCOP child.

FEBRUARY 2018



Rekindle the Gift of our Faith. Fulfill your Lenten Ministry.

Dear CFC USA Family:

Happy VaLENTine day/season! A day of Love! A season of PURE LOVE!

Welcome to the desert!

I trust that we have all prayerfully discerned our respective personal Lenten sacrifices or penance/abstinence. Self-denial and deprivation are key to this most grace-filled season to enable us to empty ourselves and make more room for Jesus in our hearts and to be in union with His suffering and passion.

It is also important that these sacrifices not be met with gloom and agony but with great joy as we better understand the intense suffering and appreciate the immense love of Jesus for us.

Cherish every one of these 40 days of Lent. 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 February pastoral formation materials helpful in your Lenten journey. Enjoy the desert heat this Winter!

In Christ through Mary,
Bro. Toffee Jeturian

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE OF THE MONTH

JOHN 3:16

For God so lo**V**ed the world
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TEACHING OF THE MONTH:

Fulfill your Lenten Ministry

BY SIS. MARIVIE DALMAN

I. INTRODUCTION:

On February 14, 2018, Pope Francis celebrated Ash Wednesday Mass in the Basilica of Santa Sabina in Rome. As per tradition the ceremony started at the Basilica of St. Anselm where the Pope led a penitential procession to the nearby St. Sabina, marking the beginning of Lent, the time of preparation for the Holy Week.

There is a rare convergence of 2 celebrations on this particular day, because Ash Wednesday is also Valentine's Day. Quite a contrast indeed where one requires a day of fasting and abstinence while the other is generally associated with anything but temperance. There is much to learn about Valentine's Day and Ash Wednesday because in reality both celebrate love.

If we reflect on the deeper meaning of true love we come to realize that there is no real love without sacrifice. Christian love is how Jesus loves. It is less about feeling and more about serving. Sometimes, it is inconvenient, not easy and painful. In fact, love is not love if it does not cost anything. St. Paul, in his letter to the Corinthians, puts this reality in a simple description. He says love, which is only spoken but not acted upon, is as worthless as a “clashing cymbal” while the love that is characterized by action or deed “always perseveres.”

Valentine’s Day and Ash Wednesday are celebrations which remind people that true love demands sacrifice. Love demands giving up for the sake of the beloved. True love goes beyond gifts of flowers and chocolates. It is about the greatest sacrifice of giving-up of self for others, like sacrifice of Jesus through His passion and death on the cross. What makes this year’s celebration of Ash Wednesday very unique is the fact that Lent is at the very core of Valentine’s Day! Ash Wednesday and the beginning of Lent is the antidote to over-indulgence which Valentine’s Day connotes.

The very first act of Lent reveals this reality. By receiving and wearing the ashes formed into a sign of the cross on their foreheads, Catholics are making the bold claim that they believe in a love that is not shallow and selfish, but one which is deep and selfless that even make them ready and willing to suffer and die for another.

II: CFC-USA- FULFILL YOUR LENTEN MINISTRY

Pope Francis points out the main goal of our Lenten activity “to allow our hearts to beat once more in tune with the vibrant heart of Jesus.” This call is reflected in the words of a famous song by John Michael Talbot “Come back to me with all your heart”. God’s call for us is to return to Him, to repent and to transform (to change our hearts). We begin our journey of 40 days in Lent this year with 2 operative words- sacrificial love!

Love is a sacrifice. The best example of sacrificial love is the one demonstrated by Jesus when He died on the Cross for us. Love intertwines with sacrifice. How many of us can truly say we love others the way Jesus loves us? Perhaps as parents we can say we do experience sacrificial love for our children- willing to give up our life for their

sake. But to be honest about it, it is hard to say we are willing to die for another person. Sacrificial love is also about giving up something precious and meaningful, and in the process we learn what it is to be selfless. These actions, be it big or small, are but a reflection of God's love. He works through each one of us - "hearts beating in tune with the vibrant heart of Jesus."

CFC-USA, we are to fulfil our Lenten Ministry. But we need to embrace sacrificial love to be able to realize this goal. Pope Francis shows us how. To be able to fulfill our Lenten Ministry, we need to rekindle the heart of the believer by doing three things; PAUSE, SEE AND RETURN!

III: THREE PILLARS OF LENT

What is our Lenten Ministry? Every Lent we return to the three-fold counsel given by Jesus Himself: prayer, fasting and almsgiving. Many of us focus so much on what we give up that we neglect these 3 pillars of Lent. What are these pillars?

1. PRAYER

Pope Francis advises us to..."Pause for a little while, refrain from the deafening noise that weakens and confuses our hearing, that makes us forget the fruitful and creative power of silence." Let us not just pray but pray HARDER.

- Holy Hour (Daily)
- Adoration (Eucharistic)
- Reconciliation (At least monthly)
- Divine Mercy (Chaplet and 3 o'clock prayer)
- Eucharist (Daily Mass)
- Rosary (Family)

Let us sacrifice our precious time to highlight spending extended moments of silence with God. This may sound a lot but this is exactly the antidote to busyness. Love demands sacrifice and we sacrifice our personal time to be with Jesus. We live in a noisy world and we need to be silent to be able to hear God's voice whose language is silence!

Reflection Questions:

- How is your prayer life?
- What can you commit to do this Lenten Season to be able to pray HARDER?

2. FASTING

Fasting denies us of our human appetites, both literally and figuratively. Fasting from goods that satisfy our physical hunger allows us to experience what the poor and the starving have to endure. This Lenten season let us fast not just on food. Let us sacrifice and give up on those other things which take us away from God.

“Fasting is done for a variety of reasons – to gain freedom from some bad habit, addiction, or vice, to share in the suffering of those who go without, or to grow in our hunger for God and for the things of heaven. Basil the Great wrote: “Take heed that you do not make fasting to consist only in abstinence from meats. True fasting is to refrain from vice. Shred to pieces all your unjust contracts. Pardon your neighbors. Forgive them their trespasses.” (Reflections from Don Schwager © 2018, Dailyscripture. ServantsOfTheWord.org)

“Pause for a little while,” Pope Francis reminds us “refrain from the emptiness of everything that is instantaneous, momentary and fleeting, that deprives us of our roots, our ties, of the value of continuity and the awareness of our ongoing journey.” Fast from things that make us proud. “Pause for a little while,” Pope Francis points out in particular, “refrain from the need to show off and be seen by all, to continually appear on the “noticeboard” that makes us forget the value of intimacy and recollection. He admonishes us to fast from our tendencies to lord it over people... “Refrain from the urge to want to control everything, know everything, destroy everything; this comes from overlooking gratitude for the gift of life and all the good we receive.”

Fasting, not just on food but in everything that satisfies our desires, weakens our tendency to hunger for more. It is an important opportunity for growth. Fasting makes us aware of the deeper hunger of our soul. Hunger points us to one direction. It makes us more attentive to God and our neighbor. It rekindles our desire to obey God’s marching orders for it is God alone who is capable of fully satisfying our hunger. Fasting goes very well with prayer. We use our hunger to focus more clearly with Jesus.

Allow it to become a prayerful exercise. Fasting as a sacrifice heightens our love for Jesus.

Reflection Questions:

- What are the “things we hunger for” in this world?
- Do these things bring us closer to or further from God?
- Am I willing to give up on those things which separate me from the Lord?

3. ALMSGIVING

The word “alms” means pity, while charity comes from the Latin word “caritas”, that means love. Giving to charity is showing love for our neighbor. However, we must take care not to give for the wrong reasons. Giving to receive praise is not true charity. Matthew 6:1-4 reminds us about almsgiving.

“[But] take care not to perform righteous deeds in order that people may see them; otherwise, you will have no recompense from your heavenly Father. When you give alms, do not blow a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites* do in the synagogues and in the streets to win the praise of others. Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right is doing, so that your almsgiving may be secret. And your Father who sees in secret will repay you.”

Pope Francis explained how our acts of charity uplifts people... “See the gestures that prevent the extinguishing of charity, that keep the flame of faith and hope alive. Look at faces alive with God’s tenderness and goodness working in our midst.”

Almsgiving frees us from greed. It helps us to regard our neighbor as a brother or sister. What we own or possess is never ours alone. When we give alms, we share in God’s providential care for each of His children. Let us fortify our Lenten journey by almsgiving or the sacrificial act of giving up material things, including food, taking up charitable habits directed to helping and caring for others and lifting up those who are in need. How much should we give? Not out of what is superfluous but out of love. Give until it hurts!

If God uses you as an instrument to help someone today, will He not provide for your own needs some other day? For no one is more generous than God. We are the blessed people whom God calls upon to become a blessing to others.

During the next 40 days, we are to pray, fast and give. How intensely and for how much shall we pray is up to us. We can pray, fast and give the barest of minimum making sure that it stays just within the rules. All these would satisfy the letter of the law, but would it satisfy the spirit of the law? Ultimately it is up to us. These three things have one thing in common, these are things we should be doing not just for Lent. We only increase these virtues during this Lenten season. We need to make sure that we do it all with the proper motives.

It takes sacrificial love to be able to pray more fervently. It takes sacrificial love to be able to fast more often and it takes sacrificial love to be able to give more generously. We do all these not for the praises of men but for the love and glory of God.

Pause, See and Return, our beloved Pope Francis exhorts us. "Return to the house of your Father. Return without fear, for this is the favorable time to come home, to the home of my Father and your Father. Return without fear, to join in the celebration of those who are forgiven."

Together let us claim God's reward for our faithfulness when He promised in Ezekiel 36:26 "I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh."

CFC-USA, let us fulfill our Lenten Ministry of prayer, fasting and almsgiving. Then, we will be able to Rekindle the gift that God has given us. The gift of possessing a heart like Jesus. When we fulfill our Lenten ministry we "allow our hearts to beat once more in tune with the vibrant heart of Jesus."

Reflection Questions:

- Am I ready to; pause, see and return to God?
- Which among the 3 pillars of Lent is difficult to do? Which is the easiest?
- Which one am I willing to commit to do?



SONG OF THE MONTH:

At the Cross (Love Ran Red) by Chris Tomlin

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zev5tHjCB_s

(Suggest you listen to and meditate on the song before going through the teaching; see attachment for song lyrics)

There's a place where mercy reigns and never dies
 There's a place where streams of grace flow deep and wide
 Where all the love I've ever found
 Comes like a flood
 Comes flowing down

CHORUS:

At the cross
 At the cross
 I surrender my life
 I'm in awe of You
 I'm in awe of You
 Where Your love ran red
 And my sin washed white
 I owe all to You
 I owe all to You Jesus

There's a place where sin and shame are powerless
 Where my heart has peace with God and forgiveness
 Where all the love I've ever found
 Comes like a flood
 Comes flowing down

CHORUS:

Here my hope is found
 Here on holy ground
 Here I bow down
 Here I bow down
 Here arms open wide
 Here You saved my life
 Here I bow down
 Here I bow...



SAINT OF THE MONTH:

St Valentine

SOURCE: CATHOLIC ONLINE

St. Valentine, officially known as St. Valentine of Rome, is a third-century Roman Saint widely celebrated on February 14 and commonly associated with "courtly love." Although not much of St. Valentine's life is reliably known, and whether or not the stories involve two different saints by the same name is also not officially decided. It is highly agreed that St. Valentine was martyred and then buried on the Via Flaminia to the north of Rome.

In 1969, the Roman Catholic Church removed St. Valentine from the General Roman Calendar, because so little is known about him. However, the church still recognizes him as a saint, listing him in the February 14 spot of Roman Martyrology. The legends attributed to the mysterious saint are as inconsistent as the actual identification of the man.



One common story about St. Valentine is that in one point of his life, as the former Bishop of Terni, Narnia and Amelia, he was on house arrest with Judge Asterius. While discussing religion and faith with the Judge, Valentine pledged the validity of Jesus. The judge immediately put Valentine and his faith to the test.

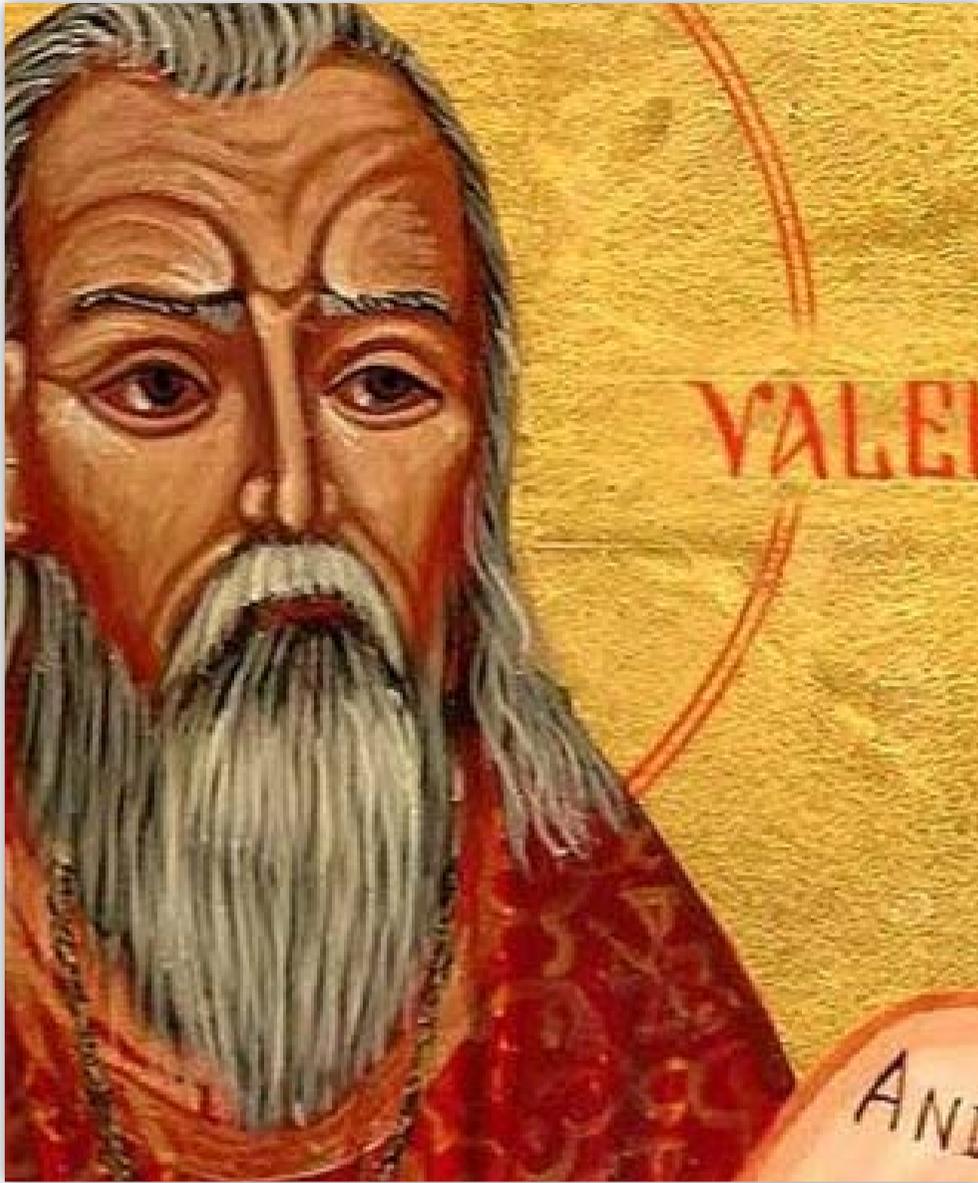
St. Valentine was presented with the judge's blind daughter and told to restore her sight. If he succeeded, the judge vowed to do anything for Valentine. Placing his hands onto her eyes, Valentine restored the child's vision. Judge Asterius was humbled and obeyed Valentine's requests. Asterius broke all the idols around his house, fasted for three days and became baptized, along with his family and entire 44 member household. The now faithful judge then freed all of his Christian inmates.

St. Valentine was later arrested again for continuing to try to convert people to Christianity. He was sent to Rome under the emperor Claudius Gothicus (Claudius II). According to the popular hagiographical identity, and what is believed to be the first representation of St. Valentine, the Nuremberg Chronicle, St. Valentine was a Roman priest martyred during Claudius' reign. The story tells that St. Valentine was imprisoned for marrying Christian couples and aiding Christians being persecuted by Claudius in Rome. Both acts were considered serious crimes. A relationship between the saint and emperor began to grow, until Valentine attempted to convince Claudius of Christianity. Claudius became raged and sentenced Valentine to death, commanding him to renounce his faith or be beaten with clubs and beheaded.

St. Valentine refused to renounce his faith and Christianity and was executed outside the Flaminian Gate on February 14, 269. However, other tales of St. Valentine's life claim he was executed either in the year 269, 270, 273 or 280. Other depictions of St. Valentine's arrests tell that he secretly married couples so husbands wouldn't have to go to war. Another variation of the legend of St. Valentine says he refused to sacrifice to pagan gods, was imprisoned and while imprisoned he healed the jailer's blind daughter. On the day of his execution, he left the girl a note signed, "Your Valentine."

Pope Julius I is said to have built a church near Ponte Mole in his memory, which for a long time gave name to the gate now called Porta del Popolo, formerly, Porta Valetini.

The romantic nature of Valentine's Day may have derived during the middle Ages, when it was believed that birds paired couples in mid-February. According to English 18th-century antiquarians Alban Butler and Francis Douce, Valentine's Day was most likely created to overpower the pagan holiday, Lupercalia.



Although the exact origin of the holiday is not widely agreed upon, it is widely recognized as a day for love, devotion and romance. Whoever he was, Valentine did really exist, because archaeologists have unearthed a Roman catacomb and an ancient church dedicated to St. Valentine. In 496 AD Pope Gelasius marked February 14th as a celebration in honor of his martyrdom.

Relics of St. Valentine can be found all over the world. A flower-crowned skull of St. Valentine can be found in the Basilica of Santa Maria in Cosmedin, Rome. In 1836, other relics

were exhumed from the catacombs of Saint Hippolytus on the Via Tiburtina and were identified as Valentine's. These were transported for a special Mass dedicated to those young and in love.

Fr. John Spratt received a gift from Pope Gregory XVI in 1836 containing a "small vessel tinged" with St. Valentine's blood. This gift now stands placed in Whitefriar Street Church in Dublin, Ireland. Other alleged relics were found in Prague in the Church of St Peter and Paul at Vysehrad; in the parish church of St. Mary's Assumption in Chelmno Poland; at the reliquary of Roquemaure in France; in the Stephansdom in Vienna; in Balzan in Malta and also in Blessed John Duns Scotus' church in the Gorbals area of Glasgow, Scotland.

St. Valentine is the Patron Saint of affianced couples, bee keepers, engaged couples, epilepsy, fainting, greetings, happy marriages, love, lovers, plague, travelers, and young people. He is represented in pictures with birds and roses and his feast day is celebrated on February 14.



PRAYER OF THE MONTH:

A Lenten Prayer

Lord,
I know how much you love me. It's hard for me to feel it sometimes, but I know your love is always with me.

Help me to use your love as a way to persevere in my Lenten sacrifices and intentions. I am weak, but I know with your grace and help, I can use these sacrifices in my life to draw closer to you.

Help me to rekindle the gift of our faith and fulfill our Lenten ministry.
AMEN.



JOKE OF THE MONTH:

Lenten Sacrifice?

A bartender notices that every evening, without fail, one of his patrons orders three beers. After several weeks of noticing this pattern, the bartender asks the man why he always orders three beers. The man says, "I have two brothers who have moved away to different countries. We promised each other that we would always order an extra two beers whenever we drank as a way of keeping up the family bond." Several weeks later, noticing that the man only ordered two beers, the bartender said, "Please accept my condolences on the death of one of your brothers. You know, the two beers and all..." The man replied, "You'll be happy to hear that my two brothers are alive and well... It's just that I, myself, have decided to give up drinking for Lent."



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

Pray. Fast. Give.

- 1- Pray HARDER
- 2- Be faithful to your Lenten Sacrifice
- 3- Be more generous in your tithes, contributions and sponsor an ANCOP child.