



Western Region Salvatorian Newsletter

March 2019

Salvatorian Western Region

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From our Regional Moderator, Sr. Sheila Novak

Lenten Makeover

Lent is late this year, giving us time to catch our breath from Christmas celebrations. Even so, it is not a season I eagerly embrace! My birthday, 99 out of 100 times, always comes during Lent and as a kid it seemed to put a bit of a pall over it. Growing up before Vatican II, the beginning of Lent was marked by sitting through a boring sermon of what you could and could not do to meet the required rules of fasting. And even though I was too young to observe the fasting rules, it became an endurance test. My resolution was usually to give up some favorite candy or snack and to make it through the long 40 days. Somehow this was my childhood idea of proving my love for God and being grateful for all Jesus did for me.

Now I know this is not enough! Along came Vatican II that took a relook at so many things Catholic. Gone were the old "rules" of Lenten fasting and in came the wisdom that one size does not fit all. We are still called by this most sacred season of the Church's year, but each of us is to shape it so we can live its intent more deeply. I don't think the Church has done a good job in helping us to see Lent is a renewed way or maybe it did, but I somehow missed it.

The article included in this month's newsletter tries to give us a lens to live Lent in a new way. It asks some probing questions for us to consider as we come to Lent 2019. The author of the article challenges us with these words, "Just when we need Lent most, we don't know we need it. Many of us have forgotten or never experienced why (we have) these Forty Days . . . Lent's fasting, prayer, and almsgiving ought to open our eyes to what's happening in the world around us. Maybe it's time to 'give up' a little more than chocolate."

*At our March gathering, we will share about Lent;

What was Lent for you as a child?

How do you see the call of Lent now?

What do you hope to be/do this Lent?



Get Hungry for Lent

(by Gabe Huck – liturgist – in US Catholic)

Just when we need Lent most, we don't know we need it. . .

Ramadan, High Holy Days, Lent: They happen when they are respected. They happen when they are honored in the lives of the faithful. It has been said so well: "It isn't that the Jews keep the Sabbath! The Sabbath keeps the Jews." . . . It isn't so much that we keep Lent; the truth is that Lent, even a Lent feebly kept by us, then keeps us, makes us, shapes us, marks us, names us - Lenten practices that, not surprisingly, we share with many other religious people in the word: prayer, fasting and almsgiving.

Fasting . . . what is it about? Bottom line answer: hunger for the reign of God. "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for justice" (Mt.5:6). No accident the gospel writer used those verbs.

The fasting of Lent may take on a hundred different expressions, but the work it needs to do is to strip us of all that keeps us from being gospel hungry. What in our lives, do we need to put aside that we may clear our sight and see, clear our palate and taste, clear our ears and hear, clear even our sense of smell and long for what Paul calls the fragrance of Christ?

Lent is learning to be a hungry Christian, part of the basic job description. It may well be that for many this must relate in part to food and drink, what and how much. We might eat lower on the food chain, choose a much more limited menu and a lot of repetition, with a real effort to take time to savor both preparation and taste. . .

We might choose never to eat in a hurry. We might daily ponder why it is that the world raises enough food for everyone to eat adequately but it doesn't get shared. We could find out why.

We might remove all the notes and pictures from the refrigerator door and put there one large page with these words of South American journalist Eduardo Galeano: "When people are starving, it is not food that is in short supply, it's justice."

We who are not the poor, not hungry, cannot by fasting share the lot of those who are. But we can turn the attention and energy that hunger gives us to what Galeano says.

The martyred Salvadoran Archbishop Oscar Romero, pointed out the difference between the fasting of the wealthy and the constant hunger of those who are poor. "For those who eat well, lent is a call to austerity, a call to give away in order to share with those in need. But in poor lands, in homes where there is hunger, lent should be observed in order to give to the sacrifice that is everyday life the meaning of the cross . . . Feeling in one's own flesh the consequences of sin and injustice, one is stimulated to work for social justice and a genuine love for the poor." . . . A wealthy Christian will find . . . the beginning of conversion, in a personal questioning: Why am I rich, and all around me so many that hunger? These seem at first painful statements, painful questions. And they are. . .

Before all else then, the fasting we do in Lent is about this love for the poor and thus the hunger for justice to be done. Justice, not charity. . . . (To) Christians in the first few centuries of the faith: It isn't your money you are giving away! It's theirs! The fourth century bishop St. Basil the Great didn't beat around the bush: "The bread in your cupboard belongs to the one who is hungry. The coat hanging unused in your closet belongs to the one who needs it. . . You do wrong to everyone you could help but fail to help."

* . . . Theologian Gustavo Gutierrez puts the Lenten challenge this way: "The poor . . . are a by-product of the system in which we live and for which we are responsible . . . The poverty of the poor is . . . a demand for the construction of a new social order." We have to find our hunger for a new social order. . . What stock can we take of our way of living that might unbind us and let us go a little more free? . . .

What are other hungers are we to feel? How does one become hungry for the survival of the earth? . . . What fasting are we to do? . . . What clarity are we seeking about our own decisions and the decisions of all political bodies of which we are a part? . . . How can we get into some good habits, virtues that will take shape in Lent and maybe last one and on?

Here are some additional thoughts about Lent...submitted by your editor:

Lent is a season of soul-searching and repentance. It is a season for reflection and taking stock. Lent originated in the very earliest days of the Church as a preparatory time for Easter, when the faithful rededicated themselves and when converts were instructed in the faith and prepared for baptism. By observing the forty days of Lent, the individual Christian imitates Jesus' withdrawal into the wilderness for forty days. All churches that have a continuous history extending before AD 1500 observe Lent. The ancient church that wrote, collected, canonized, and propagated the New Testament also observed Lent, believing it to be a commandment from the apostles. (See *The Apostolic Constitutions*, Book V, Section III.)

The following is taken from the *Praying Lent* pages of Creighton University's *Online Ministries* web site and used with Permission.

Anything worth doing is worth preparing for.

Just imagine that this Lent is going to be different from every other Lent we've experienced. Imagine that there will be many graces offered me this year. Let's even imagine that God is going to help transform our lives, with greater freedom, greater joy, deeper desires for love and service.

If we want it, we will choose it.

Lent will be this wonderful season of grace for us if we give ourselves to it. And, we will give ourselves to it to the degree we really want it badly. So, in these days before Lent, we need to prepare our hearts. We need to prepare by realizing how much we want to grow in freedom, how much we need to lighten our spirits and experience some real joy, and how much some parts of our lives really need changing.

So, preparing our hearts is a process of preparing our desires. This means practicing our sense of anticipation. If I imagine Lent as an "ordeal" or a time I dread in some way, then I've already pre-disposed myself to not get very much out of it. These days before Lent are a time to start anticipating something wonderful that is about to happen.

Our Focus: On what God wants to give us.

Our sense of excitement and anticipation will grow more easily if we begin to imagine what God wants to give us. There is really something coming that we can truly look forward to. If we get too focused on ourselves, and what we are going to do or not do, we could risk missing the gift God wants to give us. We have to keep aware of the fact that grace comes from God. This is about God's great desire to bless us. Then, it is easier for us to imagine that we really want to do is place ourselves in a space to receive what God wants to give us.

Not starting from a dead stop.

Taking some time to get ready for Lent will ensure that we aren't going to miss the first week or two of Lent, because we are just getting started. Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, but we want to be ready to really take off on that day, rather than

just beginning to think about Lent on that day. Part of what makes a vacation or a special anniversary so special is the build-up to it.

Before we get to Ash Wednesday, we should start asking ourselves some questions and we should start with some preparations. "What does God want to give me this year?" This question may require that I slow down a bit and listen to my inner spirit. For example, even if I'm very busy, I realize I'm hungry when I hear my stomach start "growling." "What am I going to be doing on Ash Wednesday?" Too often, Ash Wednesday is like every other day, except that I manage to get to church and get ashes on my forehead. Is there anything else I can do on Ash Wednesday? How will fasting and abstaining happen for me, for my family on that special day?



2019 Schedule of Monthly Western Region SDS Gatherings

This month we will have our regional gathering at Leah Edward's place on **Saturday, March 9th at 12:00 at Sunrise Senior Living**. The address is 5451 Fair Oaks Blvd, Carmichael.

Sunrise has graciously offered to set up place settings in the room where we will be meeting. So please **RSVP** to Sheila by **Thursday, March 7th**. This is necessary so they can have numbers for the set up. Therefore, you will not need to BYOD this time. We will have chili and the following is needed to round out the meal:

- some pre lunch munchies
- cheese and crackers
- cornbread
- salad
- desserts
- beverages

Leah looks forward to catching up with the region. Some of you may be going to DSP Crab Feed. We should be done with the gathering in plenty of time for you to get there.

Upcoming Gatherings:

Fri., April 12th – 12:30 PM – Srs. Jean and Sheila

Fri., May 10th – 3:00 PM – Ken and Mickey Drake - Nappa ***Please note this date was changed from May 17.*



*Happy Birthday
Wishes to
Sr. Sheila Novak
March 23rd*

February Gathering

No, our February gathering was not with the Indians, but at the Barbera's wonderful art gallery! Shirley and Phil found out their home could host over 25 people graciously. All was ready for table and lap dining and the spread brought by all of you filled the kitchen counters. We had good visits over lunch with eight interested persons and each other. After lunch we held a business meeting and Jan got the ideas of everyone about how to revise the formation modules. Joyce updated us on finances and then we shared about the stage of life most of us are experiencing – the gift of the years. Some shared of the flexibility it gave them for doing some traveling, the deep sense of gratitude that comes with a looking back at how s/he has been blessed by God and the possibilities of doing different things with your life. We closed with the challenge of the article: becoming more fully alive than ever! Father Sal closed the meeting with a prayer service honoring St. Josephine Bakita, patroness of human trafficked victims. It brought sunshine into a rainy day and we are most grateful to the Barbera's and Sal for all they did for our gathering.

Thank you Fr. Sal for the pictures

