



OPFAM

Dominican Family Matters: 20.02.2018

*Contemplate the Gospel of Humanity
then preach the Humanity of the Gospel*

A Newsletter for the Dominican Family in Australia, New Zealand, Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea

Lenten Homily of Pope Francis at Santa Sabina, Rome given on Ash Wednesday, 14 February 2018,

The season of Lent is a favourable time to remedy the dissonant chords of our Christian life and to receive the ever new, joyful and hope-filled proclamation of the Lord's Passover. The Church in her maternal wisdom invites us to pay special attention to anything that could dampen or even corrode our believing heart.

We are subject to numerous temptations. Each of us knows the difficulties we have to face. And it is sad to note that, when faced with the ever-varying circumstances of our daily lives, there are voices raised that take advantage of pain and uncertainty; the only thing they aim to do is sow distrust. If the fruit of faith is charity – as Mother Teresa often used to say – then the fruit of distrust is apathy and resignation. Distrust, apathy and resignation: these are demons that deaden and paralyze the soul of a believing people.

Lent is the ideal time to unmask these and other temptations, to allow our hearts to beat once more in tune with the vibrant heart of Jesus. The whole of the Lenten season is imbued with this conviction, which we could say is echoed by three words offered to us in order to rekindle the heart of the believer: pause, see and return.

Pause a little, leave behind the unrest and commotion that fill the soul with bitter feelings which never get us anywhere. Pause from this compulsion to a fast-paced life that scatters, divides and ultimately destroys time with family, with friends, with children, with

grandparents, and time as a gift... time with God.

Pause for a little while, 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.

Pause for a little while, refrain from haughty looks, from fleeting and pejorative comments that arise from forgetting tenderness, compassion and reverence for the encounter with others, particularly those who are vulnerable, hurt and even immersed in sin and error.

Pause for a little while, 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.

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.

Pause for a little while, refrain from the attitude which promotes sterile and unproductive thoughts that arise from isolation and self-pity, and that cause us to forget going out to encounter others to share their burdens and suffering.

Pause for a little while, 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.

Pause in order to look and contemplate!

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.

See the face of our families who continue striving, day by day, with great effort, in order to move forward in life, and who, despite many concerns and much hardship, are committed to making their homes a school of love.

See the faces of our children and young people filled with yearning for the future and hope, filled with “tomorrows” and opportunities that demand dedication and protection. Living shoots of love and life that always open up a path in the midst of our selfish and meagre calculations.

See our elderly whose faces are marked by the passage of time, faces that reveal the living memory of our people. Faces that reflect God’s wisdom at work.

See the faces of our sick people and the many who take care of them; faces which in their vulnerability and service remind us that the value of each person can never be reduced to a question of calculation or utility.

See the remorseful faces of so many who try to repair their errors and mistakes, and who from their misfortune and suffering fight to transform their situations and move forward.

See and contemplate the face of Crucified Love, who today from the cross continues to bring us hope, his hand held out to those who feel crucified, who experience in their lives the burden of failure, disappointment and heartbreak.

See and contemplate the real face of Christ crucified out of love for everyone, without

exception. For everyone? Yes, for everyone. To see his face is an invitation filled with hope for this Lenten time, in order to defeat the demons of distrust, apathy and resignation. The face that invites us to cry out: “The Kingdom of God is possible!”

Pause, see and return. Return to the house of your Father. Return without fear to those outstretched, eager arms of your Father, who is rich in mercy (cf. Eph 2:4), who awaits you.

Return without fear, for this is the favourable time to come home, to the home of my Father and your Father (cf. Jn 20:17). It is the time for allowing one’s heart to be touched... Persisting on the path of evil only gives rise to disappointment and sadness. True life is something quite distinct and our heart indeed knows this. God does not tire, nor will he tire, of holding out his hand

Return without fear, to join in the celebration of those who are forgiven.

Return without fear, to experience the healing and reconciling tenderness of God. Let the Lord heal the wounds of sin and fulfil the prophecy made to our fathers: “A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will take out of your flesh the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh” (Ezek 36: 26).

Pause, see and return!

Have you thought about a social media fast for Lent?

There has been some serious conversation about social media among Dominican sisters lately. Should we, or shouldn’t we, shut down our congregational social media accounts for Lent?

Ultimately, we’ve decided to keep these channels for communication open, the critical argument being that ceding our place in the media sphere, as modest as it is, would mean our voice for kindness and justice might be filled by a less discriminating replacement.

Cutting Back for Lent

You will see fewer posts from us this Lent, however. We will take the traditional fast days off from posting, and we’ll focus on the spiritual and justice concerns that come with this 40-day journey of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving.

Though breaking the iGadget habit is becoming a real thing, a quick, unscientific poll of Springfield Dominicans has revealed that few of the sisters are choosing a personal social media fast for Lent.

“I will stay connected during Lent so that I remain aware of the needs of my friends and the needs of the world,” Sister Judine Hilbing said. She added that it is her practice to

review her social media news feed before bed so she can bring the concerns of the world and her family and friends to her prayer.

For Sister Rose Miriam, it's about better boundary-setting. "I don't intend to give up social media, but am resolved to practice better boundaries as to when I use social media, i.e., never during a time I've already pledged to prayer or spiritual reading, nor at a time when I am committed to the service of others in my ministry," she said.

For Sister Kathleen, whose family spans the globe, the access to her loved ones lives via social media is too precious to abandon.

Opting for the Both/And

One sister said she intends to take a both/and approach. Sister Bernice will intensify her use of social media "to keep up with my family, community and friends' needs and respond in prayer" and to respond to "pressing social justice issues so that I can pray about them and be actively involved in an appropriate way," she said. At the same time she intends to curb her social media use "when I am or should be in conversation with others who are physically present."

Other sisters said they weren't giving up their internet fix because they already use it rarely, or not at all. Still others were unclear about what constituted social media, as might be expected among our older demographic.

Giving it all up

It appears that only one theology teacher and the community's communications staff is doing a techno-purge for Lent. Sister Mary Jo says she's done this every year. "It frees me up to be more intentional about the good

things and more productive with my time," she said.

The congregation's communications director, Sister Beth, says she has deleted her social media account apps from her devices and is looking forward to immersing herself more fully in her community life, spiritual reading, and opportunities for service during Lent. "I'm curious to see what this does to the rhythm of my day," she said. "Because it is my responsibility to monitor our social media and that of other religious and social organizations, it often feels burdensome to be connected all the time," she said.

Her colleague Aaron and she will share the responsibility of monitoring social media feeds during the workday from their desktop computers, but both plan to forsake the apps on their devices for the duration of Lent.

"Twenty years ago, after completing many years in a ministry that required consuming tons of media—print, radio and TV back then—I gave up news for Lent," Sister Beth said. "At first, I had real withdrawal symptoms, but soon I found it freeing. I learned about what was happening in the world from those around me and became reflective about my un-mediated life. I realized that I didn't need to know everything that was happening to be mindful of the world's needs. This led me to a deeper, more contemplative prayer. I anticipate that might be one effect of my social media fast, too."

There are valid reasons for choosing a social media fast, as well as for not choosing one.

Which might you choose?

Springfield Dominicans 19 February 2018.

Lenten Carbon Fast Calendar 2018

http://www.clrinsw.org/current/soc_just/sj_180101.pdf

