

Living the Spirit Lenten Reflections

Lent is a time for many spiritual initiatives. Some make a formal retreat. Others will be touched by the special readings of the Lenten Masses. Past customs and traditions are still observed among our families. Ethnic customs vary, but Lent is seen by Catholics as a time of preparation for the great feast of Easter. As every reader must know Easter is the high point of the Christian calendar. Why? Because as Saint Paul wrote, “If Christ is not risen, then our faith is in vain.” Easter celebrates Christ’s Resurrection, but it also foreshadows our own when the fullness of time comes.

Lent is the special time for self-reflection. If you are like me, you will not fail to examine your conscience and face the sins, weaknesses and ongoing spiritual challenges that need to be attended to. To advance in our spiritual life I believe it helpful if we examine more than our faults. Just think of all the graces and virtues that are also a part of our inner life with God and with one another. This evaluation can lead to proper prayers of thanksgiving to a very loving and compassionate Savior.

Lent leads us to ask questions of ourselves. What is our relationship with God? Who is He? What are His ways that touch our life? Will He inspire fear, when we look to failings and sins? Is it possible that we may find in the inner depths of our soul a God of light, of mercy, a Savior who seeks us out to give us forgiveness and with it joy of spirit?

Lent, you see, inspires in me these kinds of reflections. I suggest that your own reflections may well provide help in your way from God to God, as the journey of life has been called. It may press you to seek out spiritual guides. If so, remember that in the end, such persons can do only what we permit them to do. No one is better at evaluating you than you! The outcome, of course, depends on openness to the grace of God that impels and urges us on to perfection. Even the desire for perfection can only come from God.

Lent is often described as a “holy” time. For us all time is holy. We must understand the value of this time, our time. A Lenten call is found as we read: Now is the acceptable time. If it is our time now, then we must know that we cannot be saints of past times and places. We are to live in the present moment. We must be careful not to have our reflections go misdirected. They may lead us into reveries over past times, but such journeys into our past often produce little advance in perfection. This is so for those who spend time regretting the past, rather than finding grace for the present and future.

Lent is also a time for us to activate our best desires and make them into realities. Our minds are to grow with fuller knowledge of the truths of our faith. Then we hear the Passion being read to us in Holy Week we will know what Truth is, or rather who Truth is. Jesus said: I am the truth! Our wills must lead us into adventures with love in all its legitimate forms. Love which is a virtue that unites us to God in myriad ways. Lent is a holy season indeed. It is a time for living the Spirit.

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Let me continue by now sharing with you some reflections that I have had in Lent.

“Do not look forward to what might happen tomorrow; the same everlasting Father who cares for you today will take care of you tomorrow and every day. Either he will shield you from suffering or he will give you unfailing strength to bear it. Be at peace, then, and put aside all anxious thoughts and imaginings.” St. Francis deSales

As I read this I thought of how many times I seem to live for tomorrow. Often this brings an anxiety about the future. Tomorrow may be the day for a visit to the doctor, or some other challenging and at times worrisome event. When will it be time to uproot myself from comfortable surroundings, because it is simply time? I reflect, too, on others whom I know. Some are suffering; it hurts to know this. Then I realize that the Father is with them. I pray that they know it. *Are your reflections on the words of St. Francis de Sales along these lines? If not, where do they lead you? I hope to an inner peace.*

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Here is a poem by a priest, Fr. Ignatius George Spencer (died 1864):

I kiss the wounds in your sacred head, with sorrow deep and true,
May every thought of mine this day be an act of love for you.
I kiss the wounds in your sacred hands, with sorrow deep and true,
May every touch of my hands this day an act of love for you.
I kiss the wounds in your sacred feet with sorrow deep and true,
May every step I take this day be an act of love for you.
I kiss the wound in your sacred side, with sorrow deep and true.
May every beat of my heart this day, be an act of love for you.

Here are some reflections this poem gave me.

I realize, Lord, that my thoughts are open to your knowing. If they are filled with virtue of any kind, then, they are filled with love for You. Help me to think good thoughts, and not just about You, but about others, even those who are difficult. I need your help to reach out and embrace You where You are found. I pray, Lord, let me walk where You lead me with my mind, hands, feet and heart fixed on your love for me. You have given your all for me.

How do you react to what you have just read? Do my thoughts mirror your own?

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A collection of children's letters to God give a light-hearted source for some good reflections on Laetare Sunday's mid-Lent time of joy. May they give you the gift of a smile.

Dear God,

I do not think that anybody could be a better God. Well I just want you to know but I am not just saying that because you are God. *Charles*

It is great the way you always get the stars in the right places. *Jeff*

I don't ever feel alone since I found out about you. *Nora*

I bet it is very hard for you to love all of everybody in the whole world. There are only four people in our family and I can never do it. *Nan*

Is Reverend NN a friend of yours, or do you just know him through business? *Larry*

Thank you for the baby brother but what I prayed for was a puppy. *Joyce.*

I am doing the best I can. *Frank*

Smile, God loves you! Rejoice in the Lord always!

God bless you with joy!

Monsignor Morrison