

Lenten Reflections

This Lent, to help prepare you for the passion and resurrection of Christ, we have prepared a series of daily reflections. Available will be three sets of eight reflections, each set around the three temptations of Christ in the desert. Then to finish, there will be 14 daily reflections, up to Good Friday, aiding contemplation on the Stations of the Cross. Sundays are not included in the 40 days of Lent and so we haven't included a daily reflection for each Sunday.

"Man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of God" - Matthew 4:4

Thursday, March 3rd - We Feed With Bread So That We Can Feed the Soul

As Vincentians, we know that people hunger for more than just food; they hunger for love. We see daily in our work that beyond someone's visible and immediate need lies a perfect love-shaped hole. This emptiness, held by so many, is closely guarded. Our instinct is to shield and hide the emptiness to cover our vulnerability. If we wish to help others, we must first remove our own barriers, take down the walls we put up to protect ourselves, and become truly vulnerable. When we do, the love of God, the hope of the Holy Spirit, and the salvation brought by Christ can make their home within us and we, in turn, can share it with others. As Vincentians, we must become masters of vulnerability, helping neighbors to break down their own walls and, by extending a hand in friendship, sharing the love of God that dwells within us.

What walls have you put up that prevent you from fully sharing the love of God with our neighbors? How can you become a "master of vulnerability"?

Friday, March 4th - Does God and His Word give us life, just as food does?

How many times in our life do we put food before God? How many times have we put off prayer in favor of food, allowed our hunger to distract us at Mass, or broken the Eucharistic Fast? Food brings us sustenance and energy, but prayer brings us hope, truth, goodness, love, and true life. How many of us constantly ensure we plan our meals and make sure we are never long without food? Do you make the same effort to talk to God?

During this season of fasting, how can you ensure your body and soul get all the sustenance they need?

Saturday, March 5th - How Are You Fed by the Word of God?

St James tells us that listening to the Word and not following it is like "looking at your own features in a mirror and then, after a quick look, going off and immediately forgetting what you looked like." We can agree that listening to God's word and following His plan is best, but how does the Word guide us along that plan? How does the Word feed us? God does much more than just tell us what to do through His Word: He encourages us, reprimands us on our sins, and tells us how much He loves us. Like a father, God gives us hope and love through His Word.

How do you view the place of scripture in your life? Do you live life through, with, and in the Word of God? Is the Word a fatherly companion to you? If not, how can you bring scripture into a more loving place in your life?

Monday, March 7th - Becoming a Baker

Through our baptism, we are anointed as prophets, charged with carrying the Word out into the darkness. As such, we are also spiritual bakers, bestowed with unique gifts of confectionary creation, able to take the spiritual ingredients of each person's life and assemble them, through God's grace, into the perfect loaf of bread for just that individual. Through God, we are able to bring the Word to fruition, and bring love to fulfillment within others.

How have you been the baker for others? How can you be the baker for those in need, assembling their lives into love?

Tuesday, March 8th - Acting on God's Word

There is nothing better than freshly baked bread, when it's beautifully crusty and has that delicious soft, warm center. Just as bread is best when it's fresh out of the oven, so is the word of God. God picks His timing with exquisite accuracy. He knows exactly when to provide us with a prompt or message, and so in return we must not hesitate. Sometimes uncertainty means we must meditate and pray for further guidance, but when God is clear, we must not waste time, we must act.

What message is God sharing with you this Lent? How can you act on that message?

Wednesday, March 9th - Contemplation on the Word

When good food is given to us, do we eat it all at once? If someone gave you a loaf of your favorite bread, would you scarf it down immediately or would you savor it, enjoying every mouthful? Just like there are different ways to enjoy delicious food, there are different ways to consume the Word of God. Sometimes we must act quickly, bringing the Word instantly to fulfillment within us and carrying out God's mission. Sometimes we must savor it, meditating and contemplating deeply on each word, wrapping ourselves in the divine meaning given to us and recognizing God working within us.

How do you savor the Word? How do you ensure you listen attentively to the readings at Mass?

Try this guided Lectio Divina from Catholic.Bible:

<https://catholicdotbible.files.wordpress.com/2022/01/lent-1.pdf>

Thursday, March 10th - Discernment

How many times have we approached discernment as a problem to be solved? We have a question, we're looking to extract an answer, and so we turn to scripture for these answers. When we do this, Scripture becomes something we comb through looking for a particular message, and its real meaning becomes an afterthought. We all have moments where discernment feels more like torture than the simple, easy journey it should be. When this happens, we must stop actively looking for answers and instead allow scripture to envelope our lives. When you live with God's word always in your heart, discernment ceases to be about questions and answers. Instead, the answers are already in your heart, and you don't need to ask the question because you never get to the point where a question arises. Life truly at one with the Holy Spirit: how perfect it sounds. We may never get to the place of complete unity with the Spirit, but we can strive for it.

How can you adjust how you see discernment and its place in your life? Where in your life do you need to stop looking for answers and instead allow God's Word to make itself known?

Friday, March 11th - Actio

Actio is the Latin word for action. It is the uncommonly used final stage in Lectio Divina. We read, meditate, pray, contemplate, and then we act. This is also the most Vincentian stage. As Vincentians, we are called to physical service and so act we must. We hear the word of God, we take it into our hearts, and it bears fruits of love, which we share with those in need. We do not know what God will bring tomorrow, so we must act today.

This is the moment we can love; this is our time to serve. How is God calling you to act today?

Please keep your eye out for the next 8 reflections.