

ad. veritatem

ST. THOMAS MORE SOCIETY OF ORANGE COUNTY

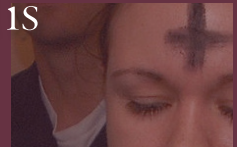
MARCH 2017

VOLUME 22 ISSUE 1

Vintage Veritatem:
Wrestling with
God During Lent
GREG WEILER



"The Word is
a Gift"
POPE FRANCIS



From the STMS
Facebook Page





THROUGH LENT we follow Christ on his journey to Jerusalem. Through well-known passages—the Transfiguration, the Temptations, the Beatitudes—we see Jesus leading us to the all-too familiar destination: this is the path of suffering, the path of humiliation and the cross, the road to Calvary.

But it is ultimately the greatest journey of purification and justification—the road that leads to resurrection and salvation.

For us, too, Lent is a journey. In the last discourse of his short-lived papacy, Pope John Paul I (Albino Luciani, pope for 33 days in 1978) said that “to love God is a journeying with one’s heart to God. A wonderful journey!” (September 27, 1978 General Audience). Pope Luciani noted that “the Journey also brings sacrifices,” because “you cannot help bending over the cross and letting yourself be pricked by some thorns of the crown which is on the Lord’s head.” (Ibid.)

Through timeless Christian practices focusing on prayer, fasting and penance, Christians seek to renew and purify their faith during Lent. According to Blessed Oscar Romero, Lenten penance means “to walk with Jesus on this mysterious journey toward the will of God” (March 9, 1980 sermon).

Lawyers can also make Lent a journey that renews and revivifies our vocations. The lawyerly equivalents of penance, fasting and prayer—pro bono, continuing legal education and mentoring—will recalibrate our identities as lawyers who are following Christ on his journey to Jerusalem.

Pro bono work allows us to share our bread with those who lack it, fulfilling the mandate of Is 58:6,7— “This, rather, is the fasting that I wish: ... sharing your bread with the hungry,

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IDEALS OF ST. THOMAS MORE

The legal profession is a high calling with corresponding responsibilities to society. The principal objective of every lawyer is to promote and seek justice. Catholic Lawyers pursue the truth in both their spiritual and professional lives. The duty of a Catholic lawyer is to remain faithful to Jesus Christ, His Church and its teachings at all times despite the personal consequences.

THE OBJECTIVES OF STMS

- encouraging its members to live a Christian life and apply the principles and ideals exemplified by St. Thomas More in their lives and encourage same in the legal profession.
- promoting and foster high ethical principals in the legal profession generally and, in particular, in the community of Catholic lawyers.
- assisting in the spiritual growth of its members.
- encouraging interfaith understanding and brotherhood.
- sponsoring the annual Red Mass for elected and appointed officials and members of the legal profession.

MEMBERSHIP IN STMS

Each member of the Society is committed to:

- strive to live an exemplary Christian life and apply the principles and ideals exemplified by St. Thomas More in their daily lives and encourage same in the legal profession.
- attend monthly meeting of the Society and provide personal support to the St. Thomas More Society.
- attend and support the Red Mass.

LAWYER'S PRAYER

Give me the grace, Good Lord,
to set the world at naught;
to set my mind fast upon thee
and not to hang upon the blast of men's
mouths;
to be content to be solitary;
not to long for worldly company
but utterly to cast off the world
and rid my mind of the business
thereof.

- ST. THOMAS MORE

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Vintage Veritatem

AD VERITATEM IS CELEBRATING ITS 20TH YEAR



WRESTLING WITH GOD DURING

LENT

GREGORY WEILER

*Reprinted from Ad Veritatem
Vol 18, no. 2 (February 2013)*

ME: “TAKE MY WILL LORD. TAKE IT. I’m done with it—I choose you, okay? You are my God, I say yes. Done. Finished.

Please take over. This ‘free will’ you gave me is just too heavy a burden. I don’t want it anymore, I don’t have the strength, it is just too heavy for me.”

God: “Greg - You have the power to become a child of God.” (John 1)

Me: “But God, the power is too awesome, too terrible a responsibility for me. Can’t you just let me exercise it once and for all? Accept my fiat now and take my free will from me for I can’t be trusted with it—this power to NOT become your child.”

God: “It’s not a moment I want Greg.”

Me: “A lifetime of choosing you? Really?”

God: “My grace is sufficient. Grow up Greg. I made you for bigger things than whining about the power I grant you (the ETERNITY WITH ME I FREELY OFFER). Would

you rather be a stone? No, I simply love you too much to make you a stone, a turnip.

And if I love you that much, will I let you go?”

Me: “But wait a minute. You tell us that we all ‘have the power’ to become your adopted children, then at the same time you tell us that ‘without you we can do nothing.’ Is it you or me? Lord, lawyers don’t do well with paradoxes and mysteries which can’t be put in logical boxes.”

God: “Oy Vey!”

My Lenten journey, my lifetime journey, is summed up in the mystery of faith: “Father take this cup from me” (“I don’t want the power”), but not my will but thine be done (“I will be a big boy and will exercise your gift, deny myself, take up my cross and follow”).

Lent is a good season for wrestling with God—or better yet, resting in Him. ♦

IN GOOD FAITH

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2)

legal education is the mechanism through which we renew ourselves, update our commitment and make it current, allowing us to examine anew the ethical implications of our work, especially as they relate to the larger aims of justice and the greater good.

Finally, mentoring is the initiation of the catechumens

sheltering the oppressed and the homeless; clothing the naked when you see them, and not turning your back on your own.”

Continuing

for our profession. It is the means by which we make our renewal coextensive to others, and therefore our best hope for transforming and reshaping the entire profession in the image of an ethical lawyer.

If I may add one last exhortation, it would be to elevate and ennoble the social and political discourse at this hour of conflict and division in our land. The chance of a lifetime to lift up, to edify, to “be an instrument of the Lord’s peace” may be at hand for all of us.

Quoting Thomas à Kempis, Pope Luciani, remarked in his last audience talk that “he who loves «currit, volat, laetatur»—runs, flies and rejoices.” (*The Imitation of Christ*, 1.III, c. V, n. 4). Let us therefore not hesitate, falter or despair before this Lenten challenge, but run, fly and rejoice to embrace it. ♦



The Holy Father’s Prayer Intention for March 2017

SUPPORT FOR PERSECUTED CHRISTIANS

That each may contribute to the common good and to the building of a society that places the human person at the center.

This year, Pope Francis is presenting only one prepared prayer intention per month, rather than the two presented in earlier years. He plans, however, to add a second prayer intention each month related to current events or urgent needs, like disaster relief.

The Apostleship of Prayer will publish these urgent prayer intentions on its website at <http://www.apostleshipofprayer.org/2017-intentions/>



*“The Word is a
gift.
Other persons
are a
gift.”*

MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS
POPE FRANCIS FOR LENT
2017

via

DEAR BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

Lent is a new beginning, a path leading to the certain goal of Easter, Christ's victory over death. This season urgently calls us to conversion. Christians are asked to return to God “with all their hearts” (Joel 2:12), to refuse to settle for mediocrity and to grow in friendship with the Lord. Jesus is the faithful friend who never abandons us. Even when we sin, he patiently awaits our return; by that patient expectation, he shows us his readiness to forgive (cf. Homily, 8 January 2016).

Lent is a favorable season for deepening our spiritual life through the means of sanctification offered us by the Church: fasting, prayer and almsgiving. At the basis of everything is the word of God, which during this season we are invited to hear and ponder more deeply. I would now like to consider the parable of the rich man and Lazarus (cf. Lk 16:19-31). Let us find inspiration in this meaningful story, for it provides a key to understanding what we need to do in order to attain true happiness and eternal life. It exhorts us to sincere conversion.

1. The other person is a gift

The parable begins by presenting its two main characters. The poor man is described in greater detail: he is wretched and lacks the strength even to stand. Lying before the door of the rich man, he fed on the crumbs falling from his table. His body is full of sores and dogs come to lick his wounds (cf. vv. 20-21). The picture is one of great misery; it portrays a man disgraced and pitiful.

The scene is even more dramatic if we consider that the poor man is called Lazarus: a name full of promise, which literally means God helps. This character is not anonymous. His features are clearly delineated and he appears as an individual with his own story. While practically invisible to the rich man, we see and know him as someone familiar. He becomes a face, and as such, a gift, a priceless treasure, a human being whom God loves and cares for, despite his concrete condition as an outcast (cf. Homily, 8 January 2016).

Lazarus teaches us that other persons are a gift. A right relationship with people consists in gratefully recognizing their value. Even the poor person at the door of the rich is not a nuisance, but a summons to conversion and to change. The parable first invites us to open the doors of our heart

THE WORD IS A GIFT



(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6)

to others because each person is a gift, whether it be our neighbor or an anonymous pauper. Lent is a favorable season for opening the doors to all those in need and recognizing in them the face of Christ. Each of us meets people like this every day. Each life that we encounter is a gift deserving acceptance, respect and love. The word of God helps us to open our eyes to welcome and love life, especially when it is weak and vulnerable. But in order to do this, we have to take seriously what the Gospel tells us about the rich man.

2. Sin blinds us

The parable is unsparing in its description of the contradictions associated with the rich man (cf. v. 19). Unlike poor Lazarus, he does not have a name; he is simply called “a rich man”. His opulence was seen in his extravagant and expensive robes. Purple cloth was even more precious than silver and gold, and was thus reserved to divinities (cf. Jer 10:9) and kings (cf. Jg 8:26), while fine linen gave one an almost sacred character. The man was clearly ostentatious about his wealth, and in the habit of displaying it daily: “He feasted sumptuously every day” (v. 19). In him we can catch a dramatic glimpse of the corruption of sin, which progresses in three successive stages: love of money, vanity and pride (cf. Homily, 20 September 2013).

The Apostle Paul tells us that “the love of money is the root of all evils” (1 Tim 6:10). It is the main cause of corruption and a source of envy, strife and suspicion. Money can come to dominate us, even to the point of becoming a tyrannical idol (cf. *Evangelii Gaudium*, 55). Instead of being an instrument at our service for doing good and showing solidarity towards others, money can chain us and the entire world to a selfish logic that leaves no room for love and hinders peace.

The parable then shows that the rich man’s greed makes him vain. His personality finds expression in appearances, in showing others what he can do. But his appearance masks an interior emptiness. His life is a prisoner to outward appearances, to the most superficial and fleeting aspects of existence (cf. *ibid.*, 62).

The lowest rung of this moral degradation is pride. The rich man dresses like a king and acts like a god, forgetting that he is merely mortal. For those corrupted by love of riches, nothing exists beyond their own ego. Those around them do not come into their line of sight. The result of attachment to money is a sort of blindness. The rich man does not see the poor man who is starving, hurting, lying at his door.

Looking at this character, we can understand why the Gospel so bluntly condemns the love of money: “No one can be the slave of two masters: he will either hate the first and love the second, or be attached to the first and despise the second. You cannot be the slave both of God and of money” (Mt 6:24).

3. The Word is a gift

The Gospel of the rich man and Lazarus helps us to make a good preparation for the approach of Easter. The liturgy of Ash Wednesday invites

us to an experience quite similar to that of the rich man. When the priest imposes the ashes on our heads, he repeats the words: “Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return”. As it turned out, the rich man and the poor man both died, and the greater part of the parable takes place in the afterlife. The two characters suddenly discover that “we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it” (1 Tim 6:7).

We too see what happens in the afterlife. There the rich man speaks at length with Abraham, whom he calls “father” (Lk 16:24.27), as a sign that he belongs to God’s people. This detail makes his life appear all the more contradictory, for until this moment there had been no mention of his relation to God. In fact, there was no place for God in his life. His only god was himself.

The rich man recognizes Lazarus only amid the torments of the afterlife. He wants the poor man to alleviate his suffering with a drop of water. What he asks of Lazarus is similar to what he could have done but never did. Abraham tells him: “During your life you had your fill of good things, just as Lazarus had his fill of bad. Now he is being comforted here while you are in agony” (v. 25). In the afterlife, a kind of fairness is restored and life’s evils are balanced by good.

The parable goes on to offer a message for all Christians. The rich man asks Abraham to send Lazarus to warn his brothers, who are still alive. But Abraham answers: “They have Moses and the prophets, let them listen to them” (v. 29). Countering the rich man’s objections, he adds: “If they will not listen either to Moses or to the

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 7)

THE WORD IS A GIFT

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6)

prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone should rise from the dead” (v. 31).

The rich man’s real problem thus comes to the fore. At the root of all his ills was the failure to heed God’s word. As a result, he no longer loved God and grew to despise his neighbor. The word of God is alive and powerful, capable of converting hearts and leading them back

to God. When we close our heart to the gift of God’s word, we end up closing our heart to the gift of our brothers and sisters.

Dear friends, Lent is the favorable season for renewing our encounter with Christ, living in his word, in the sacraments and in our neighbor. The Lord, who overcame the deceptions of the Tempter during the forty days in the desert, shows us the path we must take. May the Holy Spirit lead us on a true journey of conversion, so that we can rediscover the gift of God’s word, be purified of the sin that blinds us, and serve Christ present in our brothers and sisters in need. I encourage all the faithful to express this spiritual

renewal also by sharing in the Lenten Campaigns promoted by many Church organizations in different parts of the world, and thus to favor the culture of encounter in our one human family. Let us pray for one another so that, by sharing in the victory of Christ, we may open our doors to the weak and poor. Then we will be able to experience and share to the full the joy of Easter.

From the Vatican, October 18, 2016
FRANCIS ♦



from the STMS
Facebook page

**Bob Matthews, Christina Walton,
William Malecki and Michael Alt
at the Irvine Thanksgiving Prayer
Breakfast at the Irvine Marriott on
November 18, 2016.**



“Access to the media – thanks to technological progress – makes it possible for countless people to share news instantly and spread it widely.”

(Message of His Holiness Pope Francis for the 51st World Communications Day, released January 24, 2017.)

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