Submission of articles by the 12th of the month. Email your article to: anghweeshen@gmail.com

Please include your name, contact number and address. The editorial team reserves the right to edit any articles for publication. **Maximum article length: 450 words**

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**MISSION STATEMENT**
As the parish-community of the Blessed Sacrament, we want to be a living expression of the Holy Eucharist, by trying to become both a sign and an instrument of Christ’s life-giving and self-sacrificial love in the world of today.
The Cross

For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, but with the precious blood of Christ, a Lamb without blemish or defect. (1 Peter 1:18-19)

Jesus Christ sacrificed His life on the cross –humiliated, tortured, crowned with thorns, with His hands and legs nailed to the cross. Fully divine, Jesus Christ chose to do His Father’s will and died for our sake so that our sins can be forgiven. The cross He carried was so painful and heavy. What about the cross that we carry?

We tend to feel that the issues that we face are always greater than those faced by others. Issues such as unfair treatment at work, malicious gossip among the people we know, dealing with negative people in our lives, our moments of loneliness, and struggles in trying to make a living. The frustration, the pain and the anger can be overwhelming at times. We tend to take it out on our loved ones.

God knows what each of us is going through. He is there for us all the time. Are we able to surrender all we are facing and trust in God? Are we able to spend time in prayer and reading the Bible to listen to His voice and to recognise the graces in our life?

When we give God the time to serve Him, to love the people that we meet and to do good in our lives – we will gradually be more aware of the graces that He has showered upon us. The doors that were closed was meant for our own good; the journey that we go through teaches us to be more resilient and to remain in faith.

As we approach the Holy Week, we remember the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. As we look at the crucified Christ on the Cross, let us remember how much God loves us. May all grow closer to God.

God Bless
Patricia Ang
Announcements

Mass with Healing Service
Every 2nd Friday of the month
Mass with Healing Session @ 8pm – Damien Hall

HOLY WEEK – MASS TIMINGS

PALM SUNDAY - – BLESSING OF PALMS AT ALL MASSES.
(PROCESSION 14 APRIL – 8.45AM FOLLOWED BY 9AM MASS)

MAUNDY THURSDAY – 7PM

GOOD FRIDAY SERVICE –
10AM & 3PM (ENGLISH)
12.30PM (MANDARIN)

EASTER VIGIL –
8PM

EASTER SUNDAY –
7.30AM, 11AM, 5.30PM (ENGLISH)
9AM (MANDARIN)

(PENITENTIAL SERVICE – THURSDAY 11 APRIL – 8PM)
Holy Week - Walk the Week of Passion With the Lord  
By Conny Fernandez

“My appointed time draws near.” (Matthew 26:18)

Holy Week has nearly arrived. As the “appointed time draws near”, let’s pause and meditate each day of this holiest of week, on the Lord Jesus. What must He have felt as His time drew near to enter fully into His Passion? Was He in mourning, lamenting, grieving? Did He feel completely alone, knowing that even His apostles would not fully grasp the value of His death until much later? To walk this Holy Week with Him, can be our gift to the Lord for His price of love. To recall with loving gratitude, that the Lord chose to be born so that we might be born to eternal life.

Day 1: Triumphal Entry on Palm Sunday
On the Sunday before His death, the Lord began His trip to Jerusalem, knowing that soon He would lay down His life for our sins. "Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your King comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey." The palm we hold on Palm Sunday should be a symbol of our praise, reverence and love for the humble Master Who has saved and set us free.

Day 2: On Monday the Lord Clears the Temple
The following morning, He returned to Jerusalem with His disciples. Along the way, He cursed a fig tree because it had failed to bear fruit, representing God's judgment on the spiritually dead religious leaders of Israel and as a symbolism extended to all believers (us!); demonstrating that genuine faith is more than just outward religiosity. Living faith must bear spiritual fruit in a person's life. When He arrived at the Temple He found the courts full of corrupt money changers. He overturned their tables and cleared the Temple, saying, "The Scriptures declare, 'My Temple will be a house of prayer,' but you have turned it into a den of thieves." (Luke 19:46)

Day 3: Tuesday in Jerusalem, Mount of Olives
The Lord and His disciples returned to Jerusalem. They passed the withered fig tree and He spoke about the importance of faith. Back at the Temple, religious leaders, upset at the Lord for establishing Himself as a spiritual authority, organized an ambush with the intent to place Him under arrest. But the Lord Jesus evaded their traps and pronounced harsh judgment on them: "Blind guides!...For you are like whitewashed tombs—beautiful on the outside but filled on the inside with dead people's bones and all sorts of impurity.
Outwardly you look like righteous people, but inwardly your hearts are filled with hypocrisy and lawlessness...Snakes! Sons of vipers! How will you escape the judgment of hell?" (Matthew 23:24-33). Later that afternoon, the Lord left the city and went with His disciples to the Mount of Olives, which overlooks Jerusalem. Here He prophesized the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the age; including His Second Coming and the final judgment.

Day 4: Silent Wednesday
The Bible doesn't say what the Lord did on the Wednesday of Passion Week. A time for our own quiet reflection and entering into the Triduum - the three most sacred days of the Church year.

FULLY ENTERING INTO THE TRIDUUM

Holy Thursday: The Last Supper Re-Lived and Feet Washing

"I have been very eager to eat this Passover meal with you before My suffering begins. For I tell you now that I won't eat this meal again until its meaning is fulfilled in the Kingdom of God." (Luke 22:15-16)

Holy Thursday specifically commemorates the Last Supper. Of course, we celebrate this event at every Mass, but Holy Thursday is special. At the feet-washing, as the Lord knelt before His disciples and washed their feet, He gave us a powerful gesture of service and humility. And commanded us to do the same.

Later, at the Garden of Gethsemane, He prays in agony to the Father, is betrayed with a kiss by Judas Iscariot and arrested by the Sanhedrin. He was taken to the home of Caiaphas, the High Priest, where the whole council had gathered to make their case against Him. Meanwhile, in the early morning hours, as the Lord’s trial was getting underway, Peter denied knowing his Master three times before the rooster crowed.

In churches when the Holy Thursday Mass ends, the altar is stripped, and the Eucharist in the tabernacle is taken away. The Eucharist is brought to an “altar of repose” (a temporary or separated altar that is solemnly decorated in another part of the church or its grounds) and left accessible throughout the night for adoration. If possible, consider doing the church visitation and spend some time with the Lord.
Good Friday: Trial, Crucifixion, Death, and Burial

Good Friday is the most difficult day of Passion Week. Christ's journey turned treacherous and acutely painful in these final hours leading to His death.

Judas Iscariot, overcome with remorse, hangs himself early Friday morning. Meanwhile, before the third hour (9 am), the Lord endured the shame of false accusations, condemnation, mockery, beatings, and abandonment. He carried His own cross to Calvary where, again, He was mocked and insulted as Roman soldiers nailed Him to the wooden cross. He spoke seven final statements from the cross; starting with "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." (Luke 23:34) and ending with, "Father, into your hands I commit My spirit." (Luke 23:46)

Then, about the ninth hour (3 pm) He breathed His last and died.

By 6 pm Friday evening, Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea took the Lord’s body down from the cross and laid it in a tomb. Good Friday is the only day in the whole year when NO Mass is celebrated. Instead, the day’s liturgy takes on a character all its own. It’s the most solemn day in the Church’s liturgical calendar and a day of fast and abstinence.

Holy Saturday: In the Tomb

"For you know that God paid a ransom to save you from the empty life you inherited from your ancestors. And the ransom He paid was not mere gold or silver. He paid for you with the precious lifeblood of Christ, the sinless, spotless Lamb of God." (1 Peter 1:18-19)

The Lord’s body lay in its tomb throughout the day on Saturday which was the Sabbath (sometimes called the “Long Sabbath”), guarded by Roman soldiers. Holy Saturday is a sacred time of rest and silence. As the Lord sleeps in the tomb, all of creation awaits a salvation it does not yet understand. Holy Saturday is the only day in the Triduum without its own liturgy. What should we do or how should we commemorate Holy Saturday? Just think about the disciples, who were hanging in uncertainty; afraid, lost, grieve-stricken. Let’s place ourselves in their shoes for this day. The Man they had been following, whom they believed was the Messiah, was brutally tortured and hung to die. Most of the Apostles betrayed or abandoned Him. Now He’s buried. So, now what?
Easter Vigil: Salvation History Retold, and New Catholics (Alleluia!)

The Easter Vigil starts after sundown on Holy Saturday. And it is “the mother of all vigils” and the “greatest and most noble of all solemnities.” The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the most important event, the crux, of the Christian faith. The very foundation of all Christian doctrine hinges on the truth of this account.

The Vigil starts with the “Service of Light,” which takes place around a blazing fire outside of the darkened church after nightfall. The Paschal candle makes its debut; this giant candle is in the church sanctuary throughout the year, but it gets replaced every year during the Easter Vigil. Along with all the readings, two celebratory parts of the Mass that get omitted during Lent make a triumphant return on the Easter Vigil. The Gloria and the Alleluia. Let’s sing them loud and proud! After the Liturgy of the Word, rituals of initiation start. New Christians are welcomed into the Church through baptism and confirmation. For those preparing to enter the Church, this is the big day! Let’s celebrate with them and thank the Lord for the gift of them to the Church!

Easter Sunday: Christ is Risen! "Don't be afraid! I know you are looking for Jesus, Who was crucified. He isn't here! He is risen from the dead, just as He said would happen." (Matthew 28:5-6)

On the day of His resurrection, Jesus Christ made at least five appearances. Mark's Gospel says the first person to see Him was Mary Magdalene. He also appeared to Peter, to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, and later that day to all of the disciples except Thomas, while they were gathered in a house for prayer.

We celebrate the start of the Easter season. Yes, the Easter season. The Triduum and Easter Sunday don’t just bring Lent to an end. They start the 50-day long Easter season with the octave of Easter. It is a celebration so big, it can’t be contained in just one day!

And there is much to celebrate during those 50 days. CHRIST HAS RISEN!
Some ways to make Holy Week more meaningful

- **THINK PRAYER.** If you have to work or go to school during Holy Week, think about how you can incorporate prayer breaks into each day.
- **MAKE AN ADDITIONAL SACRIFICE** by fasting and abstaining from meat on Holy Thursday and Holy Saturday in addition to Good Friday.
- **REFRAIN FROM ELECTRONIC DEVICES, WATCHING TV** from sundown on Holy Thursday until Easter morning.
- **GO to confession,** If we haven’t yet.
- **SET ASIDE** 10 minutes every day to read Passion accounts in the Gospels.
- **Make it a point to FORGIVE** someone on Good Friday.
- **PRAY the Sorrowful Mysteries of the Rosary.**
- **OFFER UP** any pain or difficulties you experience during Holy Week and unite your sufferings with the pain of Christ.
- **PRAY the Stations of the Cross.**
- **ATTEND** all of the Triduum liturgies
- **INVITE** family members, friends and neighbours — especially people who have strayed from the church — to come to church

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**Graduation**

by Patricia Ang

On 2\(^{nd}\) March 2019, 67 students from the Catholic Theological Institute of Singapore became the first cohort graduating from the St Francis Xavier Seminary Building. I was one of the students who graduated with a Certificate of Theology.

It all started with a prompting from God. I met Andrew Neo at the Wine Conference in 2016. He asked me to consider taking up the course. The following week there was a road show for the course at St Theresa church. I knew then it was God inviting me to take up the course. Hence I stepped out in faith and applied.
The courses I took were: Introduction to the Bible; The mystery of Salvation; Fundamental Moral Theology; Christian Philosophy; Introduction of Theology and The Second Vatican Council.

It was a rigorous course filled with lots of readings, quizzes, assignments and exams. Very different from academic courses, some of the modules really set one thinking about the faith. We realised as we studied theology, how little we know our God.

The Second Vatican Council module opened my eyes to the different Church documents and teachings – like Lumen Gentium, Dei Verbum and Sacrosanctum Concilium.

I was warned that Philosophy was not easy. However I personally found it to be an interesting subject – discovering faith and reason, moral philosophy and metaphysics.

I really enjoyed the module Salvation History by Aloysius Ong. We were only the batch who had that in assignment forms – four essays spread along the course. I found that very beneficial as we were able to apply what we learnt from the course, unlike most of the modules which were lots of memory work.

Being able to complete this course was a miracle to me. I thought with my eye incident, I would never be able to study or take any exams. God proved me wrong. It was exactly 10 years since my Masters and in this course, God was there for me every step of the way. Many journeyed with me - my classmates, Agnes and Anita, Janice was there in her own ways and my family and friends who prayed and encouraged me for the past two years.

I hope to be able to apply what I have learnt through my writings and share the faith with the community. Thank You God for Your love and Your grace.

**Sharings from Fellow Coursemates:**

“A CTIS graduate should not expect a position in a ministry at the parish, but to look out for areas that require service. We have to keep asking ourselves what can we do for the Church. The theological knowledge that I have gained at CTIS has strengthened my faith and understanding, as I continue sowing the word of God at catechism class. I plan to support the RCIA too,” said Frank Miranda, Church of the Holy Trinity.
“The study of theology is not a self-serving tool. We study because we want to help grow those around us. I am in Anawin, a Bible exegesis group at St Stephen’s Church. I hope to share with this young adult community what I have learnt,” Ms Natalie Rachel Fernandez, Church of the Holy Spirit Church.

“What touched me was that His Grace mentioned that even theologians and many experts can never understand and learn everything about the faith and religion. We are only touching the surface with our studies.

However, we could still make the choice to learn more about our faith and apply the knowledge gained to contribute back to the church and communities,” said Ms Jessica Liang, Church of St Bernadette Church.

God Speaks To Us
by Stella Lee

God is always speaking to us but the problem is that we are not always listening.

I am well convinced that every believer will have at minimum five ways that God personally speaks to them. It is only the voice of a stranger you do not recognise but the more familiar you are with the person, the more you are able to recognise that voice even at a whisper. God is constantly directing us, leading us, warning us, encouraging us, promising us, comforting us, and we need to be aware of His voice so that we are not spiritually deaf. Our lives will take such an amazing turn if only we can strengthen our ear muscles and detect God’s voice easily even in a world full of opinions. Through Jesus’ sacrifice on the Cross, we established a fundamental relationship with our heavenly Father. In life’s unfairness, He stands by our side. Through our mistakes and missteps, He never abandons us. In our triumphs, He awaits for the first high-five of praise. He loves us for who we are.

Though some of the ways He speaks to us are incomprehensive, here are some ways you might have experienced.
Prayer
Answered prayers served as proof that God not only hears them but answers them according to His will. “Bend down O Lord and hear my prayer, answer me for I need Your help.” (Psalm 86:1) “I will call to you whenever I am in trouble and You will answer me.” (Psalm 86:7) King David in the Old Testament reminded himself of God’s character saying, “But You O Lord are a God of compassion and mercy, slow to anger and filled with unfailing love and faithfulness.” (Psalm 86:15). Though life’s road is long and winding, God speaks into our lives through His promise to hear and answer our prayers according to His will.

Scripture
It is through Jesus, the Word made flesh, that God speaks to us through Scripture. His breath is upon us when we read the Word of God. The Holy Spirit that resides within us translates and interprets, helping us in our daily study and prayerful application of the Word to our lives. “All Scripture is God’s breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.” (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

Holy Spirit
When Jesus appeared to His disciples after His resurrection, “He opened their minds so they could understand the Scripture.” (Lk 24:45) He told them, “I am going to send you what My Father has promised.” (Lk 23:49) Jesus was referring to the coming of the Holy Spirit fulfilled in Acts 2:4. “All the people present are filled with the Holy Spirit and began speaking languages they have never spoken as the Spirit empowers them.”
God speaks to us today through the Holy Spirit. That is why we can study a passage of Scripture multiple times through different stages of our lives and be ministered to from different angles by it.

**Jesus**

Then, now and for all time, God speaks His message of love to us through His Son Jesus. Before ascending to heaven, after His resurrection, Jesus assured His disciples, “I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (Mtt 28:20)

Jesus came to break down the barrier that sin had erected between God and us. This life is promised to be hard “for the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life and those who find it are few.” (Mtt 7:14) We are never asked to walk through it alone. No one can relate to the hardship of life more than Jesus Who died on the cross for us. He was mocked, betrayed, scourged and burdened in sorrow in His desperate prayer to the Father to make any other way than the cross. Jesus came to earth out of compassion for us to understand the temptation of humanity and face it courageously, conquering it for us with a strength only He holds. “Here on earth you have many trials and sorrows. But take heart because I have overcome the world.” (Jn 16:33)

**Church**

There are many ways of going to church other than physically walking through doors and shaking hands with people. In a virtual-driven world, many hear of Christ for the first time through media but the importance of taking our faith out into a living and breathing Body of Christ is crucial. Hebrews 10:25 urges that we “not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of His return is drawing near.”

God speaks to us today through His church. We must challenge ourselves to leave our devices and participate in God’s mission for the church. There are lives that need our personal touch, our in-person hugs, and our shared laughter and tears. When we show up, we give ourselves the opportunity for Him to show us who He made us to be. “All of us together are Christ’s body and each of you is a part of it.” (1 Corinthians 12:27) We never know what part we play if we do not physically show up to listen.

**People**

God speaks truth into our lives through His good and faithful servants. We are surrounded by others to help us live out God’s calling in our lives, weather the storms and share in the joy that breaks through it. God reveals our weaknesses
through others if we allow our hearts to be humble enough to hear constructive criticism. Often we recognise faults in others because we struggle with them too. There is no way that God who loves us so much would want us to feel alone and abandoned in the world when we are suffering through trials. Acts 2:42-47 tells of the first disciples and how excited they were to meet together and share all that they had learned from Jesus. “They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles.” (Acts 2:42-43)

Creation
Imagine the feeling we get when we revel in an amazing sunrise over the water or a forest full of trees, the birds coming and going in perfect time. All these fall under the sovereign control of our mighty God. He speaks to us through His creation. Nature reminds us of Who He is, who we are and His love for us.

Talents
God speaks to us through our gifts and talents. The strength that we all possess are part of the designed purpose of our lives. We all have purpose laid within us that comes alive as we learn how to use it. No talent exults itself without hard work and patient perseverance. God’s talents are perfected as we seek His purpose for them. We cannot be successful without following His lead. The faithful way that we serve and honour Him in the simple tasks and the unfathomable achievements in our lives gives glory to God who cheers us on. We know the joy of God’s purpose in our lives when we follow His will over our own.

Worship
God speaks to us through worship and welcome His presence. 1 Peter 3:15 states “Instead you must worship Christ as Lord of your life. And if someone asks about your hope as a believer, always be ready to explain.” Worship helps us to communicate our expression. Witness to worship in our lives is a way for others to see where the root of our joy lies. Worship is a testament to God that we not only acknowledge His presence but know unequivocally that our hope lies in Him. Isaiah’s words show up in the Gospel of Matthew to assure us that “His name will be the hope of all the world.” (Mtt 12:21, Isaiah 42:1-4).

Social media
The online church movement should in no way seek to replace the physical church. Social media feeds can be flooded with Biblical inspiration and encouragement that allow us to reach out farther into the world than physically
possible. God speaks to us through social media today. Where all people are, He is. People are in the thick of social media. We should not lose sight of the responsibility we have as witnesses to Jesus through those channels of communication.

To hear God’s voice, quiet your mind, place Him as your number one counsel, pay attention, strengthen your relationship with Him, read the Bible, worship, always pause and listen. Our God is a creative God. We are all unique and He will speak to us in different ways. With God we have to realise that everything is intentional. He is not wasteful. He does not waste resources, experiences, let alone His voice. So open your spirit to hear what God is saying in every occurrence, time and place.

Saying Goodbye
by Kelley D’Cruz

I got the message about my uncle’s critical condition when I was overseas, and it broke my heart because I knew deep down that my family and I would be losing him soon. My uncle had been suffering from one illness after another for a few months now, but it still came as a shock to us that his heart had stopped, as he seemed to be doing better in the days before.

So there I was, in Jakarta, wanting to enjoy my first trip overseas with friends, but could not enjoy it fully as the thought of my uncle’s condition kept creeping in. While I was there, I began to think about what death meant, and how I had dealt with it in the past. The only other person I remember losing painfully was my grandmother. I remember many tears shed at the time, but never fully grasped the concept of what death meant, especially through the eyes of a Catholic.

My uncle left us on Ash Wednesday and my extended family and I were in the room as he took his last breaths (although plugged to the machine). After being able to gather myself emotionally in the room, I stared at my uncle, who was now gone from the world, and tried to look at the positive side of things. Never in my 23 years of existence has my whole extended family been in the same room. Unfortunate that this was the occasion to bring us together, but that was the greatest blessing of all. I would never have imagined my uncle to be the one to unite my family and I.
We gathered in the days ahead (for his wake and funeral) to not just celebrate the moments we have all had together with him, but also to celebrate, and yes, I do mean celebrate, his death. My uncle was a human far from perfect; he suffered many trials emotionally and physically. He did not always make the best choices in life, and he often strayed from the person I am certain God intended him to be. Celebrating his death, meant singing praises to God for taking his soul, and now watching over him even more closely than before. I believed, the moment my uncle died, that God was now opening heavens’ gates to him, inviting him in, to be happy, free of suffering, and safe from all evil.

Death truly is a bittersweet thing. On one hand it is not easy letting someone go, especially someone who has made some moments in your life extraordinary. However, it is also a beautiful thing, where at last, that person is finally at peace, and peace, as I am sure many know, is not an easy feat. To me, letting my uncle go became a lot easier when I decided to realise and accept that he truly is in a much better place now.

To my late uncle; it is still incredibly unfathomable that you are no longer here on Earth, but what brings me great comfort is knowing that you are still watching us from above, and that you are suffering no more. I wish we had more days – more time for you to tell me about the mischief you were up to as a child, more time to attend Sunday Mass together, more time to tease me and tell me I am getting too chubby; but these memories are ones I will hold on to dearly, in the longing and hope that I will see you again someday.

To my most amazing God, thank You for watching over my uncle in his final hours and in his everyday life. You have made him a great example to learn from, and Lord I pray you always watch over his soul and bring us both into Your kingdom, when it is my time.

Amen.
Lenten Musing: Looking Evil in the Eye

Rather unexpectedly, the book *Exorcism* by Fr Jose Syquia, Director of the Archdiocese of Manila Office of Exorcism, came my way and I learnt a lot from it. Apart from explaining exorcism and his experiences as an exorcist, Fr Jose also explores the power of the devil and how we can fight evil.

**The reality and power of the devil**

His discussion of the reality of the devil made me realise how the concept of evil has been secularised. Today’s world downplays it and we get a much watered-down version of the devil and a big lie that there is no dichotomy between good and evil.

Fr Jose explains that Satan can appear, very cleverly, as an “angel of light” to fool us and his most effective strategy is to make us believe that he does not exist. When we fall into this trap, we would no longer see the need to resist or defend ourselves against evil and, unfortunately, some might even begin to blame God for what happens. When we draw away from God, the devil would certainly do all he can to fill that gap.

Undoubtedly, the devil exists; one just needs to read the Bible to know this and the Church has always maintained that the battle between God and evil is a real and ongoing one: “the battle with the fallen angels will last till the end of the world” (*Gaudium et Spes*).

The devil uses crafty methods to infiltrate our minds, always on the lookout for an “opening”, such as our spiritual, psychological, emotional or physical weaknesses, to exert his influence. He is powerful enough to “hurt and harass us beyond ordinary temptations” and, in fact, “extraordinary demonic assaults”* are increasing in number [note: this is on the global level and in the context of the Philippines]. This situation is helped, and perhaps even invited, by growing interest in “popular occult practices and superstition” and different ideas of “spirituality”, as well as “sinful habits”, vices and various worldly values.

Thus, we must be cautious about seemingly harmless but actually God-less ways of thinking. Some supernatural themes in popular novels, films and games, for example, can lead people into the paranormal world, as can certain modern and New Age ideas and practices. Is the focus having our wishes come true or true prayer and worship of God? Emptying our mind and looking to the “god within”
or letting our minds be filled with God’s “light and love”? There is definitely a
chasmos between wrong and right.

_The limitations of the devil_
Essentially, though, Satan is merely a “creature” so while he might be able to do
what is humanly impossible, he cannot, for example, perform any real miracle
as his abilities can never equal or surpass God’s. He can only harm those who
“leave the protection of the Father and enter his sphere of influence” and even
there, what happens is not unknown to or out of reach for God.

Having been on this battlefront for years, Fr Jose vouches that “God is infinitely
more powerful than the devil and he always protects those who willingly do
battle for him.”

_What can we do to fight evil?
Fr Jose reminds us that God calls us to “attack the kingdom of darkness and to
further the kingdom of light”. For most of us, this begins with our personal fight
against temptation and sin.

In God’s goodness and through the Church, we have effective weapons for this
battle, including:
† _prayer_
† _faith_ and reliance on God’s love and protection
† the _indwelling of the Holy Spirit_
† the _Name of Jesus_
† the _Word of God_: Satan, the father of lies, will be “defeated with pure truth
coming from the Word”
† the _Sacraments_, particularly the Eucharist and Confession: “They conquered
him by the Blood of the Lamb and by the Word of their testimony.”(_Revelation
12:11_)
† _remaining watchful_ and _living holy lives_: “make our souls… repulsive and
disgusting to the devil”
† _devotion to Mary_: in an exorcism, a demon is reported to have said that the
rosary is “the most outstanding of prayers… much feared in hell, as is the
scapular”
† _spiritual reading_ and _meditation_
† _sacramentals_, not to be used superstitiously but with faith in God Who works
through them
† _deliverance_ and _exorcism_ when necessary
Lent is an apt time to look evil in the eye and stare it down. The penitential nature of the season helps us acknowledge sin, repent and make reparations for our wrongs, while prayer, fasting and almsgiving help us grow in faith, holiness and charity. How can the devil win against all this?

*“Extraordinary demonic assaults”, for which help from an exorcist-priest and the deliverance ministry are necessary, include:

– possession, usually the consequence of “repeated sins” and/or “deep trauma” (it doesn’t happen randomly, in other words);
– obsession, where a person’s thoughts and behaviour are taken over by evil;
– oppression, where a person experiences inexplicable “burdens or afflictions that torment”;
– infestation, where evil spirits plant themselves in objects or places (this could also happen due to pre-existing conditions and through no fault of the person/s affected).

from Exorcism by Fr Jose Syquia (St Pauls Philippines, 2013)

On the Path Back to God
By Isadora Lee

“Let today be the day you give up who you have been, for who you can become.”

This was one of the whatsapp messages I received during Ash Wednesday. I found the message especially meaningful. Who have I been? Who will I become? And what better time than Lent to reflect?

Incidentally as I write, I have just celebrated my birthday, a day when I will habitually reflect on the past year: have I led the past year well? Have I grown to become a better person? Have I been loving? Have I held on to grudges? Have I fulfilled my role as a wife, mother, daughter and friend? Have I been close to God?
Honestly, I don’t know. I thought the past year was probably one of the toughest years of my life so far. I remember just reminding myself to live one day at a time; I did not have any residual energy to plan ahead. In fact, the challenges started exactly one year ago, on my birthday, when I was reprimanded by a superior for an incident which was not totally my fault. The unjustifiable treatment left me feeling doubtful not only about my job, but also my life’s direction. Then there was my spouse’s condition and the baby’s arrival to handle, both of which worn me out physically.

Emotionally, I tried my best to stay in touch with close friends and loved ones, but I could barely manage my own schedule. As a result, weekly visits to my parents’ place became a monthly affair, while for some friends, the last I saw of them was at least six months ago. On my relationship with God, the truth is, I had not have much time for reflection. Some nights I managed to perform the daily Examen; on most nights I was so exhausted that I dozed off as I was reflecting on the events of the day. All in all, I thought last year was a terrible year.

A friend whom I have not contacted for a while reached out to me, to extend her birthday wishes. I was surprised at the gesture. As we chatted, she casually asked me how life has been. I briefly replied that I had gone through some rough spots, and the series of events forced me to recalibrate my life. There was a silence. She then revealed that she was currently battling cancer, an aggressive form. She was not sure if she will survive the ordeal.

She lamented that life is indeed, short. And for now, she dared to only look at short-term plans. What followed was an uncomfortable silence; I did not know how to react. Truth be told, I have heard this lamentation many times, from the mouths of loved ones whose lives were interrupted by this sinister visitor. This lamentation masks dreams waiting to be fulfilled, and lives waiting to be led. One was a talented writer who wanted to author a book. Another was an avid yoga practitioner. There was also another who had three young children, and her last days were spent deliberating on how to break the news to the youngest one, who was then three years old.

As we chatted, a sense of helplessness overwhelmed me. There was nothing much I could do, except to pray for her, which I promised to. This was her battle. This was her cross. All I could do was stay at the sidelines, and provide support. I told myself I will dedicate my Lenten prayers to this friend. And at the same time, I will use Lent to live more mindfully, so that I can be more aware of how God is working in my life.
The reality is, life will always bring with it a fair share of challenges. We need Lent to remind us, regardless of the crosses that we carry, that Jesus is in it with us, carrying the heaviest among us all. We need Lent to pause our lives for a season, so that we may all remember that the true sustenance that we ever need, is God.

The Time for Sacrifice
By Kelley D’Cruz

The time for Lent has come again, and it is during this season where I always feel I need the most guidance from God. I have made various sacrifices every year - trying to be as creative as possible when it comes to the things I can give up, which are difficult for me to do. However, what I love to do during this time is to read the Pope’s message on Lent. I often come across a beautiful message from the Pope, and this year is no different.

One of the Pope’s messages highly emphasized on was the power of sin, and how destructive it can be. He says: “Sin leads man to consider himself the god of creation, to see himself as its absolute master and to use it, not for the purpose willed by the Creator but for his own interests, to the detriment of other creatures.”

This line made me think about the times where I have sinned, and how catastrophic it has been to others around me. A habit I have is to be slow to forgiveness when someone has wronged me, and to not think of what I have done to the other person as well. There have been many times where my sins have caused a whirlwind of sins to transpire between myself and another person.

During this Lenten season, I have decided that one of the things I want to do is to be conscious and aware of how I behave towards others, especially those whom I do not particularly have a good relationship with. It is not so much something I am giving up, but it is, in my opinion, a way of opening my heart to allow God’s love to flow through me, as I do good to the people around me.
Thinking of all the times I have been rude, selfish, demeaning, nasty, difficult to be around, I choose this period of time to be extra careful with how I behave. It is not easy to stop all my internal bad habits at one go, but that is my goal to reach. As difficult as it is, the one thing I know I must do everyday, is to pray constantly - pray for everything and anything I may need, to become this better version of myself.

I pray that we as Catholics find and hold on to the beauty of prayer, and how it works wonders by having that deep and meaningful relationship with God - someone who can be a friend, a father, a brother, a sister, a mother - all these beings wrapped into one. I pray that this Lenten season be one of love, immense prayer, and complete surrender of all our sins to the Lord Almighty.

Faked Zeal?
By Fr. Remi

*Faith is the realization of what is hoped for and evidence of things not seen.*
(Heb 11: 1)

St. Paul declared this to the Hebrew Christians. This is the same Paul who experienced the resurrected Jesus while on his way to persecuting the Christians in Damascus. Is it fair for him to tell us about faith as evidence of things not seen?\(^1\) I will not answer it here, because faith is a personal thing.

As I am preparing myself for a sabbatical time in France learning more about our Congregational faith, this question becomes relevant to the *zealous* aspect of its foundation instilled by the two founders, the Good Father and the Good Mother. They even aspired to put the word *zélateurs* in the name of the institution\(^2\). In the end the word *zealots* was not explicitly included in the title, but how should we look at this aspect of our Congregation.

I once asked a Brother here to express in his own words the Charism of SSCC

\(^1\) John 20,29 *Thomas, because you have seen me, you believe, blessed are they who have not seen and yet believe.*

\(^2\) SSCC Constitutions as approved by the Holy see on 10\(^{th}\) of January 1817 had a subtitle *Constitutiones Zelatorum et Zetalricum Sacratissimorum Cordium Iesu et mariae, adoratorum perpetuorum Sanctissimi Sacramenti Altaris.*
Congregation. Quite spontaneously he said, *A love that repairs the world*. What a simple way of expressing the soul of our Congregation. Only love can repair, because love heals. We are called to do reparation work for the Church, in the world, and to do it zealously. At any stage of SSCC development, it is crucial to identify with this special spirit received by our founders. But how?

Consider the following anecdote. *There is a story from the Desert Fathers about a young monk who asked one of the old men of the desert why it was that so many people came out to the desert to seek God and yet most of them gave up and returned to their lives in the city. The old monk answered, last evening my dog saw a rabbit running for cover among the bushes he began to chase it, barking loudly. Soon other dogs joined in the chase, barking and running. They alerted more dogs, and soon the desert was echoing the sounds of their pursuit. The chase went on into the night. After a little while, many of the dogs grew tired and dropped out. A few dogs continued the chase until the early hours of the morning, but in the end they too gave up. By morning, only my dog continued the hunt. “Do you understand the story?” “No, please tell me Father.” “It is simple,” said the desert monk, “my dog saw the rabbit.”*

**Zeal cannot be faked.** Zeal is the internal force that drives us to do more, not less. To take all points into account for the benefit of a mission; the big picture as well as the details. It is passionate, but not a passion that only serves personal interests. It is strong, but only as much as compassion would allow. It is not blind, certainly not a blind ambition that at times disregards common sense. By its nature it is never selfish, and it perseveres ridicules as well as persecutions. It is sincere, and does not try to please anyone but God. Amen.
Congratulations to our winners for last month’s issue: **Constance Chiong and Timothy Sylvester**. For a chance to win a special gift, please submit your completed entry to the church office by the 12th of this month. Clues may run forwards, backwards, diagonally, up or down. Some overlap or even be backwards. (For children 12 years & below - not for the Spotlight team & their families.)

**The Prodigal Son**

‘My son,’ the father said, ‘you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. Luke 15:31 (NIV).

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