

Vocation Reflections

February 2024



Blessed Theresa of Jesus Gerhardinger, SSND Foundress, reminds us:
Love gives everything gladly, everything again and again, daily.
(Letter #1, 1833)

February 14 marks the beginning of Lent this year. Lent is the liturgical season that prepares us for the Easter triduum, through intentional practices of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. **What does Lent have to do with discernment?**

Fr. James Martin, SJ, in an online video titled, "What is Lent?"¹ noted, "[I]n the activities of Lent, almsgiving and fasting really flow out of prayer. Why is that? Because prayer connects us to God and it's out of that relationship with God that everything we do flows... **Lent is a time of quiet to hear the call of God, to serve.**" Isn't that also what discernment and discipleship are about?

Lent offers us a grace-filled opportunity to refocus and renew our relationship with God, as we continue to discern God's will and our response. Sister Marion Welter, SSND, offers some helpful ways to be intentional about our Lenten practices in her Lent Reflection² below.

Image by Gini George from Pixabay



"Turn to me with all your heart" says our God to each one of us. Lent is one of those moments that we as disciples, once again reflect on the conversion that we know we need in our lives. Sometimes we think the actions need to be large ones, but in God's eyes, it is not about size but **our love response**. As I was reflecting on Lent, what came to mind again were the three actions that we have so often heard: PRAYER, FASTING and ALMSGIVING. These are still key words today, but each Lent brings us to a new awareness of them. One way to look at it would be to take each action and determine how we might live it out personally each day during Lent.

Here are a few examples.

- **PRAYER:** What commitment in my prayer life will I make or enter into more fully? Might I turn my heart to God in gratitude two or three times a day? What could I do to strengthen my relationship with God?
- **FASTING:** Is there a new way to look at fasting? Will it be fasting from judging others, refraining from unkind actions toward someone or an action to use less water?
- **ALMSGIVING:** Who might I reach out to with an act of kindness, such as a smile, a visit, a compliment; whether it is a family member, neighbor or co-worker; or what part of God's creation will I take better care of?

These small ways of showing love to God, one another, and God's creation lead to a conversion of heart. In the words of Blessed Theresa, foundress of the School Sisters of Notre Dame, "Love gives everything gladly, everything again and again, daily" (Blessed M. Theresa Gerhardinger, Letter #1, 1833).

~Sister Marion Welter, SSND

Reflection questions

1. What is your love response to God's action in your life?
2. What keeps you from turning to God with all your heart?
3. Music and meaningful lyrics can also help us move our hearts. Choose from these or your personal favorite:

You Say - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N8WK9HmF53w>

Come and Find the Quiet Center - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xc-xpUOaqUw>

Prayer

Create a clean heart in me, God. Dust off the unmindful activity that constantly collects there. De-clutter my heart from harsh judgments and negativity. Wash away my resistance to working through difficult relationships. Rinse off my unloving so the beauty of my generous and kind heart can shine forth. Remove whatever keeps me from following in your compassionate footsteps. Amen.³

References

¹ "What is Lent?" by Fr. James Martin, SJ. Posted by Catholic Relief Services (CRS), Feb. 1, 2015 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7C39WAUaTMo>

² "Lent Reflection" By Sister Marion Welter, SSND. 2019. <https://www.ssndcentralpacific.org/news-events/story/enjoy-a-lent-reflection>

³ Excerpt from "Create in Me a Clean Heart." *Out of the Ordinary: Prayers, Poems, and Reflections for Every Season*. Joyce Rupp. Ave Maria Press. Notre Dame, IN. ©2000. p115.

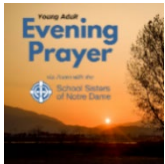
This month's vocation resource:

What Can Lent Teach us About Discernment?

<https://anunslife.org/blogs/discovering-god-s-calling/lent-teach-about-discernment>

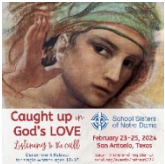
Looking ahead

Click the event title to learn more.



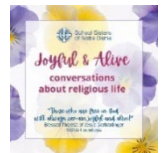
Online Evening Prayer

For young adults ages 18-45
Fourth Tuesday each month
8 p.m. ET / 7 p.m. CT



Discernment Retreats for Single Women

For single women ages 18-45
February 23-25, 2024 - San Antonio, TX
April 26-28, 2024 - in Baltimore, MD



Joyful & Alive Conversation

For single women age 18+
April 13, 2024
11:30 a.m. ET / 10:30 a.m. CT



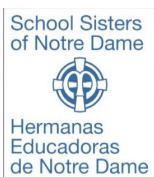
Summer Service Week 2024

For women ages 18-45
July 10-14, 2024
Whole Kids Outreach in Ellington, MO

DID YOU KNOW?

Back issues of Vocation Reflections are available [online](#).

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God's cause
is the *only* concern of
our hearts



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