Lent 2013: An Amazing Time to Return, Repent, and Renew

In Luke’s Gospel (5: 1-11), Jesus invites his new friends to go out into the deep for a big catch of fish. After a long day of fishing and coming up empty, these fishermen were skeptical about his command but went anyway only to discover a catch so immense that they were left amazed by Jesus. Simon Peter was so awestruck by this experience that he fell at the knees of Jesus and said: “Depart from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man.” In experiencing the greatness of the incarnate and transcendent God, Peter recognized his own smallness or inadequacy (sin) and yet Jesus called him out of himself to a will other than his own. This gospel passage which was proclaimed on the Sunday before our Lenten season began, offers the Church a “Lenten summons” to go out into the deep with our Lord and be renewed in our relationship with the triune God. We, too, must transcend ourselves so as to move beyond our delusional “shores” that confirm our self-centeredness to a deeper sense of God, self, and community.

This summons is especially important in our increasingly secular or postmodern/post-Christian society that has become uneasy or distrusting of religious certitude and religious institutions. In fact, Karl Rahner, the famous theologian of the twentieth century, prophetically remarked that, “The Christian of the future will be a mystic or he [she] will not exist at all.” Rahner’s observation serves not so much as a critique of the Church in the modern world, but more an invitation for each Christian to be amazed or awestruck by our salvation in Christ. Like Peter, we too must approach the Lord with an open and humble heart to be astonished by Jesus’ words and deeds. We, too, must leave the “shore” of our lukewarm faith and go deeper into the waters of our baptism arising renewed to proclaim Christ in our words and deeds.

So, if we have grown weary in our faith life or find the religious quest boring, allow Lent 2013 to be an amazing time to be awestruck by the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Let us together rediscover the mysteries of our faith and find the triune God of salvation history calling us out into the deep. Let us be caught up in God’s delight and wonder. Along the journey, we will be astonished by God’s total love and transformed into to mystics who bring hope in a cynical age.
Another Fasting

Isaiah 58:6-12

“Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen:
to loose the chains of injustice
is it not to share your food with the hungry
and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter—
when you see the naked, to clothe them,
and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?
Then your light will break forth like the dawn,
“If you do away with the yoke of oppression,
with the pointing finger and malicious talk,
and if you spend yourselves in behalf of the hungry
and satisfy the needs of the oppressed,
then your light will rise in the darkness,
and your night will become like the noontday.

Our Baptismal call challenges us to find Christ in the marginalized of society. Traditionally during Lent we often look to give something up that we enjoy. Perhaps, this Lent we could use our time to serve others. As St. Vincent de Paul reminds us, “The Poor have so much to teach us.” So often when I eat a banana, I think about a man I met on my first trip to Panama. We were in Volcan. I was with NU graduate, Fr. Emmet Nolan, CM and a couple of students. This older gentleman was so delighted to see us. He insisted on giving us a banana and coconut milk. We talked with him. He stood as he insisted for us to sit down in his limited seating. When we left, Fr. Emmet remarked to us that we ate his food allotment for two days. I was truly humbled as he gave from his necessity. Consider participating in the Service day, Saturday, February 23rd at the NU Soup kitchen located at St. George’s at 1910 Falls Street. For more information contact me at ms@niagara.edu. I know you will experience a bit of Easter in the Suffering Servant found in our marginalized friends.

Please Pray for the following students who will be participating in the BASIC Service Immersion trip to Greensboro, NC with Fr. John Dang, C.M. and Monica Saltarelli.
Morgan Bicknell, Lynnea Felton, Brianne Lilly, Katrina Hosenlopp, Andrew Daum, Brianna Rodriguez, Andrea Nicolia, Vanessa Dunn, Maria Halstead, Theresa Schmidt, Rebeca Yuhas, Kateri Whirtley, Jacie Diez, Hannah Moniz, Destiny Johnson.

Faith and Charity

Faith is a gift and free response to the love of God through Christ who was incarnate and crucified to follow the Father’s will and God’s infinite mercy. Charity is an opportunity to express our personal acts and unconditional self-giving to serve our brothers and sisters in love. Evangelization is the core of charity because we bring the Word of God and share the bread that we receive in the Eucharist with our brothers and sisters in relationship with God. As the Pope writes, “…Evangelization is the highest and the most integral promotion of the human person.”

Faith is a gift and a free response to God as well as to our neighbors. In order to have a gift more valuable and meaningful, it needs to be shared. If we do not share it, we are selfish or self-centered. Practically, the more we share the more we become who we are called to be as Christians.

Charity is walking in the truth. Whatever Christians do is a response to God’s love. Through charity, our friendship with God and with people is lived and cultivated. Through faith, we recognize the gift that God has entrusted to us. By charity, we develop that gift fruitfully in light of the Holy Spirit. As a result, the Holy Spirit united our faith and charity together. As St. Paul said, “It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me” (Gal 2:20). That means, when one opens one’s heart for the Holy Spirit; his or her life will be changed. In short, faith without work is like a tree without fruit. Faith and charity are inseparable. Lent invites us to mature and nourish our faith in charity and in love for God and neighbor. Faith enables us to look ahead with hope. Charity ushers us to the total and unconditional self-giving to God and to our brothers and sisters. The relationship between faith and charity also reminds us of two sacraments: Baptism and Eucharist. Baptism gives us faith. Eucharist perfecst the Christian journey. It is clear that “Faith precedes charity, but faith is genuine only if crowned by charity.” I wish you all to spend this special time to rekindle your faith in Christ and let it shine for our brothers and sisters with whom you encounter in your daily life.
Calling on Jesus

I was talking with a group of students recently about prayer. We were sharing stories of how we pray, when we pray, and why we pray. The conversation evolved into a discussion on how our experience of prayer has changed as we have grown older. When we were young, we were taught by our parents to just “talk to Jesus,” and it was a very innocent and informal conversation. Small children know how to pray, and they are not afraid to pray. But something happens in life to change our experience of God and the way we pray. Now, as young adults, we are hesitant to pray aloud in group settings, and we may struggle to set aside time for private prayer in our everyday lives.

So what has happened to affect such change in our relationships with Jesus? What has happened to make us nervous about talking to Him, privately and publicly, and asking Him for whatever we want?

Our small group decided that formality got in the way. When we were old enough to learn the “traditional prayers” of the Church, we did. We practiced, and in some cases were even tested on, our “Our Fathers” and “Hail Marys,” and we learned the correct responses spoken by the Assembly during the Eucharistic Liturgy. Before we knew it, there had become a “right” way to pray, which was followed by an assumption that any other way must have been “wrong.”

The prayers of the Church are beautiful and meaningful and helpful and necessary for good liturgy, good common and unifying prayer. But there is something to be said for the informal prayer of our childhood. We are and always will be children in God’s eyes. We can appreciate our tradition while also embracing the friendship with Jesus Christ into which we are each called - a friendship which requires, as any friendship, regularly “checking in.” We cannot and should not be afraid to say “hello” to Jesus, to say “I love you, Friend” to thank Him, and to ask Him for whatever we desire.

This Lent, challenge yourself to check in with Jesus at least once every day.

We offer a variety of prayer and faith-sharing experiences throughout Lent. Below are description of some programs you may not be familiar with. Dates, times, and locations are listed on the back.

**Taize Prayer:** set in a candlelit back chapel, this is a peaceful service that runs about 50 minutes, and includes music, scripture, and communal prayer. The quiet, repetitive music guides the assembly into a deep and intimate private prayer with Jesus. This is an ecumenical service, which means it is Christian in nature and is not exclusive to any one denomination.

**DOVES** (Daughters Of Virtue Enlightened by the Spirit): a group of women students who meet weekly to discuss various topics of faith and how faith and world intersect on the University campus.

**Rosary Workshop:** an informal “drop-in” workshop that teaches you how to make and pray the rosary.

**Eucharistic Adoration:** set in the chapel, this is a time to pray with Jesus in a very special way - in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament. The Sacrament is exposed, which means it is placed on the altar, for about 30 minutes. People may drop in and stay for any amount of time they wish.
Lenten Service Day Feb. 23  
NU Soup Kitchen  
Departing Campus Ministry at 9:00am

Novena  
Every Monday after 12:15pm Mass

Making of Rosary Beads  
Tuesday Feb. 26, LLG Room 110  
Tuesday March 12, MPR Gallagher  
Stop by anytime between 12-2:00pm

End of the Day Adoration  
Every Thursday  
5:10-5:45pm, Alumni Chapel

Seder Supper  
March 25, 6:00pm, Heritage Room  
RSVP - Campus Ministry

Taizé Service  
Feb. 19, 7:00pm, Alumni Chapel  
March 19, 7:00pm, Alumni Chapel

St. Joseph’s Day Table  
March 19, 1:00pm, MPR Gallagher  
After 12:15pm Mass

Penance Service  
March 21, 7:00pm, Alumni Chapel

Sacrament of Reconciliation  
Wednesdays: 4:30-5:30pm  
Alumni Chapel or by appointment

The Triduum to be held at Stella Niagara Chapel  
March 28: Holy Thursday, 7:00pm  
March 29: Good Friday, 3:00pm  
March 30: Holy Saturday, (Easter Vigil) 8:00pm

Easter Sunday Mass 11:00am  
Weekday Mass 12:15pm