



# Knights of Columbus Council 9542

THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA

Washington, DC 20064

*In Service to One, In Service to All*

So how's your Lent going? Tonight, yours truly invites each of you to reflect on this question with me as we begin the second half of the liturgical season. For many of us, our annual voluntary sacrificing of something that normally brings us pleasure can seem to perpetuate the forty-plus days of fasting and prayer into the forty year Exodus of the Hebrews. It can be tempting, then, to view Lent as a period of wailing and gnashing of teeth as we count down the days until Easter Sunday and the free use of the Gloria and the "A-word." Of course, we know Lent is so much more than the bleak spiritual desert it is often presented as— surely we get out of it at least what we put into it. Far from just being a period of time we need to bear down and grit our teeth for, it is an opportunity to remind us of our dependence on God's love and mercy rather than the comforts of the world.

Upon my return home for spring break, I arrived to the unwelcome news that my mother had made the household vegan.<sup>1</sup> So much for my [#BestLentEver](#). Escaping upstairs to cope, I found solace in the most recent issue of *Columbia* magazine waiting for me in my room, as perhaps it was for each of you. I flipped to the column of our Supreme Chaplain, Archbishop Lori of Baltimore, who helped me put things into perspective:

There's no doubt about it; Lent has somber overtones. It is, after all, a period of penitence, a time for coming to terms with our sins. This is not easy, especially since we tend to avoid thinking about our sins, or try to hide them, or make excuses for them. Through this Year of Mercy, Pope Francis has given us all an opportunity to rehabilitate Lent. He's helping us think about it not as a time of misery but as a time of mercy. God does not play our game of sanitizing or making excuses for our sins but comes to meet us with his merciful love.<sup>2</sup>

He went on to state that Lent is not a time for bitterness but rather a time for us to experience a new springtime— the word "Lent" comes from an Old English word for "spring"— in our relationships with God and others. Our faults and shortcomings may occasionally distract us from God, but He "remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself."<sup>3</sup> Remind you of today's Gospel, the Parable of the Prodigal Son? "When faced with the gravity of sin, God responds with the fullness of his mercy," writes Pope Francis, "Mercy will always be greater than any sin, and no one can place limits on the love of God who is ever

<sup>1</sup> See John 11:35.

<sup>2</sup> Archbishop William Lori, "[Giving and Forgiving](#)," *Columbia*, February 1, 2016, 4.

<sup>3</sup> 2 Timothy 2:13 (NASB).

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ready to forgive.”<sup>4</sup> We, then, cannot wallow in self-pity whenever we fall, but deny ourselves, embrace our crosses, and continue to follow Christ towards Calvary.<sup>5</sup> According to tradition, even Jesus trembled three times. Fell three times. Picked Himself off the ground three times. Struggled on towards a most inglorious Death three times.

A year ago, I went on my second international mission trip: the first had been in Jamaica with my members of my parish and last spring break it was in Costa Rica with CUA, Duke University, and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. During those times abroad, I dedicated myself to the ministries of presence for and caretaking of the destitute and others on the margins of society. As is the case for Lent, to get anything meaningful from such service trips, the experience has be allowed to change us, that is, to force us to awaken from our complacency and comfort and wake us up to the reality of the world we live in. Certainly Lent involves suffering, but it is not without purpose! Joining our sacrifices to Christ’s, we make real our love for Him in thanksgiving and awe; it should move and shape our every word, action, and thought. I conclude with an observation from Brother Lawrence of the Resurrection:

In the sight of God, thoughts count for little. Love means everything. It is not necessary to have great things to do: I can turn my little omelette [sic] in the pan for the love of God. When that is done, and if I have nothing more to do, I can prostrate myself on the ground and adore God who has given me the grace to do what I have done. Then, I rise happier than a king. When I can do nothing else, I can always pick up a straw from the ground for the love of God.

May God bless you, and God love you!

Fraternally,

SK Thomas Wong

<sup>4</sup> Pope Francis. *Misericordiae Vultus* [The Face of Mercy], Vatican Website, April 11, 2015, sec. 3, accessed March 1, 2016, [https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost\\_letters/documents/papa-francesco\\_bolla\\_20150411\\_misericordiae-vultus.html](https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_letters/documents/papa-francesco_bolla_20150411_misericordiae-vultus.html).

<sup>5</sup> See Matthew 16:24.

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