

*Lenten*  
REFLECTIONS  
2019



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Dear Sisters, Associates and Friends,

Greetings! This is a special year for the Congregation as we will hold our General Chapter. During the last two-and-a-half years, we took time to prepare ourselves to read the signs of the times by participating in conversation and discussion in Chapter Groups and sharing thoughts and ideas with our sisters, associates and friends in the countries where we are ministering across the globe. Similarly, Lent is another time in our liturgical calendar when we have the opportunity during these 40 days to pause, stop and reflect inwardly. The Church asks all of its members to reflect on their lives and the way they are living, and to be mindful of where change is needed so that on Easter we may rejoice in the joy of the resurrection.

As I am writing this letter, I am reminded of the lines in Robert Frost's poem, "The Road Not Taken":

“...long I stood...  
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—  
I took the one less traveled by,  
And that has made all the difference.”

Our General Chapter theme, “Transforming Love–for the Life of the World,” calls each of us to make a difference in our own lives as well as extend a loving gesture to others whose road is not easy. In our daily lives we often find ourselves standing at a crossroad, having to choose which path to take. It is when we select the road less traveled that we encounter Jesus.

These Lenten reflections are intended to provide opportunity for reflecting on the paths we have chosen in our personal lives as well as ones we might choose in the future in an effort to improve the lives of others.

I am deeply thankful for the reflections provided by Sisters Runu Mrong, Nita Rozario, Royne Josephine Costa, Sumona Costa, Kripa Maria Baroi, Anita Gomes, Tuli Drong and Rita Godhino.

May Jesus’ love transform us all.

In Holy Cross,  
Sister Angela Golapi Palma, CSC  
*Leadership Team Member*

## ASH WEDNESDAY

**March 6, 2019**

Joel 2:12-18

The season of Lent is a special time to reflect on the desert life: living with sacrifices, solitude, serenity, hospitality, sharing and forgiveness.

Receiving ashes on our forehead challenges us to die with the Lord by wholeheartedly acknowledging our sins and dustiness, and calls us to be a new, loving people of hope. With ashes on our foreheads and with hope in our hearts, we go forth to love and serve, growing closer to the Lord.

As we begin Lent, the words of the prophet Joel call us to an inner change in our way of life rather than mere external “giving up,” to a change that will continue well beyond Lent and become a consistent pattern of our living in the presence of God. This presence comes as a gift, with a power that creates, sustains, reconciles and heals. It is a presence that engages us personally, leading all of us beyond narrow self-interest into fuller participation in and celebration of life.

Our God is loving and merciful, but repentance is not just feeling bad about the past and seeking forgiveness. Repentance means giving up our own rigidness, being freed from all that binds us to the old life. It may be any intentional act that requires a certain self-denial and can strengthen us to create a new space and ability to grow continually. Forgiveness is not about forgetting, but about a complete change of thinking, a new way of moving forward in discipleship of Christ.

Let us make this a great Lent, not getting stuck feeling that the Lenten sacrifices are burdensome, but believing they are one of the essential pathways to the life God wants for all of us.

—*Sister Runu Mrong, CSC*

# FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT

**March 10, 2019**

Luke 4:1-13

The Gospel of Luke speaks about Jesus, the Son of God, who was born as a human to love and to save the people of God. He was full of the Holy Spirit and led to the desert for 40 days to unite with his Father.

Jesus was born a human. As a human person, Jesus was tempted by evil spirits. He overcame all temptations.

The temptations of Jesus help us to see ourselves, to be opened, and to identify what is good and what is bad for ourselves and for the world.

Today's reading challenges us to be like Jesus in this present world. "Love one another" is Jesus' teaching. From our own selfishness we are tempted by the evil spirit. We close our eyes, so that we do not see the needs of other people.

Lent is the time to reflect, to open our eyes to love others and see how Jesus loved us and is loving us.

## **Reflection Questions:**

- What are the temptations for me from this world?
- How do I overcome these temptations?
- Do I think of others before I think of myself?

—*Sister Nita Rozario, CSC*

## SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT

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**March 17, 2019**

Luke 9:28b-36

As I began reflecting, two things came to my mind. First, Lent is a time of self-renewal. Second, why do we say things like, “I should do this” or “I should not do that”? Is that what Lent is about?

As I reflect on the story of Jesus’ transfiguration, I am reminded that we as a Congregation are also on that mountain with Jesus. We are listening to the words, “This is my Son, my chosen; listen to him.” What is God saying to the disciples and to us? We need to listen to Jesus each day, but especially now as we prepare for our General Chapter. How is God calling us to be transformed, to be changed, to hear and see Jesus leading us to imitate his transforming love for the life of the world, for our life and for our Congregation?

The disciples experienced God’s presence and heard his voice firsthand. We hear noises in the midst of our busy life. Are we able to listen for God’s voice? Great things can happen when we are in God’s presence and can hear him calling to us. We can become a new person and act differently and with great joy. When we are willing to listen with our hearts, we can allow ourselves to be transformed, to hear God’s voice and believe in the Son of the living God. We may discern a call to sacrifice something dear to us, or to be humble, or a call to love and be witnesses of God’s transforming love for the life of the world. We are his disciples now and we are called to transform our world.

### **Reflection Questions:**

- How do I seek the will of God in my day, in my life?
- As a follower of Jesus, how do I bear witness to his transforming love for the life of the world? Am I transfigured?

—*Sister Royne Josephine Costa, CSC*

# THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT

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**March 24, 2019**

Luke 13:1-9

We continue our Lenten journey of reflection and awareness in this season of soul-searching and repentance, using this time to be shaped and transformed by God's grace so that we may grow in wisdom and confidence.

In order to repent of our sins and to grow in repentance, we need to get a wider view of God's absolute purity and his right, as our divine Creator, to judge sinners; and we need a deeper view of our own sinfulness, down to the heart level. In other words, we must develop a genuine awareness of our ways.

In today's Gospel, Jesus tells the story of the fig tree: The tree that bears no fruit shall be cut down. What is the message of this seemingly harsh story? It is simple: God, as Creator of all living things, has the power to judge anything and everything. Jesus, in telling this parable, reminds us that we are all sinners worthy of God's judgment.

## **Reflection Questions:**

- What do I need to do to truly repent?
- How can I be more aware of my thirst for God's ways?
- When do I find myself judging others but failing to remember that God is judging me?

—*Sister Sumona Costa, CSC*

## FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT

**March 31, 2019**

Luke 15:1-3, 11-32

When I was reflecting on the parable of the prodigal son, I was inspired to look at my life in a new way. The younger son was truly sorry about the way he had wasted his life: By accepting his mistakes, he had the courage to come back to his father and was prepared to ask for his forgiveness. The father was waiting for his son to come back, and when he came back, he welcomed him with his unconditional love.

Lent is a special time of grace, so let us ask God to grant us the grace to be more like the father who was filled with unconditional love and mercy.

### **Reflection Questions:**

- Do I accept that, at times, I fail to live in God's grace and stay near to him?
- When I fail, am I prepared to accept that I need to say I am sorry to God and come back to him?
- When I have received God's forgiveness, am I able to forgive myself from the heart?
- Am I able to accept myself as a beloved daughter of God?
- Am I able to worry less and trust in God more?
- Am I grateful like the younger son or am I jealous like the elder son?
- How often do I love others with unconditional love like the father?
- Am I really compassionate to others like the father?
- Is my behavior harmful and hurtful like the elder son who was filled with jealousy and anger?

—*Sister Kripa Maria Baroi, CSC*

## FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT

**April 7, 2019**

John 8:1-11

The Gospel for today offers lessons about God's mercy and forgiveness as the Pharisees and teachers of the Law bring in a woman caught in adultery.

Through this story we can see the mentality of the teachers of the Law and the Pharisees: They were still following the old Law that Moses gave them. Jesus, the Son of God, stood in front of them but they did not understand. When they saw Jesus' teaching, they felt he came to break the Law of Moses and that is what they accused him of.

But Jesus came to fulfill the Law from heaven through his suffering, death and resurrection. He destroyed all our sins and gave us the transforming love of God, through his life.

Sometimes, we are like the Pharisees: We cannot forgive, cannot accept new things, cannot see new ways to change for our life and for the world. In this present moment we must see the needs of the world, which might be very much a challenge for us.

### **Reflection Questions:**

- Have I asked God for the strength and courage to contribute my gifts (joy, happiness and all my capabilities), to forgive others and to bring peace to my local community? to the Congregation? my country? the world?
- How can I step in the right direction toward "Transforming Love – for the Life of the World?"

—*Sister Anita Gomes, CSC*

## PALM SUNDAY

**April 14, 2019**

Isaiah 50:4-7 | Philippians 2:6-11 | Luke: 23:1-49

The prophet Isaiah prophesied about Jesus, the “Suffering Servant.” From his great love, Jesus willingly came to rescue people from darkness, submitting himself to insults and beatings. He prays that people remain in his love and become his image in this world.

St. Paul says that Jesus loves the people and comes to be with them on Earth. Jesus emptied himself and took the form of a slave, being born in the likeness of man. He chose to suffer, die on a cross and rise from the dead for those oppressed and downtrodden.

In the Gospel reading Jesus said, “Forgive them, Father! They do not know what they are doing.” This line touched my heart: that Jesus comes as Messiah to bring freedom from sin, light to those in darkness, hope to the depressed, miracles to those who believe, love to the oppressed and forgiveness to those of humble heart.

When I reflected on these three readings, it is clear for me that Jesus prepared himself step by step to fulfill his glorious mystery, his Father’s will. As a religious, our center is Jesus Christ. We lovingly follow his footsteps in our daily life. As we begin this Holy Week, let us pray for each other that Jesus may transfigure us to be taken, blessed and broken. Then we can share ourselves in the world as Jesus shared himself with us.

—*Sister Tuli Drong, CSC*

# EASTER SUNDAY

**April 21, 2019**

John 20:1-9

What we celebrate today is a tomb that is empty! Not only that, but also the Risen Savior: He is no more in the tomb. He does not remain with the dead. That empty tomb is the sign of joy.

The joy and blessing of this morning come because Jesus Christ has conquered death. He is no more in the tomb. Mary Magdalene went to the tomb when it was still dark and found the tomb empty. Her heart was filled with fear because Jesus was not in the tomb, and joy because Jesus was alive on Earth, human and divine.

He is no more in the tomb. Mary Magdalene is the first apostle, announcing the resurrection of Christ to the other disciples. Her joy abounds to all of us today and to the world.

I imagine that first Easter celebration included shouts of joy. Jesus had risen from the dead. We are joyful because through his death our sins are forgiven. We do not have to live in guilt and shame any more. Easter is also the feast of hope amidst hopelessness, a sign of joy despite sadness, mercy in response to selfishness, the way of nonviolence instead of school shootings and bullying, and the elimination of all pain and death.

Whenever we reach out to others with compassion, forgiveness and love, that is the power of the resurrection that we share in Christ. He lifts us out of the tombs of our broken and sinful lives, turning us toward himself.

Today, let us create a new kingdom on Earth as we celebrate Easter. Let us say and promise to ourselves with the power of the Risen Christ: We will feed the hungry, shelter the homeless, give rights to migrants, visit the sick...

May the Resurrected Christ bless us and give us new hope and peace. Amen.

## **Reflection Questions:**

- Did I ever experience the joy of the empty tomb?
- How shall I meaningfully celebrate Easter this year?

—*Sister Rita Godhino, CSC*

*“Then the other disciple, who  
reached the tomb first, also went  
in, and he saw and believed...”*

*—John 20:8*

