

The Net Worker



“I Will Try”

– My Continued Lenten and Mission Mantra

By Douglas Garofalo

“I will try”. If you attended the 11:15 AM Ash Wednesday Mass, you may remember that was how Fr. Brogan suggested we respond to the priests’ saying “Turn away from sin and be faithful to the Gospel” as they prepared to place ashes upon our foreheads. How simple he made the act of receiving ashes for not only the Saint Peter Academy students in attendance, but for all of us adults there that morning too.

I would like to add these sentence starters: “I need ...” and “And I pray ...”

When added to our verbal response to turn away from sin, these two sentences can help us stay focused on being faithful to God now and always.

And at the beginning of “the little black book”, the authors described Lent as an “attitude” and they go on to explain that Lent is a time to take a long look at our lives, allowing our spirit to soar, like it was meant to, and experience the grandeur of God.

The last line in the reflection is very meaningful to me, especially for the past five years or so of my life. The authors write “When all is said and done, how much *is* God part of my life?”

For me, today, God is a very big part of my life. When I completed those sentence starters for my personal mission statement, which stated my beliefs and desires, and which prompted me to commit three years to international mission with the Franciscan Mission Service (FMS), I wrote:

“I need to keep true to my belief that this is God’s plan for me at this point in my life” and “And I pray that God, through the Holy Spirit, gives me daily graces to endure the highs and lows of mission as I concretely follow this call of service”.

As many of you know, I spent the last two years serving as a Franciscan Lay Missioner in Uberlandia, Minas Gerais, Brazil working with the local province of Franciscan Friars and the Diocese of Uberlandia. I am now back in the States, serving my third year as Development Director for FMS. I will be based in Washington, D.C. this year and will be traveling to parishes to share stories of the

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good works of FMS's Lay Missioners and to raise much needed funds to support those in the field.

While in Brazil, I started many a day with "I will try to do my best, God" whether it was in language school, learning Portuguese alongside 29 other "estrangeiros", hopping on the bus at 6:20 AM once a week to meet up with two Eucharistic Ministers for breakfast before visiting up to 15 homebound men and women or as I reviewed the lesson plans for the catechism classes each week. Even on my walk or bus ride to the "creches" or daycare centers, I prayed for God's daily graces. As fun as it was to work with the children aged 4 months to 6 years old and adult staff, I still needed God beside me to endure the challenges of living and working in a different culture where none of the people that I worked with understood much English! Fortunately, our common bond was the Catholic Church and a lot of laughter!

And with this early language barrier, which eventually lessened, I learned early on how relevant Saint Francis's motto "preach the Gospel always, use words when necessary" was for me and why the people appreciated my presence in their lives. It didn't matter that I couldn't speak their language as well as them. The fact that I left my homeland to come and help the poor and marginalized of another country spoke volumes.

As Franciscan Lay Missioners, I, while in Brazil, along with eleven others in El Salvador, Bolivia, and Tanzania walk and work *with* the people of our respective countries and accompany them in the highs and lows of their daily lives. At times it was difficult to not take control of situations and bring our "first world" ideas and way of life into theirs. But keeping true to my belief in God's plan for me and my call to serve, I humbly took a step back and just helped out where and when the people asked.

With Brazil being a predominantly Catholic (about 85%) country and in a region of the state where there is a large Franciscan presence, life as a Franciscan Lay Missioner was very rewarding. I was welcomed into so many people's lives and learned so much from them than they probably did from me. And because the Brazilians are so wonderful, I forget sometimes that I was a foreigner in their country and just felt right at home experiencing the grandeur of God!

As I continue to transition into my new role with FMS, I can already feel my spirit soaring, much higher than my third floor office, to keep the missionary fire within me alive this *joyful* Lenten Season and beyond. I hope you feel your own spirit soaring, too!



*If you are interested in making a donation to the help the Franciscans in their wonderful work, you can make the check out to 'Franciscan Mission Service'. Put my name, Doug Garofalo, in the memo line and mail it to:
FMS, PO Box 29034, Washington, DC 20017.*

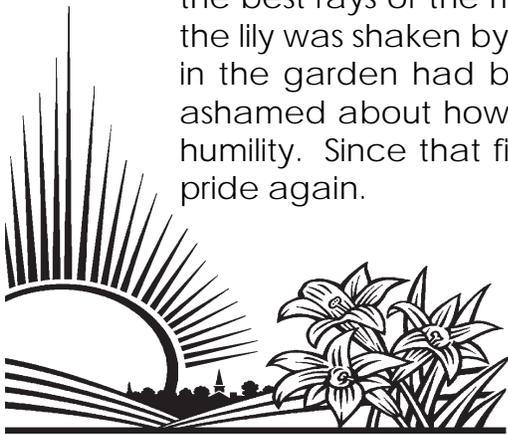
LEGENDS

By Janet George

A legend is a story that doesn't pretend to be historical but simply teaches a lesson.

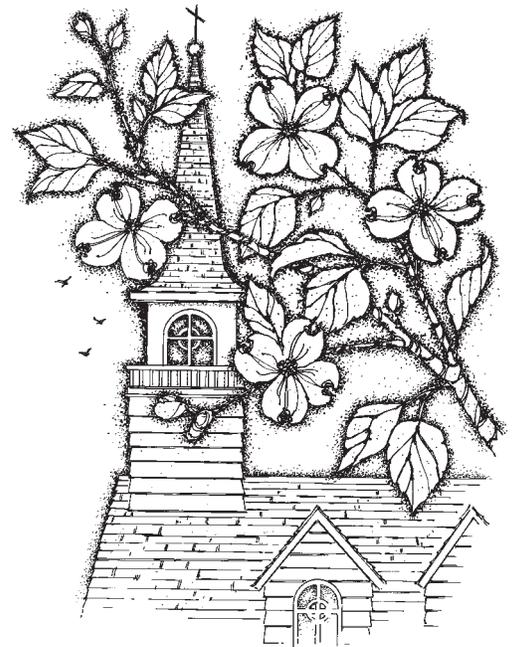
Legend of the Lily

The proudest and most beautiful flower in the Garden of Gethsemane was the white lily: the lily knew that it was special and would proudly lift its face toward anyone who entered the garden. One night a stranger came in the garden to pray. He looked so sad and wept so bitterly that the other flowers in the garden couldn't help but hang their heads in sorrow too. But not the lily. It continued to stand straight and proud, straining to catch the best rays of the moonlight on its beautiful white face. The next day, the lily was shaken by sad news. The man who had prayed so sorrowfully in the garden had been sentenced to die by crucifixion. The lily was ashamed about how it had acted and turned its head downward in its humility. Since that first Good Friday, the lily has never lifted its head in pride again.



THE LEGEND OF THE DOGWOOD

Once upon a time the dogwood tree was as large and strong as an oak. Because of this, the wood was often used for a cross. It bothered the tree to be used this way, but there was nothing it could do. Time after time, people were nailed to a cross made from the wood of this tree's including Jesus. Jesus felt sorry for the dogwood tree because he knew it wasn't the tree's fault. So, he made sure that never again would the trunk be thick and straight. Instead the trunk would be slender and it would twist upward like a gracefully sculptured work of art. And so that all would know why the dogwood tree is shaped this way, Jesus blessed its petals with the sign of its cross. Today, if you look at its blossoms, you will see four petals - two long and two short - in the shape of the cross. At the edge of each petal you can see the nail prints. And in the center, the crown of thorns. Each year in the spring time, in the month when Jesus dies, the dogwood tree displays its beautiful blossoms to remind us of the love Jesus has for this tree and for all of us.



THE JOY OF READING

By Eleanor Grybowski

Please consider the pleasure of reading a book or books from our Parish Library during Lent. We are sure you will come back for more after Easter as well.

The books are divided into sections. Each section has its own color, which is taped on the book.

Red tape - Jesus and Scripture

Blue tape - Mary

Green tape - Saints and Good People

Lavender tape - Prayer and Meditation

Yellow tape - Christian Living

Pink tape - Healing, Problems

Here are a few suggestions for Lent:

A PORTRAIT OF JESUS - Red

by Girzone, Joseph

IMAGES OF JESUS -Yellow

by Grun, Anselm

JOURNEY TO THE CENTER- Red

by Keating, Thomas

SEVEN WORDS OF JESUS AND MARY - Lavender

by Sheen, Fulton J.

THE CROSS AND BEATITUDES—LESSONS ON LOVE AND FORGIVENESS

by Sheen, Fulton J.

A GUIDE FOR CONTEMPLATION (WITH ACCOMPANYING CD) -Lavender

by Kennedy, Michael

Do not limit yourself to these books. Spend some time in the Library and familiarize yourself with the variety of the books we have on our shelves. Have you ever read any of Fr. Henri Nouwen's books? He was a world-famous writer who still has quite a following. What about Joyce Rupp, Joseph Cardinal Bernadine, Alfred McBride, Dorothy Day, Pope John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI? Fr. James Martin's books have become popular in our Library. Fr. Martin has quite a sense of humor mixed with his spirituality.

The Library is open on Sundays before the Masses and after the 8 a.m., 9:30 a.m. and 11 a.m. Masses.

It is open during the week from Monday through Thursday from 8 a.m. to 12:30 a.m.

There is always help in the Library on Sundays.

