



BOSCO NEWS

VOLUME 4 | ISSUE 2 | FEBRUARY 28, 2013



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BOSCONEWS

Volume 4, Issue 2
February 28, 2013

Salesians of Don Bosco
Province of St. Philip the Apostle
Office of Youth & Young Adult Ministry
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UPCOMING EVENTS FROM THE SALESIAN HOUSE

March Leadership Retreat

March 4-7, 2013 | Stony Point, NY

Please pray for the juniors from our Salesian high schools attending the retreat this week!

Gospel Roads Directors Weekend

April 5-7, 2013 | South Orange, NJ

Salesian Youth Ministry Seminar

April 13, 2013 | Stony Point, NY

Formerly called the Salesian Spirituality Weekend, this weekend conference will offer formation in the style and method of Don Bosco's approach to youth ministry for adults working with young people.

More information to come!

Salesian Family Day at Six Flags Great Adventure

May 11, 2013 | Jackson, NJ

Join your Northeast Salesian Family for a day at the park! More information to come!

Young Adult Retreats

North: May 17-19 | Stony Point, NY

South: May 24-26 | Tampa, Florida

Calling all young adults!

Join us for these weekends of faith, fellowship, and fun.

Gospel Roads Summer 2013

In case you haven't been to www.gospelroads.org recently, here are the sites and dates for this summer:

Gospel Roads I

(intended primarily for high school students)

New Orleans, LA June 15-22

Washington, DC July 6-13

Tampa, FL July 6-13

Toronto, ON July 20-27

Stony Point, NY August 4-10

Gospel Roads II

(intended for young adults over 18)

Long Island, NY June 8-15

Port Chester, NY June 22-29

Chicago, IL August 11-18

Visit www.gospelroads.org for more!

For more information about any events, visit us online at www.salesianym.com.

Tell us what's happening in your neck of the woods!

Submit your stories and reflections for the next BoscoNews to bosconews@salesianym.com.

MAZZAPALOOZA

LIFE ABUNDANT

*"I came so that they might have life
and have it more abundantly."*

- John 10:10

WHOLE-FAMILY FESTIVAL IN THE SPIRIT OF ST. MARY MAZZARELLO

Join our Salesian family for a day of fun and prayer for the whole family just in time for Holy Week! The day will include live music, presentations, a Saturday liturgy, the opportunity to receive the sacrament of Reconciliation, a carnival, and more! The evening will conclude with a Eucharistic Holy Hour and procession.

ENTERTAINMENT: **APEX MINISTRIES**



MUSIC AND KEYNOTE: **BOB RICE**



WHERE AND WHEN:

MARY HELP OF CHRISTIANS ACADEMY
659 BELMONT AVENUE
NORTH HALEDON, NJ 07508

MARCH 23, 2013

10:00 AM - 9:30 PM

DOORS OPEN AT 9:00 A.M. FOR
REGISTRATION AND BREAKFAST

\$5.00 PER PERSON

**FAMILY DISCOUNT \$20.00
FOR FAMILIES OF 5 OR MORE**

**BREAKFAST, LUNCH AND DINNER ARE
AVAILABLE FOR PURCHASE ON SITE**

YOU CAN PRE-REGISTER ONLINE
SEE A COMPLETE SCHEDULE AT
WWW.MARYHELP.ORG

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT MS. WATKINS, MHCA CAMPUS MINISTER
PHONE: 973.790.6200 EXT. 1130 - EMAIL: LWATKINS@MARYHELP.ORG

LOOK FOR US ON FACEBOOK! FOLLOW US ON TWITTER!

A SALESIAN SPIRIT OF SACRIFICE

This month, we invited our young people to reflect on the Salesian spirit of Sacrifice and Penance, what we like to call "Salesian Asceticism"



Ashlin Hinojosa
Academy of Our Lady
Marrero, Louisiana

Don Bosco's philosophy is deeply rooted around reason, religion and loving kindness. Being Salesian is different from every other order. While we are most definitely called to pray we are also being called to play as well. God wants us to enjoy ourselves on our journey to him; he does not want our journey of faith to be a miserable one. Don Bosco sacrificed so much for the boys he cared for. He sacrificed his time and ultimately his life for these boys. While we might be called to sacrifice our entire lives we are called to sacrifice something to better ourselves, especially during this Lenten season.

As a student of Don Bosco, he is asking me to play hard and especially pray hard. During this Lenten season I believe I am called to strengthen my faith by praying more. Praying the language we use to talk to God, whether it is formal prayer or one freely spoken from our hearts. This calls me to set aside time in my day just for prayer. This means I have to put away the cell phone, turn off the computer, and give my heart to him. Our days indeed are so busy, dealing with daily activity and the hustle and bustle of life. Praying is as easy as scrolling through the latest social networking site we do so often during our day.

Lent is a time for us to strengthen our relationship with God. Before I truly understood what this season meant, I saw this as something I had to do. We have to give up meat on Fridays or we have to give something up for lent. Once I came to fully understand what was happening during this time I realized it was not something I had to do, but rather something I wanted to do. My Lenten sacrifice included making time for prayer and giving up all caffeine. This will not only benefit my physical health, but my spiritual health as well.

The purpose of our Salesian sacrifices are not to make us miserable for forty days, but to prepare us each, individually, for Jesus' resurrection.

A SALESIAN SPIRIT OF SACRIFICE

As you probably already know, it's the Lenten Season. It's that time of year where we focus on fasting and penance, where we try to better ourselves as a whole. Being a teenager in the time we live in can be hard to successfully live out the whole Lent experience because of temptation. The temptation can be in the media, culture or the very people we call friends. So how do I know what kind of penance to accomplish without falling to temptation in our everyday lives?

As a young Salesian, I have come to realize it's not what you want to sacrifice but what you think God wants you to sacrifice. I like asking myself what Don Bosco would tell me to do for Lent. In all honesty he would probably tell me to sacrifice something that I would find difficult sacrificing. Why would you sacrifice something if you don't do it often? It's like I say I'm going to give up driving but I don't drive. The point of Lent is to suffer the way Jesus suffered in the desert for forty days. I personally sacrificed red meat and junk food. That's going to be a tough one for me.

I think of Lent is a time of opportunity to add healthy challenges to your everyday life. Daily challenges are possibly the best way to meet Jesus in new and interesting ways. If you think of Lent as a time you have to give something up that means you are thinking of it as a burden. My non-Salesian friends often think that Lent is a time that they HAVE to give something and by the end of the first week they all laugh at the fact they attempted Lent and ignore the sacrifice they had plan to do. Little that they know that if you fall along the way of accomplishing your sacrifice you can get right back up just like when Jesus did when He fell while carrying the cross.

Lent can be that time of year that you HAD to follow a bunch of rules and "give something up." OR Lent can be the best time you spent because you reflected; you fell and you overcame the obstacles thrown at you within these forty days.



Ish Gonzalez
Holy Rosary Parish
Port Chester, New York



A SALESIAN SPIRIT OF SACRIFICE



Sheena Delaney
Immaculata-LaSalle Alum
Miami, Florida

Sometimes, our faith starts to seem like something we do- a set of responsibilities we fulfill and check off of a list. We go to Mass and Confession, we pray our rosaries and avoid obvious sins in our life. But, while all of these things are both important and necessary in order to live a Christian life, it seems to me that when we make our faith only about what we do, we end up missing the point entirely.

Christianity, though it requires us to change our deeds and actions, is not simply a guide of dos and don'ts. It is, first and foremost, about relationship. Jesus himself said that the key to living a good life is love- of God and of neighbor.

As Salesian young adults, this should be especially easy for us to understand, because Don Bosco's life gives us an ever-present sign of the relational nature of our faith. During Lent, we have a special opportunity to re-focus on this relationship with God. It is a season of reconciliation, of mending relationships and making them better.

In order to have a fruitful Lent, then, we need to discover what is getting in between us and God, what is keeping us from being as close as we could be. Perhaps, it is pride, or selfishness, or impatience, or even our social choices. For me, this Lent led me to realize that there was too much noise in my life.

All this noise- the radio in the car, TV at home, crowds at sporting events and social functions- was keeping me from hearing God's voice, which requires times of silence and attention.

It was making this discovery that led me to implement practical steps to repair this relationship. The Church teaches us to do this through fasting, almsgiving, and prayer. In my case, I found that I could give up something small- like listening to music in the car- and that allowed for me to give to the Lord and others more easily. Without all that music to keep me busy, I could now pray while I drove. At the same time, the lessening noise in my life allows me to pay better attention to those around me- by making me more peaceful, and by allowing me to be a better listener, less attune to noise and more to the voices of others.

It's only the second week of Lent, but I've already seen fruits from these small sacrifices that I've made. I believe that if we focus on what St. John Bosco showed us- that Christianity is relational, about a God who loved us so much as to suffer and die for our sins, we will see our Lenten practices as more than simply "giving something up". Instead, we will think of them as practices of healing, of repairing the wounds we have caused in our relationship with God- through sacrifices, but especially by turning to him with fuller, more loving, and repentant hearts.

A SALESIAN SPIRIT OF SACRIFICE

It is now that time of year where Catholics around the world celebrate the Lenten season. It is an especially important time of year, because it ultimately leads up to the Death and Resurrection of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

Every year during this time I reflect and think about what I should give up for Lent - should it be chocolate? soda? cake? anything else? – and I get very wrapped up in making sure I stay strong to my Lenten sacrifice.

As my faith has grown over the years I have learned a new meaning to sacrifice and it has nothing to do with what item or product I had given up during Lent. No, it is much deeper than that. We make sacrifices during

Lent to grow closer to God through our sacrifice and to be reminded of all the sacrifices that Jesus had made for us. If we had the ability to ask Don Bosco what a sacrifice is, I highly doubt that he would tell us to stop eating Twinkies or stop going on Facebook.

As a Salesian Young Adult, I believe he would challenge us to serve the young and the poor, to make a real sacrifice – one that takes away from what we have, whether it is time, money, energy and to give it to someone in need. As Salesians of Don Bosco, we are called to make sacrifices and serve others 365 days a year, not just 40. Now is the time where we should reflect on the sacrifices we have been making during the past months, and this Lenten Season now reminds us to keep making those sacrifices and let it become a way of life.

Jesus gave us everything that he had, he sacrificed his life for us, it seems trivial to give up something that holds little importance to us during this time. So for my Lenten sacrifice I will give up whatever time and energy I have to help others to go out of my way to help someone in need I will say the rosary more often, we are all called to be Saints and to be Salesian Superstars. Giving up "Temple Run" or "Angry Birds" for 40 days will not get us there, but by giving all that we have to others and then making that a way of life is a sure way to reach that goal.

***The model which every Christian has to copy is Jesus Christ.
No one can boast that he belongs to Jesus Christ
if he does not endeavor to imitate Him.
Consequently, in the life and in the actions of a Christian,
the life and the actions of Jesus Christ Himself should be revealed.***

- Don Bosco -



Kevin Cavaluzzo
Salesian High Alum
New Rochelle, NY



A SALESIAN SPIRIT OF SACRIFICE



Paige Abrunzo
MHCA Alum
North Haledon, New Jersey

Fasting, penance and sacrifice; this is what the Church asks from us during the Lenten season. Many people see Lenten Sacrifice as a time that they have to give up something that they love. Before Ash Wednesday, I spent a lot of time reflecting on what I would "give up" for Lent and I came across the Bible passage Isaiah 58:7-8. "This, rather, is the fasting that I wish: releasing those bound unjustly, untying the thongs of the yoke; Setting free the oppressed, breaking every yoke; Sharing your bread with the hungry, sheltering the oppressed and the homeless; Clothing the naked when you see them, and not turning your back on your own." As a Salesian Young Adult, this really hit home. I do not negate the positive

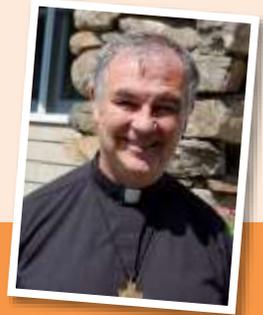
effects of fasting in the traditional sense, but when thinking about Don Bosco's mission, doing for others as a form of penance and sacrifice, for me personally, seemed far more effective.

As Salesian Young Adults, we are called to serve the young and the poor. This Lenten season, I decided to add one random act of kindness and praying the Rosary to my daily life. This includes going out of my way to comfort a stranger, buying lunch for someone that forgot their wallet and spending extra time helping a friend with homework. Lent is a time to prepare our hearts and give as Christ gave. By doing these things I can feel Christ working through me and in me. On the days that I feel overwhelmed, I look to God and I offer that up, knowing that He is there for me and that He loves me so much he died for me.

I'm also making sure that I find time to pray the Rosary every day. This is my time to talk with God and with Mary. Don Bosco stressed how important having a relationship with the Blessed Mother is and I feel called to use this time to strengthen that connection. I am using this Lenten season to do for others and strengthen my prayer life. Instead of focusing on what I'm giving up or can't have, I am focusing on what I can do for the people around me. I am reflecting on what Jesus has done for me and what He is asking for the future.

A SALESIAN SPIRIT OF SACRIFICE

A twelve year old boy came to me after hearing the story of Blessed Laura Vicuna. He empathized with her story of concern for the eternal salvation of her mother whom she realized was living in sin. 'Can I do what Laura did, Father Jay? Can I offer my life for my father who is in the same situation as Laura's mother?' My shock went beyond how clearly this child could articulate his thoughts; I stood in wonder at the grace that moved a heart so young to make such an offering. And I knew him well enough to realize how clearly he meant what he said. I told him the best offering he could make would be doing the best he could do at every moment of the day. He could offer up any difficulties he found in his daily life for his father.



Fr. Jay Horan, SDB
Vice Director
Salesian Formation House

Over the years I have been blessed to be in a variety of youth ministry settings in various cultures and geographical areas. Young people express a variety of needs and responses to the call of God in their lives. When they discover their relationship with Jesus, they immediately want to share that relationship with others, a reminder of Andrew bringing his brother Peter to meet Jesus.

I have noticed that young people have different reasons to take on ascetical practices. Some want God to change situations that are beyond their control. One young man was told on a retreat (not Salesian animated) that if he increased his prayer life, God would stop his father from emotionally and verbally abusing his family. He came back delighted that the night mare his family was going through would soon be over. He began to increase the time he prayed. With time, he became disillusioned because the home situation continued. Another began participating frequently in daily Mass so that his grandfather with incurable cancer would live. This situation turned to anger when his grandfather died about two months later. We owe to young people to hope continually in God's love and power to heal and transform; but we should never lead them to think that God is a supermarket and prayer is a currency accepted there. Prayer brings us into a clearer relationship with God.

Fasting takes on an interesting form in the creative minds of a young person. Along with the usual giving up of various foods, young people have also given up music, various means of communication (yes, I am old enough to remember a young person giving up a beeper for Lent!), parties, dances, "going into the city," and other creative means of fasting. But rather than use this exercise to grow closer to God, it became a way of saving money or catching up on work and sleep. Without guidance, fasting can lose its penitential effect.

Pete was a senior when I met him. Everyone understood that his afternoon job was to save up enough money for "his car." His friends knew not to invite him to any activity that would cost too much. But his friends also told me of Pete's custom whenever they stopped at McDonalds. Right before they left, Pete would go back to the counter, order a value meal, and hand it to a homeless person who regularly stayed in front of the restaurant. As they left, Pete would hand the bag to the homeless man and say "Take care, buddy." That is almsgiving. That is the asceticism God looks for from us. A practice that allows us to better become a part of the Kingdom He proclaims among us.



A SALESIAN SPIRIT OF SACRIFICE



Steve McEntegart
Coordinator for Youth Ministry
St. Petersburg Catholic HS

Living out our 2013 Lent as young Salesian Catholics is a beautiful opportunity to grow in holiness that should not to be overlooked. In sharing a little about St. Petersburg Catholic High School and myself, I hope the Holy Spirit will move your heart. The challenge is to read BoscoNews, not primarily for information, but seeking to take one or two things away from it that will help you be a more charitable, disciplined and prayerful Catholic.

God has offered our Baron Family here at St. Petersburg Catholic High School many opportunities to grow in Salesian holiness during this Lenten Season. One being Bishop Robert Lynch joining us, and kicking off our Lenten Season as he preached our Ash Wednesday Mass. Bishop Lynch also addressed the

student body after Mass asking us to pray, and helping us to understand more about Pope Benedict the XVI's humble resignation. Another was when prayer and repentance were highlighted in last week's school-wide Reconciliation Service. Then today three of our students challenged us to reflect on almsgiving, by calling us to be people of charity towards orphans, destitute and those faced with crisis pregnancies. Being involved with the Salesians over the last 15 years I also will share a little story about how God has been working in my own life this Lent. Finally, let's reflect on St. Francis De Sales' vision of Christian Charity and Devotion.

In his Ash Wednesday preaching Bishop Lynch contrasted the actions of the people of Jerusalem during Holy Week. He explained that the people of Jerusalem joyfully welcomed Jesus into their midst shouting "Hosanna," but less than a week later a crowd filled with many of the same people yelling "Crucify Him." Lent is a time to reflect on ourselves, and to look at our own thoughts, words and actions. Do we fall into the group yelling "Crucify Him" through our everyday lives, or do we joyfully receive Christ into all areas of our lives, as those who shouted "Hosanna." For all of us striving for Salesian Holiness we fall somewhere in the middle. What areas of our life do we need to purify, and what virtues should be amplified within us?

(continued on the next page)



Some words from Trish (SPCHS Junior) at this morning's Prayer Service really struck my heart. The Prayer Service was focused on Lenten Almsgiving. She challenged our Baron Family by saying, "Another way that we can prepare our hearts during lent is by remembering the presence of God in others. 'What so ever you do to the least of my people, that you do unto me.'(Mt. 25:40) What can we do to the 'least' of our people? Well, God has blessed all of us here with the gift of our family, friends, teachers, mentors, and our faith. Why can't we share those gifts with others?" Trish is kicking off a fundraiser for a Ugandan orphanage via the Villa Maria Children's Foundation. How can each of us as members of the Salesian Family share our gifts with others?

Personally, this lent has been something special. I have a two-month-old son at home. His name is Luke Joseph and he was born on Christmas Day. He brings great Joy and exhaustion to my home as he only sleeps between two and four hours at a time. I was in spiritual dialogue with a local Salesian priest explaining the few things I have given up for Lent and he said something so simple, yet so profound. He told me "Luke is your Lent." As I have thought about and prayed more about these sacrifices I make being a major part of my Lenten journey it helped broaden my definition of sacrifice and charity. The Salesian Spirit of Lent has helped me to think of those Sacrifices I already make in my life and Joyfully offer them up in prayer during Lent and beyond. Are there any crosses you tolerate begrudgingly in your life that with the power of the Holy Spirit can be looked at through the lens of Salesian Joy during this Lenten season and beyond?

St. John Bosco's spirituality stemmed from the charism of St. Francis De Sales. De Sales developed practical hands-on ways for the faithful to develop simple, joyful and saintly lives of virtuous devotion, while balancing marriage, work and all the other stressors of most people's lives. In De Sales book (Introduction to the Devout Life, book 1 chapter 2) he wrote, "Charity is spiritual fire and when it bursts into flames, it is called devotion." What more can we do to be recognized as a devout, charitable, Joyful member of the Salesian Family who is on Fire with the Catholic Faith?



WALKING THE GOSPEL ROADS FROM CHAMPAIGN TO TAMPA

I'm Anne Harmon. I am an RA here at Newman Hall and participated in the Gospel Roads Break trip to Tampa just a couple weeks ago. Admittedly, in the days leading up to the trip, I was very nervous and wondering what I had gotten myself into. The trip started with a few hiccups as our rental van got scratched before we even saw it, leading to a few uncomfortable moments at the airport, but once we got to Mary Help of Christians Center outside of Tampa, Christ immediately began to change our hearts. My faith journey begins at age 16. I was raised in a catholic family, always attended CCD and youth group, and went through all of the motions without thinking twice. My sophomore year of high school, I went through a TEC retreat and my life was forever changed. For the first time, I felt God's presence and began to understand what it meant to see Christ in everyone. As I transitioned into college, my faith was tried again and again. Personal loss, the stress of deciding on my future, and the general uncertainty that goes along with this phase of life was taking a toll on my faith.

Anne Harmon

St. John's Catholic Newman Center
University of Illinois

I met Sister Maryann back in August during move in week, and when I heard about this trip, I was eager to go. I'd been on several service trips before, but never through Newman. I was really interested in how the faith component would affect the service. On our first day, we went to Pinella's Hope. It is a tent city run by Catholic charities that offers many services to homeless in order to get them back on their feet. After we served lunch, our group members went out and mingled with those we served. I sat down with a young woman named Tiffany. She had the most beautiful smile and contagious laugh. She told us how she had been in a dark place, and done some bad things in her life. One day, she just felt the strong urge to pray with her boyfriend and they asked God to come into their lives. From then on, She was living for the Lord. She got a job, got married, and was preparing to leave Pinella's Hope, for she had turned her life around. Tiffany and her husband were an example to everyone in the camp. She talked of how they as a couple read the Bible daily, and were a sign of encouragement and hope to others.

Like Tiffany, many others shared their stories with my fellow students, fr. Charles, and Sister Maryann. Christ was in everyone we encountered. The homeless weren't sad and downtrodden, but greeted us with the kindest smiles and words of gratification.

As we left Pinellas Hope, I could tell something had changed in the group. We were just beaming, filled with God's love and compassion. The week only got better from there. We were able to volunteer with children at Villa Madonna school, the boys and girls club, and assist in various tasks around Metropolitan Ministries, again serving the homeless and underprivileged. I don't have time today, but I would be happy to speak to anyone further about our various sites and tasks we completed. Each night after fellowship and sharing of a meal together, we had adoration. This was such a beautiful way to end each day as I had time to reflect upon the days encounters and just spend some quiet time in God's presence.

By the middle of the week, following confession I truly felt my heart be turned back to God. I had the very same feelings I first felt at age 16 on that TEC retreat. Mary Help of Christians Center even reminded me of the old Spalding High School in Peoria, IL where we had our TEC retreats. I can't describe those feelings of joy that entered my heart, just as they did over 5 years ago. It was like waking up after being asleep for a very long time.



The Service and Justice Outreach of St. John's Newman Center at the University of Illinois after they were commissioned to begin their missionary experience.



THE GOOD NIGHT



Fr. Abraham Feliciano
Provincial Delegate
for Youth Ministry

During my years as a Salesian educator, a rather large number of young people have shared their Lenten penances with me. While there is some variety and notable creativity to their choices, the vast majority of these penances usually had two things in common: 1.) they were some sort of privation or giving up of something, and 2.) it was usually something that they thoroughly enjoyed, but wasn't essential to their daily life: candy (chocolate being the most popular), gum, soda, cheeseburgers, etc. If we really wanted to be precise, we could probably add a third commonality which would be the subsequent binge that would follow on Easter Sunday, when their penance was over and they could finally enjoy their previously forbidden treat without guilt, or fear of violating their penance. The great joy and relief that accompanied this long-awaited binge, though real, would usually end within a week. So, a question arises: what lasting effect has our Lenten penance had on us? Or, more precisely, what is the purpose or goal of penance or sacrifice?

***Go and learn the meaning of the words, 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.'
I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners.'*** (Mt 9:13)

In the Gospels, Jesus is often challenged by the Pharisees and Scribes, precisely because his disciples seemed to be less disciplined due to their failure to fast and practice other obvious (at the time) penances. But, in their questioning of Jesus, they reveal their very lack of understanding of the true purpose and effect of penance: it should bring us closer to God and make us better disciples. All too often, people in Jesus' time, as well as own, view penitential suffering as an end unto itself. While it is true that we must sacrifice for that which is truly worthwhile ("no pain, no gain"), we must remember that suffering and sacrifice are a means to a greater end, just like diet and exercise are a means to better health. Penance is like a spiritual "fitness program." It requires us to "diet" (fasting) and "exercise" (acts of charity or kindness) to grow spiritually healthier. On the one hand, some might argue that this seems liberating or be an easier approach to penance. However, upon closer inspection, this perspective actually presents a deeper and more formidable challenge to fortifying our faith. For example, what is easier: giving up chocolate for forty days or using the money I might save from buying chocolate treats to buy a favorite sweet for my younger sibling? Giving up drinking soda or giving up talking badly about someone? Giving up Facebook or Twitter for forty days, or using that time instead to pray fifteen minutes extra each day? Giving up going to the movies during Lent or volunteering at a local soup kitchen every weekend of Lent? And when the penance has ended, what effect remains? While I may be a little lighter and slimmer for having given up cheeseburgers, the weight will probably return shortly after that post-Easter binge. But, how long will the time I meaningfully spend with my little brother impact both of our lives? A truly balanced and sound fitness program will have lasting effects, even when my initial regiment may be modified, because it will have changed me. Good actions, done repeatedly, become habits. Good habits eventually become virtues. Put another way, spiritual repetitions of kindness, become spiritual muscle.

St. John Bosco was acutely aware of the true nature of penance and imparted this understanding to his youth. Interestingly enough, the student of his who had the most difficult time properly grasping the notion of penance from a Salesian perspective, was his prize pupil, St. Dominic Savio. In his great zeal to become a saint, Dominic often lost sight of the actual goal and purpose of penance, and instead of seeking that which would bring him closest to God, he often sought out that which would cause him to suffer the most, and, in some cases even do him harm. Don Bosco in his wisdom oriented his aspiring young saint by reminding him that the greatest penance is the fulfilling of God's Will:

Finally I had to forbid him absolutely to do any penance at all without first getting his confessor's permission. The penance Our Lord asks of you ... is obedience. Obey and you will be doing enough ... I will let you do the penance of patiently bearing up with injuries, pain, cold tiredness, wind, rain, all the discomfort of poor health which God may send you ... Offer all you have to suffer to God, and it will turn into virtue and bring you merit. (from The Life of Dominic Savio by St. John Bosco)

As we journey through Lent towards Easter, let us "break a sweat" by dieting from whatever vices impede us from being our spiritual best. But, more importantly, let us exercise and strengthen our virtues that not only help us to be our healthiest spiritually, but also make us strong disciples and joyful witnesses to the Risen Christ that we will celebrate at the end of these forty days.