

# LOVE OUT LOUD

## NEWSLETTER

### *Turning to the American Spiritual as a Source of Healing & Restoration.*

BY EMILIO ALVAREZ, DIRECTOR OF CAMPUS MINISTRY



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Along with the American Spirituals, we offer you this beautiful image of Saint Francis of Assisi with Sr. Thea Bowman (Servant of God) as a point of reflection as we continue this anti-racism work. Sr. Thea Bowman is one of our own. She was a Franciscan Sister of Perpetual Adoration, a Viterbo University Alumna, and a faculty member for our University. For those who knew Sr. Thea, they will share that she was a radiant light of joy and hope to everyone around.

*"I think the difference between me and some people is that I'm content to do my little bit. Sometimes people think they have to do big things in order to make change. But if each one would light a candle we'd have a tremendous light."*  
- Sr. Thea Bowman

*I Want Jesus to Walk with Me* - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ymV9e8IUb0E>

During the season of Lent, the San Damiano Community & Campus Ministry will be turning to the American Spiritual as a source of healing and restoration. As Fr. Conrad Targonski, OFM has shared with the campus community, he says, "The American Spiritual raises the question "Why us?" Like Bible heroes of old, even though we may not be in a lion's den or the belly of a whale or a fiery furnace – we still plead with God for deliverance and restoration. And what God did for Daniel or Jonah or the Hebrew children and so many others, God will do the same for us. You are welcome to raise your voices with others in prayer, song, and meditation within the tradition of the American Spiritual and its amazing power of healing." For the First Sunday of Lent, we focus on the song: *I Want Jesus to Walk with Me*. Join us on this journey of using these songs as a source of inspiration in our lives and relationships with others and God.

#### *IN THIS ISSUE*

The American Spiritual

Weekly Scripture & Reflection

Intentions for Feb. 21-28

A Closing Prayer

# Weekly Scripture & Reflection

*“Take away from me the noise of your songs; to the melody of your harps, I will not listen. But let justice roll down like the waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.” Amos 5:23-24*

BY PHOEBE "FIFI" RODRIGUEZ

Amos is a book of prophecy and exhortation against a community that had ignored God's call to social justice. Throughout this chapter, the prophet rails against those in positions of power and privilege who ignore and oppress the poor. While they continue to perform the rituals of religion, they have forgotten the heart of it.

Later in the chapter, Amos identifies pagan gods that the people have begun to worship alongside the God of Israel. But in a way, their displays of worship to God are no better than their worship of idols. Both are empty, devoid of the true love and humility that define genuine worship. Through Amos, God makes His priorities clear: He would rather not be worshiped at all than endure the shallow devotion of those who harm their fellow human beings.

Amos's admonition is unfortunately relevant to our time. Our faith communities today are often better known for who they hate than for who they love. This reputation cannot simply be chalked up to misrepresentation or ignorance; often it is due to first-hand experience within our churches. We are too often silent and complacent in the face of evils such as systemic racism. And this silence allows evil and oppression to endure. This has done more than just harm our outward reputation; I believe it has harmed our relationship with God.

The good news is that God has already made clear to us what He desires. The most genuine form of worship to God is to take an active stance against those systems that assault human dignity. This means refusing to be silent, complacent, or complicit in racism anymore. This may take us to uncomfortable and difficult places. But in the end, this is how we bring transformation. This is how we make righteousness an ever-flowing stream through our world.

## *Intentions for the Week of Feb. 21-28*

- This week, a North Carolina couple was charged with the murder of Brittany Samone Smith, a pregnant Black woman whose body was recently discovered. We mourn Brittany and pray for her family. We pray for protection over Black women, who experience violence at much higher rates than their white counterparts.
- We pray for those in Texas enduring historic cold without access to heat, light, or water. Business centers in cities have been prioritized to receive power, leaving lower-income neighborhoods, which have larger BIPOC populations, at risk. We pray for wisdom and integrity for the leaders of Texas, and for equity in their management of this crisis. We pray for communities to care for each other, and we pray for an end to this cold.
- Native American communities across the United States are reportedly getting vaccinated for COVID-19 at much quicker rates than the national average. Of the 5,000 doses received at Rosebud Indian Reservation in South Dakota, only three have been wasted. We are thankful that these communities, disproportionately harmed by the virus, are finding relief. We pray that the rest of the country would follow the example of cooperation, stewardship, and care that allowed this to happen.

## *A Closing Prayer*

FROM THE SISTERS OF MERCY OF THE AMERICAS

Good and gracious God,  
Who loves and delights in all people,  
we stand in awe before You,  
knowing that the spark of life within each person  
on earth is the spark of your divine life.

Differences among cultures and races are  
multicolored manifestations of Your Light.

May our hearts and minds be open to celebrate  
similarities and differences among our sisters  
and brothers.

We place our hopes for racial harmony in our  
committed action and in Your Presence in our  
Neighbor.

May all peoples live in Peace.