

"No one can celebrate a genuine Christmas without being truly poor. The self-sufficient, the proud, those who, because they have everything, look down on others, those who have no need even of God – for them there will be no Christmas. Only the poor, the hungry, those who need someone to come on their behalf, will have that someone. That someone is God, Emmanuel, God-with-us. Without poverty of spirit there can be no abundance of God." ~ Oscar Romero



Reforming the Way We Give Thanks: Giving from Our Abundance

A 35-Day Devotional Journey



**Jesus said, "All who exalt themselves
will be humbled, but all who humble
themselves will be exalted." (Luke 18:14)**

The devotions within this book have been shared by members of the Greater Milwaukee Synod El Salvador Committee and members of the Salvadoran Lutheran Church.

To learn more about the partnership ministries that the Greater Milwaukee Synod shares with the people of El Salvador, visit www.partnerswithelsalvador.org and click on Who We Are.

Jesus said, “All who exalt themselves will be humbled, but all who humble themselves will be exalted.” (Luke 18:14)

This is the voice of Jesus urging us to remember that despite our many apparent physical blessings, we are no better than others in the eyes of God. In fact, we are called to humble ourselves by serving. This devotion book offers you the opportunity to spend the next 35 days reflecting, discerning, and doing through the power of the Holy Spirit. You will encounter thoughts, Bible readings, and action ideas that are meant to challenge the way we all look at what we have been given and how we can more appropriately use our resources to save lives, and by so doing, grow closer to God ourselves. May God bless you on this journey to a new sense of wholeness in Jesus Christ.

SUNDAY



Today we begin our journey from Reformation to Advent while focusing on the Lutheran Church of El Salvador, and the Endowment Fund that is in place to pay pastors who serve there. This journey is meant to be one of thanksgiving, for all that God has blessed us with, but also for all God has given us the potential to do.

The Lutheran Church of El Salvador has things that need to be reformed, things to be thankful for, and much potential. The Endowment Fund is a way for those of us here in the United States to help people who are in many ways removed from us culturally and sociologically but share our same journey of faith.

Pray today about how you will commit yourself to being open to the Holy Spirit working in you and through you over the coming month. How will you allow God to grow you into a new person?

FRIDAY



Wow, our journey is almost over! What have you learned, how have you grown, where is God leading you? What more does God expect of you? Is there more I could be doing? How do we grow into the complete people that God created us to be?

Like a baby crying that is not satisfied, we see the world with so many struggles, pains, hungers, and needs and we feel that we are never able to offer comfort. However, God does grant us the ability to connect, to touch, to comfort. Just as reaching out to the unhappy infant can provide soothing, we can reach out to the world and do something, even if we feel we have little to offer.

Building God's Kingdom is only possible through the work of God's people. Christ is King, but membership in the kingdom is voluntary, open to any who choose to serve the King. Christ the King, of course wants us to put that service towards each other.

SATURDAY



Tomorrow Advent begins. Advent means coming. The season proclaims the comings of the Christ – whose birth we prepare to celebrate once again, who comes continually in Word and Spirit, and whose return in final victory we anticipate. Each year Advent calls the community of faith to prepare for these comings; historically the season was marked by fasts for preparation.

Observe a fast today and consider how Christians in El Salvador are a part of your community of faith. Reflect on all you have learned this past month and where God is leading you now. What have you been prepared for?

What could you do of lasting significance as a response to this last month? Giving to the Endowment Fund is one idea, but financial giving is only the beginning of God's call to you.

WEDNESDAY



Jesus told Pilate, “My kingdom is not from this world. If my kingdom were from this world, my followers would be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the Jews. But as it is, my kingdom is not from here.” ~ John 18:36

Jesus’ kingdom. In many ways it is a mysterious concept that we will never fully understand while we exist in our earthly form. Jesus does tell us though that it is not FROM this world. I think he means his power does not come from here. He doesn’t say his kingdom doesn’t affect this world, or it doesn’t motivate this world, or influence this world. Only that it is not from this world.

Where does that leave us? It should remind us that we too are not from this world. The things that we strive for should not be from this world. The things that are important are not from this world. I think it tells us we have higher priorities than house, car, clothes, job...

THURSDAY



“God has rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.” ~ Colossians 1:13-14

Much of what we have learned about El Salvador sounds like it is under the power of darkness – assassinations, brutal governments, poverty..., but we also see redemption in El Salvador through the stories of those who have committed their lives to making other’s lives better.

El Salvador is not the only place with these paradoxes. They exist everywhere; they are part of the nature of God’s creation. Alongside God’s great goodness exists humanity’s potential for evil. But God promises us that as we continue to work for the building of God’s kingdom here on earth, God will make all things new through Christ!

MONDAY



Reformation—to make better by stopping abuses; improve, to cause a person to behave better. My son just pushed his brother down the stairs because he wanted a toy. I wish I could cause him to behave better, but as a child sometimes he has a hard time choosing the right way to deal with his feelings.

Sometimes even as adults we have a hard time choosing the right way to deal with our feelings, the right way to put other’s needs in front of our own selfish desires. Sometimes we are too lazy to see the way our actions hurt others.

Reformation is not just about a historical moment in which the church changed into Protestant and Catholic. Reformation is about constantly making the church and ourselves, those who make up the church better. We all have room for improvement. Read a news story today with eyes for how your actions could make a difference.

TUESDAY



“The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners; to proclaim the year of the LORD’s favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn; to provide for those who mourn in Zion – to give them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit.” ~ Isaiah 61:1-3

This servant song of Isaiah sounds like it could be talking about Jesus, Martin Luther, or one of many of the martyrs in El Salvador we will learn about later. The words however, are intended for all of us, as we are all made capable by God of reforming ourselves and the world around us. Where are you being shown the broken hearted, the prisoners, those who mourn, or are oppressed?

WEDNESDAY



On October 31, 1517, Martin Luther issued his Ninety-five Theses in Wittenberg and began the Protestant Reformation. He never meant to start a new church, though. He saw himself as just a lowly priest, speaking out in the way that God called him.

The Lutheran Church of El Salvador began in much the same way, just responding to the needs of people, speaking out to the injustices that surrounded them, serving one person at a time, one need at a time.

Think of one “little” thing that you could do. How is God prodding you to speak out, do something new, change one little thing to make your community – the world, a better place? People in El Salvador are hungry right now, people in Wisconsin are too. The government in El Salvador is working to serve the wealthy, what about here?

THURSDAY



November 1 is a day of remembrance for the saints, with the New Testament meaning of all Christian people of every time and place. We celebrate the communion of saints as we remember the dead, both of the Church universal and of our local congregations. For this reason, spend some time today reflecting solemnly on the names of persons in your life who have died during the past year.

What did these people give to the world that made them special? What did they give to you personally? How can you take on a quality of theirs that you admired? What purpose did God give that person? Did they live it out?

Next week we will look at the lives of several people who gave their lives for their faith in El Salvador. However, you don't have to live in a country where Christians are assassinated in order to be a saint. All you have to do is live out your purpose, one day at a time.

MONDAY



Holy Ground: On March 24, 1996, a small group of people carrying a large wooden cross climbed to the top of a rubbly hill and proclaimed it as holy ground. This was the birth of Los Héroes de la Fe, Heroes of the Faith, a church made up of ragtag in-country refugees who needed a place to live after the war. As the community has grown, so has the impact of unemployment, poverty and gang violence. In this place where kids fly kites on the hilltop during the day, women sleep with machetes at their bedsides during the night, and teenage boys are killed. This is a place where sometimes people need to hide. Yet this is also holy ground, a place where Jesus strengthens the hearts of men and women to stand up, as heroes of the faith, to pray, to worship, to comfort, to teach, to clothe, to feed, to laugh, and to march through the streets carrying a wooden cross, proclaiming that Jesus is Lord. This is *His* holy ground.

TUESDAY



“Jesus is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those who are with him are called and chosen and faithful.” ~ Revelation 17:14

Most of us have no problem confessing that Jesus is Lord of lords and King of kings. The second part of the above verse is more challenging though. It says that those who are with Jesus are called and chosen and faithful.

Called means that God has tasks for us, specific ministries that we were created for using all that we are: our gifts, our talents, our experience, our passion. These are things that only we can do because God prepared us individually for them. Chosen means that we are expected to fulfill these tasks. And being faithful means that we accept this call, and do what God has set before us.

Are you ready for the challenge of life in the Kingdom?

SATURDAY



In 2004 a group of 16 Americans and Salvadorans living in the US flew to El Salvador to celebrate Thanksgiving with a group of Salvadorans who live in a dump just outside the city of San Salvador. Instead of eating the traditional American thanksgiving meal of turkey, they feasted on freshly fried chicken from a favorite Salvadoran fast-food chain which the dump residents had specifically requested.

This celebration of Thanksgiving was meant to be not only a time of gorging, or even just giving thanks to God, but also showing solidarity and unity in the struggles of others. The Americans who went wanted to show their commitment to people who live in vastly different circumstances from themselves.

How can you offer God thanks in a similar manner?

SUNDAY



The Last Sunday After Pentecost, which is also the last Sunday of the Christian year (today), is a celebration of the coming reign of Jesus Christ and the completion of creation.

How do you see God completing creation around you? Think of some of the stories you have heard from El Salvador. Is the reign of Christ coming there? If we are meant to be working on building the kingdom of God here on earth as Jesus directed, how are you making that happen?

Christ's kingdom is growing. It is growing in families committing their lives to serving God. It is growing in people seeing past the needs of themselves to give to others. It is in a man who shares the work that is available to him with another, who also needs work. It is in the group that travels to share a meal with people in a different culture and language. Where do you see it growing?

FRIDAY



Everliving God, this day revives in us memories of loved ones who are no more. What happiness we shared when they walked among us. What joy, when, loving and being loved, we lived our lives together. Their memory is a blessing forever.

And we remember as well the people who but yesterday were part of our community and world. To all who cared for us and labored for all people, we pay tribute. May we prove worthy of carrying on the tradition of our faith, for now the task is ours. Their souls are bound up in ours forever.

We give you thanks that they now live and reign with you. As a great crowd of witnesses, they surround us with their blessings, and offer you hymns of praise and thanksgiving. They are alive for ever more. Amen.

SATURDAY



God of the apostles and the martyrs, God of our mothers and our fathers, God of our children to all generations; we give you thanks.

Renew our communion with all your saints, especially those whom we will learn about his week - Ita Ford, Maura Clarke, Dorothy Kazel and Jean Donovan; Ignacio Ellacuria, Ignacio Martin-Baro, Segundo Montes, Arnando Lopez, Joaquin Lopez y Lopez, Juan Ramon Moreno, Julia Elba Ramos, and Cecilia Ramos; Rutilio Grande, Oscar Romero, Francisco Carillo, and Jesús Calzada de Carillo; Alfonso Coto; and Herbert Ernesto Anaya Sanabria.

Since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, strengthen us to run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the Pioneer and Perfecter of our faith. By your Spirit make us one with Christ, one with each other, and one in ministry to all the world. Amen.

SUNDAY



November 4, 2005 saw two new martyrs join the ranks when Lutheran pastors Francisco Carillo, and his wife Jesús Calzada de Carillo; were assassinated. "They died carrying out their prophetic labors," said Bishop Medardo Gomez of the Lutheran Church of El Salvador.

"I ask the world to recognize them as martyrs. By doing so this helps us to reaffirm the prophetic work that we do, exercising a preferential option for those most in need in this context of violence, death and insanity in which we are called to be the church," said the bishop.

The two were co-pastors of two Lutheran churches in El Salvador. They had just finished their Saturday afternoon worship services when they were shot outside the church. They had been tireless in their ministry which fought for social justice.

MONDAY



Wednesday, November 29 2006, Pastor Alfonso Coto, was shot to death as he rode a bus to work in the centre of the capital, San Salvador. He was approached by three men who then opened fire. He was 52 years old and pastor of the Christ is Coming Evangelical Church in Mejicanos, San Salvador. "Perhaps one thing that might help us to explain this madness is that the El Salvadoran people are subjected to extortion on the part of violent street gangs, for example, businessmen must pay the criminals who, in turn, allow them to work and leave them alive. These days, anyone can be a victim of extortion, including priests and pastors and if they don't pay the consequence is death!" While many people in El Salvador comply with the demands of these violent street gangs, which are more and more prevalent there, Christians often believe that they are morally obligated to refuse. Many believe that to give their money to these criminal gangs would be akin to funding their sinful behavior.

THURSDAY



Thanksgiving Day in the U.S.A. is celebrated as a harvest festival, giving thanks for all God's blessings, often characterized by prayer and feasts. It was first celebrated in North America in 1619 in Charles City, Virginia.

Thanksgiving may also be a time to remember how blessed we are in comparison to much of the world. Our climate makes large-scale agriculture possible. Our government provides free education to all. Our freedoms provide us with a life-style many others do not have.

We are a nation of immigrant peoples, our heritage is that we took what we wanted and killed the people who were here. How do we reconcile our great wealth with the great poverty of other nations? How do we reconcile our privilege as Americans while new immigrants are turned away? How do we tell God thank-you?

FRIDAY



The crisis that first gave José Napoleón Duarte the title of president in El Salvador began on Thanksgiving Day in 1980. A hundred or more armed men calling themselves the Maximiliano Hernández Martínez Anti-Communist Brigade surrounded a Jesuit boarding school on one of San Salvador's busiest streets. The political leadership of El Salvador's rebel opposition, the directorate of the Revolutionary Democratic Front (FDR), was meeting there and the five top leaders were dragged away, tortured, and killed.

This anti-communist brigade named itself after a man whose human rights philosophy was "it is a greater crime to kill an ant than a man." His massacres left 40,000 peasants dead and wiped out the country's Indian culture. As a student, Duarte protested Martinez, and after becoming president eventually negotiated the end of the civil war in El Salvador and ordered the air force to stop bombing civilians.

TUESDAY



18-year old Luis Edgardo Osorto Gomez was kidnapped for 1 week in September 2006, after leaving his house to facilitate a youth meeting in Santa Rosa de Lima, department of La Union. Luis Edgardo is a student at the National Institute of Santa Rosa, and had been organizing a youth group, from which all the leaders have since deserted due to safety concerns. Luis Edgardo was also the son of a recognized FMLN activist in the area. His father received threatening calls in the previous weeks, in which he was told he was a “stubborn lefty” and that his son would pay. Luis Edgardo also reported having been followed by a black car with no license plates.

Imagine you are a young person in El Salvador. Would you have the fire of the Holy Spirit in you enough to risk kidnapping or physical harm in order to help other people your age and younger? What inconveniences stand in the way of your helping others now?

WEDNESDAY



As you sit in Thanksgiving Eve worship, hit the road to visit family, or work on food preparations later today; think about the things that you are most thankful for. Many of us put family at the top of the list; especially the new baby that was born this year, the person who miraculously recovered when gravely ill, the relatives who gathered round us in our time of need.

What if much of your family had been lost during a twenty-year civil war, your sister raped, your father imprisoned, your son abducted by the government to serve in the military, your brother living as a refugee in another country? What would you be thankful for then?

Amazingly, the people of El Salvador are thankful. They are thankful for hope. They are thankful for people who offer to walk with them in their struggles. They are thankful that Jesus is with them. Would this be enough for you? Thank God for what you have.

TUESDAY



Fr. Rutilio Grande was a Jesuit priest in El Salvador and a promoter of liberation theology. Grande was responsible for establishing Christian Base Communities and training people to lead them. Local landowners saw the organization of the peasants as a threat to their power. On February 13, 1977, Grande preached a sermon denouncing the government, an action that some later believed helped to provoke Grande's murder: On March 12, 1977, the priest, accompanied by Solorzano, 72, and Lemus, 16, was driving through the sugar fields near the village of El Paisnal on their way to evening Mass, when all three were slaughtered by machine gun fire. He was a close friend of Archbishop Óscar Romero. After his death, the Archbishop changed his stance toward the government and urged the government to investigate the murder. Romero said, “The true reason for [Grande's] death was his prophetic and pastoral efforts to raise the consciousness of the people throughout his parish.”

WEDNESDAY



Óscar Romero was a priest of the Roman Catholic Church in El Salvador. He later became the eighth Bishop and fourth Archbishop of San Salvador. As archbishop, he witnessed ongoing violations of human rights and started a group which spoke out to the poor and also victims of the country's civil war. Chosen to be archbishop for his conservatism, once in office his conscience led him to embrace a non-violent form of liberation theology, a position that has led to comparisons with Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King. Romero was shot to death on March 24, 1980 while celebrating Catholic Mass at a small chapel near his cathedral, the day after he gave a sermon in which he called on Salvadoran soldiers, as Christians, to obey God's higher order and to stop carrying out the government's repression and violations of basic human rights. His death provoked international outcry for human rights reform in El Salvador. It is believed that his assassins were members of Salvadoran death squads, who were acting on orders of the Salvadoran military.

THURSDAY



Herbert Ernesto Anaya Sanabria was one of the founders and president of the NGO Human Rights Commission of El Salvador (CDHES). In addition he worked for the committee of the families of persons murdered or disappeared. On May 26, 1986 he was arrested by members of the Treasury Police and jailed in La Esperanza prison for nine months where he was interrogated and tortured. In jail Sanabria worked on a human rights record which included testimonies of 430 of the 432 inmates describing methods of torture applied to them. The 160 pages record and a video showing torture signs were smuggled outside and sent to the Marin County Interfaith Task Force. On February 2, 1987 Sanabria was released as part of an exchange of prisoners. He was assassinated on October 26, 1987 close to his home. Anaya was the fourth leader of CDHES to be murdered or "disappeared" during the 1980s.

FRIDAY



November 17 marks the 18th anniversary of the slaying of 6 Jesuits priests at the University of Central America and their housekeeper and her daughter. The UN Truth Commission left no doubt about the responsibility of the US-trained military for the heinous act, and that such responsibility went to the highest levels of the armed forces.

18 years later we remember their martyrdom and their walk with the poor and oppressed in El Salvador which should be an inspiration to us all.

Jesus said, "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you." ~Luke 6:27-28. Could you do this even to the point of death? Could you pray for someone holding a machine gun to your head? Could you continue to "fight the good fight"?

SUNDAY



Lorena began teaching in the school at Rutilio Grande at the age of 14 while she was still attending high school. Despite a heavy load of teaching and studying, her grades were excellent. Following graduation, she was offered the possibility of studying law at the UCA. She qualified for a special scholarship program there, but she turned it down. When I asked why, one of her fellow teachers said that they needed Lorena to study teaching with them so that they could all be successful in getting their teaching degrees. What an example of someone placing community needs over individual desires! She was the first to pass the teaching exam, but helped all the rest of them through it until they each passed.

How do you see God calling you to place community needs over your individual desires?

MONDAY



Griselda Ramirez was the first of the young women in the scholarship program to graduate from high school. She married her high school sweetheart and now they have one daughter. Griselda's dream has always been to pursue a degree in business and she is coming close to realizing that dream. Even though school and family are enough to keep her busy (her commute is so far that she must spend several nights away from home each week), she still dedicates her time to leading the young children's group in Rutilio Grande. It is important to her that these children learn how to become good leaders and see the importance of education. She shows them that university studies aren't out of reach!

FRIDAY



This date marks the 18th anniversary of the assassination of the six Jesuits and the two lay women at the University of Central America (UCA). Elba Ramos was the cook for the Jesuit community and Celina Ramos was her 15 year old daughter. They, along with Elba's husband who was the gardener, lived at the edge of the property in a small house near a private entrance. Elba and Celina decided to sleep in the TV room for safety that night because there had been shooting outside of the university. This decision cost them their lives as army members wanted to leave no witnesses. Elba's husband was the first to discover the killings the next day. He later planted the rose garden where the Jesuits' bodies were discovered with 6 red and 2 yellow rose bushes, one for each. His simple ministry as a gardener has touched many people who have come to the garden to pay their respects to those who lost their lives that day.

What is a way in which you could use your skills to touch others?

SATURDAY



The Lesson of a Miracle: “Do miracles really happen?” The kids in the class weren’t sure. “Did the miracles in the Bible really happen?” Oh yes – the kids were sure about that. The kids then heard the story of Antonio, a construction worker from El Paisnal who has diabetes. His injured feet had been eaten away by gangrene, and he was ready to go home to Jesus. During his visit to the Lutheran clinic, he was bathed in prayer and for two weeks prayers from El Salvador and the US surrounded Antonio. Then, there was a miracle! He **walked** into his church in El Paisnal, praising God, and testifying to his church and to Sunday School kids far away that miracles really happen. The kids made prayer bracelets to help them remember to pray for Antonio. Months later, Antonio told his story on video, walking toward the camera so that the kids could **see and believe**. “Blessed are those who have not seen yet have come to believe.”

SATURDAY



December 2, will mark the 27th anniversary of the slaying of four American churchwomen, Ita Ford, Maura Clarke, Dorothy Kazel and Jean Donovan, by Salvadoran security forces. NorthJersy.com has a feature article about the murders and their legacy. “The U.S.-backed Salvadoran military, which was protecting wealthy landowning families and fighting a leftist guerrilla movement, regarded church workers like Ford as subversives, because they sided with the poor.” Many American church activists would come to identify with the four churchwomen and their brand of liberation theology - which emphasized the need for the Church to stand by the poor.

How can I stand by the poor today? What am I called to do?

SUNDAY



This week we are looking at lay people and celebrating the ministry of Christians of all ages in the home, workplace, congregation, community, and world. Think of a lay person you know who exemplifies taking Christ into all that they do. What is best about them?

Just as there are many special people in your life who do their own unique ministry, there are many in El Salvador as well. This week we will look at several examples. Reflect on how God uses people everywhere, not just people with money and all the trappings of life in the US. Then think of all the blessings that you have that so many others in the world do not. What are you meant to do with them?

How can you take your faith into your home, your workplace, your congregation, your community, and the entire world? Where is God leading you?

MONDAY



“My name is Joel Rodríguez. I am pursuing a theological career from the Universidad Luterana Salvadoreña; and if it is God’s will, I will graduate in December 2007. I am part of the choir at Resurrection Lutheran Church and play guitar and sing with my brother, Pastor Santiago in Los Héroes de la Fe. But I am 100% sure that I will never abandon artisan work, just like the Apostle Paul who exercised his pastoral work and worked in the building of tents. I am confident that he taught many people this dignified work which allowed them to gain daily sustenance. The artisan enters into contact with other people to sell the fruit of his/her labor. In El Salvador, it also is a good alternative to confront our country’s high unemployment rate. When youth are allowed to make manual activity their vocation, accompanied by faith, creativity and patience, there is much to be gained. No longer are they burdened by an inactive mental condition that many times is produced by the lack of opportunity, family disintegration, lack of Christian values, and extreme poverty. Lack of purpose can lead to involvement in gangs and drug use.”

TUESDAY



Christian is a 30-year-old man who we met in July during the sister parish encounter. “I get involved in the work of the Lutheran church, like a volunteer. I involved in the youth work, also with the children in the bible school. Helping the choir of the church. I have been volunteer during the natural disasters in my country, hurricane earthquakes and flooding. I’m not a pastor but I done the work like a pastor, I’m not a doctor but I helped the wounded people during the earthquakes in 2001, I’m not a psychologist but I make his job too. You don’t need to be a professional to help others. You only have to know how much love you have inside you, and it is so comforting when you share it. And I have the experience about how you feel when you know that somebody else who don’t know you is interested in you. That is God. When you feel that the whole world has forgot you somebody come to comfort you, to support you and help you to carry the cross.”

WEDNESDAY



Francisco Garcia is one of God's laborers in the vineyard. Francisco is a lay worker with the Lutheran church in El Salvador dedicated to working in communities on the margin. As a community organizer, for one small community, named Heroes of the Faith, Francisco is the one who organizes projects. He tracks all the details of a scholarship program serving dozens of children and their families.

Francisco is a poet. His poems decry injustice and seek God's compassion. Francisco is a single father. Although his economic resources are paltry, he has managed to raise two fine sons. Francisco has a ready smile and a twinkle of humor in his eye. May we continue to work with him in God's vineyard.

THURSDAY



“Like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.” ~ 1 Peter 2:5

The above verse is directed at all people. The holy priesthood is referring to all believers, not just clergy. It is talking about lay people. We all are meant to be engaged in the building of God’s kingdom. We all are meant to act as priests towards each other. We all are meant to carry one another’s burdens. The concept of spiritual sacrifices is not about just putting a check in the offering plate, it is about using the spiritual gifts that God has given to each individual. God put you in the place you are at for a reason.

Today reflect on how you can make more of your opportunities as a lay person. How is God trying to build you into his spiritual house? How can you be more a part of the holy priesthood of all believers?