

# Pastor's Reflections

By Jeffrey E. Frantz

As the season of Lent breaks upon us, I share these personal meditations on the Psalms.

*While I kept my silence, my body wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer. (Psalm 31:3-4)*

*I said, "I will guard my ways that I may not sin with my tongue; I will keep a muzzle on my mouth as long as the wicked are in my presence."  
I was silent and still; I held my peace to no avail; my distress grew worse, my heart became hot within me. (Psalm 39:1-3a)*

**Talking out our personal journey.** Always, Lent is a journey; it's a journey inward where we seek to get in touch with the deeper murmurings in our spirit. At times, it can be a painful journey, one that evokes deep ache and sadness. But the journey can also be a time of immense renewal and reassurance.

Whatever our journey, it's healing to be able to talk about it with others. Not with just anyone, of course, but with those special people whom we sense can take it in and really hear our words.

Silence can be a good thing. It can bring us peace and much-needed rest from the usual clamor of the world. But too much silence, and silence on the wrong things, can be harmful

There are things each of us needs to share. Things, which, if we do not unpack them and speak them out, like the Psalmist, *our bodies waste away through groaning all day long* (Psalm 31, above).

As human beings, there are experiences that make deep, life-altering impressions upon us. The loss of a loved one, some humiliation at home or in community life, or painful memories from our childhood. For all of us, there are things in us from which we need to be unburdened. One of the ways we can do this is by sharing our story with a good listener and talking out our sadness and worry.

**Listening, a treasured gift.** Having said this, one of the often-undervalued gifts in life is the gift of listening. Listening is one of the most needed services provided by the counseling/ therapist professional community.

When we think about our lives, our burdens and our worries, how healing it is to be able to *just* talk about things with the *right* person.

Listening takes time and patience and a compassionate heart. It's a gift. That's part of the function of confession in the Catholic Church. Of course, there's also the guilty thing and absolution of sin, but there's relief and unburdening in just being able to talk to somebody.

As the Psalmist reminds us, we can't forever hold everything in. When we do, stuff builds up—frantic energy and confusion that does us no good when it festers. When *our heart becomes hot within us* (Psalm 39, above), it's time to put words to what we're feeling.

Talking things out is an important process. It's how we keep ourselves sane, whole and more healthy as children of God.