



## Father Matt's Musings

February 17, 2020

### *Presidents' Day*

I begin writing this reflection on our celebration of Presidents' Day. I remember growing up we had a separate celebration for Abraham Lincoln on February 12th and one for George Washington on the 22nd. This year, we remember them at the mid-point between the two former celebrations. As a way of honoring two of our greatest presidents, I would like to offer George Washington as an example of Salesian humility and Abraham Lincoln as one of Salesian gentleness.

Washington: "Humility is not that we think less of ourselves but that we think of ourselves less."

As Commander-in-Chief of the Continental Army, Washington put his citizen farmer life on hold for almost a decade. To continue his service to the fledgling nation, he agreed to two terms as our first president. There was a movement to convince him to run for a third term. He declined. It was time for him to return to Mount Vernon. He affirmed his gifts and talents but also encouraged the nation to seek the talents of others. He had a keen sense of timing: when to let go and let someone else have the chance to bring their gifts and talents to the country. What a great example of leadership and mentorship. May we have that in our community and in our lives.

Lincoln: "Nothing is so strong as gentleness, nothing so gentle as real strength."

This is one of the most frequently mentioned quotes from Saint Francis de Sales who tried to practice gentleness throughout his life even though he had to tame his temper. As the Civil War was winding down and Lincoln was re-elected in 1864, there was a strong sentiment among many in the Republican Party that the South should be punished for its part in the war. Lincoln rejected

such calls and said in his Second Inaugural speech about the nation moving forward, "With charity toward all and malice toward none..." Humility and gentleness always make us bigger. Let us try to imitate two of our finest presidents' example.

Live Jesus!

*Fr. Matt*

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*All through love, nothing through force or fear.*

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