

Sacred Heart

CATHOLIC CHURCH

Corner of E. First Avenue
& Hamlet Street

Church Mailing Address:
168 E. Lincoln Street
Columbus, Ohio 43215

Parish Office
(614) 294-5319

Msgr. Frank Lane, Administrator
(Territorial Parish ~ Est. 1875)

MASSES:

Saturday: 4:00 p.m.; **Sunday:** 11:00 a.m.

WEEKDAYS & HOLY DAYS:

See Mass Schedule inside the Bulletin.

PARISH OFFICE/STAFF:

Administration is done through the office of Saint John the Baptist, 168 Lincoln Street. Requests for copies of sacramental records, scheduling of Masses and other sacramental celebrations, and non-emergency needs should be made during regular office hours or email info@sjbitaliana.org.

Please notify the Parish Office of any changes such as address or telephone number, etc., by calling during regular office Hours.

MUSIC MINISTRY:

Gina M. Bishop, Music Director
John C. Huffman, Organist

PARISH MEMBERSHIP:

We welcome you into our Parish Families.
Membership in the parish consists of two parts:

Registration: Please complete the parish registration and return to Parish Office.

OFFICE STAFF

Aggie Howard, Executive Assistant, ahoward@sjbitaliana.org
Victoria Scruggs, Secretary & Bulletin Editor, vgammell@sjbitaliana.org
Office Hours: Monday-Friday, 9:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m.

RECONCILIATION:

Saturday: 3:30 p.m.; **Sunday:** 10:30 a.m.

BAPTISM:

Preparation is required for the reception of the sacrament.
Parents are encouraged to call the office
and set up an appointment before the birth of their child.

MATRIMONY:

Arrangements should be made at least six or more months in advance.
A marriage preparation program is required.

SACRAMENT OF THE SICK:

In cases of emergencies, please call anytime.
Please notify the Parish Office for Communion calls to the sick, shut-ins.

Due to privacy laws, if parishioners wish to be visited in the hospital,
they should contact the Parish Office directly
and give the information regarding the hospitalization.

If you are scheduled for surgeries or other medical procedures,
please contact the Parish Office in advance so that a priest can administer
Anointing of the Sick prior to the procedure.

BULLETIN DEADLINE:

Announcements must be submitted in writing by Tuesday at noon.

www.sacredheartchurchcolumbus.org

SACRED HEART

Dear Friend in Christ,

Lent

Throughout the long history of God's relationship with His people, there have always been times when the believing community tried to untangle its involvement in the everyday realities of life and re-engage with the God who delivered them from bondage. The Hebrews did so in the Passover and the Feast of First Fruits.

When the Old Covenant passed its heritage into the New Covenant, the Christian people retained that deep understanding of untangling the web of everyday life that they could get a closer look at and have a closer friendship with the Lord Jesus who saved us from the eternal bondage of Sin.

Some of the Ancients went into the Desert to come face to face with evil and reject it and choose the Good, the Lord – Jesus did this, John the Baptist did this, St. Anthony of the Desert did this as did many others. Few of us can go off to the desert to face evil and find God but, in our own way, we can use the season of Lent to do something similar. We have a tradition of depriving ourselves of some things that we desire and like – certain types of food, certain recreational activities, certain pastimes. It's a kind of quest for freedom from everyday dependencies, everyday personal entanglements. It's a step toward freeing ourselves sufficiently to get a better glimpse of God in our lives, a little strengthening of the Will to resist temptation, a small offering to the Lord in gratitude for our salvation.

In this movement toward a greater freedom, we might take the opportunity to get to daily Mass once in a while, we could pray more, we could visit the Blessed Sacrament a little more often, we could show up at Adoration at Sacred Heart on some Thursdays, we could pray the Rosary for the holiness and faithfulness of the Church, we could pray for those caught in the ghastly throes of war. We could do a lot with our little piece of freedom that sacrifice gives us. We could have a really good Lent!

Many Blessings!
Msgr. Frank Lane

Welcome to Sacred Heart

Sacred Heart is a welcoming community, rooted in the traditions, teachings, and beauty of our **Catholic** faith. We recognize that every person is on his or her own journey of faith, and we seek to meet you where you are in your journey.

At **Sacred Heart**, the beauty of the **Mass** is embraced, while maintaining a welcoming spirit for our **Italian Village** neighbors and greater **Columbus Community**.

To learn more about the Parish, please visit our website: www.Sacredheartchurchcolumbus.org.
Thank you for choosing Sacred Heart!

If you are interested in becoming Catholic, receiving the Sacrament of Confirmation, or Baptism, please contact Sacred Heart Office at 614-294-5319 for more information.

For Weddings and Funerals, please contact Aggie Howard at ahoward@sjbitaliana.org or call the office 614-294-5319.

Please Sign Up for Adoration: In celebration of the Jubilee 350th year of the apparition of the Sacred Heart to St. Margaret Mary Alacoque, Sacred Heart Church will be open from 10:00 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. every Thursday until the Feast of the Sacred Heart on June 27, 2025. During that time, the Blessed Sacrament will be exposed for Adoration. There will be Mass 6:30 p.m., followed by Confessions and Benediction until 7:30 p.m. There must be someone present throughout the entire day and help is needed! Please, sign up for an hour or half-hour of Adoration on Thursday. There are sign-up sheets at both church entrances. Your help is needed for this especially important mission! In these troubled times in the country, the Church, and the world, this is a wonderful opportunity for us to seek our own personal freedom from all darkness and to help to heal all in our world that is so broken.

MASSES FOR THE WEEK

Sunday: St. John the Baptist – 9:30 a.m.
February 11 + *Chris Cua*
by Mike & Kerree Susi
Sacred Heart – 11:00 a.m.
+ *Jim L.*

Monday: St. John's – 9:00 a.m.
February 12 + *Richard Lumpe*
by Fr. Michael Lumpe

Tuesday: St. John's – 9:00 a.m.
February 13 + *Alex & Sharma Lee Pieramico*
by Mr. & Mrs. John McAvoy

Wednesday: St. John's – 6:00 p.m.
February 14 + *James "Buzz" Cockerell*
by Michael & Crystal Cockerell

Thursday: Sacred Heart – 6:30 p.m.
February 15 + *Frank W. Lane*

Friday: No Mass
February 16

Saturday: Sacred Heart – 4:00 p.m.
February 17 *Family of Mrs. Ruth Farthing*
by McCallum Family

Part-time Facilities Manager Position: Looking for a part-time Facilities Manager for both **St. John the Baptist and Sacred Heart Churches**. Duties would be to maintain and oversee both churches. This would include ordinary maintenance, cleaning, dusting, mopping floors, changing light bulbs, minor plumbing and electrical work, removal of trash, and any other things that may need to be repaired or maintained. This would be approximately **25 hours a week**. If interested in the position, please contact the office for more information at **614-294-5319**. Thank you!

Ash Wednesday: February 14: At the beginning of **Lent**, on **Ash Wednesday**, ashes are blessed during **Mass** after the homily. The **blessed ashes** are then “**imposed**” on the faithful as a sign of conversion, penance, fasting and human mortality. The ashes are made from the palms used at the previous **Passion Sunday** ceremonies.

Church Regulations Regarding Fasting and Abstinence During Lent: Abstinence from meat (beast or fowl) is to be observed by all **Catholics** fourteen years and older on **Ash Wednesday** and on all Fridays of **Lent**. This obligation prohibits the eating of meat, but not eggs, milk products or condiments of any kind, even if made from animal fat. The law of fasting on **Ash Wednesday** and **Good Friday** applies to all **Catholics from age 18 through age 59**. When fasting, a person is permitted to eat one full meal, as well as two smaller meals that together are not equal to a full meal. Those who are ill or pregnant may be dispensed from their obligation.

Lenten Practices: Prayer, fasting, and almsgiving are the three pillars of **Lenten practices**. **Prayer** is our necessary communication with **God**, reminding us of our very intimate relationship with **God**, our creator. **Fasting** can help us curb our body’s appetites and put our soul in control. **Fasting** does not have to be limited to avoiding food. We can also fast from different forms of entertainment and our over-reliance on the smartphone. **Lent** can be an opportunity to give up these forms of escape and replace them with some good spiritual reading. **Almsgiving** is the third pillar. When we give alms, we are reminded that the monetary resources that we have are the result of **God’s** blessings which are meant to be shared, especially with the poor. – **Father Kitmiller**

We see both the divine power and the divine compassion of **Jesus** in this act of healing. His compassion for suffering humanity was also divine. It was out of compassion that He descended to man’s level, becoming man, equal to us in all things except sin, to suffer with us and for us. By His human sufferings He made an atonement, a satisfaction for all the sins of the world – a satisfaction which all mankind could never make – to His heavenly **Father**, and so obtained for us **God’s** pardon. At the same time, by joining our human nature to His divine nature, He brought us into the divine orbit and made us adopted children of **God** and heirs of the eternal life of the Blessed Trinity. But, due to the many times we unfortunately sin, nothing but the mercy of **God** can save us from our own folly. Fortunately, that mercy is available, if only we ask for it. What we sinners need is the faith and confidence of the leper in today’s **Gospel** reading. He believed firmly in the power and the mercy of **Jesus**. “**If you will, you can make me clean,**” was his approach to **Jesus**. This should be our approach too. What folly for any **Christian** then, to commit sin and isolate himself from **God**. But it is greater folly still, to remain in this unclean state when the cure is so easily available to any sincere penitent.

– Excerpted from *The Sunday Readings* by Fr. Kevin O’Sullivan, O.F.M.



*Returning Love for Love:
A Pilgrimage to the Heart of Jesus*

MAY 31 – JUNE 9, 2024

To commemorate the 350th anniversary of the revelations of the Sacred Heart of Jesus at Paray-le-Monial, a Jubilee Year has been declared, beginning on 27 December 2023 and continuing through 27 June 2025, the Solemnity of the Sacred Heart.

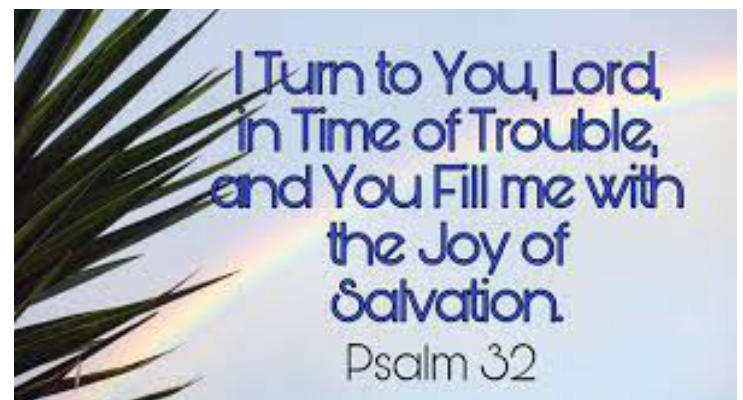
Please consider joining the Diocese of Columbus and Bishop Fernandes on this extraordinary pilgrimage to France during the Jubilee Year.

SACRE COEUR

PILGRIMAGES
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“Jesus reveals to us that God is not a detached master who speaks to us from on high. He is a loving Father who draws near to us, comes into our homes, wants to save and liberate us, and heals us from every ill of body and spirit.” @Pontifex



Prayer: *O God, who teaches us that You abide in hearts that are just and true, grant that we may be so fashioned by Your grace as to become a dwelling pleasing to You. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. Amen*

Today’s Gospel: The Gospel is from **St. Mark 1:40-45**.

HEALING HANDS

Reflection on Mark 1:40-45

"Go show yourself to the priest and offer for your cleansing what Moses prescribed." With this admonition, Jesus sends the healed leper off.

What Moses prescribed concerning leprosy is found in chapters 13 and 14 of Leviticus. Reading through these rather complex protocols, we discover that purification after leprosy includes some lengthy rituals involving "two live, clean birds, as well as some cedar wood, scarlet yarn, and hyssop." (Lv 14:4).

It is interesting to note that Jesus Himself did not follow any of these protocols, especially in touching the leper. There's an important lesson here in Jesus' action of healing – taking the risk of touching others with the healing and loving and forgiving power of God is more important than following any protocol.

This story is a good illustration of a key controversy in the Gospels, between Jesus and the religious leaders of His day, who were often offended by Jesus' exercise of His power because it challenged the system they maintained and their place and comfort in the community. Jesus was constantly pointing out that the law was made for the sake of the people, and not the other way around. He wanted the priests and other leaders to learn that people were always more important than the religious system. This is a good lesson for us as well.

~ Fr. Jay



WEEKLY SCRIPTURE

Sunday, February 11, 2024

Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Lv 13:1-2, 44-46

Ps 32:1-2, 5, 11

1 Cor 10:31-11:1

Mk 1:40-45

Monday, February 12, 2024

Weekday

Jas 1:1-11

Ps 119:67, 68, 71, 72, 75, 76

Mk 8:11-13

Tuesday, February 13, 2024

Weekday

Jas 1:12-18

Ps 94:12-13a, 14-15, 18-19

Mk 8:14-21

Wednesday, February 14, 2024

Ash Wednesday

Jl 2:12-18

Ps 51:3-4, 5-6ab, 12-13, 14 and 17

2 Cor 5:20-6:2

Mt 6:1-6, 16-18

Thursday, February 15, 2024

Weekday

Dt 30:15-20

Ps 1:1-2, 3, 4 and 6

Lk 9:22-25

Friday, February 16, 2024

Weekday

Is 58:1-9a

Ps 51:3-4, 5-6ab, 18-19

Mt 9:14-15

Saturday, February 17, 2024

Weekday

Is 58:9b-14

Ps 86:1-2, 3-4, 5-6

Lk 5:27-32

Access Daily Readings from
the New American Bible,
Revised Edition (NABRE) online at
<https://bible.usccb.org>

OUR LADY OF LOURDES

Saint of the Day: February 11

Patron Saint of: Relief from physical ills

Bernadette was a sickly child of poor parents. Their practice of the Catholic faith was scarcely more than lukewarm. Bernadette could pray the Our Father, the Hail Mary and the Creed. She also knew the prayer of the Miraculous Medal: "O Mary conceived without sin."

During interrogations Bernadette gave an account of what she saw. It was "something white in the shape of a girl." She used the word aquero, a dialect term meaning "this thing." It was "a pretty young girl with a rosary over her arm." Her white robe was encircled by a blue girdle. She wore a white veil. There was a yellow rose on each foot. A rosary was in her hand. Bernadette was also impressed by the fact that the lady did not use the informal form of address (tu), but the polite form (vous). The humble virgin appeared to a humble girl and treated her with dignity.

Through that humble girl, Mary revitalized and continues to revitalize the faith of millions of people. People began to flock to Lourdes from other parts of France and from all over the world. In 1862, Church authorities confirmed the authenticity of the apparitions and authorized the cult of Our Lady of Lourdes for the diocese. The Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes became worldwide in 1907.

Lourdes has become a place of pilgrimage and healing, but even more of faith. Church authorities have recognized over 60 miraculous cures, although there have probably been many more. To people of faith this is not surprising. It is a continuation of Jesus' healing miracles – now performed at the intercession of His mother. Some would say that the greater miracles are hidden. Many who visit Lourdes return home with renewed faith and a readiness to serve God in their needy brothers and sisters.

Read the full article: "Our Lady of Lourdes" Franciscan Media, Franciscan Friars, franciscanmedia.org/saint-of-the-day/our-lady-of-lourdes/. (Accessed January 29, 2024).

Confessions: St. John – Sunday – 8:30 a.m.
Sacred Heart – Saturday – 3:00 p.m.
Sacred Heart – Thursday – 7:00 p.m.

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament: Sacred Heart
Thursdays, 10:00 a.m.-7:30 p.m.

Ash Wednesday, February 14, Mass Times
Sacred Heart Church 10:30 a.m.
St. John the Baptist 6:00 p.m.

The **Parish Office** will be closed on **Monday, February 19, 2024**, in observance of **Presidents' Day** and reopen **Tuesday, February 20th at 9:00 a.m.**

LECTORS

Saturday, February 10, 2024, 4:00 p.m.	Joe Stefanov
Sunday, February 11, 2024, 11:00 a.m.	Bob Longstreth
Saturday, February 17, 2024, 4:00 p.m.	Neil Sika
Sunday, February 18, 2024, 11:00 a.m.	Sean Nixon
Saturday, February 24, 2024, 4:00 p.m.	Joe Stefanov
Sunday, February 25, 2024, 11:00 a.m.	Bob Padberg

If you are unable to attend Mass,
please contact Bob Longstreth. Thank you!

WEEKLY STEWARDSHIP AT SACRED HEART February 04, 2024 Number of Envelopes used Sunday 18

In Env:	\$	752.00
Loose:	\$	873.00
January EFT:	\$	1,805.00
Total	\$	3,430.00
Less Diocesan 8% Assessment	\$	-(274.40)
	\$	3,155.60

	Budgeted	Actual	Difference (\$)
This Week:	\$ 2,800.00	\$ 3,430.00	\$ 630.00

DONATION QR CODE AND WEBSITE INFORMATION



Please help Sacred Heart maintain this beautiful 100-year-old building with a donation by using the QR code. Thank you!



SH Collection Counters - Monday, February 12, 2024
Donna Bowers and Mike Padovan

SH Collection Counters - Tuesday, February 20, 2024
Donna Bowers and Rita Ward

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😊 Smile Break 😊

Q: Why can't muggers catch Catholics during Lent?

A: They fast.

Proverbs 15:15: "For the despondent, every day brings trouble; for the happy heart, life is a continual feast."

Bishop Watterson High School choirs will hold a free concert at Saint John the Baptist on Tuesday, February 13th at 7:00 p.m. All are welcome.

AROUND US

The Holy Father's Intentions for the Month of February 2024: *We pray that those who risk their lives for the Gospel in various parts of the world inflame the Church with their courage and missionary enthusiasm.*

Catholic Cemeteries of Columbus Spring Cleanup Begins March 1: It's getting close to **spring** and that means time for the **Catholic Cemeteries of Columbus Spring Cleanup!** Families wishing to retain any personal keepsakes should gather them by **March 1, 2024**, if you have questions, please contact our cemetery offices: **St. Joseph/Mt. Calvary at 614-491-2751; Resurrection at 614-888-1805; or Holy Cross at 740-927-4442.**

Joint Organization for Inner-city Needs: JOIN, is an agency of the **Diocese's Catholic Charities Office**, located at **578 E. Main Street** in downtown **Columbus**. Sharing **God's** love and word through the assistance provided to our brothers and sisters is our daily aspiration. The **Ash Wednesday collection of your church and others would be instrumental in our mission to serve our neighbors with these various needs and more. All donations go directly to improve the quality of life for those we serve.** You are always welcome to visit **JOIN** or feel free to call or email me, **Lisa Keita**, director of **JOIN**, any time at **614-241-2530** or lkeita@columbuscatholic.org. **God bless you with His grace and Peace!**



BANNS of MARRIAGE
Jack Anthony Bartel and Sophie Louise Ryan
March 2, 2024

Lectio Divina

SCRIPTURE READING + MEDITATION + PRAYER + CONTEMPLATION

“What page, what passage of the inspired books of the Old and New Testaments is not the truest of guides for human life?” ~Saint Benedict, from the *Rule of Saint Benedict* (73:3)

The month of February is dedicated to the Holy Family.

“Lent is like a long ‘retreat’ during which we can turn back into ourselves and listen to the voice of God, in order to defeat the temptations of the Evil One. It is a period of spiritual ‘combat’ which we must experience alongside Jesus, not with pride and presumption, but using the arms of faith: prayer, listening to the word of God and penance. In this way we will be able to celebrate Easter in truth, ready to renew the promises of our Baptism.” +POPE BENEDICT XVI

Monday, February 12 ~ Sixth Week in Ordinary Time

Holy Gospel: Mark 8:11-13 The Pharisees came forward and began to argue with Jesus, seeking from him a sign from heaven to test him. He sighed from the depth of his spirit and said, "Why does this generation seek a sign? Amen, I say to you, no sign will be given to this generation." Then he left them, got into the boat again, and went off to the other shore.

Meditation: The people of Jesus' time expected that the coming of the Messiah would be accompanied by extraordinary signs and wonders. The religious leaders tested Jesus to see if he had a genuine sign from heaven to back his Messianic claims. False messiahs in the past had made extraordinary claims to attract their followers, such as claiming that they could cleave the Jordan River in two or cause the walls of Jerusalem to fall. Jesus knew the hearts of those who came to test him. They were more interested in seeing signs and supernatural phenomena than they were in hearing the word of God. Simeon had prophesied at Jesus' birth that he was "destined for the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed so that inner thoughts of many will be revealed" (ref. Luke 2:34-35). Jesus gave them no sign except himself and the ultimate proof of his divinity when he rose from the dead.

Prayer: Show gracious favor, O Lord, we pray, to the works of penance we have begun, that we may have strength to accomplish with sincerity the bodily observances we undertake. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Contemplation: Never forget that the Lord reveals himself and makes his presence known to us in many ways – in his word and in the "breaking of the bread" in the Eucharist, in his church – the body of Christ, in his creation, and even in the everyday circumstances of our lives. If we seek the Lord, we will surely find him. And we can be confident that he will give us whatever we need to understand and carry out his will. Most of all, the Lord assures us of his daily presence and the promise that he will never leave us. Saint Theresa of Avila's prayer book contained a bookmark in which she wrote: "Let nothing disturb you, let nothing frighten you; All things pass: God never changes. Patience achieves all it strives for. Whoever has God lacks nothing, God alone suffices." Think about that for a moment, then ask yourself: Is God enough for you?

Tuesday, February 13 ~ Sixth Week in Ordinary Time

Holy Gospel: Mark 8:14-21 The disciples had forgotten to bring bread, and they had only one loaf with them in the boat. Jesus enjoined them, "Watch out, guard against the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod." They concluded among themselves that it was because they had no bread. When he became aware of this he said to them, "Why do you conclude that it is because you have no bread? Do you not yet understand or comprehend? Are your hearts hardened? Do you have eyes and not see, ears and not hear? And do you not remember, when I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many wicker baskets full of fragments you picked up?" They answered him, "Twelve." "When I broke the seven loaves for the four thousand, how many full baskets of fragments did you pick up?" They answered him, "Seven." He said to them, "Do you still not understand?"

Meditation: The apostles set off in their boat across the Sea of Galilee only to discover that they forgot to bring enough food for their journey. What were they to do miles away from land and any place where they could buy food and supplies? They were anxious of course, and this was right after Jesus had performed the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves and fishes where the disciples fed more than four thousand people (ref. Mark 8:1-9). Jesus knew the trouble in his disciples' hearts even before they could speak. Jesus dealt with their anxiety by first warning them to not fear what can harm the body rather than what can destroy the very heart and soul of their being.

Prayer: Keep your family safe, O Lord, with unfailing care, that, relying solely on the hope of heavenly grace, they may be defended always by your protection. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Contemplation: One might wonder why Jesus told his disciples to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of Herod? To the Jewish person leaven was a sign of evil. It was a piece of dough left-over from a previous baking. In due course it fermented and this fermented dough became leaven. Fermentation was associated with decomposing rot. Jesus warned his disciples to avoid the evil influence of the Pharisees and of Herod who sought their own counsels rather than the will of God. As the apostles continued to worry about their lack of bread, Jesus reminded them of his miraculous provision of bread in the feeding of the four thousand. He then upbraided them for their lack of trust in God. "Do you still not understand?" It's easy to get preoccupied with the problems and needs of the present moment and to forget the most important reality of all – God's abiding presence with us and his abundant provision for our lives as well. Thus when you pray, do you pray with joyful confidence, "Father, give us this day our daily bread?"

Wednesday, February 14 ~ The Beginning of the Season of Lent Ash Wednesday ~ A Day of Fast and Abstinence

Holy Gospel: Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18 Jesus said to his disciples: "Take care not to perform righteous deeds in order that people may see them; otherwise, you will have no recompense from your heavenly Father. When you give alms, do not blow a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets to win the praise of others. Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right is doing, so that your almsgiving may be secret. And your Father who sees in secret will repay you. "When you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, who love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on street corners so that others may see them. Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you pray, go to your inner room, close the door, and pray to your Father in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will repay you. "When you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites. They neglect their appearance, so that they may appear to others to be fasting. Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, so that you may not appear to be fasting, except to your Father who is hidden. And your Father who sees what is hidden will repay you."

Meditation: One might ask why Jesus singled out prayer, fasting, and almsgiving for his disciples. The Jews considered these three as the cardinal works of the religious life. These were seen as the key signs of a pious person, the three great pillars on which the good life was based. Jesus pointed to the heart of the matter. Why do you pray, fast, and give alms? To draw attention to yourself so that others may notice and think highly of you? Or to give glory to God? The Lord warns his disciples of self-seeking glory – the preoccupation with looking good and seeking praise from others. True piety is something more than feeling good or looking holy. True piety is loving devotion to God. It is an attitude of awe, reverence, worship and obedience. It is a gift and working of the Holy Spirit that enables us to devote our lives to God with a holy desire to please him in all things (Isaiah 11:1-2). The forty days of Lent is the annual retreat of the people of God in imitation of Jesus' forty days in the wilderness. Forty is a significant number in the scriptures. Moses went to the mountain to seek the face of God for forty days in prayer and fasting. The people of Israel were in the wilderness for forty years in preparation for their entry into the promised land. Elijah fasted for forty days as he journeyed in the wilderness to the mountain of God. We are called to journey with the Lord in this special season of prayer, fasting, almsgiving, and penitence as we prepare to celebrate the feast of Easter. The Lord gives us spiritual food and supernatural strength to seek his face and to prepare ourselves for spiritual combat and testing. We, too, must follow in the way of the cross in order to share in the victory of Christ's death and resurrection.



As we begin this holy season of testing and preparation, let's ask the Lord for a fresh outpouring of his Holy Spirit that we may grow in faith, hope, and love and embrace his will more fully in our lives.

Prayer: Grant, O Lord, that we may begin with holy fasting this campaign of Christian service, so that, as we take up battle against spiritual evils, we may be armed with weapons of self-restraint. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Contemplation: God wants to set our hearts ablaze with the fire of his Holy Spirit that we may share in his holiness and radiate the joy of the gospel to those around us. St. Augustine tells us that there are two kinds of people and two kinds of love: "One is holy, the other is selfish. One is subject to God; the other endeavors to equal Him." We are what we love. God wants to free our hearts from all that would keep us captive to selfishness and sin. "Rend your hearts and not your garments" says the prophet Joel (Joel 2:12). Use this Season of Lent to the fullest – embrace the laws of God and the teachings of Jesus Christ and His Holy Catholic Church. Undergo a conversion of mind and heart. Conform your will to God's; don't ask God to conform his will to yours, as so many foolishly try to do. With the help of the Holy Spirit, become humble, transform your minds and hearts to be led in God's way of truth and holiness.

Thursday, February 15 ~ The Thursday After Ash Wednesday

Holy Gospel: Luke 9:22-25 Jesus said to his disciples: "The Son of Man must suffer greatly and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed and on the third day be raised." Then he said to all, "If anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it. What profit is there for one to gain the whole world yet lose or forfeit himself?"

Meditation: Quite simply, the cross of Jesus Christ leads to freedom and victory over sin and death. We then need to ask ourselves: "What is the cross which Christ commands me to take up each day as his disciple?" When my will crosses with his will, then his will must be done. The way of the cross involves sacrifice, the sacrifice of laying down my life each and every day for Jesus' sake. What makes such sacrifice possible and "sweet" is the love of God poured out for us in the blood of Jesus Christ. Paul the Apostle reminds us that "God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit" (Romans 5:5). We can never outdo God in giving, no matter how abundant we try. He always gives us more than we can expect or imagine. Are you ready to lose all for Christ in order to gain all with Christ?

Prayer: Prompt our actions with your inspiration, we pray, O Lord, and further them with your constant help, that all we do may always begin from you and by you be brought to completion. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Contemplation: We need to ask ourselves: "What will I give to God in exchange for freedom and eternal life?" In thinking about this question, are you ready to part with anything that might keep you from following him and his perfect plan for your life? Jesus poses these questions to challenge our assumptions about what is most profitable and worthwhile in life. In every decision of life we are making ourselves a certain kind of person. It is possible that some can gain all the things they set their heart on, only to wake up suddenly and discover that they missed the most important things of all. A true disciple is ready to give up all that he or she has in exchange for happiness and life with God. The life which God offers is abundant, everlasting life. And the joy which God places in our hearts no sadness or loss can diminish.

Friday, February 16 ~ The Friday After Ash Wednesday

Holy Gospel: Mark 9:14-15 The disciples of John approached Jesus and said, "Why do we and the Pharisees fast much, but your disciples do not fast?" Jesus answered them, "Can the wedding guests mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast."

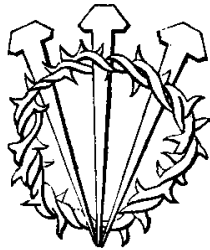
Meditation: What kind of fasting is pleasing to God? Fasting can be done for a variety of reasons – to gain freedom from some bad habit, addiction, or vice, to share in the suffering of those who go without, or to grow in our hunger for God and for the things of heaven. Basil the Great wrote: "Take heed that you do not make fasting to consist only in abstinence from meats. True fasting is to refrain from vice. Shred to pieces all your unjust contracts. Pardon your neighbors. Forgive them their trespasses." Do you hunger for more of God and for his holiness and for the abundant life he has to offer you?

Prayer: Show gracious favor, O Lord, we pray, to the works of penance we have begun, that we may have strength to accomplish with sincerity the bodily observances we undertake. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Contemplation: We must remember that hungering for God and fasting for his kingdom go hand in hand. When asked why he and his disciples did not fast Jesus used the vivid picture of a wedding celebration. In Jesus' time the newly wed celebrated their honeymoon at home for a whole week with all the guests! This was a time of great feasting and celebrating. Jesus points to himself as the bridegroom and his disciples as the bridegroom's friends. He alludes to the fact that God takes delight in his people as a groom delights in his bride (Isaiah 62:5). To be in God's presence is pure delight and happiness. But Jesus also reminds his followers that there is a time for fasting and for humbling oneself in preparation for the coming of God's kingdom and for the return of the Messianic King. The Lord's disciples must also bear the cross of affliction and purification. For the disciple there is both a time for rejoicing in the Lord's presence and celebrating his goodness and a time for seeking the Lord with humility, fasting, and mourning for sin. If we hunger for the Lord, he will not disappoint us. His grace draws us to his throne of mercy and favor. Do you seek the Lord with confident trust and allow his Holy Spirit to transform your life with his power and grace? If not, perhaps this is an area for you to work on during this Season of Lent

Scripture passages (NAB translation) courtesy of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops;
prayers are from *The Roman Missal*, Catholic Book Publishing, 2011;
information about saints, solemnities, feasts and memorials courtesy of the Catholic Culture web site.

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AS WE BEGIN THE SEASON OF LENT ~ A PRAYER FOR SPIRITUAL RENEWAL

God, our heavenly Father, look upon me and hear my prayer during this Holy Season of Lent.

By the good works You inspire, help me to discipline my body and to be renewed in spirit.

Without You I can do nothing.

By Your Spirit help me to know what is right and to be eager in doing Your will.

Teach me to find new life through penance.

Keep me from sin, and help me live by Your commandment of love.

God of compassion and mercy, bring me back to You.

Send Your Spirit to make me strong in faith and active in good works in serving others.

*May my acts of penance bring me Your forgiveness, open my heart to Your love,
and prepare me for the coming feast of the Resurrection of Jesus.*

*Lord, during this Lenten Season, nourish me with Your Word of life
and make me one with You in thought, word and action.*

Fill my heart with Your love and keep me faithful to living the Gospel of Christ.

Give me the grace to rise above my human weakness and faults.

Give me new life by Your Sacraments, especially the Eucharist during Mass.

*Father, our source of all life, I reach out with joy to grasp Your hand;
let me walk more readily in Your ways. Guide me in Your gentle mercy,
for left to myself I struggle to do Your Will.*

*Father of love, source of all blessings, help me to pass from my old life of sin
to the new life of grace.*

Prepare me for the glory of Your Kingdom.

I pray this through our Lord Jesus Christ, Your Son,

Who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, God, forever and ever. Amen.

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