

### Will You Make Jesus Your 'Valentine' this Ash Wednesday and all of Lent?

This year's liturgical calendar is very quirky: first, we had the shortest possible *Advent* and *Christmastime*; now it's *Ash Wednesday* on *Saint Valentine's Day* and *Easter* on *April Fools' Day*! [Calendar trivia: this last happened in 1945.] All we needed was *Saint Patrick's Day* on a Friday for a full house! What are devout, practicing Catholics, who take *seriously* the obligation to fast and abstain on certain days, to do?

Since we are called to imitate Jesus, who fasted for forty days and nights in the desert, the Church calls *us* to certain communal fast days: to give public witness to the One Faith; to gain self-control, mastery over our bodies, minds and hearts; and to rightly prepare for special events like *Easter* or *Christmas*, a *Rite* or *Sacrament*. So the Church has every right and a solemn duty to mandate days on which we should fast and/or abstain from meat or other things.

Some childish try to excuse themselves from these time-honored disciplines by quoting Jesus: *"You have nullified the word of God for the sake of your tradition. Hypocrites, well did Isaiah prophesy about you when he said: 'This people honors me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines human precepts.'" [Matthew 15:6-9]* On the other extreme are those who suffer from scourge of scrupulosity, who anguish over minute details, like worrying if a meat-based broth is a sinful violation of Church discipline.

While the Church also permits us to substitute other acts of penance when abstaining or fasting is not possible, or to perform these disciplines on another day ... there's only one day each year when the Church imposes blessed ashes, distributes blessed palm, and pulls out all the stops to celebrate the Last Supper [*Holy Thursday*], the Passion and Death of the Lord [*Good Friday*] and His Resurrection [*Easter*]. These days should be a top priority,

outranking all other things ... even romantic, candlelit dinners and dare I say ... sporting events and pastimes! Here are some suggestions for dealing with these issues:

**Adjust Your Schedule to Make Jesus FIRST.** As I mentioned above, some devotions and sacramentals come but once a year, so make time for them; you can 'dine with your honey' any day. Besides, with all due respect to restaurant owners and workers, eateries are jammed on *Saint Valentine's Day*, with limited menus, and even jacked up prices. Celebrate some other day, when it's cheaper and less crowded! [Perhaps because I think that way is why God called me to celibacy!]

**Accept the Challenge.** If you're giving up chocolate, candy or fancy stuff for *Lent*, rise to the occasion - and keep your promises, even on special days! [While there is no 'official' ruling whether we must fast on Sundays and Solemnities in *Lent*, I believe they 'count' as fasting days, or we would not omit the *Gloria* and *Alleluia*, not use *purple* vesture.] Anyway, in the true *Lenten* spirit, give those sweets or flowers to someone who otherwise would *not* get them, and who goes unappreciated, unnoticed or even unloved ... Jesus will be *most* pleased! But if you must ... keep it simple ... and remember to do your *Lenten* penance some other day.

**Firm Up Your Faith Foundation with Loved Ones.** As the Bible says: *"Unless the LORD build the house, they labor in vain who build."* [Psalm 127:1a] This *Lent* 'add more God and Church' to your relationships. Receive ashes together; choose joint *Lenten* disciplines or penances; pray together in communal services like the *Stations* or at home; do charitable works together, like serve at a soup kitchen or shelter. Make it your *Lenten* 'penance' to send a secret *Valentine* to someone every day this *Lent* ... and don't forget to send one to Jesus, at least once a day, via prayer, fasting and almsgiving. May God grant us a spiritually uplifting *Lent*, true repentance, and an *Easter* of unending joy!

+ **Mardi Gras** **Tuesday** **February 13** +

“Mardi Gras” is a French term meaning ‘Fat Tuesday’. Please join us for ‘Fat Tuesday’ fun: 6-7:30 pm in the parish hall. There will be entertainment and snacks in the hall. At 7:30 we will go to the church for Night Prayer and then strip our church to bare essentials for our Lenten observance. Explanations will be given as to why we remove certain things from the church during the Lenten season. We end the evening by going outside to burn last year’s palms for this year’s ashes.



### Ash Wednesday February 14

Fasting from all signs and sounds of festivity, we strip away all that keeps us from focusing on God. Blessed ashes mark the start of our Lenten journey of self-denial, penance and prayer, for we must ‘spring clean’ our homes and our souls! Ashes are a sign of repentance *and* mortality so those of *any age* may receive ashes. In Ash Wednesday’s First Reading the Prophet Joel includes “infants at the breast” in the fasting and communal penance imposed on the people.



Ashes are distributed during Mass at:

7:00 am - 8:30 am  
12:00 noon--7:00 pm

and during a  
Liturgy of the Word  
[no Holy Communion]

At 4:30 pm.

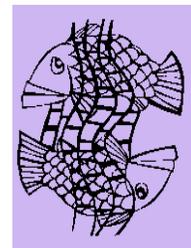
Wear your ashes proudly!

### Easter Precept or Easter Duty

All Catholics are obligated to receive Holy Communion at least once a year, between the **1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Lent, February 18,** and **Trinity Sunday, May 27.** Those conscious of serious, grave or mortal sin must celebrate the *Sacrament of Reconciliation* first; they must go to Confession before receiving **Holy Communion.**

### Fast & Abstinence Guidelines

Those 14 and older are to **ABSTAIN** from meat on **Ash Wednesday** and all **Lenten Fridays.** Those between 18 and 59 should **FAST** by eating only one main meal and two smaller ones on **Ash Wednesday** and **Good Friday.** Those unable to abstain or fast for a valid reason [i.e., **St. Patrick’s Day party or wedding**] may abstain on another day or perform a different penance; Canon law only permits **PASTORS** to dispense from fasting or abstaining. Ignoring penitential days, without good cause, is a serious sin of omission. Our Bishops ask us to abstain from meat on Friday all year long for **Pro-Life causes** and **world peace.**



### Sunday Mass Obligation

Saturday at 5:00 pm

Sunday at 7:30 - 9:00 - 10:30 am

12:00 noon

Morning Mass: Monday- Friday at 8:30 am

Saturdays: 9:30 am

### Food Collection - Operation Rice Bowl

To help feed the hungry locally and abroad: make a donation to our special ‘Fruit of our Fast’ collections on **Ash Wednesday** and **Passion [Palm] Sunday** or donate money and/or nonperishable food to help those less fortunate. All are also encouraged to take part in **ORB: Operation Rice Bowl**; please return ORB donations on **Holy Thursday, March 29,** to the special **ORB** box in the narthex.

## Stations of the Cross Friday Evenings

The church is open weekdays (Mondays –Thursdays) from 8:00 am to 2:00 pm and Fridays from 8:00 am to 11:00 am - for private praying of the venerable *Stations of the Cross*. This is also a time you can spend in private prayer during the Lenten season. Public Stations of the Cross are prayed on the following Friday evenings at 6:30 pm. They will be led by:

**2/16:** Altar Rosary Society

**2/23:** Men's Faith Group

**3/02:** Confirmation Candidates

**3/09:** Parish Deacons

**3/16:** Holy Innocents—St Justin Center of Learning

On **Good Friday** at 7:30 pm our St. Justin Youth Group will conduct the beautiful Living Stations of the Cross. We reflect on how, we, the Body of Christ, the Church, must die and rise to new life each day! Join us for this very moving, uplifting spiritual exercise!

## The Sacrament of Reconciliation Penance or Confession

Let Jesus, your '*Lenten Valentine*,' purge your heart and soul of sin in the primary sacramental experience of God's mercy: by confessing our sins in the Sacrament of Penance or Reconciliation - aka 'Confession.' While only all mortal sins must be confessed, this Rite's sacramental grace also purges us of our lesser or venial sins. It serves as a 'check-up,' helps nip sinful habits in the bud before they bloom into full-blown sins, and strengthens us against temptation and other distractions.

Those guilty of mortal sin may NOT receive Holy Communion until they confess them to a Priest. Confession is also encouraged in *Lent* and *Advent*, before a *Baptism*, *Confirmation* or *Wedding*, or serving as a Sponsor or Godparent. The 4 parts are:

**CONTRITION.** To be contrite or remorseful we must know our sins, so we examine our conscience by shining God's divine light, found in Gospel values, the Ten Commandments, Precepts of the Church, Beatitudes and Seven Deadly Sins, into every aspect

of our life. *If you can't come up with any sins, ask your family or friends to help ... they know your sins!*

**CONFESSION.** Priests not only speak for God and the Church; as '*doctor of the soul*' they help cure sick souls, as medical doctors help heal bodies - but only if we are totally open and honest. Begin with "*Bless me, Father, for I have sinned*" or simply say, "*Please help me*" from behind a screen or face-to-face. We may remain anonymous, but should tell our state in life [*married, single, ordained, a parent, etc.*], and approximate date of our last confession. List all grave, serious mortal sins by number and kind: abortion, adultery, etc.; a general admission [*I'm impatient, rude, insensitive, etc.*] covers all lesser sins. An *Act of Contrition* card is available in the confessional; at Penance Services we recite it from a printed program; don't let not knowing an Act of Contrition keep you from this Sacrament of Healing!

**ABSOLUTION.** Listen as the Priest prays; make the Sign of the Cross on yourself as he imparts it on you at the end of the beautiful *Prayer of Absolution*.

**PENANCE.** To express our gratitude and offer a token of our willingness to try to avoid future sins, we perform a penance: a prayer, good deed or other sign. To celebrate Reconciliation come to the:

## Parish Penance Service

**FRIDAY - MARCH 23 - 7:00 pm**

Several priests will hear private confessions after the communal Examination of Conscience & Act of Contrition at this annual Penance Service.

**Or Saturday afternoons at 3:30 pm.**

*All MUST ARRIVE at 3:30 pm as Confessions MUST END by 4:45 pm due to the 5:00 pm Mass!*

*Note: On Passion [Palm] Sunday eve, confessions will be at 3:30 pm and must end by 4:30 pm.*

Or call ANY Parish Office to make an appointment with a Priest.

***NO Confessions will be heard during the Sacred Easter Triduum - so plan to come to Confession early!*** 0514-pg. 3

## Lenten Enrichment Programs

Catholics are always undergoing a process of never-ending conversion. There's always more to learn. There's always a greater level of holiness to be reached when our true goal is to conform ourselves to Christ. A basic knowledge of our faith is a pressing need for all. Both Father Mark and Father Tom are committed to continuing adult faith formation.

This year, during Lent, we will offer four weeks of lectures on the following Wednesday evenings (2/21, 2/28, 3/7 and 3/14). As we have in previous years, we will offer Mass on these Wednesdays during Lent at 6:30 pm. Immediately following Mass, we will offer a lecture which will be approximately 45 minutes to an hour. One can come for Mass and can either leave or stay for the lecture or one can come for the lecture alone. Both Mass and the lecture will take approximately ninety minutes (30 minutes for Mass and no longer than one hour for the lecture. No books or materials are required for the lectures. The following topics will be addressed:

### February 21: A Biblical Walk through the Mass.

An explanation of the Mass from beginning to end. Why do we do the things we do? What does the symbolism mean? Where do the words come from? Are they from Scripture?

### February 28: Cremation: Is it acceptable for Catholics?

We are witnessing more people opting for cremation rather than burial of the body after death. While cremation was associated historically with non-Christian and even anti-Christian worldviews, the Church today allows for the cremation of Catholics. However, Church guidelines wish to assure that the remains of cremated bodies be treated with the same respect given normally to a human body. This includes how they are cared for after death, and their final resting place. These topics will be addressed in this lecture.

### March 7: Topic to be announced

### March 14: Holy Week: The Great Week

At the heart of our faith is the Paschal mystery: the passion, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ. All of salvation history leads up to and goes forth from these saving events. We will describe Jesus' final week with a brief description of each day

of Holy Week. For Christians, this is a time to prayerfully walk with Jesus his most difficult yet most glorious week.

## Get FORMED for Lent!

This Lent, take advantage of the dynamic online platform called FORMED. As a gift from your parish, every parishioner can have 24/7 access to the best Catholic content on any device with internet access, including your computer, smartphone and tablet - at no cost to you! If you have not yet done so, register at [FORMED.org](http://FORMED.org) and enter our parish code: **342G7F**. You will set up your profile and be able to access the material at any time. There are many wonderful programs for Lent, with just a few of the many offerings highlighted below:

**A Lent to Remember: A Lenten Encounter with Mercy:** Explore the ways God reaches out to each of us with his mercy, most especially through the sacraments.

**Forgiven: The Transforming Power of Confession:** Come to a greater understanding of the grace and healing offered in the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

**Prayer: Finding Intimacy with God:** Enrich your prayer life using the *Lectio Divina* method by learning how to open your heart to Scripture as the means to listen to God and then respond.

**Symbolon:** The episodes that have a Lenten theme: The Story of Salvation, Who is Jesus?, The Paschal Mystery, Sacrament of Penance.

## All Liturgical Ministers' Gathering Laetare Sunday - March 11 - 4:00 pm

All who serve in ANY Liturgical Ministry: *Altar Servers, Deacons, Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, Masters-of-Ceremonies, Music Ministers, Sacristans, Readers* - and all who wish to serve in these ministries - are invited to this gathering. We will review basic policies, review Holy Week's elaborate rites, celebrate Evening Prayer and enjoy fellowship and refreshments.

## Dates to Remember: Keep Reading the bulletin:

February 24: Catholic Men for Jesus Conference  
March 18: St. Patrick's Day Celebration  
April 3: Bible Study Begins

## ***Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion*** ***March 25***

In Procession, with *blessed palms*, we honor Christ as our King and reflect on His Passion and Death. Masses are:

**Saturday: 5:00 pm**

**Sunday:**

**7:30 - 9:00 - 10:30 am - 12:00 noon**

*All children are invited to our special Children's Liturgy of the Word at ALL Masses this weekend; before Mass all children are invited to process around the Church; after the procession they go to see a ½ hour age-appropriate video on Christ's Passion, Death and Resurrection and return later than usual, during the Lord's Prayer.*

### ***Monday of Holy Week - March 26***

regular daily Mass at 8:30 am

**Chrism Mass - 7:30 pm at  
Saint Robert Bellarmine Co-Cathedral,  
Freehold**

Priests renew their Ordination promises and our Bishop blesses and consecrates the Holy Oils: the Oil of Catechumens used at Baptism, the Oil of the Sick used in the Anointing of the Sick, and the Sacred Chrism, used at Baptism, Confirmation, Holy Orders, and the blessing of new churches & altars. All are invited to our Co-Cathedral for this ancient, moving ceremony. Pray for our Priests!

***Tuesday of Holy Week - March 27***

***Wednesday of Holy Week - March 28***

regular daily Mass at 8:30 am

### ***Holy Thursday Morning - March 29***

Morning Prayer at 9:00 am

***[no morning Mass or any other Mass permitted]***

## ***The Sacred Triduum & Paschal Fast***

*Lent ends as we begin Holy Thursday's Mass of the Lord's Supper; we then enter the shortest but most central liturgical time: the three-day Easter Triduum. To more fully join in Christ's Death and Resurrection, all are strongly encouraged to join in all Triduum events and the Paschal Fast, which is even more intense than the Lenten fast: all should fast from Good Friday until the Easter Vigil "as a way of coming to the joys of the Sunday of the Resurrection with uplifted and welcoming hearts."  
[From the Ceremonial of Bishops # 295.]*

### ***Holy Thursday - March 29***

We solemnly celebrate Jesus' parting gifts of love: His abiding Presence in the Eucharist; His care and concern for us in the Ordained Priesthood; and Christian Service, our call to continue His work. For as Jesus said after washing the Apostles' feet: *"If I, therefore, the master and teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash one another's feet. I have given you a model to follow, so that as I have done for you, you should also do."* [John 13:14-15] In the *Mass of the Lord's Supper* we serve by: washing feet, giving alms through Operation Rice Bowl, and 'watching one hour' with the Lord in *Eucharistic Adoration* until *Night Prayer*.

### ***Holy Thursday Services***

**Morning Prayer 9:00 am**

**Mass of the Lord's Supper 7:00 pm**

**Night Prayer 10:30 pm**

### ***Good Friday - March 30***

We meditate on Christ's Passion and Death with ancient rituals and in profound silence. The church is open all day for private prayer and for public services: Morning Prayer, *Main Celebration of the Passion of the Lord* and Living Stations of the Cross. ***All*** should visit the church this day to thank God for His redeeming love!

## Good Friday Services

Morning Prayer	9:00 am
The Passion of the Lord	3:00 pm
Stations of the Cross	7:30 pm

## Holy Saturday - March 31

Ancient tradition prohibits Mass this day; we keep watch at the tomb in solemn prayer. Pray for those who will be baptized and welcomed into the Catholic Church during this day of prayerful reflection.

## Holy Saturday Services

Morning Prayer	9:00 am
Easter Food Blessing	follows MP
Easter Vigil Mass	7:30 pm

## The Easter Vigil in the Holy Night March 31 - 7:30 pm

Church law strictly requires that the ONLY Masses permissible on Holy Saturday begin AFTER nightfall, in darkness, so there can be no 5:00 pm Vigil Mass on Holy Saturday. The Easter Vigil Service, the climax of the liturgical year, which begins at 7:30 pm, is a four-part ritual with roots in antiquity. The four parts are:

**SERVICE OF LIGHT.** The Paschal Candle, symbol of the Risen Christ, lit from the blessed fire, is brought into the darkened church. As all light their candle from the Christ-Light, the darkness of the tomb erupts into the warm glow of the Risen Lord's presence!

**LITURGY OF THE WORD.** We tell our scriptural story of God's marvelous, saving deeds throughout history.

**LITURGY OF BAPTISM & CONFIRMATION.** With blessed Easter Water we renew our Baptismal Promises and welcome our newest members through the Sacraments of Initiation, making God's saving deeds and the Risen Lord *truly alive* in us, His Church! [This year, we have no catechumens who are to be baptized and fully initiated into the Church]

**LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST.** In the highpoint of the Great Three Days [and the entire year] we share Eucharist and we pledge ourselves anew to become Eucharist: to become Christ's loving presence in our world.

**NOTE:** There is NO 5:00 pm Vigil Mass on Holy Saturday; the ONLY MASS is at 7:30 pm.

## Easter Sunday - April 1

*Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!*

### Easter Masses

Saturday Easter Vigil: 7:30 pm

Easter Sunday:

7:30 am - 9:00 am

10:30 am - 12:00 pm

Parish Office Phone: 732-270-3980

Parish website: [www.stjustin.org](http://www.stjustin.org)

Follow the Parish website for updates and archives of the bulletin.

Diocesan website: [dioceseoftrenton.org](http://dioceseoftrenton.org)

Vatican website: [vatican.va](http://vatican.va)