

HOW TO MAKE LENT A LIFE-CHANGING EXPERIENCE

LENT FOR ME ... IN THE 'GOOD OLD DAYS'

As a child, *Lent* meant many things; it started with having blessed ashes imposed on us, debating who got the 'biggest ash,' and doing all we could to make sure they lasted as long as possible. There was a cardboard 'mite box' into which I regularly deposited coins; I 'gave up' candy and sweets; and I waited to see all the statues 'covered' at the *5th Sunday of Lent*, the start of *Passiontide*, which signaled the end of that *penitential season*. *Meatless Fridays* were no big deal for, in those days, *every Friday, all year round*, was a day of abstinence. Even the weather was as lifeless, bleak and dismal as the *Lenten* season.

Every week my home *Parish* did *Saint Alphonsus Liguori's 1761* venerable *Stations of the Cross*, with a *Priest* saying at each *Station*: "*We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.*" Kneelers then crashed to the floor as all genuflected - which we called '*Catholic Aerobics 101!*' - as we all replied, "*Because, by your holy cross, you have redeemed the world.*" Between each *Station* we sang a verse of the mournful '*Stabat Mater*' - '*At the Cross Her Station Keeping.*' As an *Altar Boy* [no *Altar Girls* back then!] I prayed I was *NOT* assigned to the *6:30 am* daily *Mass* - but to the *8:00* or *8:30 am* *Mass*, which got me out of class for a few minutes. However, after that *earliest* 'crack of dawn' *Mass*, *Sister* invited us to the classroom to have breakfast with her ... oops, with *Sister*. It was *BYOC* - bring your own individual box of cereal, which you cut open and poured in milk which *Sister* provided. *Sister* thought the highpoint was when she [again, oops!] - for each *Mass* I attended - *Sister* put a star next to my name on a chart listing all my classmates' names ... some of whom are going to *Purgatory* until the end of time because they had *NO STARS* next to their name! - but the real highpoint was seeing *Sister* actually eat in front of us!

LENT FOR ME ... THESE DAYS

As a *Priest*, my *Lenten* focal point is purely liturgical: larger crowds at the now sole daily *Mass*; so many

people getting their *ash* in church on *Ash Wednesday*; the *Rites* of the ancient, now restored, *OCIA: Order of Christian Initiation of Adults* by which adults are *Baptized*, *Confirmed* and admitted to the *Eucharist*. I hear such a slew of *Confessions* here and in other *Parishes* that my head spins! All this leads to *Holy Week* and the spectacular *Solemn Rites* of the *Sacred Triduum*, the *Great Three Days*, which get better and better every year. *Easter joy* then continues with *First Communions* and *Confirmation!*

LENT FOR YOU AND FOR OTHERS: TODAY & TOMORROW

What will you do to make *Lent 2026* special? How will your children and grandchildren remember these grace-filled days and share their stories, as I just did, with their posterity? What *Lenten* customs do you practice? Making more time for prayer each day? Attending *holy Mass* each day? Praying the *Stations of the Cross*? Setting up a *Lenten Prayer Table* or *Shrine* at home? Digging deeper to feed the hungry through *Rice Bowl* donations? Showing your commitment to our *Diocese* by supporting the *Annual Appeal*? Joining a *Parish Ministry* or *Organization*? Committing to attend *Holy Thursday's Mass of the Lord's Supper*, pray before the *Blessed Sacrament* in the *Place of Repose*, join in *Good Friday's Celebration of the Lord's Passion*, the *Easter Vigil* and *Morning Prayer* each of the *Great Three Days*?

Our great *Catholic Faith* offers so much for us to draw closer to our *Lord* and to one another. I have certainly given the *Good Sisters, Priests*, and all who raised me in the *Faith* many reasons to turn in their graves; I hope I now do enough, in works of *penance, prayer, fasting* and *almsgiving*, to give them ample reason to rejoice in me! May we use the graces available to us in *Lent* so we can all have an *Easter* of unending joy!

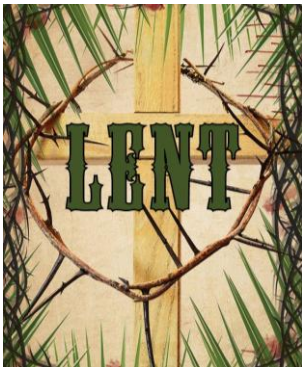
In Christ,

Reverend Mark A. Kreder

Pastor

+ MARDI GRAS TUESDAY FEBRUARY 17 +

Join in our Family Mardi Gras Celebration at 6:30 pm. Please RSVP to the Religious Education Office to sign up. We begin in the church for Night Prayer and the stripping of the church for Lent; followed by the burning of last year's palms for this year's ashes. Then the Magic Show and fun.



**ASH WEDNESDAY
FEBRUARY 18**

Blessed ashes mark the start of our Lenten journey of self-denial, penance and prayer. Ashes are a sign of repentance and mortality, so those of any age may receive ashes. Heed the words used to impose ashes: "Turn away from sin and be faithful to the Gospel." or "Remember you are dust and to dust you shall return."

Ashes are distributed DURING Holy Mass at **8:00 am - 12 noon & 7 pm** and after a Liturgy of the Word [with no Holy Communion] at 4:30 pm

EASTER PRECEPT OR EASTER DUTY

All Catholics are obligated to receive Holy Communion at least once a year, between the 1st Sunday of Lent, February 22, and The Most Holy Trinity Sunday, May 31. Those conscious of serious, grave or mortal sin must celebrate the Sacrament of Penance [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 one from fasting or abstaining. Ignoring penitential days, without good cause, is a serious sin of omission. Our **Bishops** ask us to abstain from meat EVERY Friday, all year long, for **Pro-Life causes** and **world peace**.

Sunday 'Obligation' Masses:

Saturday at 5 pm

Sunday at 8 am – 9:30 am – 11:30 am

Daily Masses:

Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday & Thursday:

8:00 am

The Sunday obligation is mandatory, but also try to attend a weekday Mass, if possible, to receive Holy Communion

FOOD COLLECTION - CRS RICE BOWL

To help feed the hungry, locally and abroad, use the Ash Wednesday 'For the Poor' envelope. We have not been passing the basket here at St. Justin Parish. So please consider using the St. Vincent de Paul envelopes and adding a bit more to your Church offerings by putting them in the receptacles at the doors as you enter or leave church. Please return Catholic Relief Services' Rice Bowl mite boxes, found in the narthex, by Holy Thursday, to the CRSRB basket in the narthex.

2025 CHRISTMAS COLLECTION STATS

Our Christmas Collection set another all-time Parish record, not only in donations, but more importantly, in recent attendance. We are grateful for your generosity. We have made many improvements in the facilities which are dependent on donations. Our Christmas collection for 2025 was \$58,156. **Thank you again for your generosity.**

THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE [RECONCILIATION OR CONFESSION]

We can enjoy the *primary* sacramental experience of *God's* mercy by confessing our sins. While only all *mortal* sins *must* be confessed, this *Rite's* sacramental grace also washes away all lesser, venial sins. And a spiritual '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 it to a *Priest*. *Confession* is also encouraged in *Lent* and *Advent*, before a *Baptism*, *Confirmation* or *Wedding*, or serving as a *Sponsor* or *Godparent*. Throughout *Lent* we will print a variety of *Examinations of Conscience* in the bulletin to assist you in preparing for *Confession*, as we have been doing in *Advent* and *Lent*:

LENT CONFESSION

FRIDAY - MARCH 20

5:30 - 7:00 pm

ARRIVAL. Upon arrival, all *Penitents* will be given a flyer with the names of the *Priest-Confessors*, an *Examination of Conscience*, and an *Act of Contrition*. Please pray the *Act of Contrition* *privately, after* your *Confession*. Ushers will be present to help the flow of traffic and to assure that there is ample space away from the priest to assure privacy for the person who is confessing. We ask that all maintain a spirit of silence as you await to have your confession heard. Instrumental music will be playing in the church during this time. As you pray your Act of Contrition, feel free to spend time in silent prayer before returning home.

Lenten Reflection. Spend some time reflecting on your life. Is there anything that you have lost interest in? What has gone to ashes? Prayer? Discipleship? Enthusiasm? Joy? Hope? Trust? Perhaps we need to fast from noise and busyness in order to hear God speaking in the silence. Perhaps we need to fast from television and entertainment in order to hear God in the cries of the poor and the stranger. The Lord says, "Return to me

with all your heart!" God pleads for our return. "Now is the acceptable time!" says St. Paul. Don't wait. The gospel gives us the spiritual tools of almsgiving, prayer, and fasting for bringing cold embers back to life.

THE RITE ITSELF. Privacy is guaranteed by the background music and by having only one *Priest* and *penitent* per area. Begin with "*Bless me, Father, for I have sinned...*" or simply say, "*Father, you lead...*" You may remain anonymous, but should tell your state in life [*married, single, ordained, a parent, etc.*], and approximate date of your 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.

Confessions are also heard on
SATURDAYS at 3:30 pm

except on March 14.

On Monday, March 9, confessions will be heard from 6:30 pm to 8:00 pm. The Blessed Sacrament will be exposed during that time. We do need to assure that people are in the church while Father is in the confessional.

Or contact Fr. Mark to make an appointment.

NO Confessions will be heard during Holy Week, from Palm Sunday [03/29] until AFTER Easter, so come to Confession early!

BULLETIN WEEKLY CATECHISM LESSON

Do you read each week's bulletin article on the various aspects of our *Catholic Faith* as your '*Lectio Divina*' or weekly 'holy study?' Topics have included the *Saints*, all revised *Mass* orations and *Sacramental Orders*, and other current issues. Check our *Parish* website for past articles! Make reading it your *weekly discipline*.

IS GOD REMEMBERED IN YOUR WILL?

While concern for our own and others' needs may keep us from tithing a full 10% now, most should be able to reach this goal in their will. Is *God* and *Saint Justin Parish* remembered ... in your will?

STATIONS OF THE CROSS
WEDNESDAY EVENINGS AT 7:00 PM
GOOD FRIDAY: 7:00 PM

Many parishes pray the Stations of the Cross on the Fridays of Lent. We made the decision to pray them on Wednesday evenings to accommodate those who cannot come on Friday evenings. This will give people more opportunities to experience this rich tradition of the Church. If someone is not able to come on a Wednesday evening they can go to a local parish on a Friday evening. Likewise, people in other parishes can come to our parish on a Wednesday night if they are unable to go on a Friday evening. Many people in our parish like to go to the Knights of Columbus on Friday evenings for the Lenten suppers. This will allow them to do so.

There are many formats for the Stations of the Cross. All of them are beautiful. This year various forms of the Stations of the Cross will be led by:

February 25: Altar Rosary Society

March 4: Religious Education Students

March 11: Altar Servers

March 18: Holy Innocents

March 25: OCIA, HNS & Men's Faith Group

Good Friday: Living Stations by our Youth Group

When we do pray the Stations of the Cross, we can also connect them with the baptismal character of Lent if we place the stations themselves in the context of the whole paschal mystery. In Baptism we are plunged into the mystery of Christ's death and resurrection, and our baptismal commitment includes a willingness to give our life for others as Jesus did. Recalling his passion and death can remind us that we, too, may be called to suffer in order to be faithful to the call of God.

The liturgy never focuses on the death of Christ without recalling his resurrection. The resurrection is an integral part of the paschal mystery. We, the *Body of Christ*, the *Church*, must die and rise to new life each day. Please make an effort to come to as many as possible. I especially ask you to support our young people—the Altar Servers and our Youth Group.

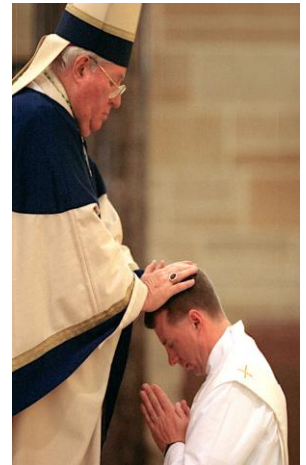
VOCATIONS & LAY CHURCH MINISTRIES:
HOW INVOLVED ARE YOU IN OUR PARISH?

Make our *Parish* even greater by joining a ministry, group or organization listed in our bulletin and on our website.

Is *God* calling you to be a LITURGICAL Minister: *Altar Server, Lazarus [funeral] Minister, Music Minister, Usher, Reader, Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion?*

A CATECHETICAL minister: *Religious Formation Leader*

or Aide, Children's Liturgy of the Word Leader or Aide, Sacramental Preparation Instructor? If so, contact the *Parish Office* to be directed to the head of that ministry or group. To become a *Priest, Deacon, Sister, or Brother*, speak to a *Priest or Deacon*, call **609-406-7448**, or visit the Vocation Office's Diocesan website: <https://godiscallingyou.org/>. Pray for vocations from our *Parish* and *Diocese*. Encourage your children and grandchildren to consider a life of service as a minister in *God's Church*.



2026 MAGNIFICAT LENTEN COMPANION

Once again, *Saint Justin Church* is gifting you with *The Magnificat Lenten Companion* which offers brief, daily reflections. The book will be available in the narthex. To subscribe for an online version, sent to you each day, go to <https://us.magnificat.net/online>.

HOMEBOUND PARISHIONERS

We are in dire need of ministers who will bring the *Most Holy Eucharist [Holy Communion]* to the sick or homebound.

Please prayerfully consider whether God is calling you to serve in this most important ministry. "Whatever you did for the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me." *Matthew 25: 40*



PARISH LENTEN FAITH ENRICHMENT

Our *Parish* offers many opportunities for adults to grow in their *Catholic Faith*; here are the main ways:

GET 'FORMED' FOR LENT!

Now that many have become familiar with many methods to teleconference, telecommute, and take part in distance education and social relations, it's time to try - or return to - the dynamic *Catholic* online platform called *FORMED*. *Saint Justin Church* *GIFTS* every parishioner with 24/7 access to the best *Catholic* content, including bible studies, movies, talks, and books. It is totally *FREE*; here's how to register:

1. Go to FORMED.ORG, click on SIGNUP AS A PARISHIONER in the options listed under Formed.org.
2. Click on "Sign up to create an account."
3. Type in your personal email
4. The next screen is SIGN UP type and confirm your email, enter first name, last name, and phone number, HIT SIGNUP BUTTON
5. JOIN YOUR PARISH/Find your parish is the next screen, put 08753 zip code in the blank area, in the dropdown box select St. Justin
6. JOIN YOUR PARISH/St. Justin is populated in the box, click SUBMIT
7. Select from numerous options and enjoy

Once you set up your profile, you can access the material at any time. *PROGRAMS* include: Salvation; Forgiven; Presence; Footprints of God: Jesus. *TALKS* include: Daily Lenten Reflections; My Beloved Son: Meditations for Lent; Walk the Walk: Following Christ as His Disciple; The Case for Jesus; Glimpses Along the Way of the Cross; Jesus the Bridegroom; Holy Week.

Men's Faith Group

Generally Meets 1st & 3rd Mondays each Month

7:00 pm - 8:30 pm

They have watched and discussed the "Chosen" series among other areas of our Faith. See the bulletin for details.

WOMEN'S FAITH FORMATION

In the past, we have had a Women's Group. Those who led it have moved from our state. We are

looking for a woman who will lead this group once again. Call the Parish Office and leave your name and number if you are interested in starting and leading a *Women's Faith Formation Group [WFFG]* so we can equip ourselves to face our secular world with the richness of our *Catholic Faith*.

LENTEN TUESDAYS

On Tuesday, February 24, we will start the Lenten Season with Eucharistic Adoration from 7 pm - 8 pm. This will give us some time to spend quiet time with Our Lord. The evening will end with Benediction.

The topics are presently being worked out. Once all the topics are decided upon, the date for each topic will be announced. Father Mark will present a lecture on the penitential psalms. These are seven psalms that traditionally have been grouped together for both liturgical and private use. They are especially appropriate for Lent.

THE ORDER OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION OF ADULTS: OCIA [FORMERLY, RCIA]

We have no *Catechumens* being fully received into the *Church* at this year's *Easter Vigil*. Pray for all adults throughout the world who will be *Baptized, Confirmed*, receive *First Eucharist* and be welcomed into the *Catholic Church* this *Easter*. We do have some *Baptized* adult *Candidates* who will complete their initiation into the *Catholic Church* this *Eastertime*. Some are preparing for *Confirmation* and *First Communion*. Some are preparing for the Reception of *Confirmation* only. *All their pictures will be on a poster in the narthex. Please pray for them.*

ADULTS who wish to become *Catholic* or need *First Eucharist* or *Confirmation*, contact the *Parish Office*. Our *Parish Team* will help *Adult Candidates* for *First Eucharist* and/or *Confirmation* through this process. Everyone is obligated to be alert to those who wish to join us and encourage all who need to complete their initiation into the *Church* [receive *First Eucharist* or *Confirmation*] or grow in their knowledge and practice of the *Faith*! Who can you invite to *God's Table*?

HOLY WEEK AND EASTERTIME SCHEDULE

Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion
March 28/29 Saturday: 5:00 pm
Sunday: 7:45 - 9:30 - 11:30
Please note the time of the first
Mass.

In Procession, with *blessed palms*, we honor Christ as our King and reflect on His *Passion* and *Death*. All children are invited to our special *Children's Liturgy of the Word [CLOW]* at the 5:00 pm, 9:30 am and 11:30 am Masses; before Mass all children are invited to the center aisle; 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*. Adult help is always needed: contact the *Parish Office* to begin the process of being trained to help with our *CLOW* ministry.

Monday of Holy Week: March 30

Mass at 8:00 am

Chrism Mass – 7:30 pm in our
Co-Cathedral of Saint Robert Bellarmine
in Freehold.

It will also be livestreamed on our
Diocesan website: dioceseoftrenton.org.

At the *Chrism Mass*, *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*. Pray for our *Priests*: present, past and future!

Tuesday of Holy Week - March 31

Mass at 8:00 am

Wednesday of Holy Week - April 1

Mass at 8:00 am

Holy Thursday Morning - April 2

Morning Prayer at 9:00 am

[no morning Mass or any other Mass permitted]

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*." [Ceremonial of Bishops #295]

Holy Thursday - April 2

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 our call to continue His work in *Christian Service*. 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 *Catholic Relief Services' Rice Bowl' [CRSRB]* and offerings placed in the receptacles at the doors, and 'watching one hour' with the *Lord* at the *Place of Repose* until 10:15 pm *Night Prayer*. Simple adoration resumes with *Good Friday's 9:00 am Morning Prayer* until the 3:00 pm *Service*. It is a very moving experience to sit quietly before the Tabernacle of Repose.

HOLY THURSDAY SERVICES

Morning Prayer	9:00 am
Mass of the Lord's Supper	7:00 pm
Night Prayer	10:15 pm

Good Friday - April 3

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 the beautiful Living Stations of the Cross performed by our Youth Group. This has always been a very special and moving presentation. All should visit the church this solemn day to seek God's help to embrace our own crosses and 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	7:00 pm

Holy Saturday - April 4

Ancient tradition prohibits *holy Mass* on this day; we keep watch at the tomb in solemn prayer. It is a day of prayerful reflection. Pray for those who will be baptized and welcomed into the *Catholic Church* throughout the world. And pray for those who will complete their Sacraments of Initiation this Easter season.

HOLY SATURDAY SERVICES

Morning Prayer; Some OCIA Rites and the Blessing of Easter Food	9:00 am
Easter Vigil Mass	7:00 pm

Easter Vigil in the Holy Night

April 4 - 7:00 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 in the Holy Night Mass*, the climax of the liturgical year, which begins at **7:00 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!*

LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST. In the highpoint of the *Great Three Days* and the entire year, our newest members share *Eucharist* with us for the first time. We renew our pledge to become *Eucharist* by being *Christ's Risen* presence in our world.

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

EASTER SUNDAY - APRIL 5

Easter Masses

Saturday Easter Vigil: 7:00 pm

Easter Sunday:

7:45 am - 9:30 am - 11:30 pm

Please note that the first Mass will start 15 minutes earlier on Passion and Easter Sunday.

Easter joy continues as our *Parish* celebrates *First Holy Communion* for **62** of our children and the *Confirmation* of **52** of our young people. Pray for them and their loved ones.



Whole 40: Making a Spiritual Plan for Lent

Sit down with Dr. Ben Akers and Dr. Elizabeth Klein to discuss the purpose of the season of Lent, how to prepare for it, and why it is such a fruitful season in our life of faith.

Our parish has a free Formed subscription for you! Simply scan the QR code or visit formed.org/signup to create your account and select our parish to get free access to this content and much more!

