

Saint Francis Xavier Parish

First Sunday of Lent

March 1, 2020



PRAYER FOR THE FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT

GOD OF THE DESERT,
FILL OUR HUNGRY HEARTS
WITH FAITH IN YOU.

WHEN WE FEEL ALONE,
HELP US SEE YOU THERE WITH US.

GIVE US THE COURAGE
TO CRY OUT TO YOU.

AMEN.

REV. DENNIS M. DINAN, PASTOR

ABBY RODDEN, *PARISH SECRETARY*

OFFICE HOURS: TUESDAY-FRIDAY 10:00AM-3:00PM OR BY APPOINTMENT

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Dear Parish Family,

Once again, we begin Lent. Again, our gospel has Jesus being tempted by Satan, the Devil. Once more, let's admit it: We don't give much weight to Jesus being tempted, right? He was Divine! He could not sin! What's the big deal? As a result, we can easily presume that he really cannot commiserate with sinners. Like his mother Mary, he was born without sin. We think: What does he know about having a fallen human nature as we do? We reason: He cannot know what it is like to be tempted as we are tempted.

It is hard for us to imagine Jesus dealing with some of the same thoughts, and desires and pulls that we do. Even so, the *Book of Hebrews* insists that Jesus, "*had to become like [us] in every way, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest before God to expiate the sins of the people*" (Heb 2:17). Yes, "*He had to become like us.*" His mission was not like that of a spectator sport. He refused to just stand on the sidelines, simply to coach. He wanted to be in the thick of it with us! He came to step into the ring. He came to get more than his nose bloodied. He chose to take the hits we couldn't bear. He came to deal death a deathblow. This meant dealing first with the cause of death: sin!

In our Second Reading, Saint Paul coaches us about this, how "*through one person sin entered the world, and through sin, death, and thus death came to all*" (Rom 5:12). Freeing us from sin was "key" to reversing this sentence. Jesus entered into a one-of-a-kind combat, whereby "*just as through one transgression condemnation came upon all, so through one righteous act acquittal and life came to all*" (Rom 5:18). The key to the battle—the core of the victory—Saint Paul says sprung from one source: "*Obedience!*" He says, "*Just as through the disobedience of one person the many were made sinners, so through the obedience of one the many will be made righteous*" (Rom 5:19). Obedience was not a now-and-then issue with Jesus, as with us.

Sounds very simplistic! In one sense it is. In another sense, it is not because obedience was the very fiber of everything that Jesus did. Obedience was the thread woven through every thought, word and action of Jesus. We are told, "*Son though he was, he learned obedience from what he suffered*" (Heb 5:8). Saint Paul also tells us that, as if he left his divine nature behind, Jesus "*emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness; and found human in appearance, he humbled himself, becoming obedient to death*" (Phil 2:7-8). This was all suffering for a divine person! The obedience was not just in his passion and death, but from the beginning, in every circumstance.

Father Raniero Cantalamessa, O.F.M., Cap., in his book, *The Mystery of the Transfiguration*, spends an entire chapter on Jesus' obedience. He explains why Jesus "*had to become like [us] in every way*" (Heb 2:17) using for instance Saint Gregory of Nazianus' teaching, "whatever" Jesus "did not assume, was not saved." Additionally, "If the Savior did not take on a soul, the soul is not saved." We can fill in the rest. He also quotes the Early Church heretic Nestorius, who taught that Jesus didn't exist as a divine person. Nestorius however praised the obedience of whom he wrongly calls "the human Christ" in a writing that is for sure:

[Jesus] took a nature which had sinned, lest in taking a nature which was not subject to sin he should be supposed not to have sinned on account of the nature and not on account of obedience. But, although he had all those things which appertain unto our nature, anger and concupiscence and thoughts, and although also they increased with the progress and increase of every age [of his life], he stood firm in thoughts of obedience....

So, Jesus was the real thing! He really did become like us in all things, but sin—in other words: "all things but disobedience." To obey his Father, he would suffer anything! To obey his Father, Jesus suffered everything! When we are tempted or tested, we

impose limits on ourselves. We may not think of it in this way or be conscious of it at all times, but we are not willing to go beyond that. So, we give up. We now become disobedient. We sin at that point, not wanting to put up with it beyond that point. It is like we are brothers and sisters of Cain, who cried out to the Lord: "*My punishment is too great to bear*" (Gen 4:13).

We can reflect on this. What does it usually take for us to commit sin? When being tempted, how long does it take us to throw in the towel? What does it take for us to lose our tempers? To start the screaming? To use the foul language? To start the whole process of treating others uncharitably? Of disciplining in anger? In seeking revenge? In getting back? How long is it before we give in to any other type of temptation? Despair? Jealousy? Envy? Sloth? Eating and drinking too much? Overindulgence in anything? Using and manipulating others for simply our benefit? Impurity or adultery in thought, word or deed? Maybe we succumb into self-pity and sulking first! How long before that leads to wanting to be compensated for sinful fulfillment? How long before we are disobedient in any way? Is it because we perceive an injustice we've suffered? That God does not understand? Or, that God will understand—so we can just go ahead with it? What conditions need arise before we start to lie? To save our own skin? Not to be found out? To avoid ridicule? Isn't this all pride? How long before we throw up our hands in displeasure, or annoyance, or indifference and commit any sin?

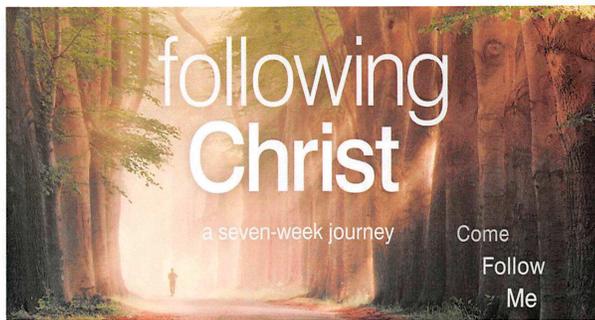
This was not true with Jesus! He had no limits. He would endure any trials, temptations or sufferings. Nothing swayed him from obedience. That's why we're told, "*In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood*" (Heb 12:4). No, we give up too soon! Jesus endured! That Jesus could not sin: That is true! It does not mean that he suffered less than we do in temptation. Actually, Jesus suffered more—incredibly more. He bore the full weight of every temptation, willing also to shed his blood—and much more! He gave all!

How did Jesus do this? First, he had the credentials, "*Because he himself was tested through what he suffered, he is able to help those who are being tested*" (Heb 2:18). Secondly, it was the grace of God. Yes, Jesus is God; but knowing how he overcame each temptation and with the power required to do so, he knows just what to do for us—knows what help and strength to give us.

We tend to be too self-reliant. So, the grace of God will not normally work if we are spending only a few moments of our days in prayer. We must turn to God, in his Son Jesus Christ. With our ailments we must enter a relationship with him as with any doctor, giving the time for our office visits, looking for a cure. "*So let us confidently approach the throne of grace to receive mercy and to find grace for timely help*" (Heb 4:16). We will do so if we remember, "*We do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has similarly been tested in every way, yet without sin*" (Heb 2:15).

Need more assurance? Father Cantalamessa, quoting Theodore of Mopsuestia, adds that through the Resurrection of Jesus, "death was abolished, corruption destroyed, passions extinguished, mutability removed, the inordinate emotions of sin consumed, [and] the power of Satan overthrown." A gift to us! Still, we need to cooperate: by obedience!—remembering: Once having endured the worst that sin, the devil and all the powers of Hell could dish out, Jesus could stretch out a hand to help us. So, let's admit: we have had it wrong. Jesus was there! He will be there for us!

God's Peace 

Following Christ is the follow-up course to the Discovering Christ course offered in Sullivan County last year. The program is 7 weeks and is open to anyone who has completed the Discovering Christ series in this county or elsewhere.

Topics covered will include:

- Introduction and Daily Personal Prayer
- Hearing God in Scripture
- The Power of the Sacraments
- Forgiving One Another
- The Spirit-Empowered Life
- We Are At War Retreat
- The World, the Flesh and the Devil
- The Heart of a Disciple

Dates: Sundays, April 19 & 26, May 3, 17 & 31, and June 6 and 14. (7-week series)*

Time: 5:00-7:30 p.m.

Location: St. Peter's School Cafeteria (basement level)
264 North Main Street, Liberty, NY

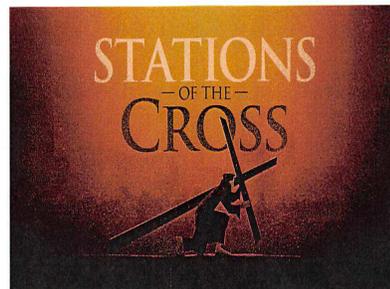
*Retreat: Sunday, June 14, from 2:00-7:00 p.m.

Cost: \$40.00 per person

This program is run by volunteers and is not sponsored by an outside organization. The \$40 fee will help us cover the cost of materials and meals for the duration of the series. Please bring your \$40 cash donation the first day.

To register or for info, contact us: discoverchristsullivan@gmail.com or call Mary Ann 845-701-1491 or Judy at 914-799-5050.

SAVE THE DATES



What: Stations of the Cross

When: Each Wednesday of Lent
From 6:00-6:30pm

Where: St. Francis Xavier Church

An Afternoon of Celtic Spirituality

Sunday, March 22, 2020

3 - 5 PM

St. Peter's Church, Liberty

Directed by

Sister Peggy Murphy, O.P.

*Who is it that you seek? How then shall we live?
How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?*

Come and reflect on the deep, rich Celtic tradition that has enriched our faith.

Light refreshments will be served.

Cardinal's Appeal Updates

Please see below for important *Cardinal's Appeal* updates:

- The first pastor follow-up letter will be reaching parishioners' homes this week.
- The 2020 *Cardinal's Appeal* video can be found online via this link: <https://vimeo.com/386732628>. Please consider sending the video out to your parishioners via Flocknote and linking it on your website. If you need additional hard copies of the video, please reach out to your campaign manager.
- To update parishioner information, please email the Donor Database Center at Updates@ArchNY.org. Be sure to copy your campaign manager as well so that he or she can follow-up on your behalf.



ARCHDIOCESE OF NEW YORK
YOUTH FAITH FORMATION
Catechetical



Lenten Afternoon of Prayer

SUNDAY, MARCH 8, 2020

From 1:00 pm to 5:00 pm

BKT RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CENTER
16 Frankie Lane, Liberty

Sister Margaret Ellen Burke, SC
will conduct the afternoon

CONFESSIONS at 3:00 pm

LITURGY CELEBRATED at 4:00 pm

By Rev. Edward Bader

Join us for an Afternoon of Prayer, Reflection, Reconciliation and the Sunday Liturgy

Registration Form

Name: _____ Phone Number: _____

Return To: BKT Religious Education Center
PO Box 1011
Liberty, New York 12754
845-292-9100 / bkt4@verizon.net

Please Return By March 1 - Donation \$4.00
Make checks payable to: Sisters of St. Dominic

Mass Intentions

Saturday, February 29th

SFX 4:30pm - Fr. William Scully
Requested by His Friends

Sunday, March 1st

(NO MASS at OLL)

SFX 8:30am - Our Parish Family
SFX 11:00am - Our Parish Family

Monday, March 2nd

NO MASS

Tuesday, March 3rd

SFX 8:30am - Linda Smith on her Birthday
Requested by The Parish

Wednesday, March 4th

SFX 8:30am - Available or Our Parish Family

Thursday, March 5th

SFX 8:30am - Edward Cardinal Egan
Requested by The Parish

Friday, March 6th

SFX 8:30am - Martin Marinelli
The Rodden Family

Saturday, March 7th

SFX 4:30pm - Walter & Florence Hubert
Requested by their Children

Sunday, March 8th

(NO MASS at OLL)

SFX 8:30am - Available or Our Parish Family
SFX 11:00am - Available or Our Parish Family

Collection

February 15/16, 2020

First Collection

St. Francis Xavier \$893.00

Other (R & M)

St. Francis Xavier \$40.00

Other (Heat)

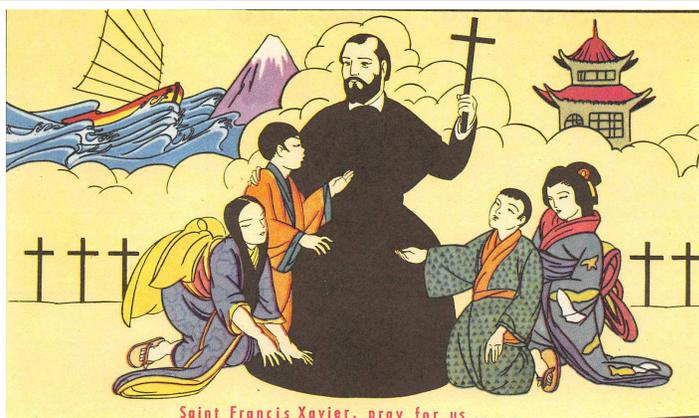
St. Francis Xavier \$15.00

Other (Capital Imp.)

St. Francis Xavier \$15.00

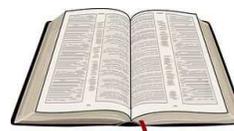
Total
\$963.00

Thank you!



Saint Francis Xavier, pray for us

READINGS



Genesis 2:7-9; 3:1-7
Romans 5:12-19 or or 5:12, 17-19
Matthew 4:1-11

Please Pray for our Parish Family

Please write your prayer intentions on the new lists at the back of the church.

For the Sick: David Meyer, Ed Coates, Ella Dorothy Neidert, Dolly Marinelli

For the Deceased: Dorothy Schlegel, Peggy Lee Romano, Carmen T. Holstrom, Joseph Ramon Gonzalez, Andrew Kimmel, Grace Kimmel, Madeline LoBasso, Margaret Corkett, Joseph Barca, Emerson "Bucky" Misner

For those Serving in the Military: