



The Messenger

ST. MARY OF THE ASSUMPTION

February 2026



Canticle of Simeon

"NOW, MASTER, YOU MAY LET YOUR SERVANT GO IN PEACE, ACCORDING TO YOUR WORD, OR MY EYES HAVE SEEN YOUR SALVATION, WHICH YOU PREPARED IN THE SIGHT OF ALL THE PEOPLES: A LIGHT FOR REVELATION TO THE GENTILES, AND GLORY FOR YOUR PEOPLE ISRAEL."

Luke 2:29-32

Serving at the Heart of the Mass

Liturgical Ministries

Here at St. Mary's, the celebration of the **Holy Mass** is enriched by the joyful service of many faithful who give their time, talent, and heart to assist in **liturgical ministries**. Each ministry plays a unique role in drawing our parish family deeper into the mystery of Christ's sacrifice and love. New volunteers are always welcome. Whatever your age, vocation, or experience, there is a place for you!

Eucharistic Ministers

Eucharistic Ministers share in one of the most sacred moments of the Mass, distributing the **Body and Blood of Christ** to fellow parishioners. This ministry calls ministers to engage heart-to-heart with communicants, offering each person Christ Himself with dignity and prayerful attention. Making eye contact and speaking the words "The Body of Christ" or "The Blood of Christ," Eucharistic Ministers joyously share the Eucharist with our community.

Altar Servers

Altar Servers assist the clergy throughout the Mass and serve the parish in prayerful presence and action. From carrying the processional cross and lighting candles to assisting at weekday Masses or special liturgies, servers support the flow of worship while learning the rhythms of the **Liturgy of the Eucharist**. At St. Mary's, this ministry isn't only for children! While youth (3rd grade and up) are welcomed with open arms, **adults are encouraged to serve at the altar too!** Serving at the altar allows anyone to enter more deeply into the heart of the Mass.

Sacristans

Behind the scenes but always indispensable, **Sacristans** prepare and care for everything needed for the celebration of Mass. From setting out the **altar linens, vessels, and vestments** to ensuring the sacred space is ready, their stewardship honors the holiness and dignity of the liturgy. This ministry is a wonderful way to serve if you enjoy attentive, prayerful preparation. We welcome both teenagers and

adults in this role, a beautiful opportunity for formation and service at any stage of life.

Lectors

Lectors proclaim the **Word of God** during Mass, bringing the Scriptures to life for the assembly. This ministry invites volunteers to prepare and reflect prayerfully so that the faithful may hear and respond to **God's living Word** with clarity and devotion. Lectors aren't just adults – teens with confidence and love for Scripture are warmly encouraged to serve at the ambo!

Each of these ministries at St. Mary's is an **honored way to serve the Lord, the clergy, and your fellow parishioners**. Whether you're young or young-at-heart, there is a place for you to grow in faith and bring Christ's light to our community. If you feel called to serve in one of these ways, speak with the ministry leaders or the parish office. Your gifts are needed and appreciated!



WELCOME

Dear friends,

Praised be Jesus Christ, who can make our hearts like His own! Welcome to the February edition of *The Messenger*. Our main theme this month is *Lent*. Ash Wednesday is February 18th, the beginning of the Lenten season, which prepares us for the celebration of Easter. In this issue, we'll look at a lot of our Catholic Lenten practices - their whats, whys, and spirituality.

For example - meatless Fridays. Does meat magically become sinful to eat on Fridays? What if a person doesn't like meat in the first place? If we don't eat meat, but have Oyster Rockefeller for lunch and Crab Imperial for dinner, doesn't that kind of miss the point? Also, did you know that if you Google "Fancy Seafood Dishes," you can easily waste time learning about meals that you've never heard of, like Oyster Rockefeller?

Here are some reasons behind the current practice (if a person doesn't like meat in the first place, I added three more!). But we'll start with:

- **Sacrifice.** It's a sacrifice for most (it depends on how much the person likes meat). It can strengthen our self-control for when we really need it. It can help us understand a little more about the experience of the poor who can't have anything they want when they want it.
- **Unity.** It's an action that joins us with Catholics throughout the world. We are not only individual Christians. We are part of the Body of Christ. This is one way, during Lent, that we can show that, with the entire team practicing the same way.
- **Intentionality.** Like with anything important, it's very easy to get into a routine and forget the deeper meanings of things. Abstaining from meat on Lenten Fridays helps us to pause and *remember that we're in Lent in the first place*.
- **Humility.** Not condemning ourselves, but real humility. If we find ourselves complaining about meatless Fridays, or thinking we're better than others because we're not complaining, or declaring ourselves separate from others because we don't like meat... We're called to be grateful, humble, and part of the team. Meatless Fridays can help us to answer that call by showing that we all have something to work on.

Lent can be a powerful time to grow closer to God, understand ourselves, and grow in love. In this issue of *The Messenger*, you'll find ways to make this Lent a time of great faith, freedom, and healing, preparing to celebrate Easter with even deeper joy!

Peace,

Fr. John

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This reflection invites us to bring our work into prayer, asking God to shape our choices and lead us along the paths of faithful labor: wisdom, humility, perseverance, and hope.

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This reflection invites us to slow down and notice what fills our days and shapes our desires. Lent offers space to reorder our loves, letting go of what pulls us away so we can return to what draws us closer to God.

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In a world where many still quietly thirst, Christ calls us to notice and respond. To give drink to the thirsty is to recognize and serve Him in the least among us.

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Following the Will of God in our Professions

"As each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another as good stewards of God's varied grace."

God has given each of us a specific mission—a specific role to play—for the good of ourselves, the Church, and the world. In the last two Deeper Dives, we've looked at following God's will as His disciples and at how we live that out through our gifts, talents, and personalities. This month, we'll consider discernment of our professions and begin reflecting on vocations—the most specific roles the Lord has fashioned for us. First, though, a quick review of where we've been.

First: The will of God for all disciples.

This is wrapped up in the command of love: loving God with all our heart, loving our neighbor as ourselves, and loving others as Jesus loved us. These are found in the Ten Commandments, in Catholic teaching on faith and morals, and in the daily command of charity. Listening to Scripture and to the Church are the first steps to knowing and following the will of God.

Second: The Will of God in our gifts, talents, and personalities. We each have a mix of gifts and talents that make up how we can go about building up the church and the world. Each of us also has specific personality traits that are a mix of DNA, experiences, and the atmosphere and many situations in each of our lives. When we use any of these - gifts, talents, personality traits - for faith, virtue, and the good of others, then we're following the will of God.

There are temptations against the will of God in both of these. However, perseverance and prayer help us to be open to God shaping us to

be the disciples He's made us to be, with the gifts, talents, and traits that He's given us to do His will.

For now, we'll look at the next way to live out God's will: **our professions.**

One of many definitions of profession is this: what we do to sustain ourselves and others for life in this world, by helping in some way to make the world work better. Most of the time it's what we're paid to do (exceptions include someone who has the vocation of a parent, and the profession of a homemaker). It doesn't have to contradict our gifts, talents, and personalities (and most of the time a successful profession won't completely do this). It ought not contradict our call to be disciples and our specific vocations.

The most important part of considering a profession is prayer. Whether it's a young person's entrance into the professional world, the need to sustain a job, or the need to discern something new. Prayer is the first place to go.

Why prayer? Aren't we talking about practical things here?

There is a good chance that God won't reveal to you the exact 10 next decisions that need to be made concerning your profession. However, with prayer, God either shows us what He wants us to see in the prayer time itself, or He prepares our hearts to pay attention to it at a later time. There are specifics that the Lord desires to show us about this job, that skill, this person to contact, and things like that.

In prayer, though, there is more that the Lord wants to show us. This is because it is God's will:

- that we be prudent and reasonable in our expectations.
- that we choose a profession that will align with the Gospel, the virtues, and the teaching of the Church.
- that our profession that can be done well with the other priorities in our lives, like our vocations, health, and the practice of our faith.
- that our profession provide for the material needs of ourselves and those dependent on us.

There could be several options that include all of these things. God will help bring clarity to our minds. He will also help us to know who to talk to about the different options in front of us. It is in prayer that God opens us to His guidance, whether He gives it right to our souls or through someone else.

Because it's God's will that we have reasonable expectations, we probably should stray from something like this: "I want a profession with no challenges, where I intuitively know everything on Day One, will not make mistakes, and have colleagues that will always compliment my personality and values."

That profession doesn't exist. But good and realistic options do exist. There will be times when there is no clear option, but several good options with different challenges. It is in these times that we say something like this:

"Lord, I have discerned to the best of my ability. Each of these options seem to line up with Your will and my needs, and have challenges that I think I can reasonably face. I'm going to choose Option A. If there is something bad that I'm not seeing, please redirect me. Otherwise, please bless this decision, and help me to flourish, learn, and persevere in it."

Our professions ought never contradict our call as disciples and our vocations. We've talked about God's will for us as His disciples. Next month's Deeper Dive will be dedicated to what our vocations are in the first place. For now, though, here is an introduction.

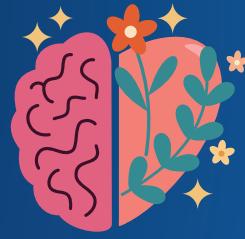
A vocation is a permanent promise that involves who we are in the deepest way. These include Marriage, Consecrated Life, Priesthood, and the Permanent Diaconate. This also includes Holy Single Life, where a person promises to live their singleness in faithfulness to Jesus and His Church. This also includes the vocations of fatherhood and motherhood, which have permanent promises written into everything about them.

How does a person discern a vocation? On the one hand, there are many answers to the question "how did you know?" as there are people who answered it. On the other hand, there are principles and guidelines that everyone can follow. We'll get into them in the March edition of *The Messenger*.

Peace,
Fr. John

Lent: Ashes, Suffering, and the Quiet Work of Healing

by Ellen Dumer, LCPC



Each year, Lent begins not with triumph, but with ashes. A small cross traced on our foreheads, accompanied by the words:



***“Remember that you are dust,
and to dust you shall return.”***

These words are not meant to shame us, but to ground us in truth. We are finite. We are fragile. And we are deeply loved.

In a culture that prizes productivity, strength, and constant positivity, the season of Lent offers something countercultural: permission to acknowledge suffering. The ashes remind us that pain is not a failure of faith. Struggle is not a spiritual flaw. Suffering is part of the human condition Christ willingly entered.

For those living with anxiety, depression, grief, trauma, or exhaustion, Lent can feel especially heavy. Fasting may be difficult. Silence may feel overwhelming. The call to repentance may awaken shame rather than hope. Yet the Church, in her wisdom, does not invite us to suffer for suffering's sake.

***Lent is not about punishment.
It is about honesty and about healing.***

Ashes come from burned palms, once waved in praise. Even what was joyful can be reduced to dust. Many people carry similar losses: relationships that changed, dreams that faded, versions of themselves they no longer recognize. Lent allows us to bring these losses into prayer, trusting that God meets us not only in strength, but in vulnerability.

Mental health struggles often involve carrying invisible burdens. Lent reminds us that what is hidden still matters to God. Jesus did not bypass suffering; He transformed it. In the desert, He experienced hunger, loneliness, and temptation. On the cross, He cried out in anguish. Our pain, including emotional and psychological pain, is not foreign to Him.

True Lenten practices should make space for compassion – toward others and toward ourselves. Sometimes the most faithful fast is from self-criticism. Sometimes the most honest prayer is simply showing up. Sometimes almsgiving means accepting help.

Lent leads us through ashes, not to despair, but to resurrection. God does not waste our suffering. Even in dust, grace is at work, quietly shaping hearts, restoring hope, and reminding us that healing, like resurrection, often begins unseen.

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Monday: We've Fallen and We Can't Get Up

Tuesday: What's the Church Got to Do With It?

Wednesday: No Kids at the Wedding!?

Thursday: I Don't Know How to Talk to People



March 1–5

Sunday, March 1:

- 4 PM Confessions/Adoration
- 5 PM Mission Talk
- 6 PM Dinner in Parish Hall

Monday, Mar 2 – Thursday, Mar 5:

- 6 PM Confessions/Adoration
- 7 PM Mission Talk



Father Nathan Mudd, CPM



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Jesus' Birthday Bash



JANUARY IN REVIEW



The Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God Vigil



Thank you to our patrons who supported our Artisan of the Month. We look forward to welcoming, The Shop at Gypsy Wild, back again soon.



Our parish confirmed twenty-nine young parishioners on January 10th! Thank you to Bishop Parker and Fr. John for a beautiful liturgy, and to the Confirmation team for the love, prayers and preparation that went into the day.



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Now You May Let Your Servant Go in Peace

The Canticle of Simeon & the Light of Christ

Candlemas, celebrated on February 2, marks the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord and comes forty days after Christmas. On this day, the Church remembers Mary and Joseph bringing the infant Jesus to the Temple in Jerusalem, where He is recognized by Simeon as the "light for revelation to the Gentiles." This powerful moment reveals Christ as the Light of the world, given for all people.

The name Candlemas comes from the ancient tradition of blessing candles on this feast day. Candles symbolize Christ's light dispelling darkness and remind us of our own call to carry that light into the world through faith, service, and love.

Candlemas also honors the obedience and humility of the Holy Family, who faithfully followed God's law, and highlights Simeon and Anna's joyful witness after years of patient hope. Church tradition tells us that Simeon was one of the seventy scholars who translated the Old Testament into Greek. When translating the prophecy of Isaiah, Simeon hesitated to render the word as "virgin," choosing instead "young woman." According to tradition, God promised that Simeon would not die until he saw the prophecy fulfilled, and so he lived to behold the Christ Child born of the Virgin Mary.

As Christmas joy gives way to ordinary time, Candlemas invites us to reflect on how Christ's light continues to shine in our parish, our homes, and our hearts.

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Lenten Prayer Schedule

Ash Wednesday – February 18

- 6:00 AM Service with Ashes
- 10:00 AM Mass with Ashes
- 6:30 PM Mass with Ashes

Fridays During Lent

- 7:00 PM Stations of the Cross
- 7:30 PM Confessions & Adoration*
- 8:30 PM Benediction

Saturday Morning Mercies

(February 21 – March 28)

- 8:00 AM Morning Prayer
- 8:30 AM Confessions & Silent Adoration
- 9:30 AM Benediction

Holy Week Schedule

Holy Thursday – April 2

- 9:00 AM Morning Prayer
- 6:30 PM Mass of the Lord's Supper*
- 9:00 PM Night Prayer

Good Friday – April 3

- 9:00 AM Morning Prayer
- 11:00 AM Outdoor Stations of the Cross
- 3:00 PM Stations of the Cross
- 6:30 PM Celebration of the Lord's Passion

Holy Saturday – April 4

- 9:00 AM Morning Prayer
- 12:00 PM Egg Hunt
- 1:00 PM Blessing of the Food
- 7:30 PM Easter Vigil Mass*

Easter Sunday – April 5

- 8:00 AM Mass (Hall & Church)
- 10:30 AM Mass (Hall & Church)
- 12:15 PM Mass (Church)

*incense to be used

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QUESTION OF FAITH



Why the Visible Ashes and the Stations of the Cross?

Each year on Ash Wednesday, Catholics step forward to receive ashes on their foreheads, marked with a visible cross. Why do we do this so publicly? And why does the Church so strongly encourage practices like the Stations of the Cross during Lent?

The ashes are not meant to be a badge of holiness or a public performance of faith. Instead, they are a **visible sign of an interior reality**. Ashes remind us of a hard but freeing truth: *“Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return.”* In a world that tells us to appear strong, self-sufficient, and permanent, the ashes gently contradict that message. They proclaim humility, repentance, and our need for God’s mercy. The visibility isn’t about being seen by others—it’s about **bearing witness to truth**, even when that truth is uncomfortable.

The Stations of the Cross continue this same movement of the heart. Walking with Jesus through His Passion helps us slow down and face suffering honestly—His and our own. Rather than avoiding pain, the Stations teach us how Christ enters into it, redeems it, and transforms it through love. Each station invites us to ask: *Where am I in this story? Where is Christ carrying my crosses today?*

Together, the ashes and the Stations shape Lent into more than a season of giving things up. They form us into people who **remember who we are**, acknowledge our brokenness, and choose to walk with Christ toward resurrection—one step, one prayer, one act of trust at a time.



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The Corporal Work of Mercy: Give Drink to the Thirsty

“Then the king will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world... For I was thirsty and you gave me drink.’”

- Matthew 25:34-35

This goes to one of our most basic needs for life on earth: water and the quenching of thirst. At its simplest, to give drink to the thirsty provides this to the many who go without. This need shows itself in many ways, and because of that there are many ways to do this work of mercy.

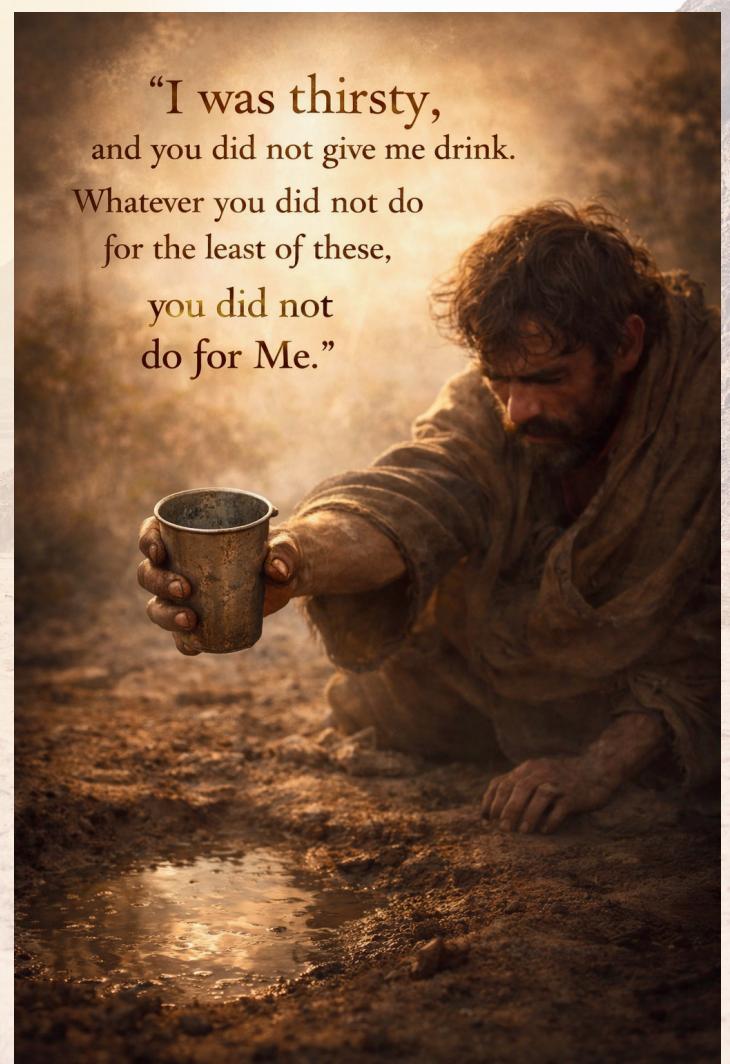
One way to stir our hearts and imaginations is this: consider the role of water in your own life. The sink. The shower. The kitchen. The glass. The laundry. The crops, whether you grow them or buy them. The things that need water to be cooked, cleaned, prepared, rinsed, re-used.

Then imagine any one of these, and replace clean water with water that is dirty, chemical-laden, unfiltered, foul-tasting, foul-smelling, foggy, or anything else that is dangerous or even disagreeable.

Then consider this: by the most conservative estimates, there are well over 2 billion people in the world who do not have access to clean water (that's about 1 in 4 people).

Like feeding the hungry, this goes beyond pompous declarations that: this government should have done something different, these statistics may not be perfect, or those people should have made better choices. There are secular and religious charities that we can support, which cut through all of that to provide clean water.

It wouldn't be a great look to stand before the Lord and say, "well you see, Jesus, I would have given you drink, but those people made different mistakes than the ones I made, and obviously those mistakes were worse, so I just thought I'd help them to learn a little lesson."



**“I was thirsty,
and you did not give me drink.
Whatever you did not do
for the least of these,
you did not
do for Me.”**

From the support of worthy causes to offering someone a drink to show them hospitality or some warmth, we can fulfill this work of mercy: Give Drink to the Thirsty.

www.crs.org/donate/crs-give-where-needed

BLESSED JUSTO TAKAYAMA UKON

JOOST-o tah-KAH-ya-MAH-oo-KOHN

FEAST DAY: FEBRUARY 3RD

By Rayma Young



Born in Japan in 1552, Takayama Ukon was baptized with his father when he was 11 years old by a Jesuit missionary. He was named Justo, after Justin Martyr, an early church teacher and martyr.

Justo was a samurai lord with a castle, land, and a title. He was very honored in his country and was a skilled samurai. It was said of him that 1,000 men could become 10,000 in his hands. When he was 21 years old, he was lord over 25,000 people and because he talked so kindly about Jesus, 18,000 people became Catholic!

After a time of openness to Christianity in Japan, leaders began to fear that the teachings of Jesus would weaken the people and cause a threat to their country. The leader, Toyokoma, began persecuting Christians, even crucifying some, so the church had to continue in secret.

Later, when Toyokoma found out that Justo was still a firm Catholic, he made him decide between Jesus and Japan. If Justo chose Japan, then he would have castles, titles, land, and honor. If he chose Jesus, he would be stripped of everything and exiled to the Philippines. Justo chose Jesus! He was exiled along with 300 other strong believers. Now an older man, the journey and persecution he endured was too much for him, and he died forty days later in the Philippines while he was praying his Rosary surrounded by his wife, children, and grandchildren.

Justo set an example of humility in a culture that highly valued honor. He loved Jesus more than anything Japan had to offer, and endured great persecution with patience.

COLOR A SHAPE WHEN YOU...

- Pray a prayer for someone else
- Say “thank you” without a reminder
- Help at home without being asked
- Choose kindness instead of arguing
- Turn off a screen and play or read
- Say sorry or forgive someone
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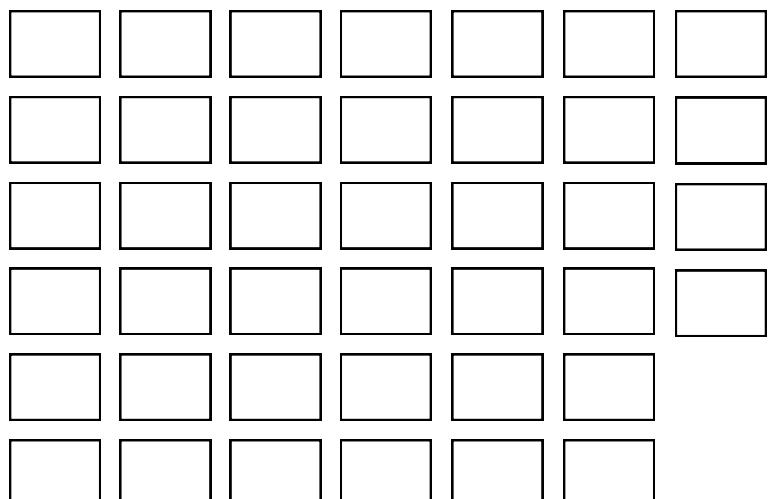
PIT BEEF | FRIDAY, SATURDAY, AND SUNDAY

Lenten Coloring Challenge

How it works:

Each day of Lent, try one small act of prayer, kindness, or self-control. When you do, color in one shape below!

There's no "wrong" way - just try your best.



St. Francis of Assisi: All Things New Through Poverty and Joy

By the early thirteenth century, the Church was firmly established. Monasteries flourished, universities were emerging, and Christian life shaped much of Europe. Yet rapid urban growth, widening poverty, and spiritual complacency created new challenges. Once again, God raised up a saint to renew His Church, not through structures or institutions, but through joyful poverty and radical trust in Him.

St. Francis of Assisi (1181-1226) was born into wealth and comfort. As a young man, he dreamed of fame and success, but a profound conversion led him to renounce his possessions and embrace a life patterned after Christ's own poverty (Matthew 19:21). While praying before the crucifix at San Damiano, Francis heard Christ say, "Go, rebuild my Church." Taking these words to heart, Francis began first by rebuilding his own life in complete obedience to the Gospel.

Francis embraced poverty not as deprivation, but as freedom to depend entirely on God. He preached repentance, peace, and joy, living the words of Christ: "Take nothing for the journey" (Luke 9:3). His joyful witness drew others, and soon a brotherhood formed around him, devoted to prayer, preaching, and service to the poor.

Unlike monks who lived within monastery walls, Francis and his followers became known as a **mendicant order**. Mendicants owned no property, supported themselves by begging, and lived among the people rather than apart from them. They traveled from town to town, preaching the Gospel, caring for the sick, and serving the marginalized. This way of life allowed the Church to meet people where they were: in cities, marketplaces, and streets, bringing Christ directly into daily life. Francis's love extended beyond people to all of creation. Seeing the world as God's gift, he praised the Creator through sun, wind, animals, and earth itself (Psalm 148). His simplicity, humility, and joy

made the faith accessible and alive, reminding us that holiness is not reserved for the few, but offered to all.

St. Francis's legacy spread rapidly, inspiring not only the Franciscans, but also other mendicant orders, including the Dominicans. Together, they renewed preaching, education, and evangelization across Europe, revitalizing the Church during a time of great change.

In St. Francis, we see God's promise fulfilled: "Behold, I make all things new" (Revelation 21:5). Through poverty, joy, and radical trust, Francis renewed the Church not by building monuments, but by rebuilding hearts. His life reminds us that God's renewal often begins simply, with surrender, love, and a willingness to follow Christ wherever He leads.

St. Francis of Assisi, pray for us!

What Is a Mendicant Order?

As the world changed, so did the way the Church lived and preached the Gospel.

By the 1200s, many people no longer lived near monasteries. Cities were growing, poverty was widespread, and the Church seemed far away. In response, God raised up the **mendicant orders**, most notably the Franciscans and Dominicans.

Unlike monks, who lived in stable communities behind monastery walls, mendicants **lived among the people**. They owned no property, depended on daily alms, and traveled from town to town preaching, teaching, and serving the poor. Their lives echoed Christ's instruction to the apostles:

"Take nothing for the journey..." (Luke 9:3)

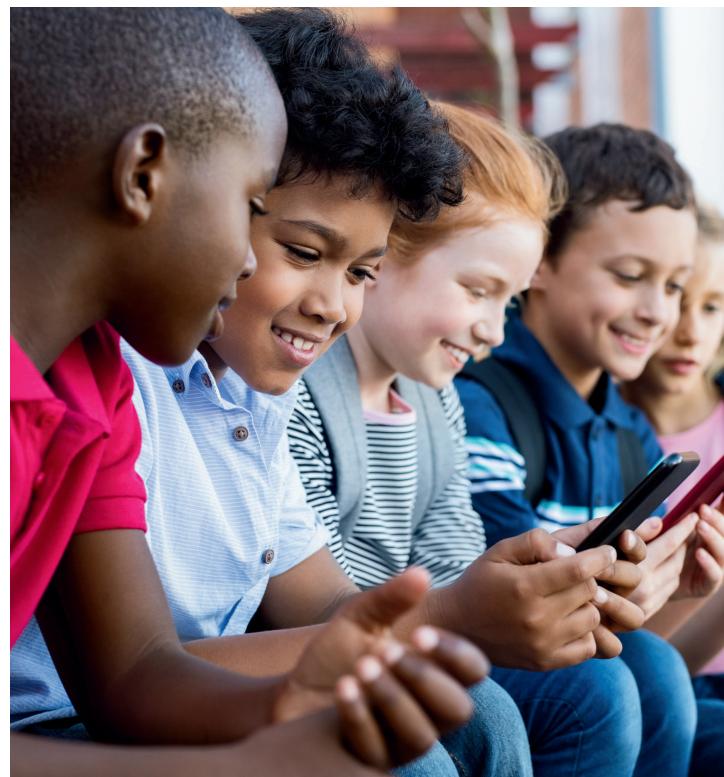
Through the mendicant orders, the Church stepped into the streets, marketplaces, and universities, bringing the Gospel directly into everyday life. This was not a break from tradition, but a renewal of it. In this way, God continued His work of making **all things new**, calling the Church to meet each age with faith, humility, and trust.

What We Love Most: Lent in a Digital Age

Lent invites us into the wilderness. Not to punish us, but to clear space for what truly gives life. This year, one powerful (and surprisingly freeing) way to enter that space is by fasting from electronics. Not a guilt trip. Not a finger-wag. Just an honest invitation to something better, for us and for our kids.

We all feel it. Phones buzz. Games beckon. Social media scrolls endlessly. And while technology itself is not evil, our *unexamined* love of it can take over. Studies and everyday experience tell the same story: addiction to cell phones, video games, and social media is contributing to rising anxiety, depression, sleep disruption, and loneliness in children and teens. Adults aren't immune either... we're just better at pretending we are.

Here's the hopeful part: Lent gives parents a way forward that doesn't rely on lectures or shame. It invites leadership through *example*. When parents choose a Lenten fast from electronics, whether that's no phones at the table, reduced screen



time, or even a full digital Sabbath, it sends a powerful message: self-control is possible, and freedom is real.

Kids notice what we do far more than what we say. When they see adults wrestle honestly with habits, name temptations, and choose restraint, they learn that faith isn't abstract; it's lived.

Saint Carlo Acutis understood this deeply. A modern teenager who loved computers and video games, Carlo wasn't anti-technology, but he was clear-eyed about its dangers. He intentionally limited his screen time, recognizing how easily entertainment could become addictive and dull the soul. His life reminds us that holiness doesn't mean rejecting the modern world; it means mastering it rather than being mastered by it.

That's where Lent sharpens the question: **What do we love most?** When electronics claim our attention, shape our moods, and steal our presence from one another, they can slip into the role of idols ... things we turn to for comfort, escape, or identity instead of God and real relationships. Idolatry today doesn't look like golden calves; it looks like glowing screens we can't put down.

A Lenten fast from electronics isn't about deprivation, it's about rediscovery. Conversation. Quiet. Prayer. Eye contact. Even boredom, which often becomes the doorway to creativity and peace. And here's the grace-filled challenge: don't stop at Easter. Let Lent be the training ground for a healthier, holier rhythm that lasts. Our children don't need perfect parents. They need courageous ones, willing to choose presence over pixels, freedom over habit, and love over idols.

40 DAY OF
LENT

A graphic for the "40 Day of Lent" featuring the text "40 DAY OF" above the word "LENT" in large, bold, purple letters. To the right of the text is a stylized illustration of a palm frond, a golden cross, and a small golden bowl containing blue Lenten土 (dust).

The Pope and the Papacy



Catholics believe Jesus founded a real, visible Church, not just a loose spiritual movement. And we believe He gave that Church a visible shepherd: **Peter**.

In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus says to Peter: *"You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church... I will give you the keys to the kingdom of heaven."* Catholics read this as Jesus giving Peter a unique leadership role among the apostles. A role meant to strengthen unity and protect the Church's teaching.

So who is the Pope? The Pope is the **Bishop of Rome**, and Catholics believe he inherits Peter's pastoral role as Peter's successor. The Catechism puts it plainly: the Pope is the *"perpetual and visible source and foundation of unity"* for the whole Church. A Vatican document summarizes it this way: the Catholic Church teaches, as a matter of faith, that the Bishop of Rome is Peter's **successor** *"in his primatial service in the universal Church."*

That raises a fair question: Does that mean Catholics think the Pope is perfect? **No**.

Catholics do not believe the Pope is sinless, nor that everything he says is automatically correct. Popes can make bad decisions, have personal faults, and offer opinions that are not binding.

Then what is papal infallibility?

"Infallibility" is a protection from teaching error, but it applies only in very specific circumstances. The Church teaches that the Pope is preserved from error only when he teaches as the supreme pastor of all Christians

and definitively proclaims a doctrine of **faith or morals** that the whole Church must hold. This is meant to protect the Church from formally teaching false doctrine about what Christians must believe or how we must live, not to guarantee the Pope always has the best take on politics, science, or daily headlines.

A simple way to say it: Catholics believe Jesus doesn't abandon His Church. The Pope's job is to guard unity and faithfully hand on the apostolic teaching - not to invent a new Christianity.

Common Misunderstandings About the Pope

✗ "Who is the Pope, really?"

✓ **The Pope is the Bishop of Rome and the successor of Saint Peter.** Jesus gave Peter a special role of leadership among the apostles, and this role continues through an unbroken line of bishops of Rome. The Pope serves as a visible sign of unity for the worldwide Church.

✗ "Everything the Pope says is infallible."

✓ **Not true.** Infallibility applies only in rare cases, when the Pope formally teaches a doctrine of faith or morals for the whole Church. Most papal statements are not infallible.

✗ "The Pope invents new doctrines."

✓ **Not true.** The Pope is a guardian, not a creator, of Church teaching. His role is to protect and clarify what has been handed down from the apostles.

✗ "The Pope replaces Jesus."

✓ **Not true.** Jesus Christ alone is the head of the Church. The Pope serves as His visible shepherd, helping preserve unity and right teaching.

✗ "The Papacy is just a medieval invention."

✓ **Not true.** Catholics see the roots of the Papacy in Scripture, with Peter's leadership among the apostles, developing organically as the Church grew.

Why This Matters

For Catholics, the Papacy isn't about power; it's about unity, continuity, and trusting Christ's promise to remain with His Church.

THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA: THE LION, THE WITCH AND THE WARDROBE

AN EPIC OF CHRISTIAN SACRIFICE – FROM DISNEY?!

This 2005 fantasy movie is a magnificent adaptation of C.S. Lewis' earliest-published book in his 7-volume "Narnia" series. Although the film differs in certain aspects from the book, it retains Lewis' Christian worldview, most tellingly in the Christ-figure of Aslan, the Lion. Explicit in the plot are themes of forgiveness, self-sacrifice, and courage.

Narnia is an alternate world of eternal winter where centaurs, fauns, and minotaurs co-exist with talking horses and beavers. Humans, however, are only myths – until the four Pevensie children stumble into it and fulfill a prophecy which will save Narnia.

The *Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe* is not for small children. It's rated "PG" for a reason: there is some violence. Granted, much of the violence is computer-generated, but the peril, torture, and battles may be frightening for young children. And let's be honest – the White Witch alone is the stuff of nightmares! This movie is a visual feast in addition to being a well-told story, highly recommended for 12 to 112-year-olds!

The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe is available on various streaming services and also through the Harford County Library system.

By Greg Mank

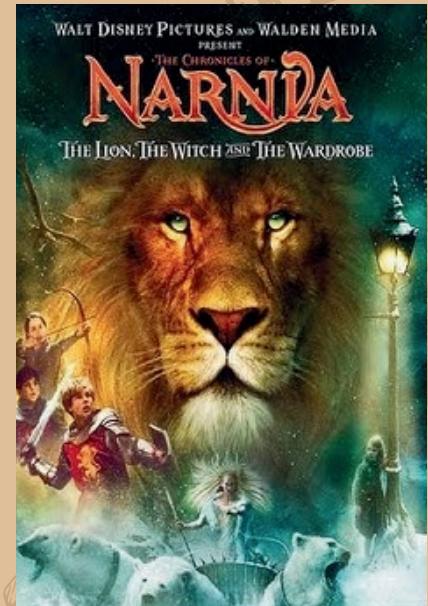


Image: *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (2005), Walt Disney Pictures / Walden Media.

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A LOOK AHEAD

FEB

**03**

Monthly Bingo/ Luncheon

BINGO! A Harford County tradition on 1st Tuesdays.

Admission includes lunch.

Doors open at 9:30 AM,
games begin at 11:00 AM

**06**

First Friday

"Behold Him here...our companion in the most Blessed Sacrament; it doesn't seem it was in His power to leave us for even a moment." - St. Teresa of Avila

Confessions
7 - 8 PM

Adoration
6 - 9 PM

**07**

First Saturday

"Behold Him here...our companion in the most Blessed Sacrament; it doesn't seem it was in His power to leave us for even a moment." - St. Teresa of Avila

Confessions
8:30 - 9:30 AM

Adoration
8 - 10 AM

**15**

Mardi Gras Breakfast

Come, enjoy a hot breakfast, Lenten Crafts, and Family Activities.

9 AM - 12 PM

**17**

Blood Drive

To schedule a time, visit redcrossblood.org and sign up for zip code 21132

12:30 - 5:00 PM

**18**

Ash Wednesday

Begin Lent with us on Ash Wednesday:

- **6:00 AM** Service with Ashes & Communion
- **10:00 AM** Mass
- **6:30 PM** Mass

**21**

Food Pantry

Food Drive that supports families in need in our area.

10 AM - 11 AM

**27**

Knights of Columbus Lenten Fish Fry

Enjoy a delicious meal and fellowship while supporting our parish community.

Takeout and dine-in available.

3 PM - 7PM

Top 10 Things Catholics Learn Every Lent

10. "I'll give up chocolate" sounds easier than it actually is.

By Day 3, we discover how spiritually attached we were to snacks.

9. Ashes make strangers very curious.

Yes, it's on purpose. No, it's not dirt. And no, we didn't forget to wash our face.

8. Fridays suddenly make everyone a seafood expert.

Fish sticks, mac and cheese, and "Is chicken considered meat?" become hot topics.

7. Giving something up isn't the whole point.

Turns out Lent is also about prayer, kindness, and not being grumpy (surprise!).

6. The Stations of the Cross get more meaningful every year.

Especially when we realize Jesus understands suffering better than anyone.

5. Silence is harder than fasting.

Sitting quietly with God for even a minute can feel longer than a whole Rosary.

4. Small sacrifices are harder to forget, and easier to keep.

Big promises fade. Small daily choices actually stick.

3. Confession is way less scary than we imagine.

And way more freeing than we expect.

2. Lent is not about being perfect; it's about starting over.

Miss a day? Forget your sacrifice? Congratulations—you're human. Try again tomorrow.

1. Easter joy is bigger because Lent was real.

Every prayer, sacrifice, and small act of love makes the Resurrection hit deeper.

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