

St. Ambrose Parish

FEBRUARY 23, 2020
BEEHIVE



Virtue Signaling

VIRTUE SIGNALING is an attempt to show other people that you are a good person, for example by expressing opinions that will be acceptable to them, especially on social media. Virtue signaling is the popular modern habit of indicating that one has virtue merely by expressing disgust or favor for certain political ideas or cultural happenings.

Before Lent begins each year, the Eastern Orthodox Church celebrates the Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee (Luke 18:9–14). For Orthodox Christians, this parable, in which a Pharisee confidently reports on his virtues and a tax collector humbly asks God for mercy, tees off a pre-Lenten season focused on humility and repentance.

The Pharisee in the story doesn't pray to God in supplicating fashion so much as he announces his own righteousness: "God, I thank you that I'm not like other people: thieves, rogues, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give a tenth of all my income." The Pharisee claims moral high ground while demonstrating his disgust with others – a pairing that directly targets Jesus' audience. According to Luke, Jesus told the parable to some people "who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and regarded others with contempt."

The Pharisee's stance is related to a phenomenon in our own day called "virtue signaling." It's a mostly pejorative term applied to those eager to advertise their own righteousness. In a bid for praise, often disguised beneath expressions of indignation and moral outrage, signalers indicate just how kind and decent they are.

Social media fosters this particular form of vanity because broadcasting personal virtue is right at home on such platforms. But more generally, smug posturing doesn't need

Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram to thrive. We can notice the human tendency to burnish personal reputation just by reading a 2,000-year-old parable, or observing political candidates boasting to their base, or reflecting on our own daily desire to be viewed favorably by others.

It's one thing to want to be good, to lead a virtuous life, to stand behind moral values of consequence. It's altogether another to want other people to know just how good we are. Herein lies the danger of virtue signaling: it's mostly talk. Signalers can trumpet their outrage or anger, or indicate support for fashionable causes, all without obligating themselves to any substantive action that might bring more hope and healing to the world. And this signaling relies on criticizing others, implicitly or explicitly, in order to boost one's own image by comparison.

Publicly accusing someone of virtue signaling carries its own problems. Accusers who are unwilling to identify with legitimate concerns or interests that matter to the signaler may be doing nothing more than leveling cheap criticism and displaying their own self-righteousness.

What's more, distinguishing genuine outrage from feigned righteousness is not always as easy as it seems. All kinds of motives and perspectives shape behavior. Determining whether the moral reaction of another person to a given situation is authentic is precarious work at best, especially if

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Virtue Signaling

Continued from page 1

we don't know the full depth of that person's character and convictions cultivated over time.

Virtue signaling is about our urge to show virtue or expertise by drawing comparisons between others and ourselves.

To return to Jesus' parable, the Pharisee's problem isn't his righteousness; it's his self-righteousness, his trust in his own goodness.

While we may be quick to thank God that we are not like the Pharisee, which would be its own exercise in vanity and comparison, what we need is the posture of the tax collector: more distance from chatter about virtue, greater reluctance to self-promote, and an acknowledgment that we're nothing apart from God's mercy.

By Peter W. Marty for the February 12, 2020 issue of The Christian Century magazine. Marty is the senior pastor of St. Paul Lutheran Church, Davenport, IA and publisher of The Christian Century magazine. For an online subscription go to christiancentury.org.

Ash Wednesday

Lent begins Wednesday, February 26th. Ashes will be distributed at morning Mass at 8:30. There will be a Scripture Service at 12:00 noon and an Evening Mass at 7:00.

Ash Wednesday and Good Friday are days of total fast and abstinence from meat.

Catholic News

Detroit Catholic is the digital news service of the Archdiocese of Detroit. The mission of Detroit Catholic is to be powered by the Holy Spirit to boldly share the stories of the people and communities answering the call to unleash the Gospel. Visit detroitcatholic.com for content from local producers, columnists and partners reporting on Catholic news and events in the local Church in southeast Michigan and across the globe. To subscribe to daily, weekly or monthly email newsletters, go to detroitcatholic.com

Lenten Prayer at St. Ambrose

On the Thursdays of Lent, our morning Mass shifts to a 7 p.m. time slot in order to give more people an opportunity to attend the liturgy during the weekdays of Lent — leading up to Holy Thursday.

Preceding Thursday night Masses (at 6 p.m.), as well as preceding Saturday afternoon Masses (at 3 p.m.), confessions will be heard.

This year Lent once again includes Friday night Stations of the Cross at 7:00 p.m. and our popular Fish Dinners which run from 4 to 8 p.m. Try this at least once this Lent: come for an early dinner and stay for Stations of the Cross. Or, come to Stations of the Cross and then enjoy a later dinner.

Good food and grace abound! Sample a serving of both here at St. Ambrose.

ST. AMBROSE LENTEN BUFFET

Join us in the ARK at St. Ambrose for dinner every Friday in Lent, February 28th through April 10th, from 4 to 8 p.m.

The menu includes a salad bar, soup du jour, fried or baked cod, tater tots, macaroni with cheese, a weekly special entrée, along with rolls, vegetable, coffee and tea. Desserts and drinks are available.

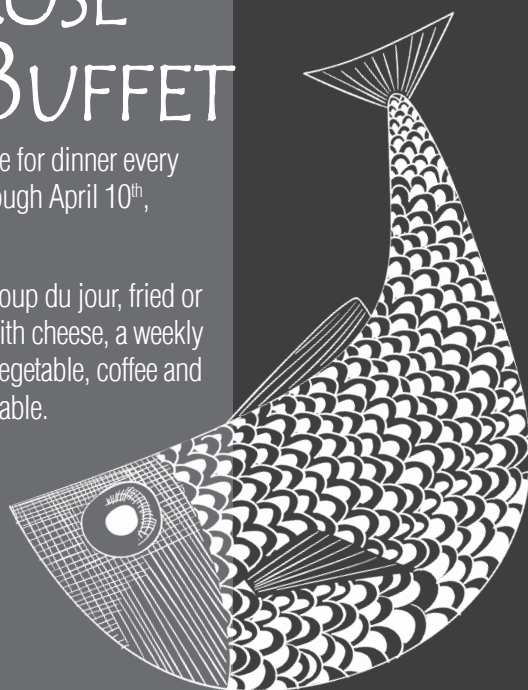
\$17.95 per adult

\$10 for children aged 6 to 10

Children 5 and under eat free.

Carry-out service available

(313) 423-6284.



All Things Considered

What's left of mandatory Lenten fasting in Church law is a small remnant of what Catholics were asked to do in the past. But, relaxed rules of fasting should not be taken lightly. Fasting and abstaining from meat on the prescribed days of Lent are a serious obligation. Families need to teach their children the importance of Lenten fasting as well as prayer and sacrifice.

All of that starts this week. Ash Wednesday is a day of complete fast and abstinence – as is Good Friday. Every Friday of Lent is a day of abstinence from meat. In addition to giving our meat-heavy diets a break, fasting also brings us into solidarity with a hungry world. The most recent regulations in the Catholic code of fast and abstinence are printed elsewhere in this bulletin.

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It took me back to my 1950's Catholic childhood when I saw a company still making "Lenten Folders." Those are cardboard coin holders which are meant to be used on each of the 40 days of Lent. A couple of our catechists had asked about taking on a challenge that was both meaningful and within the grasp of a kid in grade school. For generations, Lenten Folders provided that. It's a daily way of remembering to give alms, which is one of the pillars of Lent.

The students in our Religious Education classes will take home their Lenten Folders the first Sunday of Lent. They will be asked to bring them back to church on or before Easter. I thought there might be a few of us who are not youngsters who might like to participate in this custom. For that reason, we've ordered extra folders. You will find them in the back of church.

All of the sacrifices made in these folders will be forwarded through **Bishop Gumbleton** to the

medical mission, Kay Lasante (House of Health) in Haiti – of which he is a board member. The current Haitian daily minimum wage is 300 *gourdes*, or \$4.70. Garment workers are pushing that their minimum wage be increased to 800 *gourdes*, or about \$12.70 a day. So, one of our Lenten Folders would amount to either one or two days wages for a Haitian worker. What's pocket change for us translates into emergency health care for one of these workers.

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Our Lenten Dinners are headed into their 16th year now. When we initiated these, fish fries had largely disappeared from parish life here in Southeastern Michigan. But the time was right for their comeback. There was a "hunger" – pun intended – for some good old fashioned Catholic solidarity. The fellowship that exists at any one of our Friday

night dinners shows just how much people enjoy and appreciate the ability to dine with friends, old and new. Unlike eating in a restaurant, eating at our Lenten Dinner encourages interaction between those in the room, and it's that human interaction that is missing from much of our communal life these days.

I can't think of a single year when our Lenten Dinners have been a financial benefit to the parish. The problem is that we have crafted a menu that surpasses what the price point will bear. Multiple trips to the buffet do not help either. What we depend on to defray our losses are dessert and beverages sales as well as an army of volunteers. As we are about to enter into the first of seven Fish Dinners this week, we are asking for you to give us an assist. There are a few jobs in the pre-dinner set-up category. There are slots for some un-glamorous clean up work following the dinner. But mostly, there is a need for people to help work the room – getting people seated, bussing

tables, serving food and in general being there to take care of whatever needs to be done.

A unified, happy corps of parishioners working the night and taking care of our guests is one of the best ways of showcasing the Ambrosian spirit and our belief that as St. Benedict wrote: "All guests should be received as Christ."

Sign up sheets are in the back of church, or you can volunteer on line or by calling 313-822-2814.

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Polish immigrants brought their *Pączki* recipes with them to the United States. But Detroit seems to be the origin of *Pączki* Day stemming back to the vibrant community of 'Pole-town' Hamtramck, which welcomed

Polish immigrants as early as 1914. While there could be found other Polish-American enclaves in Chicago and New York whose bakeries produced *Pączki* for those longing for a taste of the old country,

the tradition of *Pączki* in the USA seems most strongly rooted in Detroit. Where the pastry, as they say is.... "often imitated, never duplicated."

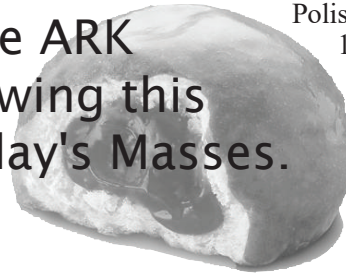
Here at St. Ambrose we have done our level best to "Keep the *Pączki* in Parish." Over the years, your Pastor and his Polish heritage staff have done due diligence at many different Polish bakeries sampling these treats – each year trying to provide for you our pick of the best of Metro Detroit Polonia. So be prepared to indulge today [would that be *Dimanche Gras*?] in these ridiculously delicious, calorie-laden treats over coffee and hospitality in the ARK.

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Financial statements for Fiscal Year 2019 were mailed out of our office two weeks ago. I am confident that our accounting procedures are solid and that your statement is accurate. But, if you spot something on your statement that does not seem correct, or if you have questions, please email us and we'll do a check. If you want to talk with someone in our front office, call 313-822-2814.

TRP

PĄCZKI
in the ARK
following this
Sunday's Masses.



Enter the Journey

Come to the Capuchin Retreat Center for a Lenten Day of Reflection this Wednesday, February 26th, either from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. with continental breakfast and lunch, **OR** in the evening from 5:45 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. with dinner at 6 p.m. Ashes are available all day. Choose only one session as it is the same program.

Our featured speaker is Fr. Tom Nguyen OFM Cap. Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of the journey of Lent. Lent is a time of returning to our relationship with God and to find again practices that lead us towards new life and resurrection. We are invited in the season of Lent to know that we are never alone. Please join us on Ash Wednesday as we “Enter the Journey” of Lent and find strength and purpose in this journey ahead.

The suggested offering is only \$25 per person. To register call 248-651-4826, or go online at capretreat.org. If you are registering on line, then please note if you are registering for the day or evening program.

Capuchin Retreat is located at 62460 Mt. Vernon Rd, Washington, MI 48094.

Electronic Donations

St. Ambrose Parish is equipped to make electronic transfers from your checking account or credit card on our website! Christian Financial Credit Union brings parishioners and friends the ability to make an electronic contribution to St. Ambrose on a regular or one-time basis.

Your checking account or credit card may be used to make a single donation; or you may set up automatic weekly, monthly or quarterly contributions on a schedule. This does not replace the envelope method, but provides an additional alternative.

We hope this additional financial service allows you another way to manage your stewardship to St. Ambrose. Visit stambrosechurch.net for more information on electronic giving.

Motor City Makeover

Metropolitan Detroit is rapidly being made over in ways that will define its future. We've invited persons knowledgeable in the field of Detroit's makeover to talk with us. Hear their visions of the 'City to come.'



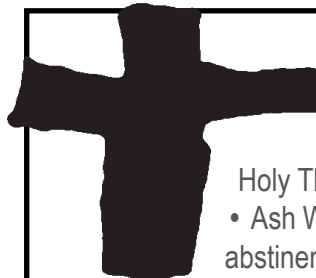
These sessions are Sundays from 9:45 until 11 a.m. in the ARK

February 9 – Who is Piet Oudolf and Why You Should Know Him ? -

Michele Hodges from the Belle Isle Conservancy comes with a report on the new gardens on that Island designed by this world-renowned Dutch landscape designer.

February 16 – Bedrock Reaches for the Stars – Jack Chidester, director of design for Dan Gilbert's real estate arm of Bedrock, will be here to update us about projects that will forever change the skyline and image of Detroit.

February 23 - A Conversation With John Gallagher. – Detroit's view and voice into everything that is happening in the Motor City, John will spend the morning with us looking at major projects in town. We'll ask him about his plans after retiring from the Detroit Free Press.



Lenten Observances

- Lent is the liturgical season which runs from Ash Wednesday until the Mass of the Lord's Supper on Holy Thursday.
- Ash Wednesday and Good Friday are days of *total* fast and abstinence from meat.
- All the Fridays of Lent are days of Abstinence from meat.
- The **Law of Abstinence** from meat binds persons from the completion of their 14th year — from the day after their 14th birthday, throughout life.
- The **Law of Abstinence** forbids the use of meat, but not eggs, milk or products or condiments made of animal fat. Permissible are soups flavored with meat, meat gravy and sauces.
- The **Law of Fasting** binds persons from the completion of their 18th year to the beginning of their 60th year, i.e., from the day after their 59th birthday.
- The **Law of Fasting** allows only one full meal a day, but does not prohibit taking some food in the morning and evening, observing as far as quantity and quality are concerned — approved local custom. The order of meals is optional; i.e. the full meal may be taken in the evening instead of at midday. Also: (1) the quantity of food taken at the two lighter meals should not exceed the quantity taken at the full meal. (2) the drinking of ordinary liquids does not break the fast.
- In keeping with the spirit and meaning of the Lenten fast, Catholics are encouraged to observe the Good Friday fast through Holy Saturday and until after the celebration of the Easter Vigil.

The Buzz

Be perfect. So we are commanded by Jesus in today's Gospel passage. But I assure you this has nothing to do with questionable international phone calls.

As we get ready for Lent this Wednesday, we are also commanded by God in today's passage from Leviticus to "Be holy."

Paul proclaims we are the temple of God, which is holy.

Me/us – perfect; holy? I've read that biblically these two words mean the same. They are less about freedom from error than they are about fullness, wholeness, maturity. And they have the same sense as when Jesus uttered from the cross: "It is finished."

Lent confronts us with these goals: be holy, be the temple, be perfect. Why? (Read again the two stories of human creation in chapters 1 & 2 of Genesis, then...) Because "I, the Lord, your God, am holy." Because the "Spirit of God dwells in you". Because your "heavenly Father is perfect."

So, what kind of Lent are you planning to begin this (Ash) Wednesday to accomplish these goals? Same-ol'-same-ol'? Something new and creative?

I hope by now that adults are beyond just giving up things for Lent, as if some self-imposed penance might hurt ourselves enough to help balance the divine scales of justice and lighten the waiting punishment we have merited by our sinful transgressions of God's commandments. If you are ready for an adult and challenging agenda for Lent, take these next few days and do some serious praying, and make an examination of conscience like you've never done before. Catch a vision about what God wants your life to be. Assess where you're at right now. Then determine what you need to do to move forward on God's path for your life. Any stalling, any u-turns, any excuses, any detours onto more "realistic" roads – are simply temptations and sin. And I think this is true – that if we succeed in our lenten practices . . . we haven't tried to do enough. For it is only when we honestly fail, that we might then acknowledge and welcome God's power to take over and transform us so thoroughly more than we could do on our own.

If we all have this kind of Lent, what a glorious Easter 2020 will be to start off and shape a new decade of faith!



Lent has its origins as a final, intensive, retreat-like preparation period for catechumens who were preparing for Baptism. And the real meaning of Baptism is an immersion into the saving death and resurrection of Christ. It calls the catechumens – and all of us already-baptized – into a radically different frame of mind and lifestyle.

This Lent at St. Ambrose, we are blessed with four catechumens and one already-baptized candidate for full communion in the Catholic Church. We will be introducing them to the parish throughout the season. The first step will be a very dramatic ceremony at the beginning of this coming Saturday's 4:00 mass. In what is known as the Rite of Sending, Fr. Tim and our whole worshipping Assembly will prayerfully "send" them with our support and best wishes to participate in the 5:00 Rite of Election and Call to Continuing Conversion at Blessed Sacrament Cathedral. Literally, before we even have the Opening Prayer of our mass here, they will leave the sanctuary, pick up their coats from the pews, and walk out the door to their cars to make their way to the cathedral ceremony with one of our Archdiocesan bishops. We thank God for them as they remind us of the true meaning of Lent, and how life changing our faith should continue to be for each one of us.

Happy pączki day, and may your ashes not rekindle. (Have a cool Lent!)

Chuck Dropiewski

The Beehive

is the parish weekly bulletin of the
St. Ambrose Catholic Community
Detroit/Grosse Pointe Park, Michigan

Pastor: Rev. Timothy R. Pelc

Pastoral Minister: Charles Dropiewski

Religious Education: Kelly Anne Woolums

Minister of Music: Louise Veltri

Dr. Norah Duncan IV – on hiatus

Office Manager: Peggy O'Connor

Secretary: Mary Urbanski

Sacramental Celebrations

Masses: On the Lord's Day –

Saturday Vigil - 4:00 p.m.

Sunday - 8:30 and 11:15 a.m.

Baptism: Arrangements for both adults and infants to be made by contacting the rectory.

Penance: As announced and by appointment.

Marriage: Couples should contact the rectory office a minimum of six months in advance of the proposed date to make arrangements.

Funeral: Normally celebrated within one week after the deceased's passing.

Directory

Parish Office: 15020 Hampton

Grosse Pointe Park, Michigan 48230

Tel: (313) 822-2814 **Fax:** (313) 822-9838

Email address: stambrose@comcast.net

Religious Education: (313) 332-5633

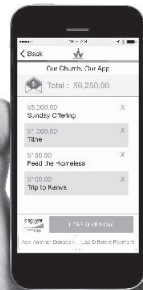
Pastoral Ministry: (313) 332-5631

Ark Scheduling: (313) 822-2814

Parish Website: stambrosechurch.net

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Liturgy Schedule for the Coming Week

Monday, February 24

8:30 a.m. - Morning Pracr

Tuesday, February 25

8:30 a.m. - Mass - Bp. Joseph Imesch

Wednesday, February 26

Ash Wednesday

8:30 a.m. - Mass & Distrubtion of Ashes

12:00 p.m. - Scripture Service

7:00 p.m. - Mass & Distribution of Ashes

Thursday, February 27

7:00 p.m.- Mass - Fr. Eric Swearingem;
Lucille Maffesoli

Friday, February 28

8:30 a.m. - Mass - Fr. Ron Heidelberg

7:00 p.m. - Stations of the Cross
& Benediction

Saturday, February 29

1:30 - Wedding -
Monica Gulli & Chris Skebo

4:00 p.m. - Mass For All People

Sunday, March 1

First Sunday of Lent

8:30 a.m. - Mass For All People

11:15 a.m. - Mass For All People

Scriptures for the Beginning of Lent

Monday, February 24

- Jas 3: 13-18
- Ps 19: 8-10, 15
- Mk 9: 14-29

Tuesday, February 25

- Jas 4: 1-10
- Ps 55: 7-11, 23
- Mk 9: 30-37

Ash Wednesday, February 26

- Jl 2: 12-18
- 2 Cor 5: 20-6: 2
- Mt 6: 1-6, 16-18

Thursday, February 27

- Dt 30: 15-20
- Ps 1: 1-4, 6
- Lk 9: 22-25

Friday, February 28

- Is 58: 1-9a
- Ps 51: 3-6b, 18-19
- Mt 9:14-15

Saturday, February 29

- Is 58: 9b-14
- Ps 86: 1-6
- Lk 5: 27-32

Sunday, March 1

- Gn 2: 7-9; 3: 1-7
- Rom 5: 12-19 or 5: 12m 17-19
- Mt 4: 1-11

First Sunday of Lent February 29th and March 1st

4:00 p.m. - **Celebrant:** Fr. Pelc **Lector:** Bern Degnan

Eucharistic Ministers: Beverly Bennert, Adam Borkowski, Della Cimini

Altar Servers: Jack Hern

8:30 a.m. - **Sunday - Celebrant:** Fr. Bede **Lector:** Mark & Benjamin Corion

Eucharistic Ministers: Colleen Drummond, Colleen Gatzke, Maggie Jackson,
Colleen Jogan, Bob Jogan, Steve Linne, Joellyn Valgoi

Altar Servers: Erica, Corey, & Carrigan McGraw

11:15 a.m. - **Celebrant:** Bp Gumbleton **Lector:** Pat Sperti

Eucharistic Ministers: Anne Billiu, Michele Hodges, Sue & Roger Playwin,
Cristina Swiatkowski, Patty Yaden

Altar Server: Alyssa Flores, Liam O'Byrne

Your Envelope Speaks ... the Inside Story

To operate, each week our parish requires a *minimum* of..... \$10,100.00

On Sunday, February 16, 2020

in envelopes we received \$6,256.00

in the loose collection \$740.00

in electronic donations \$3,616.00

for a total of..... \$10,612.00

Over budget for the week. \$512.00

Number of envelopes mailed 900

Number of envelopes used 135

Spending Spotlight

Healthcare coverage is – and has been – a hot button topic in our country in recent years. So, most families understand the impact of how the always-rising costs of healthcare can impact a monthly budget.

Your parish is no different: the cost of health care and supplemental healthcare (dental, optical and disability insurance) premiums for our staff was \$5,407.44 for the month of February 2020. For those keeping track – that's a "healthy" cut — 14% — of the minimum St. Ambrose needs to operate each month.

Our Sick

Please pray for those who are seriously ill or who are hospitalized: Pat Blake, Karen Culver, Ann Sullivan Kay, Donald Miriani, Bonnie McKenna, Jeanne Noto, David Schumacker, Matthew Elias, George Bucec, Emilie Kasper, Darby O'Toole, Anna Noto Billings, Vilma Rivers, Vilma Marone, Eileen O'Brien, Martha Luna, Dina Engels, Liz Linne, Donna Barnes, Betty Greenia, Alexandra Cullen, Charmaine Kaptur, Frank Gregory, Alex Billiu, Gladys Bogos, Wayne Wallrich, Jerry Hansen, Lou Rondini, Jackie Walkowski, Kristen Kingzett, Denise DiBiancha, Valerie Dryden, and Maria Simcina.

52 Sundays

52 Sundays is a dynamic guide to help you and your family reclaim the Lord's Day with prayer, activities, food, and more! It offers simple and insightful ways for your family to spend time together each Sunday learning more about the Catholic faith and having fun while you're at it.

52 Sundays material is available for download online or you may sign up to receive the weekly email at www.52sundays.com/

Marriage Coaching

Couples who are experiencing struggles and challenges in their marriage can receive help through the Archdiocese of Detroit sponsored Marriage Coaching Ministry. The Marriage Coaching program is a couple-to-couple mentoring program designed to assist couples to live out God's plan for their marriage.

Trained Coaching Couples will give the support and practical tools needed to help couples to restore and realize the fullness they desire and is intended for their Catholic marriage. The Marriage Coaching program consists of seven main coaching sessions and is strictly confidential and at no cost.

To learn more and get the help you need for your marriage, contact: 313-237-4680|www.aod.org/marriage-coaching | familyministry@aod.org. All inquiries are strictly confidential.

Sponsored by the Archdiocese of Detroit, Office for Marriage Support.



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[facebook.com/stambroseparish](https://www.facebook.com/stambroseparish)

4 Ways Fasting Benefits Your Spiritual Health

Fasting is having a moment right now. After decades of health experts telling us that grazing on small meals was key to health and happiness (remember the South Beach diet?), in true cyclical fashion the opposite is now touted as true. Apparently, limiting our intake to two or three bigger meals is actually better for our bodies — and 16 hours of the day should be spent not eating.

According to experts, there are all kinds of reasons that “intermittent fasting” is good for us. It improves mental clarity and concentration. It lowers blood insulin and sugar levels. It improves fat burning abilities. It lowers blood cholesterol. It increases our growth hormone. It reduces inflammation. It activates cellular cleansing by autophagy. And it even might prevent Alzheimer’s. You get the idea.

And while those perks can definitely be life-changing — what’s usually not mentioned is that fasting is also a transformative practice for our spiritual lives, too. In fact, the Catholic Church has been recommending this practice for ages and still continues to do so, especially in recent times of scandal and spiritual crisis.

Of course, there’s more to fasting than merely not eating. So, if you’re new to this concept entirely, or if you’re already fasting for health reasons, here’s why incorporating a spiritual dimension into your fasting might be the extra push that your soul needs.

Fasting can strengthen your resolve

If you’re struggling with a decision or trying to discern the ever-present question, “What am I doing with my life?” integrating fasting with prayer will give you that boost in dissolving distractions. By denying the body — just a little bit — we’re far more clear-headed and able to be mindful. This puts us in a better mental space to be in touch with our spiritual needs, and, as a result, it makes us more confident in our decisions.

“Fasting is a good safeguard for the soul, a steadfast companion for the body, a weapon for the valiant, and a gymnasium for athletes,” St. Basil the Great explains. “Fasting repels temptations.... In war, it fights bravely, in peace it teaches stillness.” And it’s this stillness where we can find the clarity we so desperately crave.

Fasting instills discipline

The Church already has several days designated for the community to join together in fasting. That said, many Catholics are completely oblivious of these days or see fasting as an afterthought — or even an annoying inconvenience (I’ve definitely been all of these). The thing is, it’s actually an opportunity to master discipline over our lives and our desires.

So, if you’re just starting to take fasting seriously, consider actually fasting on those designated days because you

can tap into a community that can help guide your prayer life and meditation — and this, is in itself, a discipline.

The Catholic practice of fasting is centered around Lent, the 40 days in spring we use to intentionally prepare to celebrate Easter. We abstain from meat on Fridays during Lent, and Ash Wednesday and Good Friday are days for more robust fasting. Because Jesus died for us on a Friday, there has been a long tradition of Catholic fasting on Fridays throughout the year, but this has become a more informal practice in recent years.

According to St. Francis of Assisi, though, going the extra mile and fasting on other days will help “to control greediness, and to keep the sensual appetites and the whole body subject to the law of the Spirit; and although we may be able to do but little, the enemy nevertheless stands more in awe of those whom he knows can fast.”

Fasting makes us more humble

With all the crazy, amazing distractions in our pocket these days, we can sometimes sort of accidentally feel like gods. We can talk to someone across the globe on a whim. With three swipes we can buy a new wallet. With another three swipes, we can notify all of our friends about the new wallet. And we can document the wallet, forever, with just a click.

Fasting is an antidote to the amazing technological abilities we wield in the 21st Century because it reminds us of our human frailty. If done right, it can remind us that we, indeed, are mortal beings who become tired, weak, and bewildered, and need the steadfastness of a loving God.

All that said, if you find yourself ever boasting about your fasting, you’re definitely doing it wrong. It’s not a competition.

Fasting brings you closer to God and others

Sacrifice is the ultimate gesture of love. While not all sacrifices are equal (because, you know, giving up your life for another isn’t the same as foregoing a brownie after 7 p.m.), when we’re mindfully fasting as a form of prayer, we are offering up little gestures of sacrificial love, which bring us closer to Jesus’ suffering for all of us. And just like Jesus fasted for 40 days in the desert, through fasting we can better understand our weaknesses and have better empathy when we confront the weaknesses of others. We become more in tune with ourselves and other people when we make fasting a mindful practice of prayer.

So sure, you can maybe fast for your health, and your body will thank you — but if you also fast for your spiritual growth, you’ll be following an ancient tradition that will only make you stronger, and ultimately, a far freer, happier person.

*By Maria Walley, writer for Grotto online magazine,
grottonetwork.com*