

# St. Ambrose Parish

MARCH 7, 2021  
BEEHIVE

## Francis in Iraq

Pope Francis' planned visit to Iraq, from March 5 to March 8, is complex on many levels. Covid-19 cases are rising, as are terrorist incidents in recent weeks. The historic but greatly diminished Christian community, says it needs a boost, however, from the Catholic leader after three years of devastation carried out by militants of the Islamic State group, and the pontiff also wants to reach out to the Muslim world by meeting with a highly-revered Shi'ite cleric.

Pope Francis' visit to Iraq marks his first foreign trip after a 15-month gap due to the pandemic, and it's also the first-ever papal visit to this biblical land. For years, the pope expressed his concerns publicly for the plight of Iraq's Christians and its many religious minorities, including the Yazidis, who both have suffered at the hands of Islamic State militants and sectarian violence.

With meetings planned with Iraqi political leaders and prominent Muslim clerics, the Pope is scheduled to travel 900 miles within Iraq in a little over three days. Here is a breakdown of the places where Pope Francis is scheduled to visit in Iraq.

### Friday, March 5: Baghdad Speech at Presidential Palace

Upon arrival at Baghdad International Airport, the Pope is scheduled to meet with Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa Al-Kadhimi at the airport before visiting Iraqi President Barham Salih at the presidential palace, where the pope will give a speech to a gathering of civil authorities.

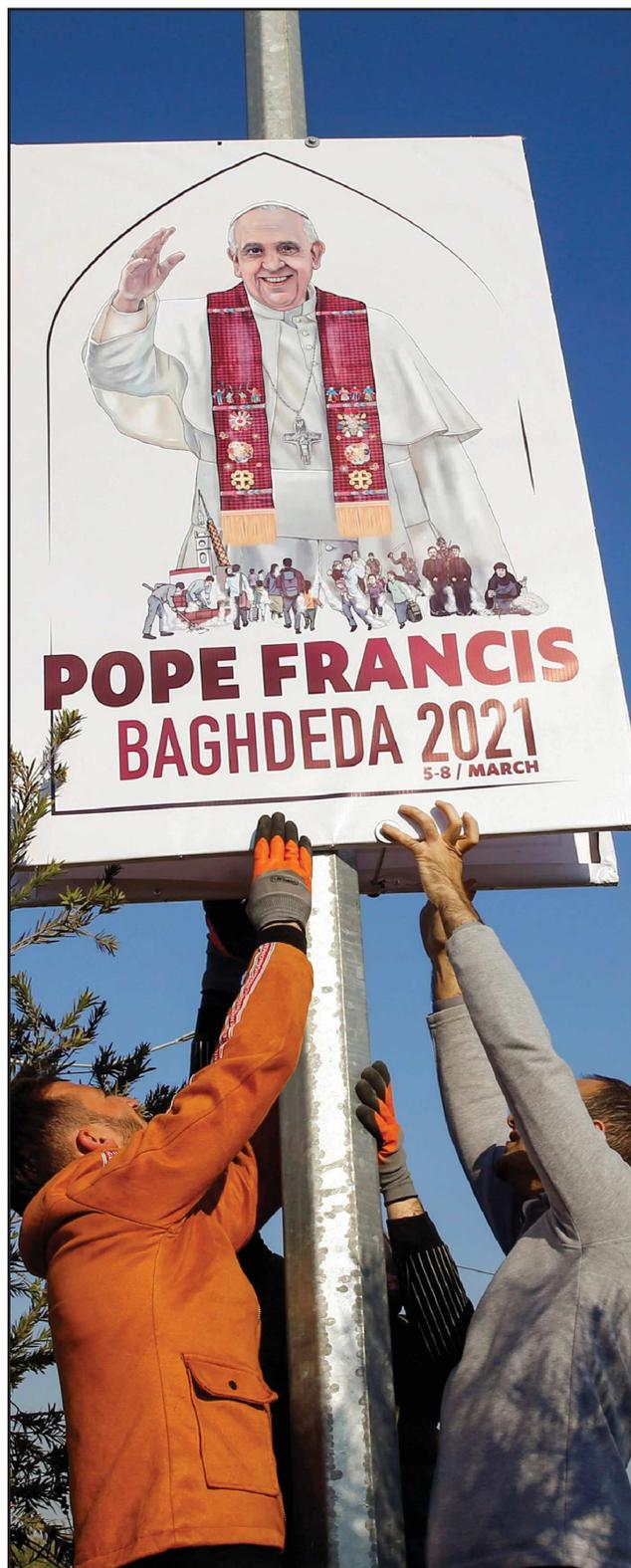
The Pope's meetings with Iraqi authorities come at a time when the country is facing severe political, socioeconomic, and security challenges, including a protest movement calling for an end to government corruption, high levels of unemployment, and the sectarian divisions within the political system established after the U.S. led invasion of Iraq in 2003.

### Cathedral Our Lady of Salvation

The Syriac Catholic Cathedral of Our Lady of Salvation, also known as Sayidat al-Nejat, was the site of a suicide attack by the Islamic State during Sunday Mass in 2010 in which more than 50 people were killed.

The terrorists killed two priests and took more than 100 hostages before Iraqi security forces stormed the church with the support of U.S. forces. The beatification process of the 48 Catholics who died inside the church advanced from the diocesan phase to the Vatican in October 2019.

*Concluded on page 7...*



## Recognizing Our Biases

People can't see what they can't see. Their biases get in the way, surrounding them like a high wall, trapping them in ignorance, deception, and illusion. No amount of reasoning and argument will get through to them, unless we first learn how to break down the walls of bias....

1. **Confirmation Bias:** We judge new ideas based on the ease with which they fit in with and confirm the only standard we have: old ideas, old information, and trusted authorities. As a result, our framing story, belief system, or paradigm excludes whatever doesn't fit.
2. **Complexity Bias:** Our brains prefer a simple falsehood to a complex truth.
3. **Community Bias:** It's almost impossible to see what our community doesn't, can't, or won't see.
4. **Complementarity Bias:** If you are hostile to my ideas, I'll be hostile to yours. If you are curious and respectful toward my ideas, I'll respond in kind.
5. **Competency Bias:** We don't know how much (or little) we know because we don't know how much (or little) others know. In other words, incompetent people assume that most other people are about as incompetent as they are. As a result, they underestimate their [own] incompetence, and consider themselves at least of average competence.
6. **Consciousness Bias:** Some things simply can't be seen from where I am right now. But if I keep growing, maturing, and developing, someday I will be able to see what is now inaccessible to me.
7. **Comfort or Complacency Bias:** I prefer not to have my comfort disturbed.
8. **Conservative/Liberal Bias:** I lean toward nurturing fairness and kindness, or towards strictly enforcing purity, loyalty, liberty, and authority, as an expression of my political identity.
9. **Confidence Bias:** I am attracted to confidence, even if it is false. I often prefer the bold lie to the hesitant truth.
10. **Catastrophe or Normalcy Bias:** I remember dramatic catastrophes but don't notice gradual decline (or improvement).
11. **Contact Bias:** When I don't have intense and sustained personal contact with "the other," my prejudices and false assumptions go unchallenged.
12. **Cash Bias:** It's hard for me to see something when my way of making a living requires me not to see it.
13. **Conspiracy Bias:** Under stress or shame, our brains are attracted to stories that relieve us, exonerate us, or portray us as innocent victims of malicious conspirators.

*By Center for Action and Contemplation faculty member  
Brian McLaren, March 1, 2021, cac.org*

## Dispensation Ends on March 13<sup>th</sup>

Citing the "essential and central nature of the Eucharistic Sacrifice" in the life of the Church, Archbishop Allen Vigneron announces that the general dispensation from Sunday Mass for Catholics in the Archdiocese of Detroit will expire on March 13 – this coming Saturday – one full year after it was granted.

However, while the general dispensation — which relieves all Catholics in the Archdiocese from their moral obligation to attend Mass on Sundays and holy days — is expiring, the Archbishop said he will continue to grant "particular dispensations" to those in need, including those who are at high risk of Covid-19.

Others who may continue to be excused from their Sunday obligation include:

- Those who are ill or whose health would be significantly compromised were they to contract a communicable illness;
- Those who care for the sick, homebound or infirmed or someone in a high-risk category;
- Pregnant women;
- Those age 65 or older;
- Those who cannot attend Mass for other reasons (such as a lack of transportation or being turned away because of capacity limits); and
- Those who have "significant fear or anxiety of becoming ill by being at Mass."

Anyone who exhibits flu-like symptoms or believes they might be asymptotically carrying COVID-19 or another communicable illness also are asked not to attend Mass "as an act of justice and charity" toward others, Archbishop Vigneron states.

"In allowing the general dispensation to expire, we welcome back to Mass all Catholics who have already been engaged in other activities that would present a similar or greater risk of exposure, such as eating out at restaurants, traveling, partaking in non-essential shopping, and widening one's circle of contacts," the Archbishop wrote. "These individuals should also prepare to return to Mass in recognition of its preeminence in our lives as Catholics."

While livestream Masses will still be offered and serve as "a means to help Catholics nourish their souls when they could not be present for Mass, we must remember that it cannot become the norm," Archbishop Vigneron said. "God did not come to us virtually. He came to us — and continues to come to us — in the flesh. As Catholics, unmediated contact with the Real Presence of the flesh and blood of Our Lord in offering this sacrifice to the Father is irreplaceable and essential."

# All Things Considered

Pope Francis is in the middle of the first ever papal visit to Iraq this weekend. He goes as an act of solidarity with an ancient but dwindling Christian community and a symbolic outreach to Muslims. The trip also comes as Iraq, ravaged by decades of conflict, faces a second deadly wave of Coronavirus infections and renewed violence. So there are a multitude of risks. Keep our Holy Father in your prayers. And if you have some time, check out some of the television coverage of this historic event. From Ur, the birthplace of the Prophet Abraham in the southern desert, to ravaged Christian towns in the north, roads are being paved and churches rehabilitated in remote areas that have never seen such a high-profile visitor. The Pope's message is that the Church stands beside those who suffer. Francis will have powerful words for Iraq, where crimes against humanity have been committed.

You can view the event via:

- Xfinity – cable channel 398 – Catholic TV Detroit
- Website – [www.CatholicTV.org](http://www.CatholicTV.org)
- Streaming – Apple TV; Roku; AmazonFIRESTICK; GoogleTV

Remember that Iraq is +8-hours ahead of Detroit (EST).

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It's happened for the past two weeks now – people arrive to pick up their Fish Dinners and get frustrated when we can't find their order. What we've discovered is that they have ordered from a St. Ambrose Parish in Illinois or a St. Ambrose Parish in Ohio.

We happily filled the order for them – free of charge – hoping that the other Ambrosian parishes do the same! Avoid the confusion and make certain that you are using the correct ordering link: [www.st-ambrose-lenten-dinners.com/s/order](http://www.st-ambrose-lenten-dinners.com/s/order)

We had a great turnout for the February 26 Lenten Fish Dinner – nearly 300 dinners sold. We were fortunate to have several fantastic and hard-working volunteers who helped make the carry-out process work well – we'll keep on refining the process each week!

Lots of teens are there to help. How about some of their dads? Call Peggy at 313-822-2814 to let her know when you can volunteer.

Once again, please remember the following tips:

Please indicate the TIME you want to pick up your meal. If you don't, the online ordering system will default to a time (usually 4:10 or 5:10 p.m.) Even if you want your dinner at those times, you still must select a time.

Order early! In weeks one and two, we offered \$1.00 off each dinner if you ordered before 11:59 p.m. the Thursday evening before the Friday dinner. We'll keep doing that if it helps people to remember to order early! We turn the online system off at 1:00 p.m. Fridays, so after that you'll have to call or drive up to the parking lot.

Tell your friends. As you know, the ARK at St. Ambrose serves a pretty tasty Lenten Buffet Dinner...even during the pandemic. Perhaps you could place a group order for where you work? We've got plenty of room for more orders – especially when you order early.

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Here's some food for thought. For the first time in my long pastorate, we had more people participate in Stations of the Cross than we did at Fish Dinners. And our Lenten Dinners did very well.

Stations for Justice last week netted 335 views, with 499 engagements.

For years we struggled to increase attendance at Stations of the Cross. Up until last week, the top number we ever garnered was 17. So to say that last week's viewership was a huge success is an understatement.

Clocking in at just over an hour, our Stations for Justice represents an epic effort on the part of 19 persons in the parish who labored for a month to

put all the pieces together. The format was so complex that it was something that could not be done weekly, which made it suitable for a video format.

Stations for Justice used a format that goes back to 1993, but is equally valid for today. Set against a visual backdrop of world events over the past few years – mostly the struggles against injustice in 2020, these Stations connect the passion and death of Jesus with the sufferings of God's people today. While it is nothing that most households have not already seen in the media, the cumulative effect makes Stations for Justice not suitable for youngsters – so parental discretion is advised.

We will broadcast Stations for Justice every Friday of Lent from midnight to midnight, allowing you to choose the time which you will find most conducive for prayer. Since there is so much material packed into these Stations – from the music, to the narratives, and the visuals – you should be able to view them more than once in order to mine the depth of the experience. Working on the final edit, one of our staff remarked: "I never realized just how much suffering there was all over the world last year!" And coming to that realization is precisely the point. Now, our faith urges us to pick up the cross and work for justice.

*"I would like to make an appeal to those in possession of greater resources, to public authorities and to all people of good will who are working for social justice: never tire of working for a more just world, marked by greater solidarity! No one can remain insensitive to the inequalities that persist in the world! Everybody, according to his or her particular opportunities and responsibilities, should be able to make a personal contribution to putting an end to so many social injustices. The culture of selfishness and individualism that often prevails in our society is not what builds up and leads to a more habitable world: it is the culture of solidarity that does so, seeing others not as rivals or statistics, but brothers and sisters." – Pope Francis, Rio, 2016*

## Monday with the Mystics

Many who practice their Catholic faith miss out on the Church's valuable mystical tradition — often because the terminology scares them away. It's time to meet our Mystics!

One Monday per month, join Faith Offman in an exploration of the lives and spirituality of some famous and lesser known Christian mystics. Each online event will also include an opportunity for a shared prayer experience. These events will take place on ZOOM. Participants will receive information on how to log in prior to the event. On Monday, March 22<sup>nd</sup>, at 7:00 p.m. you're invited to spend time with one of the great mystics of the last century — Therese of Lisieux. Again, that's on Monday, March 22, 2021.

Contact Cathy at St. Paul of the Cross Redemptorist Retreat House, (313)286-2801 or [cadamk@stpaulretreat.org](mailto:cadamk@stpaulretreat.org). There is a suggested fee.

## Literacy Fundraiser

We're always in the mood for helping the friends of an old friend, Sr. Marie Cyril Delisi who was once the principal here at St. Ambrose Academy. Join Epiphany Education Center online as they host their 13<sup>th</sup> Annual Literacy Fundraiser at Noon on Saturday, April 24<sup>th</sup>. Epiphany will post a link to the Online Silent Auction item list on their Facebook page @Epiphanyedcenter on Saturday April 24<sup>th</sup>, 2021 at 12 noon. Just follow directions to place your bid.

Every donation made will receive complimentary Bingo Raffle ticket/s. Donations of:

- \$100 or less = 1 Ticket
- \$101-\$500 = 2 Tickets
- \$501 or more = 3 Tickets

The Bingo Drawing will be held live at noon on their Facebook page. The Raffle prize is "Detroit's Favorite Things" gift basket (value \$200+)

Donations may be mailed to 5555 Conner, Suite 3258, Detroit 48213, or online at PayPal: [paypal.me/epiphanyeducationcen](https://www.paypal.com/epiphanyeducationcen)

## Faith Formation Station

*"The Eucharist is the 'source and summit of the Christian life.' The other sacraments, and indeed all ecclesiastical ministries and works of the apostolate, are bound up with the Eucharist and are oriented toward it. For in the blessed Eucharist is contained the whole spiritual good of the Church, namely Christ himself, our Pasch."* (Catechism of the Catholic Church No. 1324).

The parents of our students preparing for First Holy Communion gathered last week on Zoom to pray together and to learn more about the Eucharist and the ways in which they can best help their children prepare to receive Christ for the first time. Trying to decide what to present at this important meeting is difficult, because so much of our Catholic identity lies in the Eucharist. Our opening prayer led us through a guided meditation in which we all met Jesus who broke bread with us and reminded us that no matter where we go he will always be there with us in the Eucharist. In addition to an overview of the sacrament, we discussed how our families are the domestic church and the importance of the sacredness of the ordinary. We concluded with a prayer for unconditional love and guidance.

This year, the students spend a lot of time learning about both Reconciliation and the Eucharist. Guided by their parents in a homeschool setting along with online video sharing from their faithful catechist Elizabeth Puleo-Tague, they will come to know about the sacramental origins in the Scriptures. They will come to understand what it means when we say that Jesus Christ is "substantially" present in the Eucharist. They will come to understand how the Mass prepares us to receive this gift of love. They will come to understand the consequences of this love in their family, their community, and their friendships. We are preparing the students to preach the Good News that God is love, that God's love dwells among us, that God's love calls us to become this love for one another.

This Saturday at the 4:00 P.M. liturgy the students will celebrate the Rite of Enrollment. They will be called by name to willingly stand before the parish congregation and profess their desire to prepare for and to receive the Eucharist. This liturgy recognizes the students' sacramental preparation which includes a ritualization at Mass so that the children become comfortable coming up in front of the community. This ritualization helps children see the altar as the family table that we are all called to gather around. In a very concrete way, they can see the link between worship and formation in faith. Nowhere is the fullness of the Body of Christ more evident than in the celebration of Sunday Mass as a parish community.

May God continue to bless the sacramental journey of these special students: Gates Coyro, Elena Decker, Evangeline Hartung, Evelyn Jensen, Leo Keagle, Adam Krall, Caroline Krupp, Brian Maloney, Jameson N, Josephine O'Reilly, Matteo Paonessa, Rosa Perrotta, Mitchell Pope, Hudson Proudlock, Celia Smith, and Lucas Van Marcke.

### Religious Education Lenten Binge-Watch Challenge:

I'm not much of a TV person. Quite frankly, TV bores me. When my extended family sits down at the holiday dinner table and my sister and brothers start quoting lines from 80's TV shows and movies, I often wonder where I spent my childhood. I know it wasn't in front of a screen. I have to admit, however, that during this pandemic my kids and I have watched our fair share of television. We have watched My So Called Life, Lost in Space, The Mandalorian, Gentefied, The Fosters, Series of Unfortunate Events, All American, Joan of Arcadia - just to name a few. (I am not endorsing any of these shows as must-see Catholic TV. It's just our list.)

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## Faith Formation Station, continued ...

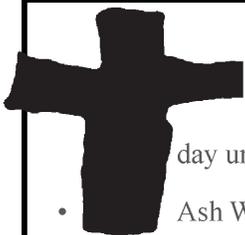
If your family has also binge-watched your fair share of TV during this pandemic – and even if you haven't – I have a Lenten challenge for you. Sit down and watch your child/ren's religious education Flipgrid lessons presented by your catechists. Sit down and watch them all at once or over a span of days. In total we have had 18 weeks of class; at under 10 minutes a video that is no more than 3 hours of screen time. If you include the students' posts, add an additional hour.

If you are feeling behind in your textbook work and are discouraged about where you are on the program syllabus, I challenge you to take this task on for Lent. I watch the posted videos every weekend and I find them just as entertaining as the aforementioned TV shows, and even more so rewarding. Take me up on this challenge. I know this binge-watch will inspire you, add to your faith-life, and connect you to your St. Ambrose parish family. And, when you are finished watching, write us a review! (Hopefully, that means a note of thanks to your catechists.)

Kelly Woolums

## Vincenzian Reflection

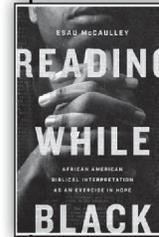
In today's Gospel, Jesus is asked "What sign can you show us?" Every day we can see signs of how God has visited us in the blessings of our lives. Let us be a sign of God's love by being a blessing to others. Is there a family you know who needs assistance? Call the St. Ambrose Conference of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul so that together we can be a sign of God's love to the suffering and poor. (313) 822-2814



## 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 14<sup>th</sup> year — from the day after their 14<sup>th</sup> 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 18<sup>th</sup> year to the beginning of their 60<sup>th</sup> year, i.e., from the day after their 59<sup>th</sup> 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.

## Marcellina's Book Club



### Reading While Black

is a personal and scholarly testament to the power and hope of Black biblical interpretation. At a time in which some within the African American community are questioning the place of the

Christian faith in the struggle for justice, New Testament scholar Esau McCaulley argues that reading Scripture from the perspective of Black church tradition is invaluable for connecting with a rich faith history and addressing the urgent issues of our times.

Esau McCaulley (Ph.D., St. Andrews) is assistant professor of New Testament at Wheaton College, a priest in the Anglican Church in North America and a contributing opinion writer for *The New York Times*. His numerous articles appear in outlets such as *Christianity Today*, *The Witness* and *The Washington Post*.

## 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:** Dr. Norah Duncan IV  
**Office Manager:** Peggy O'Connor  
**Secretary:** Mary Urbanski

### Sacramental Celebrations

**Masses:** On the Lord's Day –

Saturday Vigil - 4:00 p.m.

Sunday - 10:00 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

## Liturgy Schedule

### March 8

St. John of God, religious

### March 9

St. Frances of Rome, religious

### March 10

Weekday Third Week of Lent

### March 11

Weekday Third Week of Lent

**7:00 p.m. – Mass** – James C. Scott,

Rev. John O’Neal,

### March 12

Weekday Third Week of Lent

**12:00 p.m. – Mass** – Warner Horton Strong,

James and Yvonne Smith

### March 13

Weekday Third Week of Lent

**4:00 p.m. – Mass** – For All People

### March 14

Fourth Sunday of Lent

**10:00 a.m. – Mass** – For All People

## Spending Spotlight

The rectory boiler hit its 10-year warranty expiration in October, and of course has been failing ever since. We’ve spent \$3,678.15 to keep it running, but now know it can’t be saved – only replaced. And that will cost four to five times what we’ve already spent to fix it.

## Scriptures for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Week of Lent

### March 8

2 Kgs 5: 1-15b

Ps 42: 2-3; 43: 3-4

Lk 4: 24-30

### March 9

Dn 3: 25, 34-43

Ps 25: 4-5b, 6, 7bc, 8-9

Mt 18: 21-35

### March 10

Dt 4: 1, 5-9

Ps 147: 12-13, 15-16, 19-20

Mt 5: 17-19

### March 11

Jer 7: 23-28

Ps 95: 1-2, 6-9

Lk 11: 14-23

### March 12

Hos 14: 2-10

Ps 81: 6c-11b, 14, 17

Mk 12: 28-34

### March 13

Hos 6: 1-6

Ps 51: 3-5a, 16-21b

Lk 18: 9-14

### March 14

2 Chr 36: 14-16, 19-23

Ps 137: 1-6

Eph 2: 4-10

Jn 3: 14-21

## Fourth Sunday in Lent

There will be two Masses here on the weekend of March 13-14;  
Saturday at 4:00 p.m. and Sunday at 10:00 a.m.

Over Lent, we will slowly open more seating at mass to a congregation up to 50% of the building’s capacity – roughly 300 persons.

To participate electronically, go to: [facebook.com/stambroseparish](https://facebook.com/stambroseparish) where the Saturday liturgy will be available for viewing starting at 8:00 a.m. on Sunday.

The general dispensation from the Sunday obligation is extended by our Archbishop until March 13 – with particular dispensations granted. For specifics, logon to: <https://www.aod.org/comehometohope-dispensation>

## Your Envelope Speaks ... the Inside Story

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

**On Sunday, February 28, 2021**

in envelopes we received ..... \$3,743.00

in the loose collection ..... \$1,312.00

in electronic donations ..... \$4,952.00

for a total of ..... \$10,007.00

**Under** budget for the week..... \$93.00

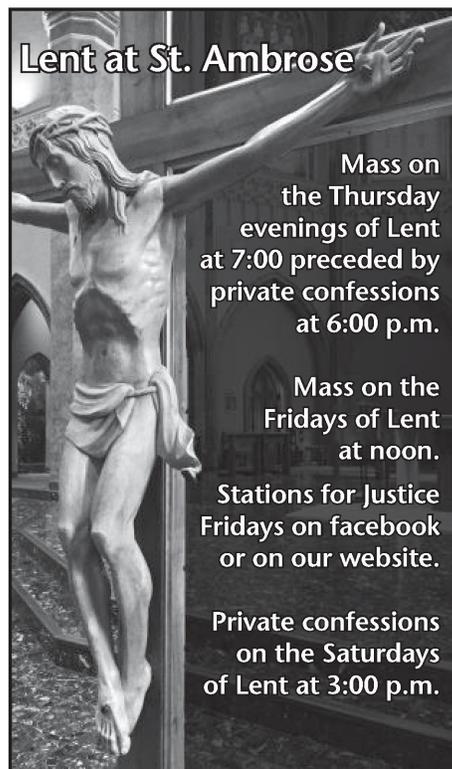
Number of envelopes mailed ..... 782

Number of envelopes used ..... 72



## Our Sick

Please pray for those who are seriously ill or who are hospitalized: Bp. Thomas Gumbleton, Mae Christine Busque, Pat Blake, Karen Culver, Donald Miriani, Bonnie McKenna, Jeanne Noto, David Schumacker, Matthew Elias, George Bucec, Emilie Kasper, Darby O’Toole, Anna Noto Billings, Eileen O’Brien, Liz Linne, Donna Barnes, Alexandra Cullen, Charmaine Kaptur, Frank Gregory, Alex Billiu, Jerry Hansen, Jackie Walkowski, Kristen Kingzett, Maria Simcina, Brian Tague, Sharif Hannan, Shirley Whelan, Anne Purvis, Chris Walsh, Jerry Gutowski, Kevin O’Connor, Mike Lesnau and those suffering and hospitalized worldwide with COVID-19.



## Lent at St. Ambrose

Mass on the Thursday evenings of Lent at 7:00 preceded by private confessions at 6:00 p.m.

Mass on the Fridays of Lent at noon.

Stations for Justice Fridays on facebook or on our website.

Private confessions on the Saturdays of Lent at 3:00 p.m.

## Priestly Vocations

The Office of Priestly Vocations’ discernment group for men (18-55) considering the priesthood is having a meeting on Thursday, March 25<sup>th</sup> from 7:00 - 8:30 p.m.

Meetings are led by Fr. Craig Giera, Director of Priestly Vocations for the Archdiocese of Detroit and will include prayer, group discussion on discernment, light refreshments, and fellowship with other like-minded men. Please contact the Vocation Office for more info: <https://detroitpriestlyvocations.com/discernment-groups/>.

# Pope Francis in Iraq

*Continued from Front Page*

The cathedral was also one of six churches bombed in August 2004 when five car bombs in Baghdad and one in Mosul were detonated in cars parked outside churches, killing a total of 12 people and injuring more than 70.

Pope Francis will visit the cathedral and give a speech to local bishops, priests, religious, and other Iraqi Catholics. A mural of the pope with Vatican and Iraqi flags has been painted on a wall outside of the cathedral in anticipation of the pope's visit, according to photos posted on social media.

## Saturday, March 6: Najaf and the Plain of Ur Meeting with Shiite Cleric in Najaf

On his second day in Iraq, Pope Francis will travel on Iraqi Airways to Najaf to meet with Ali al-Sistani, an influential leader of Shiite Muslims in Iraq. Najaf is considered one of the most sacred pilgrimage sites in Shiite Islam, after only Mecca and Medina. It is the burial place of Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib, the son-in-law of Muhammad and the first Shiite imam. The question of Ali's right to the caliphate resulted in the major schism between Sunni and Shiite Muslims. Not far from Najaf is the tomb of the prophet Ezekiel in Al Kifl, where the historic Jewish synagogue at the site is now contained within a newly built Shiite mosque.

## Interreligious Meeting in the Plain of Ur

Pope Francis will then travel to the plain of Ur in southern Iraq, which the Bible records as the birthplace of Abraham. The archaeological site at Ur, excavated in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, includes a Mesopotamian ziggurat and an ancient complex of houses. The Pope plans to give a speech at an interreligious gathering in Ur because of the importance of Abraham for all three major monotheistic religions. In Judaism, Abraham is revered as the first patriarch of the Jewish people. Muslims believe that Muhammad is a descendent of Abraham's son Ishmael.

## Chaldean Cathedral of St. Joseph in Baghdad

Pope Francis will end the day with Mass at the Chaldean Catholic Cathedral of St. Joseph, upon his return to Baghdad. The cathedral, called Mar Yousef, was built in the 1950s. It was recently restored by Chaldean Patriarch Louis Raphaël Sako.

The Chaldeans are one of several Eastern Catholic communities found in Iraq. Tracing back their history to the early Christians through their connection with the Church of the East, Chaldeans made up two-thirds of Iraqi Christians

before the population was diminished by Islamic State violence. Other Eastern Rite communities in Iraq include Syriac Catholics, Armenian Catholics, and Melkite Greek Catholics.

## Sunday, March 7: Mosul and the Nineveh Plains Memorial in Mosul

Pope Francis will spend his final full day in Iraq in the northern Nineveh Plains, where the Islamic State carried out a genocidal campaign against Christians, Yazidis, and other minority groups after taking Mosul in the summer of 2014. The Pope will be welcomed at the Erbil Airport by the religious and civil authorities of Iraqi Kurdistan before traveling by helicopter to Mosul, where he will pray for the victims of war at Hosh al-Bieaa square.

## Immaculate Conception Cathedral in Bakhdida

Pope Francis will then travel by helicopter to visit the local Christian community in Bakhdida, also known as Qaraqosh, at the Syriac Catholic Immaculate Conception Cathedral, where he will pray the Angelus.

The cathedral, also known as Al-Tahira Cathedral, was desecrated and its interior was charred after the Islamic State set it aflame after taking control of the town in 2014. Restoration of the cathedral was recently completed by Aid to the Church in Need. A new Marian statue sculpted by a local Christian artist was placed atop the bell tower in January.

## Stadium Mass in Erbil

On his last evening in Iraq, Pope Francis will offer Mass at the Franso Hariri International Stadium in Erbil on March 7. This Mass is expected to be the largest gathering of Iraqi Catholics with the pope during his trip.

Local authorities in Kurdistan have said that 4,500 people have registered for the

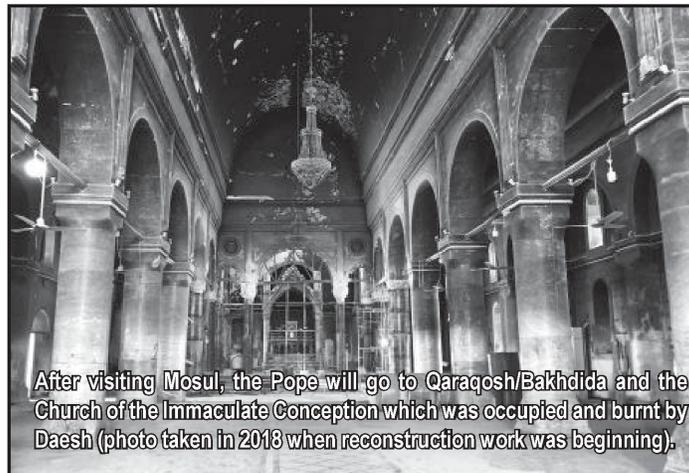
Mass. A special identification card issued by Erbil's Catholic University will be required to enter the stadium for the Mass.

## Monday, March 8: Travel back from Baghdad to Rome

After a farewell ceremony on Monday morning at the Baghdad International Airport, Pope Francis will fly back to Rome on Alitalia, traveling 1,800 miles in just over five hours. The Pope will answer journalists' questions during a press conference on his return flight.

Chaldean Catholic Archbishop Bashar Warda believes that Pope Francis' upcoming visit to the region could be a turning point for the country's diminished Christian population.

*Where is Pope Francis going in Iraq and why? A Catholic News Agency Explainer — By Courtney Mares Feb. 25, 2021*



After visiting Mosul, the Pope will go to Qaraqosh/Bakhdida and the Church of the Immaculate Conception which was occupied and burnt by Daesh (photo taken in 2018 when reconstruction work was beginning).

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