

LENT 2020

FAST & ABSTINENCE FEBRUARY 26'TH

Ash Wednesday and Good Friday are obligatory days of fasting and abstinence for Catholics. In addition, Fridays during Lent are obligatory days of abstinence.

For members of the Latin Catholic Church, the norms on fasting are obligatory from age 18 until age 59. When fasting, a person is permitted to eat one full meal, as well as two smaller meals that together are not equal to a full meal. The norms concerning abstinence from meat are binding upon members of the Latin Catholic Church from age 14 onwards.

If possible, the fast on Good Friday is continued until the Easter Vigil (on Holy Saturday night) as the "paschal fast" to honor the suffering and death of the Lord Jesus, and to prepare ourselves to share more fully and to celebrate more readily his Resurrection.

Ash Wednesday is one of the most popular and important holy days in the liturgical calendar. Ash Wednesday opens Lent, a season of fasting and prayer.

Ash Wednesday takes place 46 days before Easter Sunday, and is chiefly observed by Catholics, although many other Christians observe it too.

Ash Wednesday comes from the ancient Jewish tradition of penance and fasting. The practice includes the wearing of ashes on the head. The ashes symbolize the dust from which God made us. As the priest applies the ashes to a person's forehead, he speaks the words: "Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return."



Alternatively, the priest may speak the words, "Repent and believe in the Gospel."

Ashes also symbolize grief, in this case, grief that we have sinned and caused division from God.

Writings from the Second-century Church refer to the wearing of ashes as a sign of penance.

Priests administer ashes during Mass and all are invited to accept the ashes as a visible symbol of penance. Even non-Christians and the excommunicated are welcome to receive the ashes. The ashes are made from blessed palm branches, taken from the previous year's Palm Sunday Mass.

It is important to remember that Ash Wednesday is a day of penitential prayer and fasting. Some faithful take the rest of the day off work and remain home. It is generally inappropriate to dine out, to shop, or to go about in public after receiving the ashes. Feasting is highly inappropriate. Small children, the elderly and sick are exempt from this observance.

It is not required that a person wear the ashes for the rest of the day, and they may be washed off after Mass. However, many people keep the ashes as a reminder until the evening.

Recently, movements have developed that involve pastors distributing ashes to passersby in public places. This isn't considered taboo, but Catholics should know this practice is distinctly Protestant. Catholics should still receive ashes within the context of Mass.

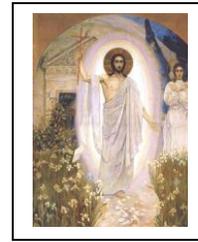
In some cases, ashes may be delivered by a priest or a family member to those who are sick or shut-in.

Lenten Practices

1. Traditional Lenten practices of **PRAYER, FASTING, and ALMSGIVING**, and other forms of self-denial, are recommended most warmly by the Church. Daily Mass is particularly encouraged.
2. **ASH WEDNESDAY, ALL FRIDAYS IN LENT, and GOOD FRIDAY** are days of **abstinence** from eating meat for those 14 years of age and older.
3. **ASH WEDNESDAY AND GOOD FRIDAY** are also days of **fasting** for those ages 18 to 58 inclusive. *(On these days, those bound by the law of fasting may take one full meal. Two smaller meals, sufficient to maintain strength according to one's needs, are also permitted. Eating between meals is not permitted, but liquids including milk and fruit juices are allowed)*



Lenten – Easter Series on Prayer Styles
Notre Dame Church
2325 Highland Rd, Hermitage, PA
724-981-5566



Within these holy seasons of penance and alleluia joy, Catholics seek out opportunities to grow deeper in their relationship with God. We will provide a number of presenters on various styles of prayer. They will be held on Mondays, 6:30 – 8:00 PM in our parish Multi-purpose room and repeated Wednesday 10:30 am – 12:00 pm in the church Founders’ Room. Call the parish for reservations so handouts can be provided. Please mark your calendar to join us now:

Monday March 2 “Types of Prayer, Prayer of Gratitude” with Kathy Higgins,
Director of Adult Faith Formation, Notre Dame, 6:30 – 8:00 PM Multipurpose room

Wednesday, March 4 Repeat of session 10:30 am – 12 noon, Notre Dame
Founders Room in the church building

Monday, March 30 “ Ignatian Spirituality, Exam of Consciousness” Sr. Ardath Blake, HM,
Villa Maria Educational and Spiritual Center; Notre Dame, 6:30 – 8:00 PM Multi-Purpose Room

Wednesday, April 1 Repeat of Session 10:30 am – 12 noon, Notre Dame Founders Room
in the church building

**Monday, April 20 “Small Christian Communities: Faith Sharing and Praying with the
Sunday Gospel”** with Sr. Nancy Fischer, SSJ Diocese of Erie Vicar for Religious Sisters,
Notre Dame, 6:30 PM Multi-purpose Room

Wednesday, April 22 Repeat of Session 10:30 am – 12 noon, Notre Dame Founders Room in
the church building

Monday, May 4 “Mary, Woman of Nazareth, Woman of the Gospels” Sr. Ardath Blake, HM,
Villa Maria Educational and Spiritual Center, Notre Dame, 6:30 – 8:00 PM Multi-Purpose Room

Wednesday, May 6 Repeat of Session 10:30 am – 12 noon, Notre Dame Founders Room
in the church building

Monday, May 18 “On-going Journey with our Companions of Faith, The Saints”
Father Richard Allen, Pastor, Notre Dame, 6:30 -8:00 PM Multi-Purpose Room

Wednesday, May 20 Repeat of Session 10:30 am – 12 noon, Notre Dame Founders Room
in the church building

Monday June 1 “Come Holy Spirit, Fill us with your Holy Fire” Notre Dame, 6:30 – 8:00 PM
Multi-Purpose Room

Wednesday, June 3 Repeat of Session 10:30 am – 12 noon, Notre Dame Founders Room
in the church building

Stations of the Cross



The Stations of the Cross are a 14-step Catholic devotion that commemorates Jesus Christ's last day on Earth as a man. The 14 devotions, or stations, focus on specific events of His last day, beginning with His condemnation. The stations are commonly used as a mini pilgrimage as the individual moves from station to station. At each station, the individual recalls and meditates on a specific event from Christ's last day. Specific prayers are recited, then the individual moves to the next station until all 14 are complete.

The Stations of the Cross are commonly found in churches as a series of 14 small icons or images. They can also appear in church yards arranged along paths. The stations are most commonly prayed during Lent on Wednesdays and Fridays, and especially on Good Friday, the day of the year upon which the events actually occurred.

Opening Prayer

ACT OF CONTRITION

O my God, my Redeemer, behold me here at Thy feet. From the bottom of my heart I am sorry for all my sins, because by them I have offended Thee, Who art infinitely good. I will die rather than offend thee again.

First Station: Jesus is condemned to death

Leader: We adore Thee, O Christ, and bless Thee.

All: Because by Thy holy cross Thou hast redeemed the world.

Jesus, you stand all alone before Pilate. Nobody speaks up for you. Nobody helps defend you. You devoted your entire life to helping others, listening to the smallest ones, caring for those who were ignored by others. They don't seem to remember that as they prepare to put you to death.

As a child, sometimes I feel alone. Sometimes I feel that others don't stand up for me and defend me when I am afraid. Sometimes I don't feel like I am treated fairly, especially if I am scolded or corrected.

As an adult, sometimes I feel abandoned and afraid as well. Sometimes I too, feel like I am treated unfairly or blamed for things unfairly. I have a hard time when people criticize me at home or at work.

Help me be grateful for what you did for me. Help me to accept criticism and unfairness as you did, and not complain. Help me pray for those who have hurt me.

My Jesus, often have I signed the death warrant by my sins; save me by Thy death from that eternal death which I have so often deserved.

Our Father.... Hail Mary.... Glory Be to the Father....

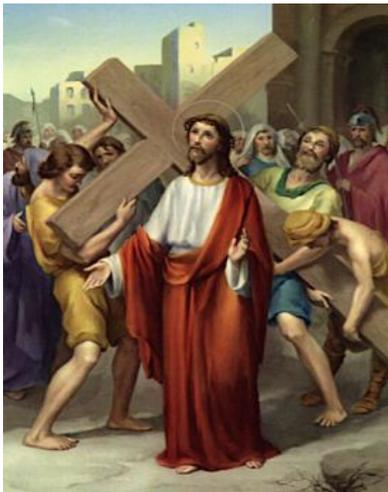
Leader: Jesus Christ Crucified.

All: Have mercy on Us.

Leader: May the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, Rest in peace.

All: Amen.

Second Station: Jesus carries His cross



Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.

All: Because by your holy cross You have redeemed the world.

Jesus, as you accepted your cross, you knew you would carry it to your death on Calvary. You knew it wouldn't be easy, but you accepted it and carried it just the same.

As a child, sometimes I don't like the problems that come my way. Sometimes I try to get others to take care of them or solve them for me. Sometimes I become upset and crabby when I'm asked to do even the smallest thing to help others.

As an adult I sometimes feel like I'm not appreciated. Sometimes I feel as if I accept more responsibility than I need to. I can feel sorry for myself, even though the crosses others carry are much larger than my own. In my self-pity, I don't reach out to help.

My Jesus, Who by Thine own will didst take on Thee the most heavy cross I made for Thee by my sins, oh, make me feel their heavy weight, and weep for them ever while I live.

Our Father.... Hail Mary.... Glory Be to the Father....

Leader: Jesus Christ Crucified.

All: Have mercy on Us.

Leader: May the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, Rest in peace.

All: Amen.



Third Station: Jesus falls the first time

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.

All: Because by your holy cross You have redeemed the world.

Jesus, the cross you have been carrying is very heavy. You are becoming weak and almost ready to faint, and you fall down. Nobody seems to want to help you. The soldiers are interested in getting home, so they yell at you and try to get you up and moving again.

As a child, sometimes I start to do something, but then get tired of it. I hurry to get finished and sometimes don't do my work well.

Sometimes I don't pay attention to what I should be doing. When things get hard for me, sometimes I give up.

As an adult, I sometimes put things off. I give up too easily, and sometimes don't do my work as well as I know I can.

My Jesus, the heavy burden of my sins is on Thee, and bears Thee down beneath the cross. I loathe them, I detest them; I call on Thee to pardon them; may Thy grace aid me never more to commit them.

Our Father.... Hail Mary.... Glory Be to the Father....

Leader: Jesus Christ Crucified.

All: Have mercy on Us.

Leader: May the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, Rest in peace.

All: Amen.



Fourth Station: Jesus meets his mother

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.

All: Because by your holy cross You have redeemed the world.

Jesus, you feel so alone with all those people yelling and screaming at you. You don't like the words they are saying about you, and you look for a friendly face in the crowd. You see your mother. She can't make the hurting stop, but it helps to see that she is on your side, that she is suffering with you. She does understand and care.

As a child, sometimes I feel like too many things are going

on. Sometimes other kids pick on me and call me names. I need to look around me for a friendly face, and for the help I need. I need to share my troubles with those who truly care about me.

As an adult I sometimes feel overwhelmed by many things. Life is so competitive, and I worry so much about my future and those who have some control over it. I need to remember that being an adult does not mean having to solve every problem all by myself. I need to look around me for a friendly face, for the help I need.

Jesus most suffering, Mary Mother most sorrowful, if, by my sins, I caused you pain and anguish in the past, by God's assisting grace it shall be so no more; rather be you my love henceforth till death.

Our Father.... Hail Mary.... Glory be to the Father....

Leader: Jesus Christ Crucified.

All: Have mercy on Us.

Leader: May the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, Rest in peace.

All: Amen.

Fifth Station: Simon of Cyrene helps Jesus to carry his cross



Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.

All: Because by your holy cross You have redeemed the world.

Jesus, the soldiers are becoming impatient. This is taking longer than they wanted it to. They are afraid you won't make it to the hill where you will be crucified. As you grow weaker, they grab a man out of the crowd and make him help carry your cross. He was just watching what was happening, but all of a sudden he is helping you carry your cross.

As a child, sometimes I see people who need my help.

Sometimes I pretend not to hear when my parents call me. I disappear when I know others could use my help.

As an adult, sometimes I try to do as little as I can and still get by. Others might need my help, but I ignore their needs. Even when I'm asked to help, I sometimes claim to be too busy.

My Jesus, blest, thrice blest was he who aided Thee to bear the cross. Blest too shall I be if I aid Thee to bear the cross, by patiently bowing my neck to the crosses Thou shalt send me during life. My Jesus, give me grace to do so.

Our Father.... Hail Mary.... Glory be to the Father....

Leader: Jesus Christ Crucified.

All: Have mercy on Us.

Leader: May the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, Rest in peace.

All: Amen.

Sixth Station: Veronica wipes the face of Jesus



Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.

All: Because by your holy cross You have redeemed the world.

Jesus, suddenly a woman comes out of the crowd. Her name is Veronica. You can see how she cares for you as she takes a cloth and begins to wipe the blood and sweat from your face. She can't do much, but she offers what little help she can.

As a child, sometimes I know someone could use a little help and understanding. They may be picked on or teased by others, or just sad or lonely. Sometimes I feel bad that others don't step in to help, but I don't help either.

As an adult, I notice the needs around me. Sometimes my own family members crave my attention, and I don't even seem to notice. Sometimes a co-worker, friend, or family member could use help or understanding, but I don't reach out to help lest I be criticized, or that they demand more of me than I'd like to give.

My tender Jesus, Who didst deign to print Thy sacred face upon the cloth with which Veronica wiped the sweat from off Thy brow, print in my soul deep, I pray Thee, the lasting memory of Thy bitter pains.

Our Father.... Hail Mary.... Glory be to the Father....

Leader: Jesus Christ Crucified.

All: Have mercy on Us.

Leader: May the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, Rest in peace.

All: Amen.

Seventh Station: Jesus falls the second time

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.

All: Because by your holy cross You have redeemed the world.

This is the second time you have fallen on the road. As the cross grows heavier and heavier it becomes more difficult to get up. But you continue to struggle and try until you're up and walking again. You don't give up.

As a child, sometimes things get me down. Others seem to find things easier to do or to learn. Each time I fail, I find it harder to keep trying.

As an adult, sometimes I think I should know more than I do. I become impatient with myself and find it hard to believe in myself when I fail. It is easy to despair over small things, and sometimes I do.



Help me when things seem difficult for me. Even when it's hard, help me get up and keep trying as you did. Help me do my best without comparing myself with others.

My Jesus, often have I sinned and often, by sin, beaten Thee to the ground beneath the cross. Help me to use the efficacious means of grace that I may never fall again.

Our Father.... Hail Mary.... Glory be to the Father....

Leader: Jesus Christ Crucified.

All: Have Mercy on Us.

Leader: May the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, Rest in peace.
All: Amen.



Eighth Station: Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.

All: Because by your holy cross You have redeemed the world.

Jesus, as you carry your cross you see a group of women along the road. As you pass by you see they are sad. You stop to spend a moment with them, to offer them some encouragement. Although you have been abandoned by your friends and are in pain, you stop and try to help them.

As a child, sometimes I think a lot about myself. I think about what I want and would like people to spend their lives pleasing me. As an adult, sometimes I act like a child. I become so absorbed in myself and what I'd like that I forget about the needs of others. I take them for granted, and often ignore their needs.

Help me think more about others. Help me remember that others have problems, too. Help me respond to them even when I'm busy or preoccupied with my own problems.

My Jesus, Who didst comfort the pious women of Jerusalem who wept to see Thee bruised and torn, comfort my soul with Thy tender pity, for in Thy pity lies my trust. May my heart ever answer Thine.

Our Father.... Hail Mary.... Glory be to the Father....

Leader: Jesus Christ Crucified.

All: Have Mercy on Us.

Leader: May the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, Rest in peace.

All: Amen.

Ninth Station: Jesus falls a third time

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.

All: Because by your holy cross You have redeemed the world.

Jesus, your journey has been long. You fall again, beneath your cross. You know your journey is coming to an end. You struggle and struggle. You get up and keep going.

As a child, sometimes I fail time and time again. I find it hard to get along with my sisters and brothers, sometimes I'm not honest, sometimes I'm lazy. I'm tempted to stop trying. It's



just too hard sometimes.

As an adult, I often feel I should have conquered my weaknesses by now. I become discouraged when I'm confronted by the same problems over and over again. Sometimes I get weary. When I have health problems, I can become discouraged and depressed.

Help me think of the cross you carried. Help me continue to hope that I can make the changes in my life I need to. You didn't give up. I can have the strength to get up again as well.

My Jesus, by all the bitter woes Thou didst endure when for the third time the heavy cross bowed Thee to the earth, never, I beseech Thee, let me fall again into sin. Ah, my Jesus, rather let me die than ever offend Thee again.

Our Father.... Hail Mary.... Glory be to the Father....

Leader: Jesus Christ Crucified.

All: Have mercy on Us.

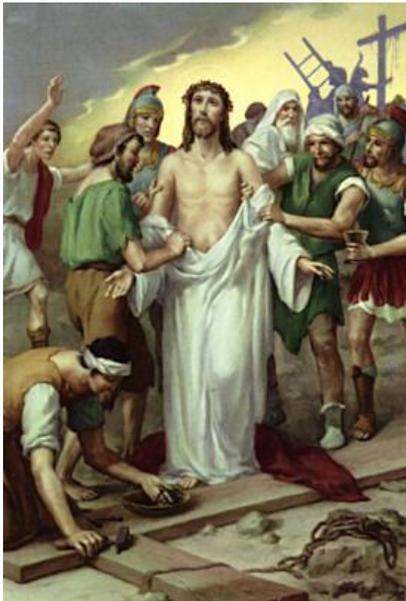
Leader: May the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, Rest in Peace.

All: Amen.

Tenth Station: Jesus clothes are taken away

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.

All: Because by your holy cross You have redeemed the world.



The soldiers notice you have something of value. They remove your cloak and throw dice for it. Your wounds are torn open once again. Some of the people in the crowd make fun of you. They tease you and challenge you to perform a miracle for them to see. They're not aware that you'll perform the greatest miracle of all!

As a child, sometimes I'm tempted to repeat stories I know are unclean and disrespectful. I sometimes try to act grown up by using crude and bad words.

As an adult, sometimes I repeat stories that are disrespectful of others. I can entertain thoughts that are not clean. Sometimes I give the young people around me a bad example to follow.

Help me to keep myself pure and clean. Help me say things that build up the people around me. Help me overcome worldly desires that I may become more like Jesus. Help me set a good example for others to follow.

My Jesus, stripped of Thy garments and drenched with gall, strip me of love for things of earth, and make me loathe all that savors of the world and sin.

Our Father.... Hail Mary.... Glory be to the Father....

Leader: Jesus Christ Crucified.

All: Have mercy on Us.

Leader: May the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, Rest in peace.

All: Amen.

Eleventh Station: Jesus is nailed to the cross

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.



All: Because by your holy cross You have redeemed the world.

You are stretched out on the cross you have carried so far. The soldiers take big nails and drive them into your hands and feet. You feel abandoned by the people you loved so much. People seem to have gone mad. You have done nothing but good, yet they drive nails through your hands and feet.

As a child, sometimes I hurt others. Sometimes I join with friends and decide not to like another. We gang up against another and cause them hurt and pain. Sometimes I say or do hurtful things to my brothers and sisters. I can wonder what they'd think about themselves if they believed everything I told them about themselves.

As an adult, sometimes I discriminate against others. Even without thinking, I judge others because of their color, intelligence, income level or name. I forget that I am to live as a brother or sister to all people. Sometimes I use harsh words when I speak to my children and family members. I can find it easy to look for something that isn't very important and make it very important.

Help me look again at the people around me. Help me see the hurt and pain I have caused in others. Be with me to help me make amends for the harm I have done.

My Jesus, by Thine agony when the cruel nails pierced Thy tender hands and feet and fixed them to the cross, make me crucify my flesh by Christian penance.

Our Father.... Hail Mary.... Glory be to the Father....

Leader: Jesus Christ Crucified.

All: Have mercy on Us.

Leader: May the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, Rest in peace.
All: Amen.

Twelfth Station: Jesus dies on the cross

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.

All: Because by your holy cross You have redeemed the world.



As Jesus hung on the cross, he forgave the soldiers who had crucified him, and prayed for his mother and friends. Jesus wanted all of us to be able to live forever with God, so he gave all he had for us.

Jesus, let me take a few moments now to consider your love for me. Help me thank you for your willingness to go to your death for me. Help me express my love for you!

My Jesus, three hours didst Thou hang in agony, and then die for me; let me die before I sin, and if I live, live for Thy love and faithful service.

Our Father.... Hail Mary.... Glory be to the Father....

Leader: Jesus Christ Crucified.

All: Have mercy on Us.

Leader: May the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, Rest in peace.

All: Amen.

Thirteenth Station: The body of Jesus is taken down from the cross

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.

All: Because by your holy cross You have redeemed the world.



Jesus, how brutally you were put to death. How gently your are taken from the cross. Your suffering and pain are ended, and you are put in the lap of your mother. The dirt and blood are wiped away. You are treated with love.

As a child, sometimes I treat others better when they're sad or in pain. When somebody dies, I become very gentle and kind. I notice the good and kind things people say about those who have died.

As an adult, I seem to be kinder when someone dies. If only I could learn to see the good things about them while they

were alive. If only I would tell those around me how much I love them, while I still have the opportunity to do so.

Help me look for the good in those around me, especially those I love the most. Help me live this day as if it were the last. Help me become a more gentle and loving person through my greater appreciation for those around me.

O Mary, Mother most sorrowful, the sword of grief pierced thy soul when thou didst see Jesus lying lifeless on thy bosom; obtain for me hatred of sin because sin slew thy Son and wounded thine own heart, and grace to live a Christian life and save my soul.

Our Father.... Hail Mary.... Glory be to the Father....

Leader: Jesus Christ Crucified.

All: Have mercy on Us.

Leader: May the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, Rest in peace.

All: Amen.

Fourteenth Station: Jesus is laid in the tomb

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.

All: Because by your holy cross You have redeemed the world.

Jesus, your body is prepared for burial. Joseph gave you his own tomb. He laid your body there and rolled a large stone in front of it, then went home. What a sad day it has been for so many people.



As a child, sometimes I try to keep everything for myself. I find it hard to share my things with my brothers or sisters and with my friends.

As an adult, I can be selfish too. I can accumulate things and keep them for myself. I try to make sure I have what I want before I share what I have with anybody else.

Help me think of Joseph of Arimathea, who risked his own life as he accepted Jesus' body for burial. Help me think of how Joseph loved Jesus so much that he gave him his own tomb.

My Jesus, beside Thy body in the tomb I, too, would lie dead; but if I live, let it be for Thee, so as one day to enjoy with Thee in heaven the fruits of Thy passion and Thy bitter death.

Our Father.... Hail Mary.... Glory be to the Father....

Leader: Jesus Christ Crucified.

All: have mercy on Us.

Leader: May the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, Rest in peace.
All: Amen.

Feast Days of March

March 9th

St. Frances of Rome

Frances was born in the city of [Rome](#) in 1384 to a wealthy, noble family. From her mother she inherited a quiet manner and a pious devotion to God. From her father, however, she inherited a strong will. She decided at eleven that she knew what [God](#) wanted for her -- she was going to be a nun.

And that's where her [will](#) ran [right](#) up against her father's. He told Frances she was far too young to know her [mind](#) -- but not too young to be married. He had already promised her in marriage to the son of another wealthy family. In [Rome](#) at that [time](#) a father's word was law; a father could even sell his [children](#) into slavery or order them killed.

Frances probably felt that's what he was doing by forcing her to marry. But just as he wouldn't listen to her, Frances wouldn't listen to him. She stubbornly prayed to [God](#) to prevent the marriage until her [confessor](#) pointed out, "Are you crying because you want to do God's [will](#) or because you want [God](#) to do your will?"

She gave in to the marriage -- reluctantly. It was difficult for people to understand her objection. Her future husband Lorenzo Ponziani was noble, wealthy, a [good person](#) and he really cared for her. An ideal match -- except for someone who was determined to be a bride of Christ.

Then her nightmare began. This quiet, shy thirteen-year-old was thrust into the whirl of parties and banquets that accompanied a wedding. Her mother-in-law Cecilia loved to entertain and expected her new daughter-in-law to enjoy the revelry of her social [life](#) too. [Fasting](#) and scourging were far easier than this torture [God](#) now asked her to face.

Frances collapsed from the strain. For months she lay close to death, unable to eat or move or speak.

At her worst, she had a vision of St. Alexis. The son of a noble family, Alexis had run away to beg rather than marry. After years of begging he was so unrecognizable that when he returned home his own father thought he was just another beggar and made him sleep under the stairs. In her own way, Frances must have felt unrecognized by her [family](#) -- they couldn't see how she wanted to give up everything for Jesus. [St. Alexis](#) told her [God](#) was giving her an important choice: Did she want to recover or not?

It's hard for us to understand why a thirteen-year-old would want to die but Frances was miserable. Finally, she whispered, "God's [will](#) is mine." The hardest words she could have said -- but the [right](#) words to set her on the road to sanctity.

St. Alexis replied, "Then you [will](#) live to glorify His Name." Her recovery was immediate and complete. Lorenzo became even more devoted to her after this -- he was even a little in awe of her because of what she'd been through.

But her problems did not disappear. Her mother-in-law still expected her to entertain and go on visits with her. Look at Frances' sister-in-law Vannozza --happily going through the rounds of parties, dressing up, playing cards. Why couldn't Frances be more like Vannozza?

In a house where she lived with her husband, his parents, his brother and his brother's family, she felt all alone. And that's why Vannozza found her crying bitterly in the garden one day. When Frances poured out her heart to Vannozza and it turned out that this sister-in-law had wanted to live a [life](#) devoted to the [Lord](#) too. What Frances had written off as frivolity was just Vannozza's natural easy-going and joyful manner. They became close friends and worked out a program of devout practices and services to work together.

They decided their obligations to their [family](#) came first. For Frances that meant dressing up to her rank, making visits and receiving visits -- and most importantly doing it gladly. But the two spiritual friends went to [mass](#) together, visited prisons, served in [hospitals](#) and set up a [secret chapel](#) in an abandoned tower of their palace where they prayed together.

But it wasn't fashionable for noblewomen to help the poor and people gossiped about two girls out alone on the streets. Cecilia suffered under the laughter of her friends and yelled at her daughters-in-law to stop their spiritual practices. When that didn't work Cecilia then appealed to her sons, but Lorenzo refused to interfere with Frances' charity.

The beginning of the fifteenth century brought the birth of her first son, Battista, after [John](#) the Baptist. We might expect that the grief of losing her mother-in-law soon after might have been mixed with relief -- no more pressure to live in society. But a household as large as the Ponziani's needed someone to run it. Everyone thought that sixteen-year-old Frances was best qualified to take her mother-in-law's place. She was thrust even more deeply into [society](#) and worldly duties. Her [family](#) was right, though -- she was an excellent [administrator](#) and a fair and pleasant employer.

After two more [children](#) were born to her -- a boy, Giovanni Evangelista, and a girl, Agnes -- a flood brought disease and famine to Rome. Frances gave orders that no one asking for alms would be turned away and she and Vannozza went out to the poor with corn, wine, oil and clothing. Her father-in-law, furious that she was giving away their supplies during a famine, took the keys of the granary and wine cellar away from her.

Then just to make sure she wouldn't have a chance to give away more, he sold off their extra corn, leaving just enough for the family, and all but one cask of one. The two noblewomen went out to the streets to beg instead.

Finally, Frances was so desperate for food to give to the poor she went to the now empty corn loft and sifted through the straw searching for a few leftover kernels of corn. After she left Lorenzo came in and was stunned to find the previously empty granary filled with yellow corn. Frances drew wine out of their one cask until one day her father in [law](#) went down and found it empty. Everyone screamed at Frances. After saying a prayer, she led them to cellar, turned the spigot on the empty cask, and out flowed the most wonderful wine. These incidents completely converted Lorenzo and her father-in-law.

Having her husband and father-in-law completely on her side meant she could do what she always wanted. She immediately sold her jewels and clothes and distributed money to needy. She started wearing a dress of coarse green cloth.

Civil [war](#) came to [Rome](#) -- this was a [time](#) of [popes](#) and antipopes and [Rome](#) became a battleground. At one point there were three men claiming to be pope. One of them sent a cruel governor, Count Troja, to conquer Rome. Lorenzo was seriously wounded and his brother was arrested. Troja sent word that Lorenzo's brother would be executed unless he had Battista, Frances's son and heir of the family, as a hostage. As long as Troja had Battista he knew the Ponzianis would stop fighting.

When Frances heard this, she grabbed Battista by the hand and fled. On the street, she ran into her spiritual adviser Don Andrew who told her she was choosing the wrong way and ordered her to trust God. Slowly she turned around and made her way to Capitol Hill where Count Troja was waiting. As she and Battista walked the streets, crowds of

people tried to block her way or grab Battista from her to save him. After giving him up, Frances ran to a church to weep and pray.

As soon as she left, Troja had put Battista on a soldier's horse -- but every horse they tried refused to move. Finally, the governor gave in to God's wishes. Frances was still [kneeling](#) before the altar when she felt Battista's little arms around her.

But the troubles were not over. Frances was left alone against the attackers when she sent Lorenzo out of [Rome](#) to avoid capture. Drunken invaders broke into her house, tortured and killed the servants, demolished the palace, literally tore it apart and smashed everything. And this [time God](#) did not intervene -- Battista was taken to Naples. Yet this kidnapping probably saved Battista's [life](#) because soon a plague hit -- a plague that took the lives of many including Frances' nine-year-old son Evangelista.

At this point, her house in ruins, her husband gone, one son dead, one son a hostage, she could have given up. She looked around, cleared out the wreckage of the house and turned it into a makeshift hospital and a shelter for the homeless.

One year after his death Evangelista came to her in a vision and told her that Agnes was going to die too. In return [God](#) was granting her a special [grace](#) by sending an archangel to be her guardian [angel](#) for the rest of her life. She would always be able to see him. A constant companion and spiritual adviser, he once commanded her to stop her severe penances (eating only bread and water and wearing a hair shirt). "You should understand by now," the [angel](#) told her, "that the [God](#) who made your body and gave it to your [soul](#) as a servant never intended that the [spirit](#) should ruin the flesh and return it to him despoiled."

Finally, the wars were over, and Battista and Lorenzo returned home. But though her son came back a charming young [man](#), her husband returned broken in [mind](#) and body. Probably the hardest work of healing Frances had to do in her [life](#) was to restore Lorenzo back to his old self.

When Battista married a pretty young [woman](#) named Mabilia, Frances expected to find someone to share in the management of the household. But Mabilia wanted [none](#) of it. She was as opposite of Frances as Frances had been of her mother-in-law. Mabilia wanted to party and ridiculed Frances in public for her shabby green dress, her habits, and her standards. One day in the middle of yelling at her, Mabilia suddenly turned pale and fainted, crying, "Oh my pride, my dreadful pride." Frances nursed her back to health and healed their differences as well. A converted Mabilia did her best to imitate Frances after that.

With Lorenzo's support and respect, Frances started a lay order of women attached to the Benedictines called the Oblates of Mary. The women lived in the world but pledged to offer themselves to [God](#) and serve the poor. Eventually they bought a house where the widowed members could live in community.

Frances nursed Lorenzo until he died. His last words to her were, "I feel as if my whole [life](#) has been one beautiful dream of purest happiness. [God](#) has given me so much in your love." After his death, Frances moved into the house with the other Oblates and was made superior. At 52 she had the [life](#) she dreamed of when she was eleven. She had been [right](#) in discerning her original vocation -- she just had the timing wrong. [God](#) had had other plans for her in between.

Frances died four years later. Her last words were "The [angel](#) has finished his task -- he beckons me to follow him."

Prayer: Saint Frances of Rome, help us to see the difference between what we want to do and what [God](#) wants us to do. Help us to discern what comes from our [will](#) and what comes from God's desire. [Amen](#)

https://www.catholic.org/saints/saint.php?saint_id=49

March 19th



Solemnity of St. Joseph, Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary

St. Joseph, the spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the foster-father of Jesus, was probably born in Bethlehem and probably died in Nazareth. His important mission in God's plan of salvation was "to legally insert Jesus Christ into the line of David from

whom, according to the prophets, the Messiah would be born, and to act as his father and guardian" ([*Directory on Popular Piety and the Liturgy*](#)). Most of our information about St. Joseph comes from the opening two chapters of St. Matthew's Gospel. No words of his are recorded in the Gospels; he was the "silent" man. We find no devotion to St. Joseph in the early Church. It was the will of God that the Virgin Birth of Our Lord be first firmly impressed upon the minds of the faithful. He was later venerated by the great saints of the Middle Ages. Pius IX (1870) declared him patron and protector of the universal family of the Church.

St. Joseph was an ordinary manual laborer although descended from the royal house of David. In the designs of Providence, he was destined to become the spouse of the Mother of God. His high privilege is expressed in a single phrase, "Foster-father of Jesus." About him Sacred Scripture has little more to say than that he was a just man—an expression which indicates how faithfully he fulfilled his high trust of protecting and guarding God's greatest treasures upon earth, Jesus and Mary.

The darkest hours of his life may well have been those when he first learned of Mary's pregnancy; but precisely in this time of trial Joseph showed himself great. His suffering, which likewise formed a part of the work of the redemption, was not without great providential import: Joseph was to be, for all times, the trustworthy witness of the Messiah's virgin birth. After this, he modestly retires into the background of holy Scripture.

Of St. Joseph's death the Bible tells us nothing. There are indications, however, that he died before the beginning of Christ's public life. His was the most beautiful death that one could have, in the arms of Jesus and Mary. Humbly and unknown, he passed his years at Nazareth, silent and almost forgotten he remained in the background through centuries of Church history. Only in more recent times has he been accorded greater honor. Liturgical veneration of St. Joseph began in the fifteenth century, fostered by Sts. Brigid of Sweden and Bernadine of Siena. St. Teresa, too, did much to further his cult.

At present there are two major feasts in his honor. On March 19 our veneration is directed to him personally and to his part in the work of redemption, while on May 1 we honor him as the patron of workmen throughout the world and as our guide in the difficult matter of establishing equitable norms regarding obligations and rights in the social order.

St. Joseph is invoked as patron for many causes. He is the patron of the Universal Church. He is the patron of the dying because Jesus and Mary were at his death-bed.

He is also the patron of fathers, of carpenters, and of social justice. Many religious orders and communities are placed under his patronage.

<https://www.catholicculture.org/culture/liturgicalyear/calendar/day.cfm?date=2019-03-19>

March 17th

The Origins of St. Patrick's Day



St. Patrick's Day celebrates the Roman Catholic feast day of the patron saint of Ireland. St. Patrick died on March 17, 461. But did you know that he wasn't even Irish?

Here are some fun facts about St. Patrick and some activities you can do with your family

History:

Patrick's birthname was Maewyn. He was born in Roman Britain. He was kidnapped into slavery and brought to Ireland.

He escaped to a monastery in Gaul (France) and converted to Christianity. He went back to Ireland in 432 as a missionary. He changed his name to Patricius (or Patrick), which derives from the Latin term for "father figure," after he became a priest. While Christianity had already taken hold in the country, tradition has it that Patrick confronted the Druids at Tara and abolished their pagan rites, making Christianity more widespread.

Patrick became a bishop and after his death was named Ireland's patron saint. Celebrations in Ireland were understated though. When the Irish emigrated to the U.S., they created the bigger celebrations and parades known today.

Eighteenth century Irish soldiers who fought in the Revolutionary War held the first St. Patrick Day parades. The celebrations became a way for the Irish to connect with their roots after they moved to America.

The modern St. Patrick's Day celebrations, at least in the United States, will likely be characterized by commercial lucky charms and green beer—all of which has very little to do with the historical figure of the saint. As it turns out, it took centuries for the holiday to accrue the elements that now seem crucial to its celebrations.

The March 17 celebration started in 1631 when the Church established a Feast Day honoring St. Patrick. He had been Patron Saint of Ireland who had died around the fifth century—a whopping 12 centuries before the modern version of the holiday was first observed. But very little is known about who he actually was, according to Marion Casey, a clinical assistant professor of Irish Studies at New York University (and a regular marcher in the St. Patrick's Day Parade in Manhattan).

It wasn't until the early 18th century that many of today's traditions were kicked into high gear. Since the holiday falls during Lent, it provides Christians a day off from the prescriptions of abstinence leading up to Easter, and around the 1720s, the church found it "got kind of out of control," Casey says. It was to remind celebrants what the holiday actually stood for, that the church first associated a botanical item—customary for all saints—with St. Patrick, assigning him the symbol of the likewise lucky shamrock.

The shamrock: According to legend St. Patrick used the three-leaf clover (or shamrock) to explain the Trinity.

It wasn't until 1798, the year of the Irish Rebellion, that the color green became officially associated with the day. Up until the rebellion, the color associated with St. Patrick was blue, as it was featured both in the royal court and on ancient Irish flags. But as the British wore red, the Irish chose to wear green, and they sang the song "The Wearing of the Green" during the rebellion, cementing the color's relevance in Irish history.

As for the green beer, that's an even later addition. In fact, it wasn't until the late 20th century that Ireland repealed a law that initially kept everything—pubs included—shut down for the day. Since then, thanks to a marketing push from Budweiser in the 1980s, downing beer has become a common way to celebrate, regardless of how closely it's tied to the actual meaning of St. Patrick himself.

Dyeing the river green: The practice of dyeing the river green started in Chicago in 1962, when city officials decided to dye a portion of the Chicago River green.

Corn beef and cabbage: This is an Irish American dish. Irish Americans were so poor they could not afford certain meals. On St. Patrick's Day, the best meal they could afford was beef and cabbage. It became a staple for the holiday.

<https://www.gpb.org/education/origins-of-st-patricks-day>

<https://time.com/4261456/st-patrick-day-2016-history-real-saint/>

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<https://www.catholicculture.org/culture/liturgicalyear/calendar/day.cfm?date=2019-03-19>

- Holy Thursday
- Good Friday
- Easter Sunday



On Palm Sunday, we celebrate the first joy of the season, as we celebrate Our Lord's triumphant entrance into Jerusalem where he was welcomed by crowds worshiping him and laying down palm leaves before him. It also marks the beginning of Holy Week, with the greatest tragedy and sorrow of the year.

Jesus' triumphant return to Jerusalem is only one side of the story.

By now many of the Jews are filled with hate for Our Lord. They want to see him stoned, calling Him a blasphemer, especially after offering proof of His Divinity during a winter visit to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Dedication.

After this, Jesus went to Perea, where he was summoned to Bethany. There he raised Lazarus from the dead, a miracle which wins Him such renown among certain Pharisees that they decided finally to end His life.

Jesus took refuge at Ephrem returning six days before Passover to Bethany, triumphantly entering Jerusalem. That evening, He leaves Jerusalem and returns Monday. He spent time with Gentiles in the Temple, and on Wednesday left for the Mount of Olives. Here he foretold the apostles the events of the next several days, including His impending death.

He returned to Jerusalem on Thursday, to share the Last Supper with His apostles. He was subsequently arrested and tried. He was crucified at Calvary on Friday, outside the gates of Jerusalem.

He was buried the same day, and arose three days later, on Easter Sunday.

All of this is done by our Lord for forgiveness of our sins, and for life everlasting with Him.

God so loved us, that He sent His only begotten Son to die for us, so that our sins may be forgiven.

Easter is the celebration of Christ's resurrection from the dead. It is celebrated on Sunday, and marks the end of Holy Week, the end of Lent, the last day of the Easter Triduum (Holy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter Sunday), and is the beginning of the Easter season of the liturgical year.

As we know from the Gospels, Jesus Christ rose from the dead on the third day following his crucifixion, which would be Sunday. His resurrection marks the triumph of good over evil, sin and death. It is the singular event which proves that those who trust in God and accept Christ will be raised from the dead.

Since Easter represents the fulfillment of God's promises to mankind, it is the most important holiday on the Christian calendar.

In the Gospels, the precise details of the Easter narrative vary slightly, but none of these variances are critical to the main story. In fact, it is argued that the variances are simply matters of style and not substance. Despite the variances, the key aspects of the Easter story all match. Above all, they agree that the tomb of Christ was indeed empty, which is the most essential fact.

Based on direct evidence from the mid-second century, it is believed that Easter was regularly celebrated from the earliest days of the Church.

The Easter date is movable and always falls on a Sunday between March 22 and April 25. Easter in the Roman Catholic Church is always on the first Sunday after the first full moon after the spring equinox.

Most Catholics attend Easter Vigil at midnight, although the services can be lengthy because many sacraments are performed, such as baptisms and Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults, during the Mass. Services during the daytime on Easter are shorter and well attended.

Sunrise services are common but are distinctly Protestant. Sunrise services are gathered before dawn and reflect the arrival of the women at Jesus' tomb early in the morning. The services take place outdoors, often in church yards, cemeteries, or in parks, and are timed so the sun will rise during the worship service.

Traditional family activities vary by region. In the United States, children often hunt for Easter eggs, which are often brightly dyed hard-boiled eggs, though they can be plastic eggs filled with candy or small denominations of money. Candy is a traditional gift for Easter as children often break their Lenten fasts with sweets. Adults tend to share bouquets of flowers, greeting cards, and may gather for a family meal. Such celebrations are often secularized and focused on children and family rather than the religious aspect of the holy day.

Following Easter Sunday, the season of Easter begins and lasts for seven weeks, ending with Pentecost.

<https://www.catholic.org/lent/easter.php>



Palm Sunday 2020

Palm Sunday for the year 2020 is celebrated/ observed on **Sunday, April 5th**.

Palm Sunday which is the Sunday before Easter Sunday and the start of Holy Week for Christians is a feast day commemorating Jesus's entry into Jerusalem on a Donkey (symbolizing peace versus a horse which symbolized war).

The name Palm Sunday comes from the palm branches the crowd scattered on the ground in front of Jesus as he rode into Jerusalem. Many churches today will celebrate the day with other tree branches (Yew, Willow, Olive, and Box) as many climates are unable to grow the Palm tree.

https://www.calendardate.com/palm_sunday_2020.htm

Palm Sunday is the final Sunday of Lent, the beginning of Holy Week, and commemorates the triumphant arrival of Christ in Jerusalem, days before he was crucified.

Palm Sunday is known as such because the faithful will often receive palm fronds which they use to participate in the reenactment of Christ's arrival in Jerusalem. In the Gospels, Jesus entered Jerusalem riding a young donkey, and to the lavish praise of the townspeople who threw clothes, or possibly palms or small branches, in front of him as a sign of homage. This was a customary practice for people of great respect.

Palm branches are widely recognized symbol of peace and victory, hence their preferred use on Palm Sunday.

The use of a donkey instead of a horse is highly symbolic, it represents the humble arrival of someone in peace, as opposed to arriving on a steed in war.

A week later, Christ would rise from the dead on the first Easter.

During Palm Sunday Mass, palms are distributed to parishioners who carry them in a ritual procession into church. The palms are blessed, and many people will fashion them into small crosses or other items of personal devotion. These may be returned to the church or kept for the year.

Because the palms are blessed, they may not be discarded as trash. Instead, they are appropriately gathered at the church and incinerated to create the ashes that will be used in the follow year's Ash Wednesday observance.

The colors of the Mass on Palm Sunday are red and white, symbolizing the redemption in blood that Christ paid for the world.

<https://www.catholic.org/lent/palmsunday.php>

