

First Sunday of Lent | February 21, 2021



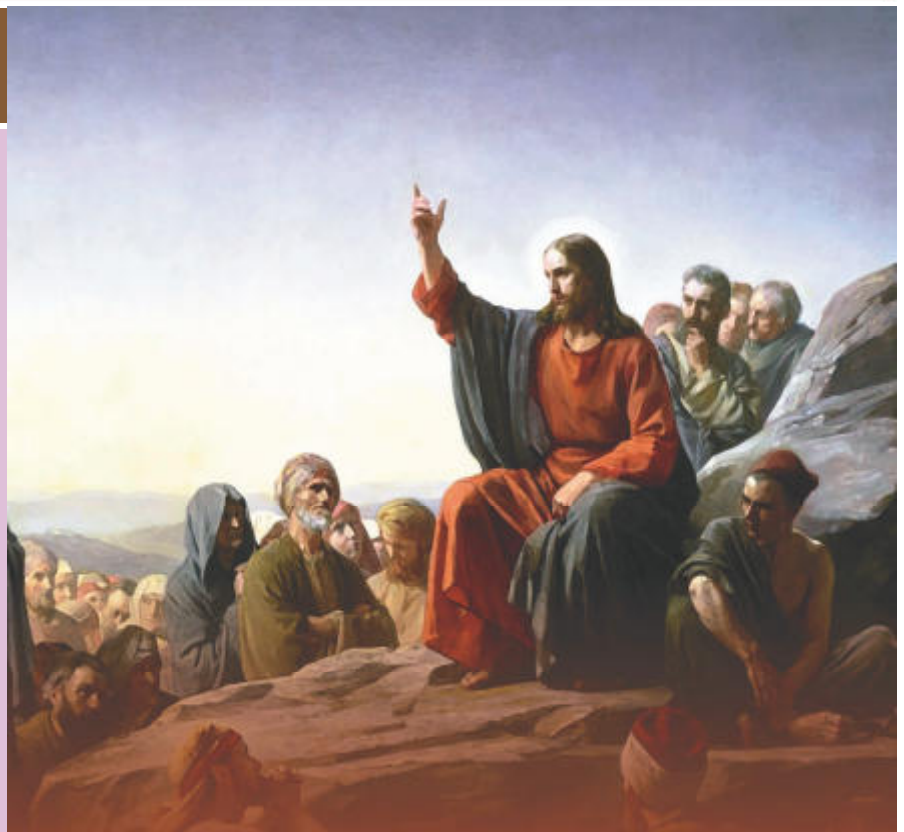
SAINT JOAN of ARC NEWS

The members of St. Joan of Arc Parish are disciples of Jesus Christ, who recognize God's love for the world & are empowered by the Holy Spirit to proclaim the Gospel to all people through joyful worship, life-long education, compassionate service, responsible stewardship, & active community living.

~ Mission Statement - Pentecost 1998 ~

WHAT'S INSIDE

Parish Directory.....	Page 2
Liturgy Schedule and Information	Page 2
Live Stream Info	Page 2
TALLer Tales	Page 3
The Chosen Watch Party	Page 4
St. Vincent DePaul Letter.....	Page 5
8th Grade Can and Bottle Drive	Page 5
Holy Hours	Page 6
Calendar of Events	Page 7
Words on the Word	Page 7
Mass Intentions.....	Page 8
Those Who Have Recently Died.....	Page 8
Tire Tracks in d'Arc.....	Page 9
An Act of Spiritual Communion	Page 10
Readings for the 2nd Sunday in Lent	Page 11
Gospel Meditation	Page 12
Hallow App.....	Page 13
Grow + Go for the 1st Sunday in Lent	Page 14
Prayers for the Sick & Military.....	Page 15
Bringing Home the Word.....	Page 16



1st SUNDAY OF LENT

"This is the time of fulfillment. The kingdom of God is at hand.
Repent, and believe in the gospel." - Mk 1:15

PARISH CENTER
22412 Overlake
Saint Clair Shores, MI 48080
Phone: 586-777-3670
Fax: 586-774-5528
Website: www.sjascscs.org
E-mail: sjainfo@sjascscs.org

SCHOOL
22415 Overlake
Saint Clair Shores, MI 48080
Phone: 586-775-8370
Fax: 586-447-3574
Website: www.stjoan.net
E-mail: info@stjoan.net

**FAITH AND FAMILY
FORMATION OFFICE**
22415 Overlake
Saint Clair Shores, MI 48080
Phone: 586-772-1282
Fax: 586-775-8374
E-mail: repopffice@sjascscs.org

Parish Directory / Liturgy Schedule

ST. JOAN OF ARC DIRECTORY

Parish Center

Phone: 586-777-3670
Fax: 586-774-5528

School

Phone: 586-775-8370
Fax: 586-447-3574

Religious Education

Phone: 586-772-1282
Fax: 586-775-8374

Pastor

Msgr. G. Michael Bugarin
gmbugarin@sjascs.org

Business Manager

Dina Ciaffone
dciaffone@sjascs.org

Athletic Director

Charles Kaiser
ckaiser@stjoan.net

Associate Pastor

Fr. Andrew Dawson
adawson@sjascs.org

Principal

Kathy Kalich
kkalich@stjoan.net

Office of Faith & Family Formation

Kristine Stewart Hass
khass@sjascs.org

Non-Resident

Associate Pastors / Weekend Assistants:

Fr. Rich Bartoszek
Fr. James Grau

Assistant Principal

Mary Pat Brennan
mbrennan@stjoan.net

Exceptional Children

Mary Cal
mcal@sjascs.org

Permanent Deacons

Deacon Tom Strasz
tstrasz@sjascs.org

Music Director

Catherine Thomas
cthomas@sjascs.org

Youth Group

Linda Lietaert
llietaert@stjoan.net

Deacon Dom Pastore
dpastore@sjascs.org

Anthems Director

Eleonore Ellero-Groth
eleonoraellero@gmail.com



PARISH CENTER OFFICE HOURS

The Parish Center is open Monday -Thursday from 8:30am-5pm and Friday from 8:30-4pm.

MASKS ARE MANDATORY WITHOUT EXCEPTION

For mass intentions or any service we may be reached at 586-777-3670 during these hours.

For any urgent needs when we are not open, please call our after-hours emergency number: 586-777-1342.

Baptisms: Please go to our website (stjoan.church) and fill out the Baptism request form.

Marriages: Arrangements should be made at the Parish Center at least six months prior to the desired date. Pre-marriage series required.

Registration: It is very important that every family and independent adult be registered in the Church in order to keep our records and mailings current. Please contact the Parish Office to register at your earliest opportunity.

LITURGY SCHEDULE

Weekdays

Monday thru Friday: 7:00 am

Weekends

Saturday: 4:00 pm & 6:00 pm

Sunday: 8:00 am & 12:00 pm

Holy Day Masses

Vigil Mass: (evening prior) 7:00 pm

7:00 am, 12:00 pm, 7:00 pm

Reconciliation

Saturday: 11:00 am in the Sister Carol Center adjacent to Church

Holy Hour

Thursdays in Church at 7:00 pm

Rosary

Monday - Friday after the 7am mass outside by the Holy Trinity statue.

INTERESTED IN BECOMING A PARISHIONER?

If you would like to become a parishioner of St. Joan of Arc, at this time please register at stjoan.church and we will contact you by phone to get further information OR by calling us at 586-777-3670 during office hours.

Live Streamed Broadcasts at St. Joan of Arc

Though we have returned to public masses we will continue our Live Stream Broadcasts of all celebrations.

- **Weekdays -7 am Mass - (Monday thru Friday)**
- **Saturdays - 4 pm and 6 pm Masses**
- **Sundays - 8 am and 12 pm Masses**
- **Thursdays - 7 pm Holy Hour**

Go to: livestream.stjoan.church to watch all live streaming and to view archived celebrations.



Who's car is that? As I sit here on a snowy Tuesday and hear all the work being done outside to clear the snow, I can't help but remember an

incident that happened a week ago last Friday or whenever we last had a few inches of snow.

As a backdrop to the story, you need to know that I was called out to Ascension St. John Hospital to anoint someone on the Thursday of that same week. This wasn't your typical anointing. Because I haven't had both of my vaccines yet, I still can't be present in the hospitals. So, getting a call from Father Mahoney, the chaplain at Ascension St. John, caught me off guard. He explained the request was unusual. The person needing anointing was in the process of dying. She also had Alzheimer's. The family discovered that the individual wasn't responding in English but was responding in her native Italian. Father Mahoney knew I could speak some Italian, so he wanted to see if I would come down to the hospital to anoint her in Italian. It wasn't an emergency but needed to be done sometime that day. Eventually, I printed the ritual in Italian and headed out to the hospital. When I got up to the room, the person was somewhat alert. I tried to dialogue with her in Italian, but she wasn't responding that much at all. After struggling through the ritual for a few minutes in Italian, I switched back to English; otherwise, I would have been there a long time! I remembered looking around the room and realized no one but God would have known I switched back to English. I then returned to the Parish for Holy Hour that evening.

That Friday morning, I remember walking over to Church for the 7 AM mass and happened to see a black car parked near the entrance to the Church. At first, I thought the car belonged to Dina, our Business Manager. I thought she arrived at Church pretty early that morning. The car had been parked there for some time because the snow crew had to work around it when they plowed the snow that morning. It always grinds me (and I'm sure our snow crew) whenever cars are left in the lot when it snows. I didn't think anything of it and walked into Church for Mass. After Mass, I realized the car didn't belong to Dina because I

saw her get into her car on the other side of this black vehicle.

As this was a Friday, I was going to fulfill my Friday plans to be with my Mom (and thus take a day off). Now granted, I love being with my Mom on these Fridays, but I also have a strong motivator not to weasel my way out of these days occasionally when I have too much going on. That strong motivator is knowing that Father Rich would positively, absolutely, and undoubtedly RAT ME OUT at a Saturday 4 PM Mass, and thus to the world since it's our greatest attended live-stream liturgy too.

To get ready for my Friday, I walked back to the office to clean things up before I got close to my scheduled 10 AM departure. But the talk of the office was the black car that sat there overnight and hindered the snow crew. When it was time to leave the office, I walked to the house, changed out of my blacks, and gathered what I needed for the day with my Mom. I then pushed my garage door opener. As the garage door was opening, my heart sank for a minute because my car was missing! Right away, I thought someone stole my car. But then I had a conversation with myself after face palming myself. "You BIG dummy," I said to myself. "That black car everyone is talking about near the Church is YOURS!" That's where I parked it after returning from the hospital the night before.

Led into the Desert: Every year, as I reflect on this weekend's Gospel, I'm always struck by one line: "Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert ..." Matthew and Luke's version says "led;" Mark's version says, "The Spirit drove Jesus into the desert ..." Just as the Spirit LED Jesus into the desert, we too find ourselves being led into our own deserts probably more often than we wish. It is here we are called to face our temptations and strive to turn our lives and hearts more completely to God. And, just as much as Jesus emerged from the 40 days in the desert and went and proclaimed the Gospel in Galilee, we too are called to emerge from the desert as Easter people ready and willing to proclaim the Gospel to all we meet on our journey.

While many of us have never been in a desert and don't comprehend the harsh environment it entails, we know that if you remain still, your chances of survival are minimal. In order to survive, you must traverse the desert.

During this Lenten season, we enter our own desert(s). Sometimes the deserts we face are frightening and overwhelming, like dealing with a terminal illness or helping a spouse or parent with Alzheimer's. Some deserts might be the fear of losing a job or health care. Some deserts might be the reality that a college education for our child may no longer be a reality because of finances. Some deserts might be the same as those in years past; it might be the desert of addiction or sinful behavior. It could be the desert of isolation caused by the pandemic. Whatever the desert, we are called to traverse it with God's help and emerge from it as risen people!

Too often in the deserts of our lives, we lose sight of the "promised land" or the oasis we seek. Sometimes, we even forget that God NEVER leaves us orphaned or abandoned. We need to realize that God is present in our desert experiences and that it is only with his help that we get the courage and strength to keep moving toward better land.

Yes, we may have been led into a desert we didn't expect. We may wonder why we were led down this road. Lent is about facing the deserts of our lives. It is not about asking the question WHY but rather HOW this desert experience might be calling us to conversion and repentance. Lent is about doing something to traverse the desert in order to emerge as changed people.

The question remains then what helps us traverse the desert. First, we must realize that the Spirit is present, and much like with Jesus, angels are present to minister to us. Second, we need to orient our hearts and minds toward God. You need a strong compass/GPS, and you need to keep focused. You need to know where you are going. Without a compass or focus, you can wander for a long time. If you want to go someplace, if you truly want to emerge from your desert, you need the proper tools. For Christians, the ultimate tool is a relationship with God. Without that relationship, without that prayer, without that compass, we may never find our oasis. Prayer then becomes our GPS to help us get out of the deserts of our lives.

Happy Lent. Know of my prayers.

In Christ,

gmb
gmb@sjascs.org

The CHOSEN

WATCH PARTY AND DISCUSSION



**JOIN FR. ANDREW VIA ZOOM
TO WATCH AND DISCUSS THE
FIRST SEASON (8 EPISODES)
OF THE ACCLAIMED SERIES
ABOUT CHRIST'S LIFE**

**BEGINNING, TUESDAY, JAN 12 THRU MAR 2
7-8:30 PM**

**IT'S FREE. REGISTER AT
[SJASCS.ORG/THE-CHOZEN-WATCH-PARTY](https://sjascs.org/the-chozen-watch-party)**

Christian Service Info

St. Vincent De Paul Conference



Everyone is aware that the year 2020 presented many unexpected and difficult situations for people, businesses, schools and church related issues. It doesn't appear that very little has not been affected by the pandemic. We continue to live with the effects of the COVID 19 virus. Many lives have been lost to it; many families have had to adjust their way of living. School students have had their classroom experience changed in many ways. Much unfamiliarity in everyday life, and life in general, has changed. Mandates have been enforced, rescinded and mandated again.. The word "adjustment" has become the norm today.

While the world continues to adjust (if that is even remotely possible at the present time), the St. Vincent DePaul Conference of St. Joan of Arc Parish, continues its work and is available to help with food and paper goods if needed by persons who reside within the boundaries of our parish. Those in need can call 586-774-3598 on Mondays, Wednesdays or Fridays. Phone calls will be retrieved and calls returned.

When calling, please state

Family Name

Address

Phone #

Number of family members in household

When calling, please speak clearly and slowly so that we are able to record correct information and return your call.

We wish to thank everyone who donated to our St. Vincent DePaul conference during the past year. Your generosity continues to support our ministry for which we are very grateful. Thank you to the SJA students, parents, and staff for the Dec. 15, 2020 Paper Products Drive. Your twice a year drives keep us re-stocked. In addition we thank the Dan McMann family & friends who for the last 10 years have supplied us with car-loads of canned and packaged dry foods. Together with donations from the school children and the McManns, we are fortunate to help many people in need from within our parish.

With sincere gratitude, we know that our loving God will bless each and every one for your goodness and sacrifice.

8th Grade Can and Bottle Drive

The Class of 2022 is now responsible for the can and bottle drive.

This is an important fundraiser that helps defray the cost of their events and Washington trip in 2022.

Bring your returnables in bags to the Parish Center - West SIDE DOOR - (near Father Andrew's House) please. There is a large plastic bin with a lid that they can be placed in..

Or you can arrange a pick-up by calling or texting Matt at 313-683-1972.

Thank you for your support.

The Class of 2022 ~



Diving into the beauty of the Faith has never been easier: at home, on the go, or from any internet connected device.

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*Spend an hour
with me.*

Jesus

HOLY HOURS

*7-8 pm, Thursdays
in the Church*

**and streaming live online at
stjoan.church and on
Facebook @sjascs**

First and third
Thursdays include
Praise and Worship
music, second and
fourth are silent.

Calendar of Events / Words on the Word

Weekly Calendar of Events

Monday, February 22nd

7:00 am Public Morning Mass - Live Streamed

Tuesday, February 23rd

7:00 am Public Morning Mass - Live Streamed

8:30 am School Mass (5th –8th Gds) Live Streamed

Wednesday, February 24th

7:00 am Public Morning Mass - Live Streamed

8:30 am School Mass (1st –4th Gds) Live Streamed

Thursday, February 25th

7:00 am Public Morning Mass - Live Streamed

Friday, February 26th

7:00 am Public Morning Mass - Live Streamed

7:00 pm Stations of the Cross - Live Streamed

Saturday, February 27th

11:00 am Reconciliation

1:30 pm Baptism of Michael Lechkon

4:00 pm Public Mass - Live Streamed

6:00 pm Public Mass - Live Streamed

Sunday, February 28th

8:00 am Public Mass - Live Streamed

12:00 pm Public Mass -Live Streamed

Words on the Word

February 21, 2021 – Among Wild Beasts

Lent begins this year with the very brief description from St. Mark's gospel about Jesus' time of fasting in the desert:

"The Spirit drove Jesus out into the desert," today's gospel passage begins, "and (Jesus) remained in the desert for forty days, tempted by Satan. He was among wild beasts, and the angels ministered to him."

Rather than provide detail about the temptations of Jesus, as we often hear of this 40-day period, St. Mark instead observes that Jesus was "among wild beasts."

Sometimes, alas, it can feel like Jesus' church today is among those same beasts, or others, depending on how one reads the passage and the circumstances.

An Associated Press article a few weeks ago described how dioceses across the country benefitted from a portion of a \$1.5 billion emergency relief program that had been established to help small businesses caught in the economic crosshairs of the pandemic. This was done, the reporting continued, even as the dioceses collectively had more than \$10 billion in cash that could have helped them weather the storm.

An analysis of whether the accounting is correct, and whether the insinuation of wrongdoing is fair or even close to accurate if beyond the purview of this space. Such matters, as we all know, always are subject to deeper explanations than quick media accounts usually provide.

More instructive for the moment is the predictable commentary that followed, which quickly became a collection of "church vs. state separation" comments, at best, and clear anti-Catholic propaganda and vitriol, at worst. The lesson, as usual, is that regardless of the surface details, there are deeper, more pressing concerns with which the church and its members should concern themselves as we commence with Lent.

"Repent," Jesus says at the conclusion of today's passage, "and believe in the gospel."

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Mass Intentions / Weekly Readings

Mass Intentions

Monday February 22, 2021 The Chair of Saint Peter the Apostle (White)

7:00 a.m. Marian Gorde

Tuesday February 23, 2021 Lenten Weekday (Purple)

7:00 a.m. A special intention for the Benedis Family

Wednesday February 24, 2021 Lenten Weekday (Purple)

7:00 a.m. Nancy LaClair

Thursday February 25, 2021 Lenten Weekday (Purple)

7:00 a.m. George J. Bugarin

Friday February 26, 2021 Lenten Weekday (Purple)

7:00 a.m. Sr. Carol Juhasz, IHM and Carlos Mallare

Saturday February 27, 2021 Lenten Weekday (Purple)

4:00 p.m. Michael Forrester, Bonnie Batche, George Rupinski, William Dinan, George Bugarin, Brent Berger, Robert J. Pierce, and special intentions for the Thomas Family, teh J. Champine Family and for Cathy Spindler

6:00 p.m. George J. Bugarin

Sunday February 28, 2021

8:00 a.m. For the Intentions of St. Joan of Arc Parishioners

12:00 p.m. Hugo Calisi, Dee Allor, Virginia Ketelhut, Celso Collini, Mary Asher, Herman Wang, Averil Cottone, and for the deceased members of the Gaetano and Lucia Families

Weekly Readings

Monday, February 22

1 peter 5:1-4
Matthew 16:13-19

Friday, February 26

Ezekiel 18:21-28
Matthew 5:20-26

Tuesday, February 23

Isaiah 55:10-11
Matthew 6:7-15

Saturday, February 27

Deuteronomy 26:16-19
Matthew 5:43-48

Wednesday, February 24

Jonah 3:1-10
Luke 11:29-32

Sunday, February 28

Genesis 22:1-2, 9a, 10-13, 15-18
Romans 8:31b-34
Mark 9:2-10

Thursday, February 25

Esther C:12, 14-16, 23-25
Matthew 7:7-12



I Am The Resurrection & The Life

“Heavenly Father, welcome home those who you have called from this world and grant peace and consolation to their families.”

**Jim Frank
Elza Groth
Joyce Hobbs**



“I said to the man who stood at the Gate of the Year: Give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown. and he replied: Go out into the darkness and put your hand into the hand of God. That shall be to you better than light, and safer than a known way.”

~Minnie Louise Haskins

Can Tab Recycling

We are back to recycling can tabs. All proceeds will benefit the Ronald McDonald House Charities.

How you can help: Spread the word! Let your family, friends, co-workers, and classmates know that their small pop tabs, food can tabs all can make a big difference for Ronald McDonald House Charities.

Donations can be dropped off in the buckets at church, brought to the Parish Center, or pick-up may be arranged by calling:

Frank Poeschel at #586-776-8746.





Drawing An Analogy, Drawing Strength From Confession: When I was very young, I used to like to draw. I kept it up into my early teens. By then, I

was pretty much exclusively drawing race cars. I don't know why, but after the age of 14, I didn't draw at all. I don't remember which seminary class I was in (maybe I didn't even know at the time!) but I must not have been particularly engaged because I started doodling in my notepad, a race car again. One of my classmates, who is an amazing artist, saw it back in my room and said, "You should draw Mary." I said, "I can't draw Mary; I only draw race cars." He went off to his room and came back with a sketch pad and pencils, put them down on my dresser and said "Draw Mary," and walked out.

The next day he came in my room and said, "Show me Mary." I told him I hadn't even thought about it since the day before. He threw his arms up, rolled his eyes and walked out. The next day, the same scene played out again. So he stopped asking. 6 months passed by and now I'd thought about it. We were in Irene, South Dakota, a town of 300 people, on a 30-day silent retreat. No wonder I had time to think about it. It was July and I was sitting outside the retreat house, making my first attempt to draw the Blessed Mother. My classmate walked up, looked over my shoulder and grinned and nodded with a satisfied, "my work here is done" kind of look on his face—of course we weren't allowed to speak! He said later, "I could see the lines on those race cars and I knew you could draw Mary." Since then, I have drawn more, not a lot, but it's an enjoyable hobby. I have tried to experiment with a few different styles in the past year or so. Recently, I've been working on a sketch of a bridge and surrounding buildings from a part of Rome. I've discovered that old Italian buildings are, well...old....and very forgiving to draw. I'm taking it from a picture I found online. There are no straight lines where you might usually expect straight lines on a building, so any error is easy to cover.

One of the reasons I don't draw more often, I think, is that starting a new sketch is always less fun than continuing one I've been working on for a while. Once I finish one, that tends to be it for a while, until I really find the motivation again. I

enjoy the shading work, but less so the outlining. Later on you can see progress in the work, but at the beginning it's tough to get going.

I can't help but find analogies everywhere—it's just the way my brain operates. And I was thinking of the similarity between this and the Sacrament of Confession (bear with me here!) If it's been a while since you went, it may be difficult to get back into starting a new practice, a habit (a good habit). And then it often becomes a question of where to start. Don't overthink it.

- "Father, it's been a year/ 5 years/ 20 years since my last confession."

- "Welcome back."

A return to confession is always a beautiful thing. Now you've started again. And now we have an outline. And the process is the same, whether it's been a week or 20 years since you confessed last. Now start on the details... BUT.... when I say details, trust the priest to ask for more - if he needs you to shade it in a little so he understands what you are confessing. All you need to do is give the sins you are aware of having committed. Worried about how to confess the biggest ones? Don't be! No priest has to wait very long before he's just about heard it all. And be assured your sins are not that unusual or interesting that we want to dwell on them. I tell people when they say, "I don't know where to start," "Start with the biggest." Don't sit getting more anxious about how to say it, just say it: "Father I"

Rarely does any individual sin you are confessing need more than a few words, one sentence. The story of what led you into that sin might be true, and it's good to examine your conscience to help you avoid any near occasion of sin again, but it's not usually significant to the end result.... you sinned. Just confess the sin and not the story. The priest can absolve the sin, but not the circumstances that led to it. It's the sin you came to ask for God's mercy for. What leads us to sin is that ultimately we are all fallen people. We are all sinners. God knows this and that's why He gave us the sacrament as the means of our redemption. We don't need to try to water-down or justify our sins, just to be honest and sincere with God, "Lord, I'm a sinner; I need you and your mercy."

Remember, too, that in confession, you are confessing sins, not virtues. God knows all of them, but he doesn't ask you to come and confess that you pray the Rosary every day or that you love Mary and would never hurt anyone. Those are good things, but the priest can't absolve them! Nor can the priest absolve someone else's sin! I have told penitents that if they confess another person's sin, I'll give them their penance as well as their own!

I often wonder where a confession is about to go when a penitent begins with "Bless me Father, my wife...." or "Bless me Father, my husband...." Confession is about you and God.... Someone else may have been in the wrong, but presumably you're mentioning it because it drew *you* into doing or saying something wrong too, so that's really the part you need be concerned with in the sacrament. The rest is between that person and God. There is no pyx for taking God's forgiveness home from confession for someone else.

Please try to remember that there are usually other people in line, and you don't want to cause them the sin of anger while they wait for you to tell the priest what he doesn't need to hear! It is charitable to be especially attentive to this in Lent, when lines are longer. Don't skip sins, just go right to the point.

God is so forgiving. Even when our attempts at confession are imperfect, God's heart is consoled that you came to confess... to ask for His mercy. We are like the crooked lines of the Italian buildings in the sketch, but God erases any mistakes we make if we are willing to present them to Him in all humility.

Don't worry about the process - if you're unsure how to go to confession, just tell the priest that and he will guide you through it. There are many helpful guides and examinations of conscience available online and in Catholic bookstores.

Lent is a beautiful time to turn back to God and to simply ask for the mercy He makes available to us in the Sacrament of Confession. God is waiting, hands open, waiting for us to off-load our burden of sin. Why not take Him up on the offer?

You are in my prayers this week.
Fr. Andrew adawson@sjasc.org

An Act of Spiritual Communion

It has long been a Catholic understanding that when circumstances prevent one from receiving Holy Communion, it is possible to make an Act of Spiritual Communion which is a source of grace.

Spiritual Communion means uniting one's self in prayer with Christ's sacrifice and worshipping him in his Body and Blood. The most common reason for making an Act of Spiritual Communion is when a person cannot attend Mass.

Acts of Spiritual Communion increase our desire to receive sacramental Communion and help us avoid the sins that would make us unable to receive Holy Communion worthily.

A Prayer for Spiritual Communion

*My Jesus, I believe that you are present
in the Most Holy Sacrament.*

I love you above all things and I desire to receive you in my soul.

Since I cannot at this moment receive you sacramentally,

Come at least spiritually into my heart.

I embrace you as if you were already there

And unite myself wholly to you.

Never permit me to be separated from you.

Amen.

SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT – FEBRUARY 28 B

Reading 1 – Genesis

God put Abraham to the test. He called to him, "Abraham!" "Here I am!" he replied. Then God said: "Take your son Isaac, your only one, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah. There you shall offer him up as a holocaust on a height that I will point out to you."

When they came to the place of which God had told him, Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it. Then he reached out and took the knife to slaughter his son. But the LORD's messenger called to him from heaven, "Abraham, Abraham!" "Here I am!" he answered. "Do not lay your hand on the boy," said the messenger. "Do not do the least thing to him. I know now how devoted you are to God, since you did not withhold from me your own beloved son." As Abraham looked about, he spied a ram caught by its horns in the thicket. So he went and took the ram and offered it up as a holocaust in place of his son.

Again the LORD's messenger called to Abraham from heaven and said: "I swear by myself, declares the LORD, that because you acted as you did in not withholding from me your beloved son, I will bless you abundantly and make your descendants as countless as the stars of the sky and the sands of the seashore; your descendants shall take possession of the gates of their enemies, and in your descendants all the nations of the earth shall find blessing—all this because you obeyed my command."

Responsorial Psalm 116

R. I will walk before the Lord, in the land of the living.

I believed, even when I said, "I am greatly afflicted." Precious in the eyes of the LORD is the death of his faithful ones.

R. I will walk before the Lord, in the land of the living.

O LORD, I am your servant; I am your servant, the son of your handmaid; you have loosed my bonds. To you will I offer sacrifice of thanksgiving, and I will call upon the name of the LORD.

R. I will walk before the Lord, in the land of the living.

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My vows to the LORD I will pay in the presence of all his people, In the courts of the house of the LORD, in your midst, O Jerusalem.

R. I will walk before the Lord, in the land of the living.

Reading 2 – Romans

Brothers and sisters: If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but handed him over for us all, how will he not also give us everything else along with him?

Who will bring a charge against God's chosen ones? It is God who acquits us, who will condemn? Christ Jesus it is who died—or, rather, was raised—who also is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us.

Verse Before Gospel - Matthew

From the shining cloud the Father's voice is heard: This is my beloved Son, listen to him.

Gospel – Mark

Jesus took Peter, James, and John and led them up a high mountain apart by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his clothes became dazzling white, such as no fuller on earth could bleach them. Then Elijah appeared to them along with Moses, and they were conversing with Jesus. Then Peter said to Jesus in reply, "Rabbi, it is good that we are here! Let us make three tents: one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." He hardly knew what to say, they were so terrified. Then a cloud came, casting a shadow over them; from the cloud came a voice, "This is my beloved Son. Listen to him." Suddenly, looking around, they no longer saw anyone but Jesus alone with them.

As they were coming down from the mountain, he charged them not to relate what they had seen to anyone, except when the Son of Man had risen from the dead. So they kept the matter to themselves, questioning what rising from the dead meant.

GOSPEL MEDITATION

ENCOURAGE DEEPER UNDERSTANDING OF SCRIPTURE

St. Oscar Romero said, "Aspire not to have more, but to be more." These powerful words provide the perfect framework for a conversion oriented Lenten experience. God is giving us this Lenten sign to stop being concerned about what you have and focus on who you are. This requires that we create a desert space and listen more attentively for God to reveal His presence. It is all so wonderfully simple on the one hand and so incredibly challenging on the other. The message is simple: love God, neighbor, and self. Those simple words make great sense, but we struggle translating them into reality. Our attachments, compulsions, obsessions, addictions, routines, and busyness all anchor us to the "I" of the self," keeping us mired in our compulsive need for self-aggrandizement. It's not about us!

God vowed, long ago, to nurture, sustain and protect the relationship He has with His people. He called us into being, nurtures us in being, and sustains us in being. Without the Loving Divine Presence, all life would cease. Once we slow down a bit and clear away some of the clutter, we can see how the journey of our life is unfolding. We can see what brings us in and out of tune with God's love and how we can better imitate God's loving fidelity in our relationship with Him. In short, we will see our myopic short sightedness and figure out how



we can better share the Divine Fire within with others. Lent isn't just about giving stuff up for forty days and indulging again at Easter. We need to push things much farther and wrestle with the question of how we can be more. "Being more" means becoming more fully alive and in touch with the holiness of life and the divinity that lives in and empowers all beings and things. It is realizing that the "quality" of our presence is crucial to being an effective witness and herald of God's unconditional love.

The illusion we have bought into causes us to believe that the wrong things and systems matter. We tirelessly fight to keep things the way they are, to return to the former

ways of doing things or restore some nostalgic fantasy memory of "life in the good old days." Lent isn't about maintaining what we have or returning to something that is gone. It's about becoming something new. It's about being more focused, centered, convicted, and grounded so that we can be a person who truly loves and treasures being made in the image of God. The secret to Gospel living is not found in accumulating anything for ourselves, even merit points for heaven. Gospel living means learning how to live with less so that others can live with more. The thought of permanently giving something up makes us feel uncomfortable. Truth often does.

After John had been arrested, Jesus came to Galilee proclaiming the gospel of God: "This is the time of fulfillment. The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel." - Mk 1:14-15

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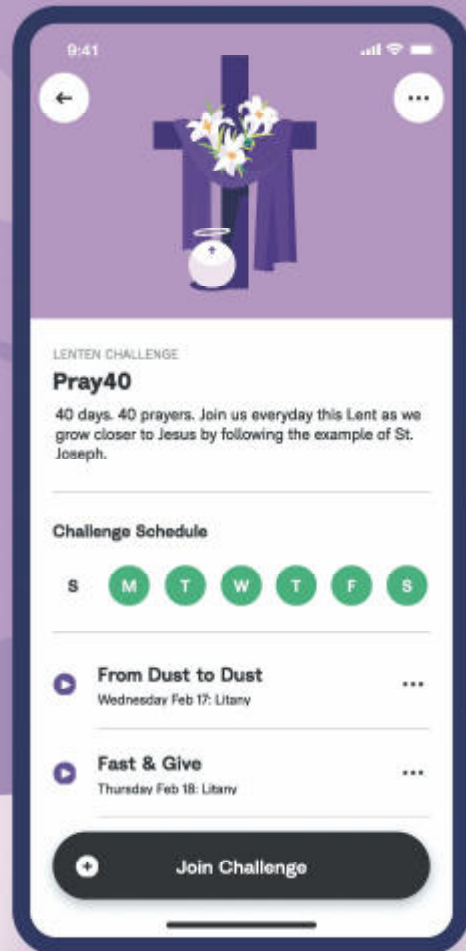
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February 21, 2021

First Sunday of Lent

Gn 9:8-15 | 1 Pt 3:18-22 | Mk 1:12-15

Written by
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GROW AS A DISCIPLE | PRAY, STUDY, ENGAGE, SERVE

Even amid the forced slowdown of a pandemic, distractions abound: Netflix bingeing, online shopping, even positive pursuits like home organizing and personal fitness. I confess I indulge in all of these (except for home organizing). Lent challenges me to let go of the unnecessary distractions and dare to make friends with solitude, which can be a daunting proposition because it means keeping company with my own thoughts. Jesus, our human and divine Savior, faced the desert and was tempted by Satan. But he also emerged *from* the desert, and announced himself and the Gospel to the people of Galilee. He goes on to accept his death on a cross for the sake of our salvation, the fulfillment of the covenant between God and his people. As we enter Lent, as we enter *our* desert, we pray for the fortitude to forego temptation, opening our hearts to God's will for us, and ready to proclaim it to the world.

GO EVANGELIZE

PRAYER, INVITATION, WITNESS, ACCOMPANIMENT

What are you doing for Lent this year? I ask our kids that every Ash Wednesday around the dinner table, and one or more of us often scramble for a plan. "Umm ... candy! I'll give up candy except Snickers." "No Netflix!" Or we take the "do good" route: "I'll pray more." "I'll help with chores." "I'll volunteer or donate to charity." All good things. Whatever "the plan," however, today's Gospel challenges me to be quiet and listen. While a plan gives us accountability and can lead to growth, sometimes less truly can be more. This year, I'd like to spend less time planning and more time listening for God's voice in the silence, which I find personally challenging. For others, the desert may look quite different. However we decide to approach Lent, let us pray that these 40 days bring us closer to God and our lives more in line with his will for us.

PRAY "One does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes forth from the mouth of God." The verse before today's Gospel caught my attention. What can I pare away from my daily life to make room for the word of God? For those of us whose minds tend to wander when praying silently, perhaps listening to the daily readings can be a good way to start or end the day.

Prayers Needed

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Bringing Home the Word

First Sunday of Lent (B)
February 21, 2021

Navigating the Desert

By Fr. Mark Haydu, LC

Like Noah being prepared to navigate the Flood, so the Spirit sent Jesus into the desert. Why was he sent there? Did he need to learn something he didn't know? Did he lack something he needed? Jesus as God didn't lack anything, of course, but he needed time to pray, reflect, and prepare for his mission. He also wanted to set an example to follow. Another Scripture says he went into the desert to be tempted by the devil. That time of spiritual combat was helpful for him.

We also need to go through trials and crises to grow both in our spiritual lives and human maturity. We each have had our desert where we are challenged to our core and stretched beyond our limits. Perhaps it was a crisis such as a health, employment, or relational issue. But it doesn't always have to be such a dramatic event. It can be as simple and constant as the prolonged embracing of daily challenges in a manner that leads to life. We probably look back and see these as some of our best times—if we truly encountered ourselves and our Lord.

The key is in peaceful acceptance, looking for what good can be learned from these inconveniences. In every cross there is a resurrection; in every storm a rainbow assures us of God's presence and victory. It tells us that clouds and storms will not lead to total death, but rather to a purified rebirth, growth, and newfound life and strength. He has promised us this, +

In every cross there is a resurrection; in every storm a rainbow assures us of God's presence and victory.

Sunday Readings

Genesis 9:8–15

[God said,] "I set my bow in the clouds to serve as a sign of the covenant between me and the earth."

1 Peter 3:18–22

[Baptism] is not a removal of dirt from the body but an appeal to God for a clear conscience.

Mark 1:12–15

[Jesus said,] "This is the time of fulfillment. The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel."

A Word from Pope Francis

Let us invite Jesus into the boats of our lives. Let us hand over our fears to him so that he can conquer them. Like the disciples, we will experience that with him on board there will be no shipwreck. Because this is God's strength... He brings serenity into our storms, because with God life never dies.

—Extraordinary Moment of Prayer for the COVID-19 Pandemic, March 27, 2020



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

QUESTION 1 REFLECTION

- What important lessons have I learned from a challenge in my life?
- Can I share that lesson with a friend or family member?

Becoming the Paschal Mystery

By Johan van Parys

Have you ever wondered where Lent comes from? The word *Lent* comes from the Middle English word *leste*, which means "spring." Just as new life abounds in spring, during Lent we prepare to celebrate new life at Easter.

The origin of Lent can be traced back to a period of intense fasting and praying in preparation for adult baptism. In some Christian communities this period lasted anywhere from a few days or a few weeks to the symbolic forty days. Our current forty-day Lenten fast refers back to the forty days of Jesus and the forty years of Israel's people spent in the desert.

It was determined that Easter Vigil would be the best time to celebrate baptism, and forty days of preparation before Easter became a custom. Currently the period of preparation for Easter known as Lent is recognized by the entire community; it used to be recognized only by catechumens planning to be baptized during the Easter Vigil.

Lent also became the time for great penance by those who belonged to the Order of Penitents as the precursor to the sacrament of reconciliation, which was created to allow people to repent for grave sins. The bishop admitted sinners to the Order of Penitents during a special rite that included the use of ashes. A remnant of this rite is found in our Ash Wednesday service.

Members of the Order of Penitents were excluded from the sacraments and



expected to dedicate their lives to prayer and penance. Once a year, on Holy Thursday, the bishop welcomed those who were ready to be readmitted to the Church and the sacraments. Penitents would intensify their prayer and penance during the days leading up to Easter.

Today, these two movements toward the sacraments of initiation and reconciliation characterize the season of Lent. Lent is indeed the time of final preparation for those who will join the Catholic Church during the Easter Vigil. Those who are already members are called to reconcile with God and the Church so they can celebrate Easter in a worthy manner.

In addition, Lent offers three disciplines as part of the preparation for initiation and reconciliation: fasting, praying, and giving of alms (charity or care for others). Prayer allows us to reconnect with God. Without this relationship, our Church membership is a mere exercise in following rules and regulations. Penance helps us reconnect with ourselves as an exercise in removing everything that clouds our vision. Giving alms enables us to reconnect with others as an exercise in sharing.

May the celebration of this great season of Lent be a time of sincere penance, prayer, and sharing so that, in a renewed spirit, we may become the paschal mystery we celebrate. +

Lent was recognized only by catechumens planning to be baptized during the Easter Vigil.



Lord, strengthen my resolve to be faithful to your covenant of love and be more compassionate and generous toward all people.

—From *Mindful Meditations for every Day of Lent and Easter*, Rev. Warren J. Savage and Mary Ann McSweeney

WEEKDAY READINGS

February 22–27

Monday, The Chair of St. Peter the Apostle:
1 Pt 5:1–4 / Mt 16:13–19


Tuesday, Lenten Weekday:
Is 55:10–11 / Mt 6:7–15

Wednesday, Lenten Weekday:
Jon 3:1–10 / Lk 11:29–32

Thursday, Lenten Weekday:
Est C:12, 14–16, 23–25 / Mt 7:7–12

Friday, Lenten Weekday:
Ez 18:21–28 / Mt 5:20–26

Saturday, Lenten Weekday:
Dt 26:16–19 / Mt 5:43–48

Bringing Home
the Word 
February 21, 2021

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