

Growing in FAITH™

Discovering hope and joy in the Catholic faith.

March 2023

St. Mary's Church and St. Rita's Church
Rev. Peter DiTomasso, MSSCC, Pastor

One Minute Meditations

Fasting to detach

"Their God is their stomach; their glory is in their 'shame.'

Their minds are occupied with earthly things"

(Philippians 3:19). We tend to eat and drink so freely that we forget God, who gives us that which we eat and drink. Fasting, especially during Lent, helps us to detach from the things of this world and remember Him. Catholics are required to fast on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday, and to abstain from meat on Fridays.

Believe in God

Believing in God means more than just saying He exists. Believers serve God, give time to Him, and put Him first. Spend more time in prayer this Lent, shed some possessions, perform works of charity and you will act on your baptismal promises.

"Yet even now,' says the LORD, 'return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; and rend your hearts and not your garments'"
(Joel 2:12).



Preparing hearts for Easter joy

Lent is the Church's gift to us to help prepare our hearts for Easter by purifying our hearts, opening up to love, and putting love into action.

Purifying our hearts: Every heart yearns for love, yet only God's love can truly satisfy that yearning. The goal of Lenten penance is to purify ourselves of whatever blocks us from God's love or closes our heart to others. This can include excessive social media, materialism, gossip, or sinful habits like lust or deceit. From what does your heart need to detach so there's room for God and others?

Opening up to love: Mother Teresa

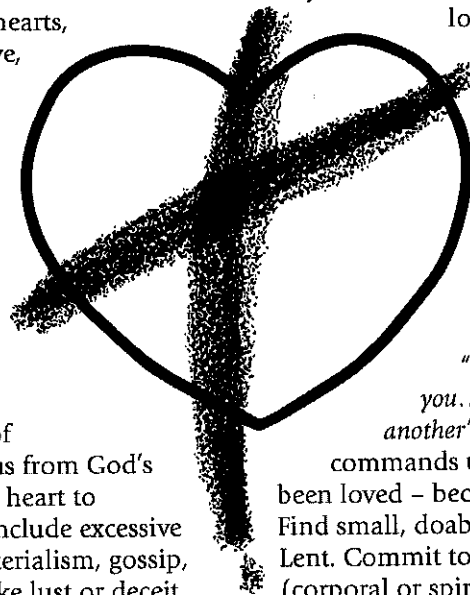
wrote, "Have you seen...how [Jesus] looks at you with love?... Have you heard the

loving words He speaks to you?" Strive to know God's heart. Seek Him, not just His gifts. Only by receiving God's love first, beginning with prayer, can we share it with others.

Put love in action:

"Even as I have loved you...you also love one another" (John 13:34). God

commands us to love as we've been loved – because we are loved. Find small, doable ways to serve during Lent. Commit to a Work of Mercy (corporal or spiritual). Practice patience. Give the gift of listening. True joy at Easter comes from loving Christ and imitating Him. Strive to do this throughout Lent and beyond.



Why Do Catholics Do That?

Why do Catholics cover statues during Lent?

Many churches cover statues and crucifixes in red or purple cloth for the final weeks in Lent, traditionally known as "Passiontide." The veils are visual cues that we're entering into a solemn time and remind us that sin separates us from God.



This helps to build anticipation for Easter when the statues are unveiled and we are restored to Him. Lastly, the veils symbolize that heavenly glories are hidden in this life, but will be revealed when we enter eternity.

Cultivating a "holy hospitality"

Jesus asked us to make others feel welcome, seen and loved while they're with us. "Holy hospitality" is vital to building community around Christ. Try these tips:

Sit and listen: When Jesus visited with his dear friends, Martha, Mary, and Lazarus, He observed that Martha was so distracted and focused on her own concerns that she merely served Jesus instead of connecting with Him personally (Luke 10:41-42). Prepare for guests like Martha did, but enjoy them like Mary – with complete attention.



Fill your conversations with faith: A "holy hospitality" is a faith-informed one. The Samaritan woman's life changed when she encountered Christ (John 4:14-15) because He told her the Good News of salvation. Ensure your conversations are uplifting and reflect your hope and optimism for eternity.

Open your circle: Jesus ate with tax collectors and public sinners – those considered unpleasant. "Holy hospitality" means your social circle is open to the socially awkward, the frustrating coworker, the elderly neighbor who lives alone, because Christ is in all we serve (Matthew 25:40).

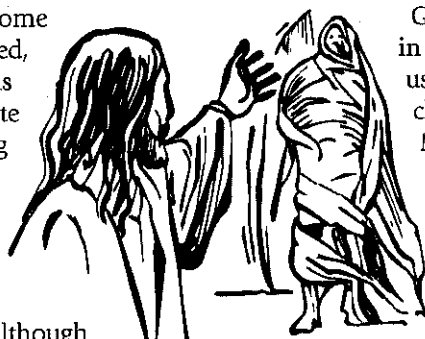
from Scripture

John 11:1-45, Generous trust, generous faith

In this Gospel passage, a beloved friend of Jesus' was fatally ill and his sisters sent urgent word to Jesus to come immediately. Jesus delayed, and Lazarus died, but this would not be His ultimate fate. Jesus had something else in mind for Lazarus and his family.

When He finally arrived, Martha didn't demand Jesus raise Lazarus from the dead, although she acknowledged His power to do so. Even though her brother's body had been in the tomb for days and the decay had begun in earnest, her trust in Jesus was complete. She knew that God's love

is more powerful than death and left the outcome in His hands.



God never leaves us in our troubles but uses them to draw us closer to Him.

Martha's generous trust in God's will rested on her close friendship with Christ. Whatever He thought would be best

was best. God's timing is not ours, yet everything He does – even when He does it – is for our good. Martha's trust in Jesus was rewarded in the most magnificent way. Ours will be, too.

Q & A

How can I overcome the temptations in my life?

Jesus knows that the battle for holiness is challenging in a fallen world, so He gave St. Faustina Kowalska twenty-five strategies to help (*Divine Mercy in My Soul*, #1760). Here is a sample:

"Do not bargain with any temptation; lock yourself immediately in My Heart."



Don't assume you are strong enough for a "little" temptation. Run immediately to the refuge of Jesus' sacred heart for protection.

"Bear with yourself with great patience." Saints aren't made overnight. See yourself as God does – beloved. Be patient and keep trying.

"Do not neglect interior mortifications." Withhold a biting remark, give up a luxury for the day, cut down on screen time. Sacrifices for love are powerful.

"Shun murmurs like a plague." Gossip is never in God's service. False accusations and rumors that hurt reputations are Satan's favorite tools. Don't indulge.

"Always fight with the deep conviction that I am with you." Our courage comes from being rooted in God (John 15:5). Recall God's loving presence throughout the day: "Jesus, I trust in you!"

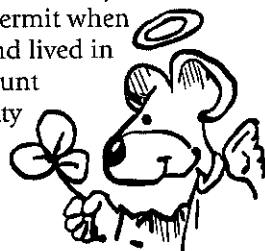
Feasts & Celebrations

March 9 – St. Frances of Rome (1440). Although she preferred a life of service, St. Frances' wealthy parents required that she marry. With her sister-in-law, Vannozza, St. Frances formed a group of women dedicated to serving the poor, all while caring for her family.

March 22 - St. Deogratias of Carthage (456): As Bishop of Carthage, St. Deogratias is best known for aiding slaves captured by the Vandal king, Geiseric. He ransomed hundreds of captives and sheltered them in two large cathedrals.

March 25 – The Annunciation of the Lord (1st century). The angel Gabriel visited the Blessed Virgin Mary with the extraordinary news of her role as the mother of God. Even at her young age, she had confidence in God's grace and trusted in His wisdom.

March 30 - St. John Climacus (606): Born in 525 near Syria, St. John became a hermit when he was sixteen and lived in the region of Mount Sinai. A community of monks formed around him and elected him abbot.



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To provide practical ideas that promote faithful Catholic living.

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