Tuesday, February 16, 2021 Shrove Tuesday

Why Pancakes?

Growing up my family would host a crepes/ pancake dinner the day before Ash Wednesday. We would unload all the sugary-delicious breakfast toppings from the refrigerator; the blueberry syrup, strawberry and grape jelly, chocolate chips, peanut butter, & Nutella. We would giggle and load our plates until our bellies were full. As an adult I now have the same tradition with my own family and we look forward every year to the evening where we feast on these special traditions.

The Tuesday prior to Ash Wednesday is called Shrove Tuesday. The word “Shrove” means to hear penance and give absolution. As Catholics we are called to prepare out hearts for the season of Lent. Early Christian tradition reminds us that preparing meals that use up precious ingredients like milk, sugar, and egg (ingredients for pancakes) are a way to prepare our homes for Lent. A way to begin fasting and leading a simpler diet/life for the next 40 days.

We pray that you are warms and safe on this cold winter day, and perhaps enjoy a pancake or two this evening.

Day 1 - Wednesday, February 17, 2021 Ash Wednesday

**Catholic 101**

**Ash Wednesday will be different this year due to COVID-19 concerns.  Ashes will be placed on the forehead using a Q-tip cotton swab.  The Q-tip will be disposed of after a single use.**

There are over forty passages in the Bible that mention the use of ashes for mourning, grief or repentance. In the Old Testament ashes was a sign of repentance. They would sit in ashes, roll around in them, sprinkle them upon their heads. They did this as an outward sign of their inner repentance. See **Daniel 9:3-6.**

For over twelve hundred years on the “day of ashes” the faithful have approached the altar and received ashes upon their foreheads. Fr. Linus and Fr. Evaristus will burn the extra palm branches that were blessed on Palm Sunday last year. The ashes are sprinkled with holy water, usually fragranced with incense and blessed using four prayers that are thousands of years old.

Ash Wednesday begins Lent, a time when we stop and assess how we’re doing in our walk with God. Lent helps us identify spiritual areas in which we can grow and sinful areas that we need to avoid. To repent, put simply, means to turn *away* from sin and turn *toward* God and ashes are an outward expression of our need to begin again.

The parish is following very strict COVID procedures to ensure your safety.  Please consider joining us for Mass on Ash Wednesday.

Ash Wednesday Feb 17

8:00 AM Mass

7:00 PM Mass

For more info: [**Origins of Ash Wednesday Article**](https://catholicstraightanswers.com/what-are-the-origins-of-ash-wednesday-and-the-use-of-ashes/)

## Day 2 - Thursday February 18, 2021

**What happened to the Alleluia?!?**

Alleluia or Halleluiah is defined as “A song of Praise or thanksgiving”.  Throughout the season of Lent we are reminded to fast. When omitting Alleluia in Masses and Liturgical gatherings we are in a sense fasting from the joy or praise that would typically be celebrated.  We are saving that joy for Holy Saturday and Easter Morning when we can finally and joyfully proclaim Alleluia.

Historically, when we gather as a parish to burn palms we create an Alleluia banner that is rolled up and hidden until Easter. This year we invite families to create/decorate an Alleluia Banner at home. Following completion, banners can be hidden and later displayed during the Easter season. Families can use the provided Banner template or create their own. When you have completed your banner, please send pictures to Catherine, cburkart@ssppcc.org. We will share pictures of completed family banners during the season of Easter.

**Download the banner here:** [**https://www.ssppcc.org/alleluia-banner**](/alleluia-banner)

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Day 3 - Friday, February 19, 2021

**Why Do Catholics Worship on Sunday and Not on Saturday?**

**Summary from Chapter 11, “Does the Bible Really Say That?” by Patrick Madrid**

Christians have worshipped on Sunday, the Lord’s Day, instead of on Saturday, the Sabbath, since the days of the Apostles.

In Exodus 20:8-10 the Lord God said to Moses, “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.  Six days you shall labor, and do all your work; but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God; in it you hall not do any work.”  This commandment was a ‘perpetual covenant’ that God wanted his people to observe through the ages.  Henceforth, the Jews have observed the Sabbath on Saturday, resting form all work and emulating God’s own rest on the seventh day of creation.

The Catholic Church did not abandon this commandment, as some claim.  Rather, the direction of the third commandment to ‘keep holy the Sabbath’ was transferred to Sunday, also known as ‘The Lord’s Day’ because it is through his resurrection that we become a ‘new creation.’

Around the year 100 AD, the Didache, which is the Lord’s teachings to the apostles, instructed Christians to “gather together on The Lord’s Day” which they defined as Sunday.

The early Church transferred the observance of the third commandment from Saturday to Sunday for two primary reasons.  First, Sunday is the day Christ rose from the dead.  Second, the early Christians sought to differentiate themselves from Judaism.  This included their abandonment of Judaism’s system of ritual animal sacrifices.  Christ is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world and his perfect sacrifice replaced the old covenant Passover Lamb, which was ritually slain and consumed as a mere symbol of sacrifice for sin.  Similarly, Christians relinquished other Jewish ceremonial rituals and precepts, such as the kosher food laws and dietary restrictions imposed by the law of Moses and the observance of the Passover and other Jewish feast days.

As St. Paul wrote, ‘Therefore let no one pass judgement on you in questions of food and drink or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath.  These are only a shadow of what is to come, but the substance belongs to Christ’.  He scolds Christians who still clung to the old covenant restrictions and ceremonies.  The ritual observance of the Sabbath was part of the old covenant.  But in Christ, we are no longer bound by the old covenant. So the demands and obligation of the old covenant, including the ritual observance of the Sabbath, have passed away, having been replaced by the spiritual observance of the Lord’s Day in the new covenant.

##  Day 4 - Saturday, February 20, 2021

**Mark 1:12-15**

*The Spirit drove Jesus out into the desert, and he remained in the desert for forty days, tempted by Satan. He was among wild beasts, and the angels ministered to him. 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.” Mark 1:12-15.*

This weekend we celebrate the first Sunday of Lent, and we hear the familiar story from Mark 1:12-15. This story reminds us of the temptations that Jesus experienced. These same temptations are still with us today. They are the very forces that drive us away from Christ and our faith.

Focus for a moment on the Desert. The Desert where Jesus fasted for 40 days was tempted by Satan and among the wild beasts…the Desert where he was never alone…the Desert where God was present to Christ the entire time. Perhaps this Desert was a place of solitude, a place for Jesus to stop, reflect and draw closer to God. As Catholics, Lent is a time of solitude, a time to overcome temptation and to move closer to Christ. A time for prayer, fasting and almsgiving.

Where are you on your journey today? Are you feeling lost in the wilderness? What temptations are you facing? What are you hungry for in your life? Talk to Jesus about this…. Allow Jesus to be present with you….

##  Day 5 - Sunday, February 21, 2021

**CATHOLIC 101**

**Why Does Mary Appear on Earth?**

Why does Mary appear on earth? Brother John Samaha writes: “[God] continues to intervene in human history by sending the mother of Jesus when the Christian faith is challenged and under attack. The human family needs to be reminded, sometimes in a dynamic and supernatural way, that God exists, that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is a universal call to goodness and holiness, that we are all responsible before our Maker for our choices.”  [READ](http://email.vervemail.com/ct/56784714%3A6YtcqvuNE%3Am%3A1%3A2839272405%3A666CF2625767D2E83BAB3147F7115EF6%3Ar)

Day 6 - Monday February 22, 2021

**Feast of the Chair of St. Peter, Apostle**

When I think of the word *chair,* immediately I envision a strong piece of furniture with sturdy legs and a strong back; something that can hold a person or title. An object that can provide comfort and support after a long day.  A chair as defined but Merriam-Webster is a seat typically having four legs and a back for one person, an official seat or a seat of authority, state, or dignity.

Today the Catholic Church celebrates the Feast of the Chair of Saint. Peter. While we are not celebrating a piece of furniture we are celebrating the office of Saint Peter in the Church. Saint Peter was the first Pope, the successor of Christ. Today Pope Francis holds the office. More than 2,000 years later the office/Chair of Saint Peter continues to be a source of authority and unity to Christians around the world. “…for the Catholic community, the feast of the Chair of Saint Peter stands as a celebration of the authority and unity that Jesus created for his Church on earth as exercised by our pope. An authority and a unity that does not totally depend on the person who presently holds the office, for it is an authority and a unity that is bigger than any one person….We celebrate the feast of the Chair of Saint Peter rejoicing in the guidance and the role of the Holy Spirit, thanking Jesus for the authority he shares with mere humans, and we pray for the person God has chosen to occupy the Chair of Saint Peter at the present time.” (Franciscanmedia.org)

One of the unique pieces of our Catholic tradition is the ability to see our faith in almost every object or event. Reflecting on the image of the chair you can see exactly how this is true. While Pope Francis holds this office, the sturdy legs are US, the members of the Catholic Church. The comfort and support are scripture and prayers that draw us closer to Christ and ease our pain. The strong back is the history and tradition that are faith has been built upon.

To learn more about the Feast of the Chair of St. Peter, Apostle visit: [**https://www.franciscanmedia.org/franciscan-spirit-blog/saint-peters-chair-why-a-celebration**](https://www.franciscanmedia.org/franciscan-spirit-blog/saint-peters-chair-why-a-celebration)

##  Day 7 - Tuesday February 23, 2021

**Catholicism 101**

Padre Pio, now Saint Pio had some advice for Catholic nuns that were terrified of the Spanish Flu pandemic that hit Italy during the summer of 1918. Many people fell ill in San Giovanni Rotondo. But Padre Pio was steadfast in his faith. He told one of his spiritual daughters: “Never fear. Put yourself under the protection of the (Blessed) Virgin (Mary), do not sin, and the sickness will not overcome you.”

For more information: [**Padre Pio Pandemic Article**](https://aleteia.org/2021/01/29/padre-pios-powerful-words-of-advice-when-a-pandemic-hit-italy/)

##  Day 8 - Wednesday, February 24, 2021

**Don’t Underestimate the Power of the Blessing**

We as Catholics experience the act of blessing in our lives.  The act of giving a blessing is rooted in the Old Testament and was an important part of a child’s life to receive the blessing from their father.  We see this in the stories of Noah, Jacob, and the prodigal son.  Even in the Mass we are offered a blessing at the end by the priest. We also, more than most others, tend to bless objects in our lives.  We bless cars, jewelry, homes, and pets.

These blessings are an important part of our Catholic faith.  The blessed objects are not given any special powers in a superstitious kind of way, but rather are presented for a blessing to set them apart from ordinary objects.  We are called to serve God in all that we do and with all that we have.  Having blessed items in our everyday life can be a helpful reminder to use all that we have for the glory of God.

So, if you have something that you want blessed, don’t be afraid to take it to Father for a blessing, just maybe not right before Mass.  Let those blessed items be a constant reminder for you that they and you are set aside for a higher purpose.  And at the end of Mass when you receive that blessing from the priest, take it to heart as you leave and go out into the world.  You are a child of God who received His blessing and are called to be set apart!

With you in prayer during this Lenten Season. This reflection was written by Nathan Higgerson

##  Day 9 - Thursday, February 25, 2021

**Why Confess to a Priest?**

**“Does the Bible Really Say That?” – Patrick Madrid (Chapter 13)**

“Why should I confess my sins to a priest?  As a Christian, I confess my sins directly to God.”  This is a common question among Protestants and some Catholics.   There is no explicit statement in Scripture that says “Confess your sins to a priest” but there is a wealth of implicit evidence that leads to this conclusion.

It’s not an either-or proposition – you either confess to God or you confess to a priest.  It’s a both-and situation.  No Catholic can make a good sacramental confession without first confessing directly to God.  Only then can you properly receive the sacrament of confession, receiving sacramental absolution from the priest, who ministers in the Person of Christ.

Ultimately, God alone can forgive sins.  Christ, who is God, possesses this authority which he conferred to his Apostles when he said, “As the Father has sent me, even so I send you.’  And when had said this, he breathed on them, and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit.  If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.”  The special authority was not merely to declare sins to be forgiven, but to actually forgive them, in the name of Christ.

When St. Paul talks about this ministry, he says “we” are the ministers of reconciliation, and that God is appealing through “us”.  Then he switches to “you” saying “we beseech you to be reconciled to God.”   This indicates that St. Paul was speaking about two distinct groups here:  those who are ministers of reconciliation and those who are reconciled to God through their ministry.

There are many bible verses linking Christ’s promise of forgiveness to the priestly ministry of forgiving sins.

James 5:14-16 says, “Is any among you sick?  Let him call for the elders (or priests) of the Church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer of faith will save the sick man, and the Lord will raise him up; and if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.  Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed.”  This passage links the forgiveness of sins with the prayers and ministry of the priest and with the act of confessing one’s sins.  And while the phrase “confess your sins to one another” could reasonably be understood to refer to Christians in general, the emphasis on the minister of the priests here offers an implicit indication of their unique role in forgiveness.

Mark 1:40-44 tells about a leper who approached Christ and asked to be healed of his illness:

After Jesus healed him he sent him away and said to him, “See that you say nothing to anyone; but go, show yourself to the priest, and offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded, for a proof to the people.”  There is a parallel between what happened to this leper and confession to a priest.

Sin, especially mortal sin, is like leprosy – a contagious and horribly disfiguring disease.  The leper is like the sinner.  He asked Christ for healing, as Catholics do by repenting and turning away from sin.  Christ healed the leper just as he forgives the repentant sinner.  But notice that Christ didn’t simply heal the leper and send him on his way.  He instructed to go into the city and present himself to the priest so that the priest could examine him and verify the cure.  The priest would formally declare the man to be healed and permit him to reenter society.  Similarly, in the sacrament of confession, the priest absolves the penitent.  He then imposes a penance on the penitent; the cured leper likewise performed a sacrifice of ritual expiation.  From this passage we can see another example of why Christ instituted the great sacrament of confession.

With you in prayer during this Lenten time, this reflection is submitted by Patti Stirnaman

## Day 10 -  Friday February 26, 2021

**David and Goliath**

*The story can be found in 1 Samuel 17.*

The battle is at hand and how quickly the Israelites have forgotten who is with them.  Goliath was a massive man for that time.  His armor weighed over 200 pounds and the point of his spear was over six pounds.  David showed no hesitation to want to take on Goliath.  While all the others fear the giant, David steps up because he remembers he and the army are anointed by God.  David shows no fear knowing the Lord is with them.  As he comes out to fight Goliath, Goliath is surprised and throws more insults at David and the army of the Lord.  But in the end, it is not the mighty giant that prevails.  It is the lowly shepherd boy who no one expects that wins. The battle is at hand for these 40 days.

The world and the things we have given up are standing in front of us like Goliath.  They call us out and mock us.  It is too long, too cold, or you can have a snack.  Follow the example of David, use your quiet time to focus on God.  Ask him to give you strength to persevere through these trials.  Pick up the stones near the river of God’s grace.  Prayer, fasting, reflections of the Word, suffering, and good deeds are the stones we need to pick up.  Any one of these may be enough to get you through but only if you offer them to God and focus on Him.  We pray now that God grant us the strength to slay our giants.

With you in prayer during this Lenten Season. This reflection was written by Nathan Higgerson