

# Growing in FAITH™

Discovering hope and joy in the Catholic faith.

February 2023

St. Bernard of Clairvaux

Rev. Jack Gleason

## One Minute Meditations

### Flee temptation

Christians are meant for Heaven.

Yet, the world can work against our efforts for holiness. St. Peter tells us to "escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires" (2 Peter 1:4). Ask God often to protect you from sin, to give you the wisdom and courage to make good choices and, become sensitive to the promptings of the Holy Spirit. God will reveal when you've messed up, and rejoice with you when you get it right.

### Serve without complaint

Every job has aspects about it that are tedious, messy, and unrewarding, yet they are necessary. However, they can be opportunities to grow in virtue: humility, patience, self-discipline, etc. When you dread doing your work, smile and say a prayer, "and your Father, who sees in secret, will repay you" (Matthew 6:4).

"The works of God are all of them good; in its own time every need is supplied" (Sirach 39:16).



## Take steps to share your faith during Lent

Jesus didn't intend for the Great Commission – "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:19) – to be a heavy burden.

He meant witnessing to His love to come through the natural course of living a Christ-inspired life. Consider making more disciples this Lent:

**Live a Catholic life.** Non-believers may hear what we say about Jesus, but they are persuaded by seeing how our love for Him shapes our lives. It is critical that worship – Sunday Mass, Confession, Scripture – informs our life choices. When we spend time in Jesus' presence, His character rubs off on us.

**Bring Christ out into the world.** Jesus asked that we care for the poor and

needy, thus acting as His hands and feet in the world. We may not be able to solve all of their problems, but we can show them the reality of Christ's love in their lives.

**Talk about God's plan.** God wants us each to experience the peace He offers.

Help others know that

God's love is personal and He

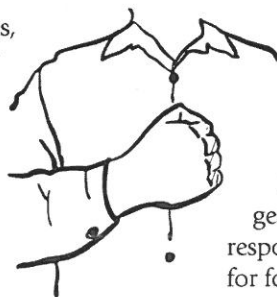
has a specific plan for each of us.

**Invite.** Some people will be ready to "come and see," so consider inviting seekers to Mass. Others might be ready to "take up and read." Share your favorite inspirational reading. If you need other suggestions, ask your pastor or favorite religious.



## Why Do Catholics Do That?

When we use our voices, our minds, and even our bodies during prayer, we pray with deeper meaning and enthusiasm. During the Confiteor at Mass, for example, we strike our chest three times, saying,



## Why do Catholics strike their chests?

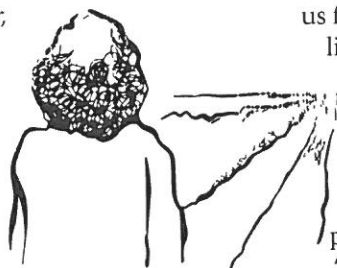
"through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault." It's an ancient symbol of sorrow and repentance for having offended God or hurting our neighbor. Such a gesture reminds us to take responsibility for our actions and pray for forgiveness and grace to change.

## Lent leads us back to God

*"For gracious and merciful is he, slow to anger, rich in kindness, and relenting in punishment"* (Joel 2:13). Lent may be a penitential season, but it is also a wonderful reminder that no matter how we let sin interfere in our relationship with God, He always wants us back. Gracious and merciful is He.

*"Return to me with your whole heart."*

Throughout the year, sin creeps into our daily lives almost without our noticing. A bad habit such as using bad language or gossiping can keep



us from loving God fully. Lent is a time to examine our lives and sweep aside whatever keeps us from giving God our whole heart.

*"Rend your hearts, not your garments."* God doesn't just want outward acts of repentance. Our Father wants a change of heart. Start with Confession and then practice virtues such as prudence, temperance, and fortitude.

*"Gather the people, notify the congregation."* Become more active in your parish to build it up. Consider attending Mass more often than just once a week.

### from Scripture

#### Matthew 4:1-11, Victory in the wilderness

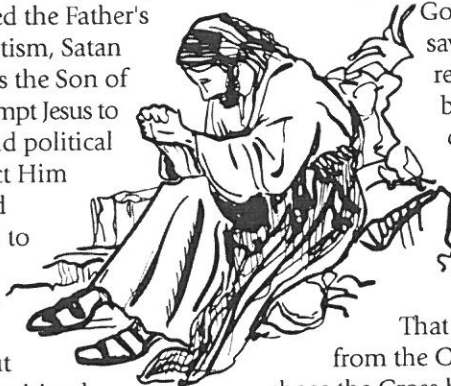
In this passage, Jesus is tempted by the devil. Having witnessed the Father's declaration at His baptism, Satan tested Jesus' identity as the Son of God. His goal was to tempt Jesus to embrace an earthly and political mission and to distract Him from the suffering and death that would lead to the world's salvation.

Satan tempted Jesus to satisfy His hunger with a miracle – to put physical needs above spiritual needs. In His response, Jesus taught us to put spiritual needs first and to entrust both body and soul to God's care. Next, Satan commanded Jesus to jump from

the temple roof in an effort to force God to miraculously save Him. Again, Jesus refused. God is not to be forced or controlled.

Finally, Satan offered to surrender all the kingdoms of the world if Jesus would worship him.

That would save Jesus from the Cross. Instead, Jesus chose the Cross because it was the only way to save us. When tempted to do what's "easy" versus what's morally right, ask for the strength to choose what's right.



### Q & A

#### What's a simple way to explain the Faith, if asked?

St. Peter says to be ready to *"account for the hope that is in you"* (1 Peter 3:15). Consider using this simple, five-point explanation, inspired by Bishop Michael Jackels:

**Pinky:** The smallest finger recalls our weakness and need for a Savior.

Although Jesus redeemed us, we're still weak and must pray for God's graces daily.

**Ring finger:** To save us, Jesus took on our human nature, "wedding"

Himself to us. At Sunday Mass, we worship God and become one with Him in Holy Communion.

**Middle finger:** Jesus was raised up on the Cross for sins, then raised from the dead. We attend Confession monthly and receive the saving graces. We hope to be raised to eternal life.

**Pointer:** Jesus' call is universal, yet personal. He singled you out and chose you to follow Him; only you can give Jesus your "Yes" – in word and deed.

**Thumb:** Lastly, hitchhikers point their thumbs to ask, "Are you on my way?" Likewise, we're called to ask, "Are you going His Way?" (John 14:6).



### Feasts & Celebrations

Lent begins February 22, and is devoted to the Passion of Our Lord. One form of observance is to pray the Stations of the Cross and meditate on Jesus' walk to Calvary.

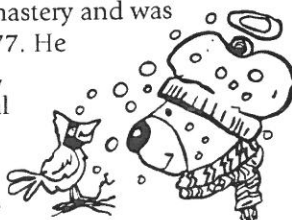
**February 1 – St. Brigid of Ireland** (525). Born to an Irish chieftain and an enslaved mother in Ireland, St. Brigid founded a monastery for monks and nuns at Kildare and served as abbess until her death.

**February 11 – Our Lady of Lourdes** (1858). A heavenly "lady" appeared to St. Bernadette Soubirous, a poor girl

from a village in France and a miraculous spring emerged from a nearby cave. The "lady" revealed herself as the "Immaculate Conception," the Blessed Virgin Mary.

**February 22 – Ash Wednesday.** The first day of Lent. Ashes are placed on the foreheads as a sign of penance.

**February 27 – St. Gregory of Narek** (1003). Born in Armenia to a devout Christian family, St. Gregory entered the Narek Monastery and was ordained in 977. He wrote treatises, letters, mystical poems, and Scripture commentaries.



### Our Mission

To provide practical ideas that promote faithful Catholic living.  
Success Publishing & Media, LLC  
Publishers of Growing in Faith™ and Partners in Faith™  
(540)662-7844 (540)662-7847 fax  
<http://www.growinginfaith.com>  
(Unless noted Bible quotes and references are from the Revised Standard Version and the New American Bible)

# LENT 2023

**St. Bernard of Clairvaux**  
Rev. Jack Gleason

 = a day of fasting and  
abstinence from meat

 = a day of abstinence  
from meat

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<p>"Lent is the liturgical season of forty days which begins with Ash Wednesday and ends with the celebration of the Paschal Mystery (Easter Triduum). Lent is the primary penitential season in the Church's liturgical year, reflecting the forty days Jesus spent in the desert in fasting and prayer" (<i>Catechism of the Catholic Church</i>).</p>						
26 Imagine being responsible for all the souls in the world. Offer a Rosary for the intentions of the pope.	27 Ask God to show you what is keeping you from experiencing His love fully - worry, fears, sin. Resolve to deal with it by Easter.	28 Offer an extra small sacrifice for God, just for today - coffee without cream, lukewarm shower, no snacking, etc.	1 <b>March</b> Enjoy pretzels -- a traditional Lenten snack. The "crossed" arms of the pretzel recalled monks at prayer.	2 Today, look for opportunities to practice the virtues humility, patience, and kindness.	3 <b>First Friday</b> Attend Mass or visit the Blessed Sacrament (find the red candle). Be present to Him who is present to you.	4 Set up an empty box or bin. Throughout Lent, fill it with gently used clothes. Bring it to a local charity at the end of Lent.
5 After Mass today, go out to eat with other parishioners from church.	6 Dive deeper into your faith. Skim the glossary in the Catechism for an unfamiliar term and learn the Church's teaching about it.	7 Pick an issue in the news and pray over it today.	8 Figure out on which luxuries you spend the most money. Take a tenth of that amount and put it in the poor box at church.	9 Pray the Chaplet of Divine Mercy for those who have no one to pray for them. Look here: <a href="https://www.usccb.org/prayers/divine-mercy-chaplet">https://www.usccb.org/prayers/divine-mercy-chaplet</a> .	10 <b>Resist "idle curiosity."</b> Don't research trivial questions or follow every browser thread. Unless it's important, it's okay not knowing.	11 Pray for pregnant mothers and their babies. Consider donating to pro-life charities that help women in crisis.
12 Reread John 4:5-30. How is Christ calling you closer to Him? What "jug" would you leave behind?	13 Refuse to gossip, either in person or on screen. Affirm every person or keep silent.	14 <b>Write down your worries.</b> Place the list under a statue or image of Jesus. Pray, "Jesus, I surrender this to You. Take care of everything."	15 Attend Confession and experience God's mercy. Resolve to make amends where you can.	16 Check out Catholic Relief Services to see how you can support their projects. Look here: <a href="https://www.crs.org">https://www.crs.org</a> .	17 <b>St. Patrick's Day</b> In honor of St. Patrick, evangelize silently by wearing a symbol of your faith (e.g. a cross, medal).	18 Contact local shelters and soup kitchens and ask if they need volunteers.
19 <b>Laetare Sunday</b> Unless it's sinful, enjoy something you gave up for Lent in joyful anticipation of Easter!	20 <b>St. Joseph's Day</b> St. Joseph silently, selflessly cared for Mary and Jesus. Pray for fathers and entrust them to St. Joseph's care.	21 Do an act of kindness. Whether openly or secretly, do it for God's glory. It's really Him you're serving.	22 Take the box of clothes you set up on March 4 to a clothing drive.	23 Pray for an increased faith throughout the Church in the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist.	24 <b>Practice patience...</b> patiently. "Be patient with everyone, but first of all with yourself" (St. Francis de Sales).	25 <b>Annunciation of the Lord</b> Mary said "Yes!" to God's plan. Pray three Hail Marys, "for the grace to give your "Yes" to Him, too.
26 Fast from unnecessary screen use today. Use the time to read a book, walk outside, pray.	27 This week, get up when the alarm goes off and offer your day to God's service.	28 Send your parish priest a "spiritual bouquet" -- listing the prayers you'll offer for them (e.g. three Hail Marys, an Our Father).	29 Today, complete an errand or chore you've been putting off.	30 The Our Father is the prayer given to us by Jesus. Pray each line slowly. Really think about what you are saying.	31 Today, fast from complaining. Cultivate gratitude instead.	1 <b>April</b> Declutter, dust, and clean the house in preparation for Holy Week -- the holiest time of the year.
2 <b>Palm Sunday</b> Display blessed palms around your home. "that the King of Glory may come in!" (Psalm 24:7)	3 Holy Week is a busy time for parishes. Stop by your parish office and ask how you can help.	4 Pray for those who are coming into the Church at the Easter Vigil.	5 Judas betrayed Christ. Consider how our sins betray Jesus and make a sincere Act of Contrition.	6 <b>Holy Thursday</b> Visit the Blessed Sacrament. Offer Him your love for the "lost hour" of Gethsemane (Matthew 26:40).	7 <b>Good Friday</b> Read the Passion Narrative, John 18, 19. "See Jesus" offering of love for you. How will you respond?	8 <b>Holy Saturday</b> Renew your baptismal vows and commit to living your faith more fully this year.