

Growing in FAITH™

Discovering hope and joy in the Catholic faith.

February 2024

St. Bernard of Clairvaux

Rev. Jack Gleason

One Minute Meditations

St. Josephine Bakhita

Born in Darfur, Sudan around 1869, she was kidnapped and sold into slavery. Her captors gave her the name Bakhita, meaning "fortunate." After several years of serving under cruel masters, she was bought by Augusto Michieli. The Michielis sent Bakhita with their daughter to Italy, where Bakhita encountered Catholicism. Overjoyed, she was baptized and took the name Josephine. In 1893, instead of returning to Africa with the Michielis, she entered the Institute of St. Magdalene of Canossa.



The moment of truth

Conversion begins when we accept responsibility for our failures. Lent is an opportunity to stop and take a good look at our lives. Identify all the ways that sin keeps you from living the way Jesus taught us to live. Know that it may take courage to face your shortfalls.

"Apart from the cross, there is no other ladder by which we may get to heaven." St. Rose of Lima

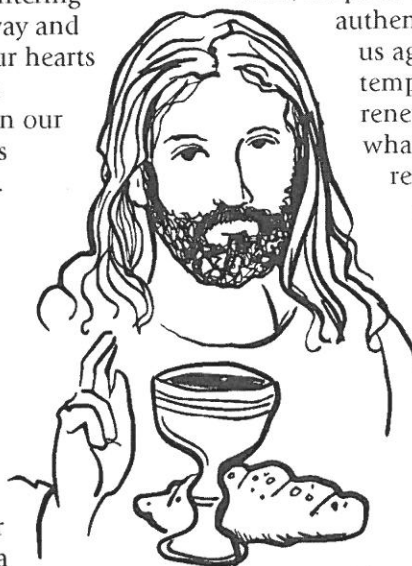


Deepen the connection to Christ during Lent

The key to a fruitful Lent is not to perform miserable penances. A good Lent hinges on encountering Christ in a personal way and letting Him change our hearts and minds. In fact, an effective way to deepen our encounter with Him is through the Eucharist. Consider these suggestions:

"Here I am, Lord. Love me!" Mother Teresa told her sisters to start their chapel time with this bold prayer, "Here I am, Lord. Love me!" No matter whether you are in His Presence for Mass, a holy hour, or a quick visit in front of the Blessed Sacrament, begin with, "Here I am, Lord. Love me!" It's a prayer of faith God delights to answer.

Live for the next Communion.



Every Communion deepens our union with God, strengthens our faith, helps us love more

authentically, and immunizes us against future temptations. Each week, renew your resolve to do whatever is needed to receive Jesus well. For example, avoid activity or entertainment that tempts you away from God, and if you sin seriously, immediately go to Confession and start anew.

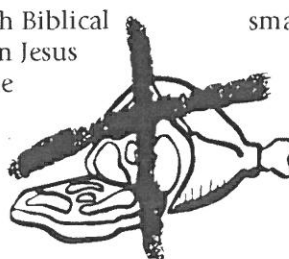
Invite others to the feast. Invite a friend, neighbor or colleague to Mass or Adoration

with you. Pray for priests to stay close to the Eucharist. Most importantly, pray that more people come to faithfully encounter Jesus in the tabernacle.

Why Do Catholics Do That?

Why do Catholics have to fast on Ash Wednesday?

Fasting is a practice with Biblical roots, most notably, when Jesus fasted for forty days in the desert. Those in good health, aged 18-59, are required to fast on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. We're permitted one full meal and two



smaller meals that together don't equal the full meal. This includes abstaining from meat. Fasting expresses our recognition that we've sinned and desire to make amends. It purifies our hearts and frees them to love God and others well.

Pope Francis's three-point approach to Confession

Instead of dreading seeking the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation (Confession), Pope Francis suggested we look at it as "the Sacrament of the tenderness of God, His way of embracing us." Follow the pope's three-point approach to the Sacrament:

What's my intention? Rather than an obligation, consider the Sacrament a fresh start. Firmly resolve, from this moment forward, to give up the activities or behaviors that separate you from God. The firm resolution to change is key to receiving absolution effectively.

Are there loose ends? Unconfessed sin creates



distance between us and God. Make sure you have not withheld mortal sins in prior Confessions, either intentionally or accidentally. If you become aware that you have, confess them and leave the confessional a new man or woman.

Have I completed the assigned penance? The Sacrament is meant to change us.

Purposefully make amends and continue your resolutions to realign your life to the Gospel.

Seeking Reconciliation often and staying in a state of grace helps us become holier people of God.

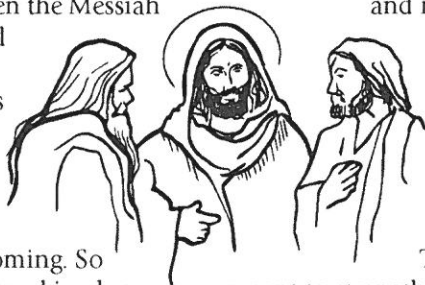
from Scripture

Mark 9:2-10, Heavenly glory, not worldly power

In Jesus' time, Israel was occupied by the Romans. The Israelites already had a long history of being attacked and conquered by other nations. The Jews dreamed of the day when the Messiah would set them free and make them the victors.

God had set up Moses as liberator and lawgiver, and sent them Elijah, the first of the great prophets who foretold Christ's coming. So when Jesus was transfigured in glory with Moses and Elijah, the Apostles assumed that God was revealing Jesus as the Messiah.

Moses and Elijah spoke with Jesus about His death and Resurrection.



Jesus warned His disciples that He would suffer and die (Mark 8:31). While many Jews were expecting the Messiah to overthrow the Romans and make Himself king,

God revealed that the Messiah would save His people by His own death and Resurrection. The

Transfiguration was meant to strengthen the faith of the Apostles and prepare them for the Passion. The Transfiguration reminds us that however difficult this life may be there is unimaginable glory that awaits us in Heaven.

Q & A Why should we "offer it up"?

When tempted to complain about suffering, we may be encouraged to "offer it up" instead. This act of surrender carries incredible spiritual power.

A share in Christ's Cross. Because Jesus is God, His suffering and sacrifice have infinite value. When we unite even our

small sufferings to Jesus' suffering, it takes on an infinite value in helping Him to save souls.

Spiritual "strength training." When we offer our sufferings to God, He is able to work on our hearts. Suffering for others helps us to become less selfish and more compassionate, less hard-hearted and more patient, less self-indulgent and more generous. Our hearts emerge more Christ-like, and better able to love.

Prudence is needed. Under most circumstances, encouragement to "offer it up" works as a spiritual discipline for inconveniences or mild suffering. Sometimes, however, remediation or professional help may be needed. God sees the sincerity of our love so we can still offer our suffering to Him and yet take constructive action to remediate whatever is causing the suffering. Be prudent.

Our Mission

To provide practical ideas that promote faithful Catholic living.

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Feasts & Celebrations

February 3 – St. Blaise (316). A bishop in fourth-century Turkey, St. Blaise was arrested for being a Christian. On his way to jail, he healed a young boy choking on a fish bone. Refusing to deny his faith, the bishop was martyred.

February 11 – Our Lady of Lourdes (1858). A heavenly lady appeared to St. Bernadette Soubirous, a poor girl from a French village, and a spring with miraculous, healing waters emerged from a nearby cave. The lady revealed herself as the "Immaculate

Conception," the Blessed Virgin Mary.

February 14 – Ash Wednesday. The first day of Lent. Ashes of old palms are placed on the forehead as a sign of penance. It's also a day of abstinence from meat and fasting – one regular meal and two small meals that together don't equal a full meal.

February 22 – The Chair of St. Peter. Marking St. Peter's establishment of the Holy See, on this festival we thank God for His Church and pray for its holy preservation.



LENT 2024

 = 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>						
18 Scroll through your phone contacts and offer your Communion for whichever person you land on.	19 Keep custody of the thoughts: give up complaining, rash judgement, and negative self-talk. See holiness -- and productivity! -- increase.	20 Pick a saint to accompany you during Lent. Learn more about them and ask them to pray for you.	21 Find a pro-life pregnancy center near you and ask how you can help them support the women and their babies.	22 Put out an empty box. Throughout Lent, fill it with gently used items in good condition that you no longer use.	23 Observe a screen fast (from recreational use) from noon to 3, recalling the 3 hours Jesus hung on the Cross.	24 Make up bags of socks, oranges, and bottled water to offer people who are homeless.
25 Stay after Mass and pray for the intentions of the pope.	26 Ask God to remind you of His love for you today -- it's a prayer He loves to answer. Thank Him tonight before bed.	27 Make a small sacrifice today for souls, e.g., no cream in your coffee, no snacks before dinner.	28 Give up worry. Write down what worries you and leave it before an image of Jesus, surrendering it to His care.	29 Stop by the parish office and ask what upcoming events you can volunteer with (e.g. setting up St. Joseph's Table).	1 March Attend Daily Mass and/or spend some time before the Blessed Sacrament in honor of Jesus' Sacred Heart.	2 Our Lady urged praying the Rosary to bring peace. Play a Rosary in honor of Mary's Immaculate Heart.
3 Meditate on today's Gospel (John 2:13-22). Where can you 'clean the temple' of your heart to make more room for God?	4 Learn something new about your Faith: skim the glossary of the Catechism for an unfamiliar term and learn more about it.	5 Check out Catholic Relief Services at www.crs.org to see how you can help support any of their projects.	6 Meditate on Scripture on-the-go. Copy down a favorite Bible verse and carry it with you all day. Pray with it whenever you have to wait.	7 Catch up with a friend you haven't heard from in a while.	8 Attend a Stations of the Cross service or pray them on your own. Find them here: www.usccb.org .	9 Give others the gift of your presence: ask about their work, interests, or family, and listen attentively while they speak.
10 <i>Laetare Sunday</i> Rejoice! Have some holy fun after Mass today.	11 This whole week, give up recreational screen time after 9PM and give that time to God.	12 Renew your commitment to your Lenten promises.	13 Do a thorough Examination of Conscience, then go to Confession to be freed of your sins and experience God's mercy.	14 Today, choose kindness. Resolve to smile at everyone you meet.	15 Make an additional small sacrifice of your choosing and pray for the unborn children and their mothers.	16 Volunteer at a retirement community. Call ahead and ask how you can serve (e.g., reading to the residents, donating needed items).
17 Consider offering your Communion at Mass for missionaries, teachers, and catechists -- anyone who passes on the Faith.	18 Until the end of Lent, only buy essentials, like food, medicine, etc.	19 <i>St. Joseph's Day</i> Happy Solemnity! Enjoy pastries today to celebrate. Prayerfully entrust husbands and fathers to St. Joseph's protection.	20 Drop off the box of clothes at its destination.	21 Find time today to visit the Blessed Sacrament, even if briefly. Pray that everyone has a safe and spiritually fruitful Holy Week.	22 The King is coming! Clean the house in preparation for Palm Sunday.	23 Praying for the dead is a work of mercy. Visit a cemetery and pray for the souls there.
24 <i>Palm Sunday</i> During the Gospel readings at Mass, imagine you're in the scene. How would you respond?	25 Offer extra prayers today for those coming into the Church at Easter.	26 Evaluate your Lent. Where did you see spiritual growth? What would you do differently next year?	27 Today recalls Judas' betrayal of Christ. Ask forgiveness from those you have hurt. Forgive those who have hurt you.	28 <i>Holy Thursday</i> Today, Christ instituted the Holy Eucharist and the Priesthood. Send a priest a thank-you card for all the ways he's served you.	29 <i>Good Friday</i> Read Mark 15 and reflect on Jesus' love for you. Name one way you'll return His love.	30 <i>Holy Saturday</i> Light a candle and renew your baptismal vows to remain faithful to God this coming year.