

Our Lady of Hope  
and  
Saint Paul Parishes  
February 4, 2024



Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time

So Jesus went into their synagogues,  
preaching and driving out demons  
throughout the whole of Galilee.

Mark 1:39

## OUR LADY OF HOPE / SAINT PAUL DIRECTORY

### OUR LADY OF HOPE PARISH

1 Pineswamp Road  
Ipswich, MA 01938  
978-356-3944

WEBSITE: [www.ourladysaintpaul.org](http://www.ourladysaintpaul.org)  
EMAIL: [ourlady@ourladysaintpaul.org](mailto:ourlady@ourladysaintpaul.org)



Handicap Parking and ramp into the church is located on Pineswamp Road on right side of Church.

### WEEKEND MASS SCHEDULE

#### SATURDAY:

4:00 pm: Our Lady of Hope (OLOH)

#### SUNDAY:

7:30 am: Saint Paul (SP) ~ No Music

9:30 am: Saint Paul (SP)

11:15 am: Our Lady of Hope (OLOH)

### WEEKDAY MASS SCHEDULE

9:00 am: Monday & Tuesday (OLOH)

9:00 am: Thursday & Friday (SP)

### SACRAMENTS

#### RECONCILIATION

SATURDAYS 3:00—3:45 PM at Our Lady of Hope or by appointment at either church.

#### BAPTISM

If you are planning a baptism in the future, please call the parish office to make arrangements.

#### MARRIAGE

If you are an engaged couple, please call Fr. Brogan *directly* at *least* 6 months prior to the intended date.

**PASTORAL VISITATION:** The Eucharist and the Anointing of the Sick can be brought to our parishioners confined to their homes.

#### OCIA & FAITH FORMATION

Questions regarding current, upcoming programs and/or sacramental programs available at our parishes, please contact the parish office.



Hearing Assist Boxes are available at Our Lady of Hope. Let the Priest know if you would like one before Mass when attending Mass at OLOH.

### NEW TO OUR PARISH?

If you are new to Our Lady of Hope or Saint Paul, please introduce yourself to Fr. Brogan following Mass. To formally register at one of our parishes, contact the parish office or go online to register through our website.

### SAINT PAUL PARISH

50 Union Street  
South Hamilton, MA 01982  
978-468-2337

WEBSITE: [www.ourladysaintpaul.org](http://www.ourladysaintpaul.org)  
EMAIL: [stpaul@ourladysaintpaul.org](mailto:stpaul@ourladysaintpaul.org)



Elevator for Handicapped Access to the Saint Paul church is located in the rear of the building.

### PARISH STAFF

**PASTOR:** Fr. David A. Brogan

**PRIEST IN RESIDENCE:** Fr. John G. Kiley

#### MUSIC MINISTER:

John Maher 978-500-6789  
[jmaher@ourladysaintpaul.org](mailto:jmaher@ourladysaintpaul.org)

#### BUSINESS MANAGER, OUR LADY OF HOPE:

Joanne DiNatale 978-356-3944  
[ourlady@ourladysaintpaul.org](mailto:ourlady@ourladysaintpaul.org)

#### BUSINESS MANAGER, SAINT PAUL:

David McLean 978-468-2337  
[stpaul@ourladysaintpaul.org](mailto:stpaul@ourladysaintpaul.org)

#### PARISH SECRETARY, SAINT PAUL:

Lucy Cronan 978-468-2337  
[stpaul@ourladysaintpaul.org](mailto:stpaul@ourladysaintpaul.org)

### RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

**OUR LADY OF HOPE:** 978-356-3944 EXT. 28

#### Kindergarten through Grade 11

Elisa St. Clair [estclair@ourladysaintpaul.org](mailto:estclair@ourladysaintpaul.org)

**SAINT PAUL:** 978-468-3617

#### Grades 1 through 5

Kristen Monahan [kmonahan@ourladysaintpaul.org](mailto:kmonahan@ourladysaintpaul.org)

#### Grades 6-8

Debra Brown [dbrown@ourladysaintpaul.org](mailto:dbrown@ourladysaintpaul.org)

#### Grades 9-10

John Cusolito [jcusolito@ourladysaintpaul.org](mailto:jcusolito@ourladysaintpaul.org)

### STAY UP TO DATE THROUGH EMAIL

When important information is sent to registered parishioners, it is conveyed through email. Please let us know when your email has changed.

### IMPORTANT REMINDER

Please accompany your child downstairs to the church hall or to restrooms. For their safety, please be sure they are always accompanied by an adult family member. Child safety is everyone's responsibility. Thank you for your cooperation.



**COLLABORATIVE MASS INTENTIONS****Saturday, February 3**

4:00 pm Vigil— Assunta DiMaggio (OLOH)

**Sunday, February 4**7:30 am— Parishioners (SP) *NO MUSIC*

9:30 am— Ruth Butman (SP)

11:15am— Weekend Mass (OLOH)

**Monday, February 5**

9:00 am— John &amp; June Miniter (OLOH)

**Tuesday, February 6**

9:00 am —Donald Huff (OLOH)

**Wednesday, February 7 No Daily Mass****Thursday, February 8**

9:00 am — Weekday Mass (SP)

**Friday, February 9**

9:00 am — Weekday Mass (SP)

**Saturday, February 10**

4:00 pm Vigil— Weekend Mass (OLOH)

**Sunday, February 11**7:30 am— Weekend Mass (SP) *NO MUSIC*

9:30 am— Parishioners (SP)

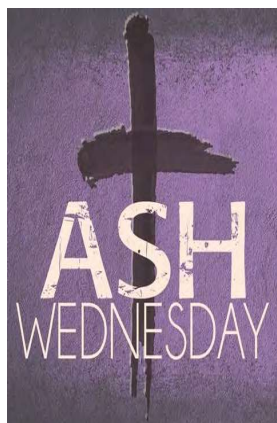
11:15am— Weekend Mass (OLOH)

*Please contact the parish office to schedule a Mass intention for your deceased loved one.*

## MASSSES & SERVICES

### ASH WEDNESDAY

### FEBRUARY 14

**MASS & ASHES**

9:00 AM —OLH

9:00 AM —STP

**SERVICES & ASHES**

3:15 PM —STP

5:30 PM —OLH

7:00PM —STP

Ash Wednesday is a day of fasting.

**PRAYER REQUESTS****WE ASK PARISHIONERS TO PRAY...**

† For all those who are sick, especially Amy Lombardo, Cameron Cyr, Kathy Bartlett, Blanche Zak, Mathew Faino, Kim Donohoe, Mia Angelis, Philip Abodeely, Juilett Carlson, Cameron Gagnon, Cathryn Lally, Denise Polli, Gerrie O'Brien, Melissa Faino Palelli, Arline Thornell, Irene Stackpole, Connie Donovan, Patricia Foley, J. P. Quinn and all those infected with the Covid-19 virus

† For all our parishioners who are sick, homebound and those confined to nursing facilities and hospital

† For the all students and teachers.

† For peace in our world, especially in the Ukraine and Middle East

† For all the deceased members of our parishes

† For the safety and good health of all missionaries

† For all who serve our country in the Armed Forces, especially Marine 2nd Lt. Thomas Monahan and Air Force 2nd Lt. Will Hogan

† For the unborn children

† For all those affected by natural disasters

**PLEASE NOTE:** In order to keep our prayer list current, names will remain on the list for four weeks.

Please resubmit by contacting the parish office. Names should be submitted by the individual or immediate family member.

**ONLINE GIVING**

We offer this convenience to our parishioners and visitors. Online giving is an easy and secure way to make contributions to support our parish. You may contribute using direct withdrawals (ACH) or credit cards. Visa, MasterCard and American Express are all accepted.

**SAINT PAUL**

If you prefer the convenience of giving your donation online, please call the parish office or enroll online at: <https://churchofsaintpaul.churchgiving.com/>

Parish envelopes for your weekly donation allows us to keep a record for your tax purposes. If you would like to receive weekly envelopes, please call the parish office.

**OUR LADY OF HOPE**

To contribute using online giving, simply visit our website: [ourladysaintpaul.org](http://ourladysaintpaul.org) and follow the instructions. For assistance, call the parish office..

If you make an offering/donation to the collection basket at Mass with Parish (specific) contribution envelopes or put your donation in an envelope writing both Parish name and your name on the front, your donation will be transferred to that Church. Cash donations outside of an envelope will remain in the parish where you made your donation. If you have any questions, call the parish office.



**SPECIAL COLLECTIONS****February 14 —****ASH WEDNESDAY COLLECTION  
for CATHOLIC CHARITIES**

This collection benefits the Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Boston which serve nearly 200,000 families and individuals annually, helping them towards a path to self-sustainability. On behalf of those we serve, thank you in advance for your generosity.

**February 24-25—****SUPPORT OF CHURCH AROUND THE WORLD**

This second collection will support the Church in those underdeveloped areas of the world. Catholic Relief Services (CRS), the Church in Africa and in Central and Eastern Europe and three important national Catholic missions: the Military Archdiocese, Home Missions and the Black and Indian Missions. For more information visit: [www.usccb.org](http://www.usccb.org)

**WORLDWIDE MARRIAGE ENCOUNTER**

Mark 1:33-35: "The whole city was gathered at the door. He cured many who were sick with many diseases, and he drove out many demons. "Later "he went off to a deserted place to pray." Jesus preached and also went about healing those who were ill. Jesus also can heal our marriages and make them whole again. Learn the five tools for a better marriage by signing up and attending a Worldwide Marriage Encounter Experience. You will be glad you did! You can find one by looking up WWME.org. Some of the dates to sign up are:

February 8-March 21, 2024, Virtual (evenings twice a week)

February 9-11, 2024 in Huntington, NY

March 15-17, 2024 in Upton, MA

Worldwide Marriage Encounter sponsors a variety of in-person and virtual marriage experiences, some on weekends and some on seven weekdays. Couples explore their relationship with each other, God, and the Church. Registration is limited; there is a \$100 application fee. For more information or to apply, call Joe & Ginny Vatelle at 978-870-5646 or <https://wwmema.org/>.

**OLOH SPECIAL COLLECTIONS:  
FUEL COLLECTION**

The Fuel collection is a great help in funding the anticipated cost of the parish heat and utilities this winter. This collection will continue to be taken up during the month of February. Donations can be mailed, put on rectory porch or dropped in the weekend collection baskets.

Thank you in advance for your generosity to this important collection that supports Our Lady of Hope Parish.

**GRAND ANNUAL COLLECTION**

The 2023-2024, Grand Annual Collection is well underway. If you have not made your donation yet, there are extras on the exit tables of the Church and rectory porch. We are grateful to all who have already generously contributed to this important collection. As of this past weekend we have received \$87,849.00 in donations.

**LENTEN FASTING AND ABSTINENCE**

**FRIDAYS OF LENT** are days of abstinence.

**FASTING** is to be observed by all 18 years of age and older, who have not yet celebrated their 59<sup>th</sup> birthday. On a fast day, one full meal is allowed. Two other meals, sufficient to maintain strength, may be taken according to each one's needs, but together they should not equal another full meal. Eating between meals is not permitted, but liquids, including mild and juices, are allowed.

**ABSTINENCE** is observed by all 14 years of age and older. On days of abstinence, no meat is allowed. Note that when health or ability to work would be seriously affected, the law does not oblige. When in doubt concerning fast and abstinence, the parish priest should be consulted.

**Fasting, almsgiving, and prayer** are the three traditional disciplines of Lent. The faithful and catechumens should undertake these practices seriously in a spirit of penance of preparation for baptism or of renewal of baptism at Easter.

*Although I am free in regard to all, I have made myself a slave to all so as to win over as many as possible. To the weak I became weak, to win over the weak. I have become all things to all, to save at least some. All this I do for the sake of the gospel, so that I too may have a share in it.*

1 Corinthians 9:19, 22-23

**Prayer for our county...**

God our Father, giver of life, we entrust the United States of America to your loving care. You are the rock on which this nation was founded. You alone are the true source of our cherished rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Reclaim this land for your glory and dwell among your people. Send your Spirit to touch the hearts of our nation's leaders. Open their minds to the great worth of human life and the responsibilities that accompany freedom. Remind your people that true happiness is rooted in seeking and doing your will. Through the intercession of Mary Immaculate, patroness of our land, grant us the courage to reject the "culture of death."

We ask this through Christ Our Lord. Amen.

## SAINT PAUL PARISH HAPPENINGS

### ADORATION OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT



On the First Friday of the Month following the 9:00 am Mass there will be Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and Confession until 10:00 am at Saint Paul Parish, Hamilton.

### SECOND FRIDAY COFFEE AT ST. PAUL'S

Following the second Friday Daily Mass, coffee will be served in the church hall. This will be a wonderful opportunity to meet with parishioners from St. Paul and Our Lady of Hope.

**CHILDREN'S LITURGY with Mrs. Monahan**  
February 11 at 9:30 AM Mass

### COFFEE & DOUGHNUTS

Please join us for coffee & doughnuts in the church hall following the 9:30 Mass next weekend.

### Saint Paul Men's Prayer Group

St Paul's Men's Prayer Group meets Saturday mornings in the church from 7:30 to 8:30. The meeting includes praying from the Liturgy of the Hours and a discussion of the Sunday readings. Contact the parish office for further details."



We are bringing back for the first time since COVID, the Shrove Tuesday Pancake "Breakfast-for-Dinner" hosted by our EDGE Students in the church hall at St. Paul's!



Join together with your parish family for one last celebration before we enter the Lenten Season. Everyone is invited to come party together for Mardi Gras/ Shrove Tuesday as we prepare for the holy season of Lent: **Tuesday, February 13 from 6:00 until 7:30 pm.**

The Pancake "Breakfast-for-Dinner" with pancakes, sausage and fruit medley and some fun games will be hosted & served by our EDGE Students, so we need your RSVP including Family Name, Contact info and Number Attending to Deb Brown at [dbrown@ourladysaintpaul.org](mailto:dbrown@ourladysaintpaul.org)

### ST. FRANCIS HOUSE CLOTHING DRIVE

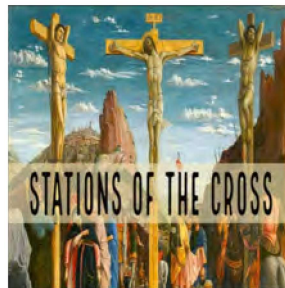
Cleaning out closets? Please keep St. Francis House in mind! Kindly donate gently used clothing, such as:

#### Fresh Threads—regular everyday clothing

- Men and Women's coats (bigger sizes preferred)
- Men and Women's sneakers, shoes, boots (no high heels)
- Men and Women's jeans, khakis, cargo pants
- Men and Women's sweatshirts, hoodies
- Men and Women's polos, long sleeve shirts
- Men and Women's t-shirts, sweaters, cardigans
- Men and Women's winter hats
- Men and Women's belts
- Backpacks, duffel bags, reuseable bags

**Specially marked boxes for your donations are at the church entrances. Together we can make this a huge success for Saint Francis House!**

### STATIONS OF THE CROSS DURING LENT



### Lenten Stations of the Cross

Starting on **Friday, February 16**

Stations of the Cross will be held at **6:30pm on Friday evenings during Lent.**

The Stations of the Cross devotion commemorates Jesus Christ's Passion and Death. The 14 devotions, or stations, focus on specific events of His last day, beginning with His condemnation. The stations are commonly used as a mini pilgrimage as the individual moves along from station to station. At each station, the individual recalls and meditates on a specific event from Christ's Passion. Specific prayers are recited, then the individual follows along to the next station until all 14 are complete.



**2023 CONTRIBUTION STATEMENTS**

Please let us know if you would like a 2023 statement of the contributions you made with your weekly/monthly contribution envelopes, contact the parish office to request your statement. For those who have been making contributions through Online Giving, you are able to print a statement yourself when logged into your account. The Parishes are also able to issue contribution statements for donations that include those made through Online Giving. If you are not currently receiving envelopes and would like to, let us know.

**NORTH SHORE SACRED HARP GROUP**

The North Shore Sacred Harp group will next on **Sunday February 18th**, in the lower church hall at Our Lady of Hope Church, from **2:00 - 4:30 p.m.**

Come join us as we meet in a square to sing hymns dating from the 18<sup>th</sup>–21<sup>st</sup> century, in four part a capella harmony. No previous experience required. Loaner hymnals will be available. Free will offering to help defray building upkeep.

If you are curious about shape note music, we suggest googling "Sacred Harp" and watching a few YouTube videos, and/or exploring fasola.org, our national website. Our North Shore group has a presence on Facebook. For further details contact George Howe 978-356-3252 or [gehowe@comcast.net](mailto:gehowe@comcast.net)

**Remember God's will in yours...**

When you leave a bequest to the Church in your will or estate plan, you express your commitment to the future of your parish. You also return some of the blessings God gave to your life and leave an eternal message of what is important to you. Please consider including Our Lady of Hope Parish and Saint Paul Parish when preparing your will.

For more information contact Fr. Brogan or call /email the parish office.

**WINTER STORM CANCELLATIONS**

When there is inclement weather, there is concern for the safety of parishioners and visiting priests traveling to our parishes and our ability to clear the parking lot and walkways to make them safe and free of snow/ice. When conditions are extreme and the Ipswich, & Hamilton-Wenham School system cancels classes, we will also follow this same decision and cancel celebrating daily Mass. In addition, when there are extreme conditions or roads are unsafe we will also post cancellations of parish events, religious education and weekend Masses on our website. In addition to this you are also able to check cancellations on Channel 7 (NBC), Channel 56(CW) and by logging onto [www.whdh.com](http://www.whdh.com).

**IPSWICH KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS**

The Knights of Columbus is the world's largest Catholic fraternal service organization. It was founded by the Venerable Father Michael J. McGivney in New Haven, Connecticut, in 1882, and named in honor of the navigator Christopher Columbus. Originally serving as a mutual benefit society to low-income immigrant Catholics, it developed into a fraternal service organization dedicated to providing charitable services, promoting Catholic education, and actively defending Catholicism in various nations.

The Knights of Columbus is not just a fraternity in name. It is a brotherhood of Catholic men who each play a part in improving the world around them, one community at a time. They are dedicated to upholding the principles they cherish: Charity, Unity, and Fraternity. The Knights stand together in faith and lend their support to the parish, home, and fellow Knights. From charity for worldwide causes, to helping closer to home with volunteer activities, to a top-rated insurance program that protects those closest to you, the Knights make the most of its brotherhood. All men in the parish are welcome and should consider joining the Knights of Columbus. We'd love to have you! For more information on joining the Knights, please contact Jim Foley Grand Knight of Ipswich Council 498 at: [Jamesfoley2233@gmail.com](mailto:Jamesfoley2233@gmail.com).



Feeding people. Changing lives.

**Knights of Columbus****The Open Door Food Drive**

The Knights of Columbus will be sponsoring a food drive for The Open Door Food Pantry in Ipswich. Please leave your donations near the front entrance of Our Lady of Hope Parish in the food donation box. The Knights will be transporting the food once a week and they

**Thank you for your donation.**

**Most needed items at**

**The Open Door (no glass!):**

**Peanut Butter • Canned Tuna, Chicken &**

**Turkey • Healthy Snack Items •**

**100% Juice/Juice Boxes • Breakfast Cereal •**

**Hearty Soups • Canned Vegetables & Fruits**

**• Spaghetti Sauce • Macaroni & Cheese •**

**Rice, Noodles, & Pasta • Cake, Muffin &**

**Pancake Mix**

## PARISH MINISTRY CONTACTS

## CATHOLIC WOMEN'S CLUB

Bonni Berkowitz, President | 617-549-2744  
[berky000@gmail.com](mailto:berky000@gmail.com)

## MUSIC MINISTRIES

John Maher | 978-500-6789  
[jmaher@ourlady saintpaul.org](mailto:jmaher@ourlady saintpaul.org)

## SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL

James McCarthy, President | 978-992-6151

## KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS

James Foley | 978-360-2799

***For more information, contact the parish office.  
 Consider sharing your gifts and talents.***

## COLLABORATIVE PARISH COUNCIL MEMBERS

Bonni Berkowitz	Joanne Bialek
Richard & Diane	Bostrom Pat Donahue
Stephen Dowd	Martha Driscoll
James Foley	JoAnne Kelleher
Linda Murphy	Alana Mitchell
Phil Monahan	Jim Moynihan

## MEN'S GROUP AT OUR LADY OF HOPE

The Men's Group invites you to come join them on Saturday mornings from 7:15-8:30 am in the church hall at Our Lady of Hope for light refreshments and Christian fellowship in an easy-going, informal atmosphere.

## KNITTING MINISTRY



St. Paul's Knitting Ministry knits baptismal blankets for St. Paul's and baby blankets and hats for Project Linus which are donated to local hospitals. If you knit, crochet or quilt and would like to join us, we meet generally on **the first Saturday of the month from 1PM to 3PM in St. Paul Church hall.**

## HOMEBOUND

If you or someone you know is homebound and wishes to receive Holy Communion, please call parish office to make arrangements.

## ADULT CHOIR

Music Director John Maher is looking for choir members to sing at the 9:30am Mass at St Paul's on Sundays, or the 4pm Mass at Our Lady of Hope on Saturdays. Time commitment is minimal. Whether you have sung with a choir in the past or have never done it before, all are welcome! Reach out to John at [jmaher@ourlady saintpaul.org](mailto:jmaher@ourlady saintpaul.org) or call 978-500-6789.

## PARISH ROSARY GROUP -OUR LADY OF HOPE

Praying the Rosary for those affected by abortion

Please join us every Tuesday and thereafter at 7 PM in the upper Church at Our Lady of Hope for reciting the Rachel Rosary, intercessory prayer for victims of post-abortion syndrome. Rachel Rosary is a positive and appropriate means of praying for those affected by abortion.

**All are welcome to attend each week or as you are able.**

## SVDP News:

In the tradition of its founder, [Blessed Frédéric Ozanam](#), and patron, [St. Vincent de Paul](#), the Society of St. Vincent de Paul is a Catholic lay organization inspired by Gospel values. We join together to grow spiritually by offering person-to-person service to neighbors in need.

As a reflection of the whole family of God, members, known as Vincentians, come together from every age, every race, and every income level and share our blessings of time, talent, and treasure with those who need help and hope. Organized locally, Vincentians witness God's love by embracing all works of charity and justice. We make no distinction in those we serve because, in them, Vincentians see the face of Christ.

Our local chapter of the Saint Vincent DePaul Society is a collection of parishioners inspired by Gospel values, growing in holiness, and building a better world through personal relationships with and serving the people in need in our community. We join to grow spiritually by offering person-to-person service to those in need and suffering. **We meet face-to-face with those seeking assistance, preferably in their home.** During these home visits, we bring hope, prayer, and financial resources to neighbors in need through assistance with rent, food, clothing, and other emergency needs.

Here are some recent examples of the help we have provided thanks to your generous Poor Box donations; we assisted a woman in a housing transition suffering from several health challenges with a week's stay at a local Inn. We've provided new mattress sets and sheets to a young family in need, and we have assisted a single mother and her son with a deposit for electricity as they return to Ipswich from Gloucester, hoping to find a better environment for their family life. We're assisting another single mother who has had to deal with the requirements of a special needs preschool child and, due to not being able to work full time, fell behind on her electric bills, and we've assisted a recently widowed senior with rental assistance while she deals with unexpected expenses.

We appreciate the opportunity to represent our two parishes in this work of charity that we do on behalf of all parishioners. We provide a person-to-person Christ-centered service that encompasses listening, empathizing, and bringing a prayerful approach to each encounter. We meet in the homes of each recipient, representing ourselves as members of our Hamilton/Ipswich/Wenham Catholic Community, seeking to bring support and the joy of Christ, non-judgmentally, to those in need.

Thank you again for thinking of those less fortunate and donating to the Poor Boxes on your way out of Our Lady of Hope Church. Please contact us if you know of anyone in Ipswich/Hamilton/Wenham who could benefit from a visit from your SVDP Society. Also, please visit our website for additional details: <https://svdpipswich.blogspot.com/>

All are welcome to participate in this mission as we meet at 7 PM on the first Monday night of every month in the OLVH parish hall.





## Fact of Faith

### PENITENTIAL PRACTICES FOR LENT

Raise Up. Sacrifice. Offer.

**O**ne important way to grow in the Lord is to observe the penitential practices that strengthen us for resisting temptation, allow us to express our sorrow for the sins we have committed, and help to repair the tear caused by our sinning.

Penitential practices take many forms: apologizing to an injured party, healing divisions within our families, fasting during the Lenten season, or graciously accepting the menial tasks of life. The purpose of penance is not to diminish life but to enrich it.

Jesus, in Matthew's Gospel, calls us to pray, to fast, and to give alms: "when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites," "when you fast, do not look gloomy," "when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right is doing" (Mt 6:5, 16, 3, respectively). As a Church, we ponder and pray over this call every Ash Wednesday. In a most profound way, the three spiritual exercises identified by Jesus are directed toward the nurturing of relationships.

**Prayer**, that process of listening to and responding to God's daily call, sustains and nurtures our relationship with our triune God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Without prayer, personal and communal, this relationship is diminished, sometimes to the point of complete silence on our part. Every day the Spirit of Jesus invites us to enter into that serious conversion that leads to blessed communion.

**Fasting**, a very special form of penance, and Jesus' second call, has been a consistent part of our Catholic tradition. Fasting assists us in getting our own house in order. All of us have to deal with areas of servitude, whether in regard to smoking or alcohol consumption, misused sexuality, uncontrolled gambling, psychological hang-ups, spiritual obsessions, use of stimulants, immoderate use of the Internet, excessive amounts of television watching, or preoccupations with other forms of entertainment. By fasting and self-denial, by

living lives of moderation, we have more energy to devote to God's purposes and a better self-esteem that helps us to be more concerned with the well-being of others.

The third call of the Lord is to **give alms**. Jesus was always concerned about those who were poor and in need. He was impressed by the widow who, though having so little, shared her resources with others: "I tell you truly, this poor widow put in more than all the rest; for those others have all made offerings from their surplus wealth, but she, from her poverty, has offered her whole livelihood" (Lk 21:3-4). To be a disciple of Christ means to live a life of charity. To be a disciple of Jesus is to live a life of stewardship, generously giving of our time, talent, and treasure.

At the heart of all penance is the call to conversion. Jesus' imperative "Repent, and believe in the gospel" (Mk 1:15) makes explicit this connection between authentic discipleship and penitential discipline. Discipleship, our following of Jesus, embraces discipline, a firm commitment to do whatever is demanded in furthering God's kingdom. Viewed in this way, the virtue of penance is not optional, just as weeding a garden is not optional for a responsible caretaker. The gardener is concerned with a bountiful harvest; the disciple is concerned about greater conformity to the person of Jesus.

If we are serious about embracing the penitential discipline that is rooted in the call to discipleship, then we will identify specific times and places for prayer, penance, and works of charity. Growth in spiritual maturity demands a certain level of specificity, for it shows that we take seriously God's call to discipline and are willing to hold ourselves accountable. In our Catholic tradition we specify certain days and seasons for special works of penance: Fridays, on which we commemorate the death of the Lord, and Lent, our forty days of preparation for the Easter mysteries.



Catholic  
Current

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# Try It, You'll Like It!

## A CONFESSION ABOUT CONFESSION

*We can take a look into our spiritual mirror, and if we don't like what we see, we have the chance to change it, all while accepting God's gift of forgiveness.*

*Confession is always an affirmation of faith and not just a proclamation of sinfulness.*

Bless me, reader, for I have sinned: I am not the best role model when it comes to confession.

Of course, I know how important it is. I know that there is great peace in the forgiveness offered by God, that it strengthens our relationship with him and it reminds us of our duty to live our lives in a more Christ-like way.

Like exercise, confession – or the sacrament of reconciliation, as we now call it – always makes me feel better after I go – separated from my sinful habits and inspired to adhere more closely to my spiritual path.

But convincing my children of its myriad benefits is one of the wonderful challenges of parenting, akin to making sure they've got enough spiritual veggies on their plate of faith.

Me: "Try it, you'll like it!"

Them: "Uh, huh," as they hide their peas under the mound of mashed potatoes.

Like plenty of adults I know, my children have no problem coming up with reasons why they don't need to make a list of their less-than-stellar moments and, worse, tell someone about it.

"I haven't done anything wrong," spits out my younger daughter at my suggestion of a Saturday afternoon family trip to the confessional. (This, of course, comes right after a

morning fight with her younger brother.)

I deftly point out that while we aren't a family of murderers, it would behoove all of us to take a moment and think of the times we were less than kind to each other, when we perhaps spoke too hastily or took pleasure in another person's misfortune.

We can confess those sinful moments and receive God's forgiveness, I say. I try to explain it in different ways: It's like wiping down the dry erase board – chalkboards are so 20th century – and making a fresh start.

I say to the kids: "Try it, you'll like it!"

Kid No. 2 says: "We've got (insert random sports activity, birthday party, semiannual family ritual) coming up."

Sure, in a family of five, there is always something going on in our lives. I joke that we don't have excuses, we have exceptions – reasons why we are somehow above the rules. Except, that's not the case.

Sometimes, the day-to-day struggles are precisely why we need to make the time for a trip to the confessional. Those moments spent in the pew clicking off our list of sins – the gossip, the profanity, the desiring of what belongs to someone else – may be the reality check we need to bring us back on course.

We can take a look into our spiritual mirror, and if we don't like what we see, we have the chance to change it, all while accepting God's gift of forgiveness.

Me: "Try it, you'll like it!"

"You've been saying we need to go, and then we don't," my older one says to me.

Zing – the shot to the heart. She's right. Oh, I talk a good game about confession, but in the end, I make all the same excuses they do. I can't tell you how many times I've walked into church on a Sunday morning and chastised myself for missing the Saturday confession window. And then I slide into the pew, the thought discarded like a wadded-up tissue.

So what am I teaching my kids?

During Lent, I took the time to teach them that confession is something we do – as a family. It doesn't matter if our sins are big or small, if we are busy or lazy. I realized the one I'm convincing is myself, that it's time for me to look into the mirror and decide if this is the reflection of God I want the world to see. Only then can I hope my children will follow my example.

"Try it, you'll like it!"

*Kelly Bothum, a mother of three, is a freelance writer.*



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