

SIXTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

February 15, 2026



WELCOME TO HOLY FAMILY CATHOLIC CHURCH

Served by the Mercedarian Friars USA (www.orderofmercy.org)



PARISH OFFICE, 588 W. Gay Street, Columbus, OH 43215

OpenMonday – Thursday: 8:00 am – 3:00 pm

Main No.....614-221-4323 Fax No: 614-221-9818

Web:.....www.holyfamilycolumbus.org

Email.....office@holyfamilycolumbus.org

Facebook.....Holy Family Catholic Church

Flocknote.....holyfamilycolumbus@flocknote.com

PERSONNEL STAFF

Father Michael J. Donovan, O. de M...Pastor

Father Daniel Bowen, O. de M.....Vocation Director

Brother Kevin Cush, O. de M.....Seminarian

Brian Krull Business Manager

Secretary.....Mary Gamble

Maintenance.....Tim Kearns

Music Director / Organist.....Shawn Kenney

OCIA (RCIA) Coordinator.....Linda Hamilton

Religious Education.....Sr. Bozena Tyborowska LSIC

PARISH ORGANIZATIONS

Altar Servers – *Br. Kevin Cush, O. de M., Director*

Confraternity of Christian Mothers – *Rita Martinez, President*

Diocesan Center for the Guard of Honor
of the Sacred Heart of Jesus – *Rebecca Rector, Zelatrix*

Eucharistic Adoration – *Sarah Hill, Coordinator*

Holy Family Young Adults – *Bear Bates, Coordinator*

Hospitality – *Kathy McKinniss & Linda Hamilton, Coordinators*

Knights of Columbus – *Br. Kevin Cush, O. de M., Grand Knight*

Liturgical Ministry – *Linda Hamilton, Coordinator*

Mercedarian Lay Third Order – *Fr. Michael J. Donovan, O. de M.,
Spiritual Director*

Respect Life – *Aurelio & Rosalinda Morales, Coordinators*

Sodality of the Blessed Virgin Mary – *Sr. Bozena Tyborowska, Dir.*

SOUP KITCHEN – (backyard of Parish Center building)

Donations...Monday – Friday

8:00am – 12noon, preferred (back of building)

12noon – 3:00pm, optional (please call in advance)

Main No.....614-221-4323

Web.....www.hfsk.org

Email.....Dennis Shope, Director

soupkitchen@holyfamilycolumbus.org

maintenance@holyfamilycolumbus.org

BAPTISM

Call the Parish office to schedule a Baptism. Children over the age of 6 will require some special instruction.

MARRIAGE

Please call the Parish Office at least six months before the wedding. Diocesan Pre-Cana and Natural Family Planning classes are required and six meetings with the priest.

THE SACRAMENT OF THE SICK

Call the Parish Office during general office hours. Otherwise, call Parish Office and select "Sacramental Emergency" option.

RECEPTION OF THE HOLY EUCHARIST

Those who desire Holy Communion at home should call the Parish Office.

MASS SCHEDULE

Weekdays: 12:15pm

Saturday: 9:00 a.m.

Sunday: 9:00 a.m. 11:00 a.m. 5:00 p.m. & 8:00 p.m.

Convent of St. Birgitta – 40 N. Grubb St., Columbus

Weekly: 7:00 a.m. Mon., Tues., Thurs. Friday

4:00 p.m. Wednesday

(Each day is open to the public)

THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION

Weekdays: 11:30 a.m. – 12 Noon

Sunday: 8:30 a.m. 10:30 a.m. 4:30 p.m. 7:30 p.m.

EUCCHARISTIC ADORATION SCHEDULE

Holy Family Church

Weekly: 1:00 p.m. Thursday – 12 Noon Friday

First Friday Adoration in Reparation to the

Sacred Heart – 8:00 p.m. – 8:45 a.m. First Saturday

Please contact **Sarah Hill** at **740-418-0517** or **thehills1936@gmail.com** if you have interest in being scheduled weekly or monthly in either location

Convent of St. Birgitta (CSB)

40 N. Grubb St., Columbus

Weekly: 9:00 a.m. – 9:00 p.m. Tuesday

8:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. Mass Wednesday

4:30 p.m. – 9:00 p.m. following 4pm Mass

9:00 a.m. – 9:00 p.m. Friday

MOST HOLY ROSARY

Weekdays: 11:30 am (Tuesday is Respect Life Rosary)

Chaplet of Divine Mercy follows Rosary

Saturday: 8:30 a.m. before 9:00 a.m. Marian Mass

8:15 a.m. before 9:00 a.m. First Saturday Mass

Sunday: 8:30 a.m. 10:30 a.m. & 4:30 p.m. (before Mass)

Please contact the Parish Office if you wish to be scheduled to lead before 9am Saturday or 9am; 5pm Sunday Mass.

REGULAR DEVOTIONS



Each Tuesday following the 12:15 p.m. Mass there are Devotions to **St. Anthony of Padua**.



Each Saturday Novena Prayers to **Our Lady of Mercy** following 9:00 a.m. Mass.



On First Wednesday of each month a 7:00 p.m. Mass is offered in honor of **Good Saint Joseph**.



On First Friday of each month following the 12:15 & 7:00 p.m. Masses there is **Act of Consecration of the Human Race to the Sacred Heart of Jesus**.

SIXTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

February 15, 2026

MASS INTENTIONS FEBRUARY 15–22, 2026

Sun Feb 15	SIXTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME
9:00 AM *	Tom and Louis Carter, by Mary Sue Dempsey
11:00 AM	The Randolph Family
5:00 PM	Repose of the Soul of Dick Crumley, by Wife
8:00 PM	People of the Parish
Mon Feb 16	
7:00 AM	CSB — The Kevin and Emily Sellers Family by Emily Sellers
12:15 PM	Sister Klara, SSCJ by Sr. Miriam Joseph, SSCJ Sr. Monica Marie, SSCJ
Tues Feb 17	The Seven Holy Founders of the Servite Order
7:00 AM	CSB — The Lonehill Family by Sandy Kills-Right
12:15 PM	Matthew “Mooch” Randolph by The Mark Smith Family
Wed Feb 18	Ash Wednesday
7:00 AM	CSB — Sophia Bowman, by Chloe Bowman
7:00 AM	Parish Repose of the Soul of Mary Helen Colelli by Mary Gamble
12:15 PM	Repose of the Soul of Mary Karabinos by Mary Zacks
7:00 PM	Repose of the Soul of Eric Michael Schmitt by ARD
Thurs Feb 19	Thursday after Ash Wednesday
7:00 AM	CSB — Repose of the Soul of Sherry Simental by Sean & Jody White
12:15 PM	Repose of the Soul of Lucy Ziegler by Kristi Ziegler
Fri Feb 20	Friday after Ash Wednesday
7:00 AM	CSB — Joseph Spielvogel and Mary and George Spielvogel, by Kathleen Spielvogel
12:15 PM	Repose of the Souls of James and Livia Gallicchio by Lisa A. Gallicchio-Cannon
Sat Feb 21	Saint Peter Damian, Bishop and Doctor
9:00 AM	Repose of the Soul of Annette Brickey by Christian Mothers
Sun Feb 22	FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT
9:00 AM *	Repose of the Soul of Donald Blaisdell by Jennie Gallastegui
11:00 AM	Kathy McKinniss, by Anonymous
5:00 PM *	People of the Parish
8:00 PM	Virginia Moretto, by The Gabriel and Johnson Families

* Incense will be used at this Mass

HOMEBOUND AND/OR ILL IN NEED OF PRAYERS

Melody Christ	Debbie Newell
Sarah Conway	Theresa Piatt
JoAnn Cormack	Maura Renouf
Mary Jo Fetch	Michelle Stewart
Jack Gookin	Josh Stroud
John Keller	Celeste Trautman
Larry Lorms	Bill Warren
Charles McKinniss	Mary Ann Wirsching

Please inform the Parish Office of any parishioner's name that should be added or removed. Thank you.

"Even the darkest moments of the liturgy are filled with joy, and Ash Wednesday, the beginning of the Lenten fast, is a day of happiness, a Christian Feast." - Fr. Thomas Merton

Holy Family Parish Office will be **CLOSED Monday, February 16, 2026** to observe President's Day. We will resume normal schedule February 17. Holy Family Soup Kitchen will be Open for donation drop offs 8:30am – 12noon in backyard of the Holy Family Parish Center building.

LECTOR SCHEDULE



February 15	9:00 am	Brandon Litman
	11:00 am	Kendy Troiano
	5:00 pm	Brian Bishop
February 18	7:00 pm	Austin Hill
February 22	9:00 am	Mary Gamble
	11:00 am	Aurelio Morales
	5:00 pm	Dan Hueckel

SERMON ON THE AMOUNT

Giving for February 2 – February 8, 2026

Offertory

<i>Collection</i>	\$ 3,809
<i>On-Line</i>	9,475
<i>Mail</i>	+ 1,392
<i>Total</i>	\$14,676

Less: Assessment (10%) - 1,468

Net \$13,208

Soup Kitchen \$ 6,531

Total Capital Campaign Donations \$372,793

The Appeal Pledges \$92,690

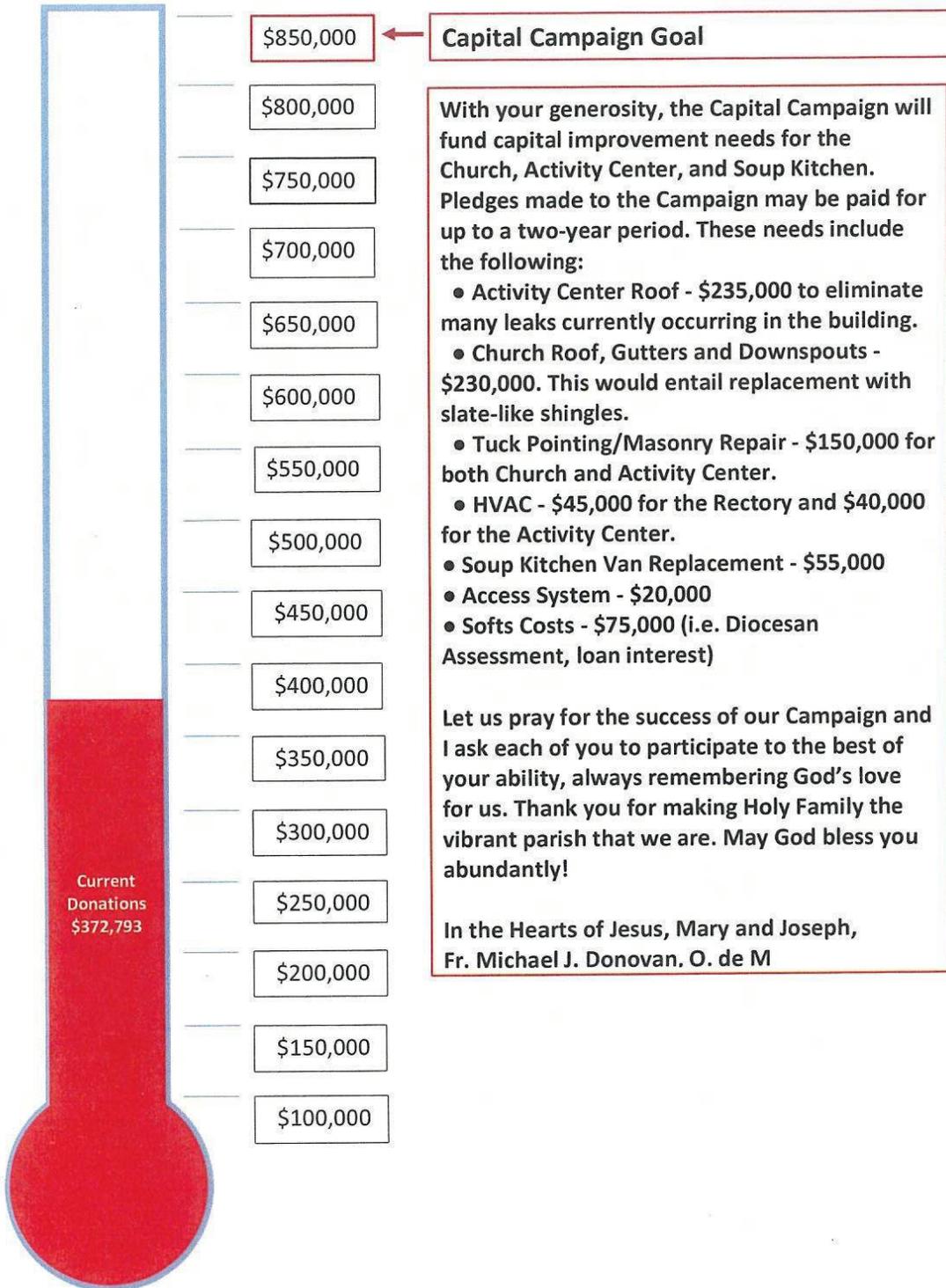
The Appeal Goal \$82,347

God Reward your Generosity

SIXTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

February 15, 2026

Holy Family Capital Campaign



2/8/2026

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HOLY FAMILY KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS #13428

We continue to collect aluminum cans for the Seminarians. All proceeds will go to these young men of Christ. Please drop the cans off at the entrance of the Church and/or Parish Center.

Upcoming Events

Sunday, March 1, 2026—Knights of Columbus Corporate Mass at the 11am Mass.

Sunday, March 1, 2026—Knights of Columbus monthly Council meeting in the undercroft of the Church after the 11am Mass.

** The Knights of Columbus at Holy Family will not have the weekly fish fry during Lent this year. We are planning a fish fry on March 20, 2026. More details will follow at a later date.

If you are interested in becoming a Knight of Columbus, please contact **Jack Gookin at (614) 309-2519**.



HOLY FAMILY RESPECT LIFE MINISTRY

Our upcoming meeting is **March 9 at 7pm** in the Parish Center.

Our Rosary for Life meets every Tuesday at 8:45am to 10:45am in front of Planned Parenthood Surgical Clinic. There is an opportunity to carpool by meeting in the Holy Family parking lot by 8:15.

If you are not able to go to the clinic, you can join us to pray the Rosary For Life every Tuesday, before Mass at 11:25am.



LENTEN STATIONS OF THE CROSS

Every Friday during the holy season of Lent you are invited to come to Church at 7:00pm for praying of the Stations of the Cross.



CONFRATERNITY OF CHRISTIAN MOTHERS & LADIES GUILD

Serving the Women of Holy Family Since 1887

Prayer to the Holy Spirit

*Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful.
And kindle in them the fire of your love.
Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created.
And you will renew the face of the earth.
Lord, by the light of the Holy Spirit
You have taught the hearts of Your faithful.
In the same Spirit, help us to relish what is right
and always rejoice in Your consolation.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.
Amen*

We will gather together in the undercroft on **February 21st** after the 11:00am Mass. We will be setting up and cooking for the Chicken Noodle Luncheon and could use some potato peelers and help setting up. The flyers are posted with the QR codes for the luncheon and statue raffle of Pope Francis. You may also RSVP via holyfamilyccm.com. Please bring a breakfast item, coffee and water will be provided.

Wishing all a productive, healthy and faith-filled week.

Holy Family Confraternity of Christian Mothers Officers

Rita Martinez, President / Louise Popich, Vice-President
Anita Van Order, Treasurer / Kendy Troiano, Secretary
Father Michael J. Donovan, O. de M. Director

Schedule for the pericardium relic of ST. CARLO ACUTIS

February 15 St. Joseph Cathedral Columbus

February 16 St. Paul the Apostle Westerville

February 17 St. Brendan Parish Hilliard
St. Michael Parish Worthington

February 18 St. Thomas More Newman Center
Home of Buckeye Catholic

For veneration times & details: columbuscatholic.org.

"The more Eucharist we receive, the more we will become like Jesus, so that on earth we will have a foretaste of heaven." - St. Carlo Acutis

HFYA (18—35) meets weekly, with a rotation of activities including prayer/spirituality, talk, adoration, and social nights. Use this QR code to connect with this group.



HIS INCREDIBLE SENIORS EXERCISE PROGRAM

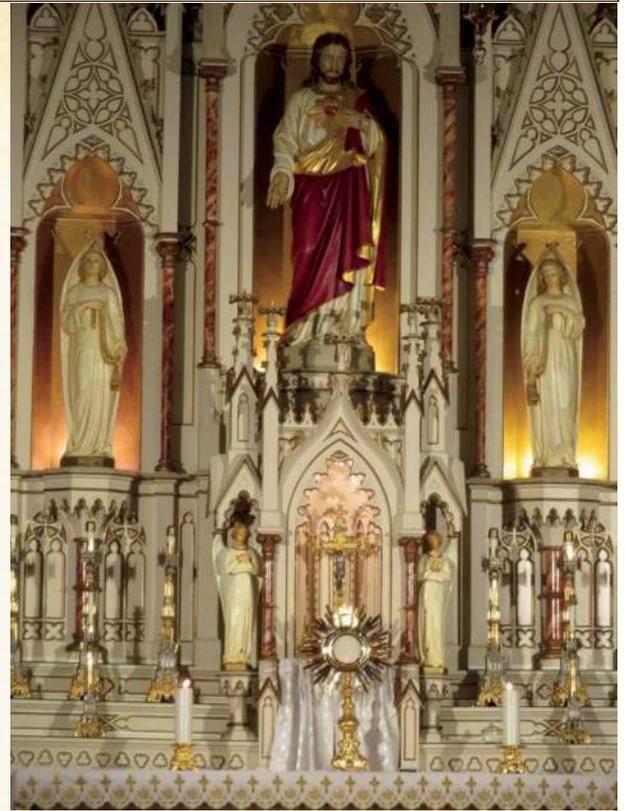
Our upcoming class is scheduled 1:30—2:30pm **Tuesday, February 17** in the Parish Center. The next class is same time and location on **Wednesday, February 18**. Join & get yourself in a routine of fun!

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40 DAYS OF ADORATION SCHEDULE

	<u>Time</u>
February 18 St. Joseph Cathedral 212 E. Broad St., Columbus 43215	12:05 Mass – 5:00 pm
February 19 St. Margaret of Cortona 1600 N. Hague Ave., Columbus 43204	9:00 am Mass – 7:00 pm Stations & Benediction
February 20 St. John the Baptist, St. Vincent de Paul 303 E. High St., Mt. Vernon 43050	5:00 am – 5:15 pm Benediction Mass 5:30 pm
February 21 St. Catherine 500 S. Gould Rd., Columbus 43209	6:00 am – 4:00 pm Adoration Chapel
February 22 St. John Neumann 9633 E. 9633 OH—37, Sunbury 43074	7:00 am – 7:00 pm
February 23 St. Michael of Archangel 5750 N. High Street, Worthington 43085	9:00 am – 10:00 pm
February 24 St. Joseph—Circleville 134 W. Mound St., Circleville 43113	9:00 am – 7:00 pm Mass
February 25 Blessed Sacrament 394 E. Main St., Newark 43055	8:30 am Mass – 11:00 pm
February 26 Our Lady of Peace 20 E. Dominion Blvd., Columbus 43214	9:00 am – 7:00 pm
February 27 & 28 St. Patrick—Columbus 280 N. Grant Ave., Columbus 43215	7:30 pm – 4:30 pm Saturday 7:00 am Mass



A complete list of parishes participating is posted on bulletin boards for you to make note of where to visit.

Holy Family Station Day is 9:00am – 9:00pm Wednesday, March 25th! Start your Lent offerings out early by completing the Sign Up sheet below or contact the Parish Office.

Make Jesus happy with some of your time that He yearns for and so deserves.

40 Days of Adoration Sign Up – Each year during 40 Days of Lent, parishes throughout the Diocese of Columbus schedule date(s) for Adoration that is open to the public. All dates scheduled will be provided upon completion so you can plan on spending as much priceless time with Our Lord as possible throughout this sorrowful period of His Life. **Holy Family Church Adoration will be open to scheduled adorers and the public 9:00am – 9:00pm, Wednesday, March 25, 2026.** Please contact the parish office to share what hour(s) you and family members or friends would like to give to *Jesus, Our Lord*. Our congregation needs to teach people from other churches how to honor with reverence and devotion as we protect the Blessed Sacrament with our love.

For your convenience, please complete this portion of the bulletin and place it in the offertory basket. We will contact you to confirm. **Please note: 12:15pm Mass, 7:00pm Vespers & 8:45pm Benediction are scheduled.**

Name: _____ Phone/Cell No. _____

Email: _____

Please indicate time of interest: _____ 9 – 10:00am _____ 10 – 11:00am _____ 11 – 12:00pm

_____ 1 – 2:00pm _____ 2 – 3:00pm _____ 3 – 4:00pm _____ 4 – 5:00pm _____ 5 – 6:00pm

_____ 6 – 7:00pm _____ 7 – 8:00pm _____ 8 – 9:00pm **JESUS, my Lord, my God, my ALL!**



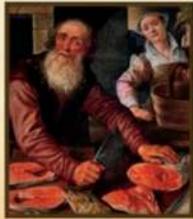
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It is obligatory for:



Catholics who are **14** years old until death are bound to practice the law of **abstinence**.



and Catholics who are **18 - 59** years old are bound to practice the law of **fasting**.

Fasting and Abstinence are to be observed during (*Canon 1251*):



**Ash
Wednesday**



**Friday of
Passion of
Our Lord**



**All
Fridays**

All Fridays through the year and the time of Lent are penitential days and times throughout the entire Church. (*Canon 1250*)

Fast from hurting words and say kind words. Fast from sadness and be filled with gratitude. Fast from anger and be filled with patience. Fast from pessimism and be filled with hope. Fast from worries and have trust in God. Fast from complaints and contemplate simplicity. Fast from pressures and be prayerful. Fast from bitterness and fill your hearts with joy. Fast from selfishness and be compassionate to others. Fast from grudges and be reconciled. Fast from words and be silent so you can listen. — *Words of Pope Francis*

CHRISTIAN MOTHERS CHICKEN NOODLE LUNCHEON

February 22 after 9:00 AM and 11:00 AM Mass
Carry out available
\$10/adult – children 11 and under are free
Chicken & noodles, mashed potatoes, salad, roll and
dessert
RSVP by 2/18/26



RSVP can also be sent to holyfamilyccm@gmail.com

Please consider donating a dessert!

Silent Auction Baskets!

We also have a St. Francis statue that will be raffled off!
Use the QR code below to purchase tickets:



40 DAYS FOR LIFE. THE BEGINNING OF THE END OF ABORTION.

Spring INTO ACTION TO END
ABORTION IN OHIO BY 2033

**40 DAYS FOR LIFE.
40 CHURCHES NEEDED.**

*Anchor in
Truth and Hope*

February 18th-March 29th.
Planned Parenthood Surgical Clinic | 3255 E Main St, Columbus OH



JOIN GCRTL IN PRAYER AND ACTIVISM BY
ADOPTING A DAY, PARTIAL DAY, OR HOUR!

HOLY FAMILY DAY

TUESDAY, MARCH 24

9:00 AM—5:00 PM

SIGN-UP SHEET IN THE VESTIBULE

BE MY VOICE

Lectio Divina

SCRIPTURE READING + MEDITATION + PRAYER + CONTEMPLATION

“What page, what passage of the inspired books of the Old and New Testaments is not the truest of guides for human life?” +Saint Benedict, from the Rule of Saint Benedict (73:3)

The month of February is dedicated to the Holy Family + Jesus, Mary and Joseph

“Let us familiarize ourselves with certain texts of sacred scripture that invite us to unite ourselves constantly with the divine will: ‘Lord, what will You have me do?’ ”

+SAINT ALPHONSUS LIGUORI

Monday, February 16 ~ Sixth Week in Ordinary Time

Holy Gospel: Mark 8:11-13 The Pharisees came forward and began to argue with Jesus, seeking from him a sign from heaven to test him. He sighed from the depth of his spirit and said, "Why does this generation seek a sign? Amen, I say to you, no sign will be given to this generation." Then he left them, got into the boat again, and went off to the other shore.

Meditation: The people of Jesus' time expected that the coming of the Messiah would be accompanied by extraordinary signs and wonders. The religious leaders tested Jesus to see if he had a genuine sign from heaven to back his Messianic claims. False messiahs in the past had made extraordinary claims to attract their followers, such as claiming that they could cleave the Jordan River in two or cause the walls of Jerusalem to fall. Jesus knew the hearts of those who came to test him. They were more interested in seeing signs and supernatural phenomena than they were in hearing the word of God. Simeon had prophesied at Jesus' birth that he was "destined for the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed so that inner thoughts of many will be revealed" (ref. Luke 2:34-35). Jesus gave them no sign except himself and the ultimate proof of his divinity when he rose from the dead.

Prayer: O God, who teach us that you abide in hearts that are just and true, grant that we may be so fashioned by your grace as to become a dwelling pleasing to you. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Contemplation: Let us never forget that the Lord reveals himself and makes his presence known to us in many ways – in his word and in the "breaking of the bread" in the Eucharist, in his church – the body of Christ, in his creation, and even in the everyday circumstances of our lives. If we seek the Lord, we will surely find him. And we can be confident that he will give us whatever we need to understand and carry out his will. Most of all, the Lord assures us of his daily presence and the promise that he will never leave us. Saint Theresa of Avila's prayer book contained a bookmark in which she wrote: "Let nothing disturb you, let nothing frighten you; all things pass: God never changes. Patience achieves all it strives for. Whoever has God lacks nothing, God alone suffices." Think about that for a moment, then ask yourself: Is God enough for you? If he is not, then this might be an area for you to work on during Lent.

Tuesday, February 17 ~ Sixth Week in Ordinary Time

Holy Gospel: Mark 8:14-21 The disciples had forgotten to bring bread, and they had only one loaf with them in the boat. Jesus enjoined them, "Watch out, guard against the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod." They concluded among themselves that it was because they had no bread. When he became aware of this he said to them, "Why do you conclude that it is because you have no bread? Do you not yet understand or comprehend? Are your hearts hardened? Do you have eyes and not see, ears and not hear? And do you not remember, when I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many wicker baskets full of fragments you picked up?" They answered him, "Twelve." "When I broke the seven loaves for the four thousand, how many full baskets of fragments did you pick up?" They answered him, "Seven." He said to them, "Do you still not understand?"

Meditation: The apostles set off in their boat across the Sea of Galilee only to discover that they forgot to bring enough food for their journey. What were they to do miles away from land and any place where they



could buy food and supplies? They were anxious of course, and this was right after Jesus had performed the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves and fishes where the disciples fed more than four thousand people (ref. Mark 8:1-9). Jesus knew the trouble in his disciples' hearts even before they could speak. Jesus dealt with their anxiety by first warning them to not fear what can harm the body rather than what can destroy the very heart and soul of their being.

Prayer: Impart to us, O Lord, in kindness the filial devotion with which the holy brothers venerated so devoutly the Mother of God and led your people to yourself. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God for ever and ever. Amen.

Contemplation: One might wonder why Jesus told his disciples to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of Herod? To the Jewish person leaven was a sign of evil. It was a piece of dough left-over from a previous baking. In due course it fermented and this fermented dough became leaven. Fermentation was associated with decomposing rot. Jesus warned his disciples to avoid the evil influence of the Pharisees and of Herod who sought their own counsels rather than the will of God. As the apostles continued to worry about their lack of bread, Jesus reminded them of his miraculous provision of bread in the feeding of the four thousand. He then upbraided them for their lack of trust in God. "Do you still not understand?" It's easy to get preoccupied with the problems and needs of the present moment and to forget the most important reality of all – God's abiding presence with us and his abundant provision for our lives as well. Thus when you pray, do you pray with joyful confidence, "Father, give us this day our daily bread...?"

Wednesday, February 18 ~ The Beginning of Lent Ash Wednesday

Holy Gospel: Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18 Jesus said to his disciples: "Take care not to perform righteous deeds in order that people may see them; otherwise, you will have no recompense from your heavenly Father. When you give alms, do not blow a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets to win the praise of others. Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right is doing, so that your almsgiving may be secret. And your Father who sees in secret will repay you.

"When you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, who love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on street corners so that others may see them. Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you pray, go to your inner room, close the door, and pray to your Father in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will repay you.

"When you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites. They neglect their appearance, so that they may appear to others to be fasting. Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, so that you may not appear to be fasting, except to your Father who is hidden. And your Father who sees what is hidden will repay you."

Meditation: One might ask why Jesus singled out prayer, fasting, and almsgiving for his disciples. The Jews considered these three as the cardinal works of the religious life. These were seen as the key signs of a pious person, the three great pillars on which the good life was based. Jesus pointed to the heart of the matter. Why do you pray, fast, and give alms? To draw attention to yourself so that others may notice and think highly of you? Or to give glory to God? The Lord warns his disciples of self-seeking glory – the preoccupation with looking good and seeking praise from others. True piety is something more than feeling good or looking holy. True piety is loving devotion to God. It is an attitude of awe, reverence, worship and obedience. It is a gift and working of the Holy Spirit that enables us to devote our lives to God with a holy desire to please him in all things (Isaiah 11:1-2). The forty days of Lent is the annual retreat of the people of God in imitation of Jesus' forty days in the wilderness. Forty is a significant number in the scriptures. Moses went to the mountain to seek the face of God for forty days in prayer and fasting. The people of Israel were in the wilderness for forty years in preparation for their entry into the promised land. Elijah fasted for forty days as he journeyed in the wilderness to the mountain of God. We are called to journey with the Lord in a special season of prayer, fasting, almsgiving, and penitence as we prepare to celebrate the feast of Easter, the Christian Passover. The Lord gives us spiritual food and supernatural strength to seek his face and to prepare ourselves for spiritual combat and testing. We, too, must follow in the way of the cross in order to share in the victory of Christ's death and resurrection. As we begin this holy season of testing and preparation, let's ask the Lord for a fresh outpouring of his Holy Spirit that we may grow in faith, hope, and love and embrace his will more fully in our lives.



Prayer: Grant, O Lord, that we may begin with holy fasting this campaign of Christian service, so that, as we take up battle against spiritual evils, we may be armed with weapons of self-restraint. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Contemplation: Do you hunger and thirst for God? Do you thirst for God's holiness? God wants to set our hearts ablaze with the fire of his Holy Spirit that we may share in his holiness and radiate the joy of the gospel to those around us. St. Augustine tells us that there are two kinds of people and two kinds of love: "One is holy, the other is selfish. One is subject to God; the other endeavors to equal Him." We are what we love. God wants to free our hearts from all that would keep us captive to selfishness and sin. "Rend your hearts and not your garments" says the prophet Joel (Joel 2:12). Use this Season of Lent to the fullest – embrace the laws of God and the teachings of Jesus Christ and His Holy Catholic Church. Undergo a conversion of mind and heart. Conform your will to God's; don't ask God to conform his will to yours, as so many foolishly try to do. With the help of the Holy Spirit, become humble, transform your minds and hearts to be lead in God's way of truth and holiness – it's the one and only way!

Thursday, February 19 ~ The Day After Ash Wednesday

Holy Gospel: Luke 9:22-25 Jesus said to his disciples: "The Son of Man must suffer greatly and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed and on the third day be raised." Then he said to all, "If anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it. What profit is there for one to gain the whole world yet lose or forfeit himself?"

Meditation: Quite simply, the cross of Jesus Christ leads to freedom and victory over sin and death. We then need to ask ourselves: "What is the cross which Christ commands me to take up each day as his disciple?" When my will crosses with his will, then his will must be done. The way of the cross involves sacrifice, the sacrifice of laying down my life each and every day for Jesus' sake. What makes such sacrifice possible and "sweet" is the love of God poured out for us in the blood of Jesus Christ. Paul the Apostle reminds us that "God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit" (Romans 5:5). We can never outdo God in giving, no matter how abundant we try. He always gives us more than we can expect or imagine. Are you ready to lose all for Christ in order to gain all with Christ?

Prayer: Prompt our actions with your inspiration, we pray, O Lord, and further them with your constant help, that all we do may always begin from you and by you be brought to completion. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Contemplation: We need to ask ourselves: "What will I give to God in exchange for freedom and eternal life?" In thinking about this question, are you ready to part with anything that might keep you from following him and his perfect plan for your life? Jesus poses these questions to challenge our assumptions about what is most profitable and worthwhile in life. In every decision of life we are making ourselves a certain kind of person. It is possible that some can gain all the things they set their heart on, only to wake up suddenly and discover that they missed the most important things of all. A true disciple is ready to give up all that he or she has in exchange for happiness and life with God. The life which God offers is abundant, everlasting life. And the joy which God places in our hearts no sadness or loss can diminish.

Friday, February 20 ~ The Friday After Ash Wednesday

Holy Gospel: Mark 9:14-15 The disciples of John approached Jesus and said, "Why do we and the Pharisees fast much, but your disciples do not fast?" Jesus answered them, "Can the wedding guests mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast."

Meditation: What kind of fasting is pleasing to God? Fasting can be done for a variety of reasons: – to gain freedom from some bad habit, addiction, or vice, to share in the suffering of those who go without, or to grow in our hunger for God and for the things of heaven. Basil the Great wrote: "Take heed that you do not make fasting to consist only in abstinence from meats. True fasting is to refrain from vice. Shred to pieces all your unjust contracts. Pardon your neighbors. Forgive them their trespasses." Do you hunger for more of God and for his holiness and for the abundant life he has to offer you?

Prayer: Show gracious favor, O Lord, we pray, to the works of penance we have begun, that we may have strength to accomplish with sincerity the bodily observances we undertake. Through our Lord Jesus

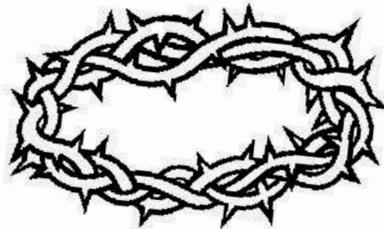


Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Contemplation: Do you ever find yourself hungering for God? We must remember that hungering for God and fasting for his kingdom go hand in hand. When asked why he and his disciples did not fast Jesus used the vivid picture of a wedding celebration. In Jesus' time the newly wed celebrated their honeymoon at home for a whole week with all the guests! This was a time of great feasting and celebrating. Jesus points to himself as the bridegroom and his disciples as the bridegroom's friends. He alludes to the fact that God takes delight in his people as a groom delights in his bride (Isaiah 62:5). To be in God's presence is pure delight and happiness. But Jesus also reminds his followers that there is a time for fasting and for humbling oneself in preparation for the coming of God's kingdom and for the return of the Messianic King. The Lord's disciples must also bear the cross of affliction and purification. For the disciple there is both a time for rejoicing in the Lord's presence and celebrating his goodness and a time for seeking the Lord with humility, fasting, and mourning for sin. If we hunger for the Lord, he will not disappoint us. His grace draws us to his throne of mercy and favor. Do you seek the Lord with confident trust and allow his Holy Spirit to transform your life with his power and grace? If not, perhaps this is an area for you to work on during this Season of Lent.

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THE POINT OF LENT ~ A SPECIAL REFLECTION BY SAM GUZMAN

If we're going to have a good Lent, we have to realize that the heart of Lent is not resolutions but *repentance*. Jesus began his preaching of the Gospel by saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand," and his message has been repeated by all the great saints through history. And what is repentance exactly? It is a return to God.

Human beings were made for communion with God and participation in his Divine life. Before the fall, this union with God was as natural as breathing, but now, it is a constant struggle. In fact, our hearts seem to have a gravitational pull to anything but God. We look for happiness and satisfaction in everything but him, and our hearts cling to sin like a magnet clings to steel.

Because our hearts are inclined toward selfishness and sin, restored communion with God requires a radical and painful reorientation. Aided by grace, we have to wrench away the magnets of our hearts and point them toward what they should cling to: God. This wrenching reorientation is what is known as repentance.

So how do we go about reorienting our hearts? Throughout history, three tools have been recommended by Mother Church and the saints to aid us in repentance: prayer, fasting (penance), and almsgiving. The most important thing to realize about them is that they are means to an end, not an end in themselves.

So often we start Lent focusing on all that we are going to do or give up. We focus on what we hope to *do*, rather than what we hope to *be*. It's like starting a strict diet and being proud of yourself for how much you will exercise and how little you will eat, rather than how much you hope to weigh at the end.

If we don't have the right attitude about prayer, fasting, and almsgiving, we will get to Easter burned out and frustrated. We'll think Lent is a waste of time, and we'll grow discouraged at our lack of willpower. As we prepare for Lent, let's keep the focus where it was always supposed to be— on a heart of repentance and love.

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