# The Catholic Community of Rankin and Swissvale

## MADONNA DEL CASTELLO PARISH

2021 S. Braddock Avenue • Swissvale, PA 15218

**March 19, 2017**

## Word of God Catholic Parish

7446 McClure Avenue • Swissvale, PA 15218

*Administrative Office: 2021 S. Braddock Avenue • Pittsburgh, PA 15218*

## MASS SCHEDULE

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Daily:** | **Monday** *(Madonna)* | **7:00 P.M.** |
| | **Tuesday** *(Word of God)* | **9:30 A.M.** |
| | **Wednesday** *(Madonna)* | **8:00 A.M.** |
| | **Thursday** *(Word of God)* | **9:30 A.M.** |
| | **Friday** *(Madonna)* | **8:00 A.M.** |
| | **Saturday** *(Word of God)* | **9:30 A.M.** |
| **Saturday Vigil** *(Madonna)* | | **4:00 P.M.** |
| **Saturday Vigil** *(Word of God)* | | **6:00 P.M.** |
| **Sunday** *(Word of God)* | | **9:00 A.M.** |
| **Sunday** *(Madonna)* | | **11:00 A.M.** |

*Consult the bulletin for Holy Day and Holiday Mass schedule*

## PARISH STAFF

Fr. John Lynam ..... *Pastor*
Keith Kondrich ..... *Deacon*
Ron Demblowski ..... *Deacon/Pastoral Associate*
Edward Kapsha ..... *Madonna Music Director*
Michael Burke ..... *Word of God Music Director*
Kelly James ..... *Madonna Parish Secretary*
Karen Flynn ..... *Word of God Parish Secretary*
Marcia Murello ..... *Coordinator of Religious Ed.*

## SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION

Saturday, 12:00 Noon
(Word of God church)

## SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM

Contact the Parish Office
for an appointment

## SACRAMENT OF MATRIMONY

Contact the Parish Office
for an appointment at least
6 months before the wedding

## SACRAMENT OF THE SICK

Available after Mass
and upon request

## CONTACT INFORMATION

Parish Office *(Madonna)* ..... 412-271-5666
Parish Office *(Word of God)* ..... 412-241-1372
Parish Office Fax ..... 412-271-2335
Religious Education Office ..... 412-271-5666
Music Ministry *(Madonna)* ..... EKAPD5965@gmail.com
Bp. Dattilo Social Hall ..... 412-271-3959
Madonna Website ..... www.madonnadelcastello.org
Madonna Email ..... madonnadelcastello1920@gmail.com
Word of God Email ..... wordofgod1994@verizon.net
Church Street Convent ..... 412-271-3346
Parish Prayer Line ..... 412-804-8858

East Catholic School ..... 412-351-5403
2001 Ardmore B1vd., Pgh., PA 15221
Sr. Judith Stojhovic, RSM ..... *Principal*
School Website ..... www.eastcatholicschool.org

*A member of the East Catholic School Consortium*

**Bulletin Deadline Monday at Noon.**

The woman left her water jar and went into the town and said to the people, "Come see a man who told me everything I have done. Could he possibly be the Christ?" - Jn 4:28-29

Excerpts from the Lectionary for Mass ©2001, 1998, 1970 CCD.

## A NOTE FROM FATHER JOHN

**Your Parish Share Letter** is now available in the vestibule. Please pick up the letter of friends and family who can't attend Mass.

† † †

**Child Protective Services Law:** Report any acts of child abuse to Commonwealth of PA Hotline 1-800-932-0313.

**Diocesan Victim Assistance Hotline: 1-888-808-1235.** Diocesan website, www.diopitt.org, under "Protecting God's Children." Sessions available on-line.

**Diocesan Safe Environment Certification:** Contact Kelly James at the parish office.

### Readings for March 26, Fourth Sunday of Lent

**1st Reading:** 1 Samuel 16:1b, 6-7, 10-13a…As directed by God, Samuel anoints David as king, from among Jesse's eight sons.

**2nd Reading:** Ephesians 5:8-14…The Ephesians are told to live as children of light.

**Gospel Reading:** John 9:1-41…Jesus heals the man born blind, and later reveals to him that He is the Son of Man; the man believed and worshiped him.

**Question for reflection:** "...Man sees the appearance but the Lord looks into the heart."(1st reading) How can you get beyond appearances when dealing with others?

### WEEKLY MASS INTENTIONS

**Saturday Vigil - March 18**
4:00 PM For the People
6:00 PM Homer McCartney (Ladies of Charity)

**Third Sunday of Lent - March 19**
9:00 AM Marty & Mary Ida McDonough (Lisa McDonough)
11:00 AM Giuseppe Fiorillo (Nicola & Marie Candiello)

**Monday - March 20 - St. Joseph**
7:00 PM Raymond & Pauline Albani (Andrea & Scott Eicher)

**Tuesday - March 21**
9:30 AM Olympia Demase (Ladies of Charity)

**Wednesday - March 22**
8:00 AM Thomas Noonan (Susan Crowe)

**Thursday - March 23 - St. Turibius of Mogrovejo**
9:30 AM Theresa Brush (Tim & Carol Brush)

**Friday - March 24 - Bl. Oscar Romero**
8:00 AM Ted & Mary Stahurski (Karen & Michael Burke)

**Saturday - March 25 - Annunciation of the Lord**
9:30 AM Ann Rajakovich (Rita & Jim Hyland)

**Saturday Vigil - March 25**
4:00 PM Charles & Dolores Schano (Janice Schano)
6:00 PM Norman DeLuca (Wife & Family)

**Fourth Sunday of Lent - March 26**
9:00 AM For the People
11:00 AM Antonio Grieco Family (Olimpio & Pierina Grieco)

### THIS WEEK

**Saturday**
6:30 PM to 7:30 PM - Gift Shop & Library Open

**Sunday**
9:00 AM to 11:00 AM-Gift Shop & Library open
Used Book Sale - Parish Library

**Monday**
6:30 PM Word of God Choir Rehearsal -Word of God

**Tuesday**
7:00 PM Holy Hour - Madonna
Eucharistic Adoration & Benediction

**Wednesday**
7:00 PM Bible Study - Psalms

**Thursday**
1:30 PM Mass-Swissvale Hi Rise
Community Room, 1st Floor
7:00 PM Prayer & Praise Group - Madonna

**Friday**
12:00 PM Stations - Word of God
12:00 PM to 7:00 PM - Fish Fry - Madonna
7:00 PM Holy Hour - Madonna
Stations, Divine Mercy Chaplet, Benediction

**Saturday**
12:00 PM Reconciliation - Word of God Parish
6:30 PM to 7:30 PM - Gift Shop & Library Open

**Next Sunday - Collection-Home Missions; Food Drive for the Needy**
9:00 AM to 11:00 AM-Gift Shop & Library open
Used Book Sale-Library-Parish Center

## LOOK FOR THE LIGHTHOUSE MEDIA

The father of lies, the devil is very active during this time of Lent. He has many deceptions to use …….one is to focus on the false Trinity – me, myself and I – rather than on the Father, Son and Holy Spirit……it has been said "The devil does not care whether you think highly of yourself or poorly of yourself just so you focus on yourself and not on God." Don't let the evil one succeed in his temptations! Pray, fast and practice alms giving……..God has provided us a multitude of tools…and He is there to protect us!

**Please be sure to place your suggested donation in the money slot on the display.**

**Collection for Catholic Home, Black and Indian Missions is the weekend of March 25 & 26.** Please use the envelope provided in your weekly set. The Home Missions Appeal supports the Church in Appalachia, the Deep South, the Southwest and the Rocky Mountains. The Black and Indian Missions assists the evangelization of Black, American Indian, Eskimo and Aleute communities.

**Food Drive for the Needy of our parishes:** Please bring non-perishable items to church on the weekend of March 25 & 26th. At Madonna, place them in the designated area of Dattilo Hall; Word of God, place them on the designated table in the main vestibule. Place monetary donations for Easter Hams in an envelope marked "Easter Hams" and place in the collection basket or mail/deliver to the Parish Office by Tuesday, March 28th. If you know of any parishioners who are in need, please contact Deacon Ron at the Parish Office. Questions: (Madonna) contact Leanna or Mark Ballog, 412.823.8398; (Word of God) contact Patty Byrnes 412.271.4830.

**Fraternity of Priests Healing Mass-Wed., March 22, 7:00p.m.,** St. Richard, Gibsonia. For more info. call 724-444-1971.

**MASS-Thurs., March 23, 1:30p.m.,** Swissvale Towers, 1826 Monongahela Ave., Community Room, 1st Floor.

**MASS FOR HEALING-Thurs., March 23, 8:00 p.m.,** Christ the King Chapel, Franciscan University, Steubenville, OH. Father Kiel will offer a Mass for healing. For more information call 740-284-5893.

**40 Days for Life:** Began on Ash Wednesday and ends on Sunday, April 9th. Our parishes are invited to unite with Christian churches in the Pittsburgh area to pray and fast to end abortion. Our parishes will also stand in peaceful prayer vigil at the Planned Parenthood abortion clinic 933 Liberty Ave. **Sat., April 8th, 11:00a.m.- 3:00p.m.**. Info. packets with sign up forms are available in the literature racks and tables. Please sign up for one or more hours. If you cannot join us physically, please support us with your prayers. You may also participate on any day between now and April 9th. Questions: Deacon Ron, parish office or 40daysforlifepittsburgh.com.

**PRAYER AND PRAISE GROUP** meets at 7:00p.m. the 2nd & 4th Thursdays each month at Madonna**.** For info. call Mike Matthysse, 412-241-1254.

**HOMEBOUND:** Please contact the parish office so we can bring you Holy Communion on a regular basis. If you have homebound parishioners who are neighbors, please let us know.

**ON MISSION FOR THE CHURCH ALIVE! Bringing Others to Jesus** is what Bishop Zubik has been saying that On Mission for The Church Alive! Is all about. In today's Gospel, the woman at the well was able to bring her entire town to Jesus. She had a mission, and so do we. How can we show the love of Jesus to others and bring Jesus to them so that they might go and do likewise? Be inspired in your call to bring others to Jesus at Visit OnMissionChurchAlive.org.

**ECUMENICAL LENTEN SERIES-Wed., March 22nd, 7:00 p.m.** Pastor Chris Ansell will preach at the Swissvale Presbyterian Church, 1825 Monongahela Ave. The series will continue every Wednesday in Lent in a different church. A free will offering will be taken up for the Swissvale Community Emergency Fund.

**St. Vincent de Paul Sarris Candy Fundraiser:** Distribution will be April 1st & 2nd after weekend Masses in Dattilo Hall at Madonna and in the vestibule at Word of God.

**Taize Prayer Service-Sun., March 19, 8:00 p.m.,** St. Paul Cathedral, 108 N. Dithridge St., Oakland. Join Bishop Zubik for a prayer service for college students and young adults. Seeking the intercession and protection of St. Joseph, we are guided by the words of Pope Francis who prays that we "build bridges of friendship and make visible the love with which God loves us." For info. contact Gary Roney at groney@diopitt.org.

**Teaching Mass at St. Maurice Parish:** "Why do we make the sign of the Cross at the beginning of Mass?" "What's with all those prayers the priest says before Communion?" "Did the apostles read from the Bible at the Last Supper? Why do we read from it every week?" If you don't know the answers to these questions about the Mass, or have others, then come to the Teaching Mass to learn more about the prayer that is "source and summit" of our faith. Join us at St. Maurice Parish, 2001 Ardmore Blvd., Forest Hills, PA 15221, for this special Mass **Sun., April 2, 6:00p.m.** The Mass will count as your regular Sunday obligation.

**Lenten Events – St. John Fisher Church,** 33 Lewin Lane, Churchill, PA 15235. Lenten Taizé Prayer Service-Mon., April 3, 7:00 p.m. This event is organized by the National Pastoral Musicians local chapter in the Diocese of Pittsburgh. If you have never experienced a Taizé Prayer Service, you may find this experience one that will speak directly to your heart. All are welcome. The University of Pittsburgh Men's Glee Club-Good Friday, April 14, 7:30 p.m. with a repertoire of inspiring music. For more information call 412-241-4722.

**Seven Church Walk-Holy Thurs., April 13th**, approximately 8:15 p.m. Bus leaves from Madonna Locust Street exit. Itinerary to be announced. Bus space is limited and reservations required. Contact the Word of God Parish Office, 412.241.1372. Free will offering for the bus driver accepted.

# Madonna del Castello

The Altar Candles are in memory of FRANK FUSCO from Mary Iannucci.

PSP Donation in memory of FRANK FUSCO from Wife, Daughter & Grandson.

### MADONNA COLLECTIONS

March 12 .....$2,799.00
Utilities…….....$936.00

**ANNUAL FISH FRY held Fridays during Lent** (except

Good Friday) in Dattilo Hall, Noon-7:00p.m. Baked or fried cod dinners, eggplant, shrimp basket, sandwiches, haluski, macaroni & cheese, pasta e fagiole, applesauce, bread/butter & beverages available; also children's menu & take-out orders. Deliveries made within a reasonable distance until 2:00 p.m. **We are asking for donations of butter or margarine (no spread), noodles, cabbage, onions, sugar, flour, coffee, lemon blend, or cash donation would be appreciated.** Drop items off at social hall before or after all weekend Masses or call LoisPetrarca, 412-646-2344 or Mary Iannucci, 412-371-4912. **Baked goods needed for Lenten Fridays**—call Mary Iannucci. We appreciate the help we get every year from our wonderful volunteers, but need more volunteers to help with this year's Fish Fry—setting up, cooking, serving, drivers to deliver take-out orders & for clean up—sign up sheets in Dattilo Hall.

Anyone who would like to have any or all of the gifts celebrated in memory of or tribute to a loved one(s) at **Madonna del Castello Parish,** should complete the form below, place information and money in a plain envelope and deposit the sealed envelope in the collection basket, mail it to the parish office or deposit in the mail slot.

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**Madonna del Castello Memorial/Living Tribute Request**

I would like to offer:

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Altar Flowers | ($50) _____ | Altar Candles | ($10) |
| Altar Bread | ($25) _____ | Tabernacle Lamp | ($10) |
| Altar Wine | ($25) _____ | Complete Offering | ($120) |

In Memory of _____

In Tribute to _____

From_____

Phone_____

### PRO LIFE CORNER

Ponder the following thought in relation to abortion: Silence in the face of evil is itself evil: God will not hold us guiltless. Not to speak is to speak. Not to act is to act. To be silent about abortion and euthanasia is a sin of omission. Join pro-life today.

# WORD OF GOD

**THROUGHOUT THIS WEEK IN WORD OF GOD PARISH LITURGIES,** we will use the Altar Wine & Sanctuary Lamp in memory of **Marge Rengers** from Joseph & Patricia Curran; Altar Candles in memory of **Larry & Jim Gavin** from the Gavin Family.

**PSP Donations:** In memory of **Helen Burg** from Jeff & Denise Crane, Diana Cravotta, Pauline Musar and Susan Rush.

**IN YOUR CHARITY,** please pray for the soul of **Ann R. Nieser** who was buried recently from Word of God Parish. May her soul rest in peace with Christ.

### WORD OF GOD COLLECTIONS

March 12……..... .$6,066.00
Utilities .....$745.00

**Parish Library and Canterbury Corner Gift Shop:** Visit the Gift Shop now for cards and gifts for **RCIA, Easter, Confirmation, and First Holy Communion**!

**Now showing at the Parish Library!**—New DVD series by Bishop Robert Barron—***Catholicism: the Pivotal Players***. Barron uses beautiful music, art, architecture, and venues from around the world to powerfully present the lives of six of the Catholic Church's most influential religious and historical people. **Catherine of Siena** will be shown on March 19. Upcoming programs: John Henry Newman (March 26), G.K. Chesterton (April 2), and Michelangelo (April 9). Come to the Parish Library and watch the segments (50-60 mins.) on the **Sundays of Lent from 10:00-11:00a.m**.

**Parish Library Used Book Sale**: **Saturday, March 18 (6:30 -7:30p.m.) and Sunday, March 19 (9:00-11:00a.m.) with the same hours the following weekend, March 25/26**. There is a great selection of novels, books on religion and spirituality, cookbooks, history, biographies, non-fiction, and more.

**We're looking for creative writers!** During the month of **April** the Library will present a display of **religious poetry** that will include poems by parishioners. Anyone interested in submitting poetry for the display should contact Karen at goldbachkm@verizon.net.

**MEMORIAL OFFERING:** Any or all of the gifts at **Word of God Parish** can be celebrated in memory of a loved one(s). Please fill out the form below and drop it off at the parish office, send through the mail or put it in the collection basket. You may request a particular week. Dates requested will be scheduled on a first-come/first served basis.

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**WORD OF GOD PARISH MEMORIAL OFFERING REQUEST FORM**

I would like to offer:

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| ALTAR BREADS | $30_____ | SANCTUARY LAMP | $ 5 ____ |
| ALTAR WINE | $15_____ | COMPLETE OFFERING | $60____ |
| ALTAR CANDLES | $10_____ | | |

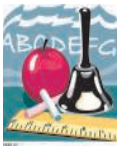
IN MEMORY OF_____

FROM_____

WEEK_____

PHONE_____

## EAST CATHOLIC SCHOOL



**School Walking Tours** are conducted during school hours. This will allow parents to observe the children in the classroom, learn about the programs, meet our teachers and find out more about the East Catholic School philosophy. Tours include classroom observations as well as a guided tour of the facility. To sign up for a tour contact the school office 8:30a.m.-2:00p.m. at 412-351-5403.

**Informal Open House-Sun., March 19, 1:30p.m.-3:00p.m.,** in Keane Hall (school cafeteria). Walking tours of the school will be available. Tour our beautiful campus and discover the wonderful educational opportunities available to your child. Meet parents, students, teachers and administration and see firsthand how "East Catholic School" offers a rich curriculum that fosters a faith-filled, value-centered, quality education for your child in a safe and caring environment that sets us apart. Admission information will be available including details about tuition, financial aid, after school care, and extra-curricular activities.

**Open House at La Roche College-Sat., April 8, 9:00a.m.-2:00p.m.** High school sophomores, juniors and seniors are invited, and can explore more than 50 career-focused majors with faculty, staff and current students. They'll also learn more about the admissions process, financial aid and the college's merit-based scholarships, based on SAT/ACT and GPA, which make La Roche one of the most affordable private colleges in Western Pennsylvania. Another feature is the nearly-free Study Abroad+Study USA program, included in the tuition structure. Visitors will tour the buildings and grounds and enjoy a complimentary lunch. Event begins in the Kerr Fitness Center with light refreshments and select faculty table discussions. Register online at laroche.edu. (Groups can register by calling 800-838-4LRC or 412-536-1272.) Questions? admissions@LaRoche.edu or 412-536-1272.

**St. Anselm All Classes Reunion-Sat., Nov. 11:** There will be an organizational meeting **Mon., March 20, 7:30 p.m.** at Madonna in Dattilo Hall. For more info. contact Rita Hyland, 412-241-0204.

**Learn About Marriage Annulments:** Free workshop with Jay Conzemius, JCL, judge and moderator of the Diocesan Tribunal. Topics include: theology of marriage, ministry of the tribunal, marriage annulment types, Pope Francis' changes to the marriage law, and an overview of the annulment process. No reservations required, but RSVP at AnnulmentsIntake@diopitt.org or call 412-456.3033. Presentations will start at 7:00p.m.-St. Paul Cathedral, Oakland-March 28 & St. Bernadette, Monroeville-April 5. All are welcome.

**RETROUVAILLE - SAVE OUR MARRIAGE:** This program has helped countless couples experiencing marital difficulty at all levels including disillusionment and deep misery. **The next Weekend begins March 31.** Please call for confidential information at 412-277-3434 or see http://www.retrouvailleofpittsburghinc.org/

**CRAFT FAIR & FLEA MARKET-Sat., April 8, 8:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m.,** Swissvale Presbyterian Church, 1825 Monongahela Ave., Swissvale. Tables are $12. For more information and to register for a table call 412-351-0900 or email thesower@verizon.net.

## GOOD FRIDAY

Join us for a Meager Meal to help us make the Lenten Pilgrimage together. Meager Meal is a light supper of homemade soup and bread, a simple inspiration to help us understand how the poor live.

PLACE: Word of God Parish
FOOD for the Soul—12 Noon Stations

12:30 p.m.—Celebration of the Passion of the Lord
Divine Mercy Novena

FOOD for the Body—Word of God Social Hall
3:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m.—Soup, Bread and Fellowship
(Good will offering benefits Ladies of Charity work for the poor.)

**Donations Requested to Help Local Families who are Homeless:** Teddy Kondrich, a Word of God parishioner and altar server, is completing his Eagle Scout project by renovating old classrooms at The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul (on Pittsburgh's Northside) to provide temporary shelter for families who are homeless. Teddy is seeking donations to help furnish the rooms and is looking for the following items: couches; lounge/reclining chairs; bookcases; dressers; night stands; lamps; books, DVDs, and videos appropriate for children & young adults. To respect the dignity of the families being served - donated items must be in **good shape** (not torn, damaged, missing hardware, stained, or covered with pet hair). If you would not give the item to a close friend or family member, it is probably not appropriate for this project. Call or email Teddy at 412.216.9972; ***tkondrich1@hotmail.com*** to arrange for a pick-up or drop-off.

Growing in FAITH™

Discovering **hope** and **joy** in the Catholic faith. 2017 Special Lent Edition

Madonna del Castello and Word of God Parishes

Rev. John Lynam, Pastor

## One Minute Meditations

### Not the old life

When Jesus rose from the dead, he didn't just resume his old life; he was given a new and glorious life. That is what awaits all those who follow him.

### Ashes to ashes ...

To ancient Jews, wearing sackcloth and sitting in ashes showed repentance and humility, and acted as a penance. Today, wearing the ashes of Ash Wednesday is meant to show our repentance but also acts as a witness of our faith. Take the opportunity to explain the practice when others ask why you wear the ashes.

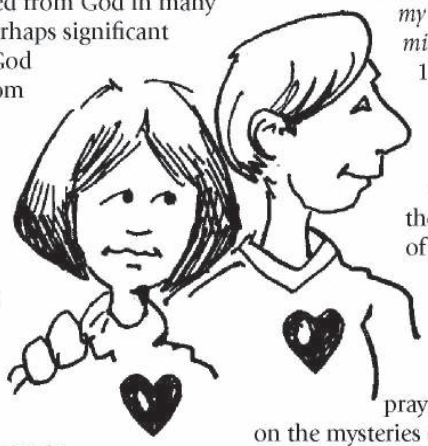
### A prayer for Lent

"God of all mercy and steadfast love, we do not always live the way you want us to. Forgive us. Help us during this season of Lent to examine how we can be more faithful followers of Jesus Christ, your son. Guide us in our pilgrimage of discipleship. May our words and actions truly reflect your will for us. Amen."

*The Essential Catholic Prayer Book*, Liguori Publications.

# Three ways to return to God during Lent

Why do we begin the holy season of Lent with ashes on our foreheads – a sign of repentance? Throughout the year we have turned from God in many small ways and perhaps significant ones, too. While God respects the freedom he has given us as his children, he urges us to come back to him to reconcile. Our wise Father knows that it's the only way we can be truly happy.



The Church has identified three tools we can use to make our Lenten journey back to God more effective: prayer, fasting and almsgiving. These tools will help us to clear the static in our connection to God and help us take our places as his true children.

## Prayer

*"... 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"* (Matthew 6:6)

**Conversational prayer**. All relationships need nurturing — even our relationship with God. It is in prayer that we can confide our deepest desires, hurts, and needs. It is in prayer that we discern God's voice. Especially during Lent, make time every day to talk to God and grow in love with him. Remember, he finds everything about you interesting.

**Community prayer**. *"For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them"* (Matthew 18:20). Praying in a group not only brings God into your circle, it also makes members aware of the needs and concerns of others who may be outside the circle.

**The Rosary prayer.** The Rosary is a time-honored way to pray to Jesus and to focus on the mysteries of his life, death, and Resurrection. This year why not make the Rosary your Lenten prayer? If time is limited, pray a decade at a time and watch them add up by the end of the day. Consider offering a special Rosary for the souls in Purgatory or for an increase in vocations to the priesthood and consecrated life.

**The Stations of the Cross prayers**. Walking the Stations of the Cross is a powerful way to pray during Lent. If your parish doesn't offer a Stations of the Cross prayer service as a community, take a few moments each week to stop and meditate at each of the Stations displayed in your church. Reflect on Jesus' journey from judgment to burial.

**Private Eucharistic prayer.** Praying before the Eucharist is one of the most sacred places to pray. Consider arriving for Mass early to spend extra time in prayer before the tabernacle.

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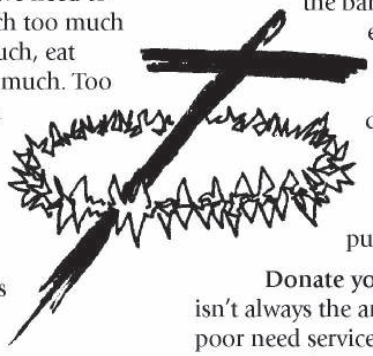
## Fasting

*"… 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"* (Matthew 6:17-18).

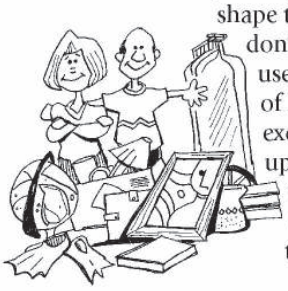
**Fasting from food**. Voluntary fasting from food strengthens our skill of self denial. It is difficult and can be uncomfortable but it reminds us of Jesus' suffering. Plus, fasting leaves an open space we can fill with God's spirit. Prayerful fasting can increase our hunger and thirst for God.

**Fasting from bad habits**. We all have areas in our lives we need to change. Maybe we watch too much television, shop too much, eat too much or drink too much. Too much of anything is an unhealthy distraction from our relationship with God and throws our lives out of balance. By fasting, we deny our own wants and open up space for what God wants. Plus, we become less wrapped up in ourselves and instead have the opportunity to focus on the needs of others.



**Fasting from luxury.** For many of us, putting food on the table or buying new clothing when we need it is not a huge concern. That's not true for many people in our own communities who need our help to get even the basics. To understand what that is like, research an impoverished nation to see what people there eat in a typical day. Then spend a day eating the same foods in the same quantities.

**Fasting from excess.** Many of us have clothing, books, toys, or even household items in perfectly good shape that we don't need or use. Instead of letting the excess build up, donate what you don't use to a local charity. Then try to go the entire season of Lent without buying anything new that isn't a necessity.



## Almsgiving

*"… 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"* (Matthew 6:3-4)

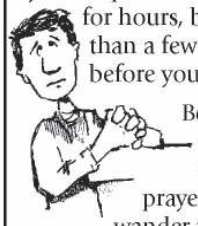
**"Gimme 5."** Many organizations like Catholic Relief Services or Catholic Charities can do a great deal of good with just $5. During Lent, whenever you have a $5 bill, consider putting it into a jar. This includes $5 bills you receive in change at the grocery store, the bank, the gas station, or even if you find one in your pocket. Add it to the jar. At Easter, donate what you've collected to a relief organization and know that it will be put to great use.

**Donate your labor**. Money isn't always the answer. Many of the poor need services they can't afford. If you can paint, cook, or do carpentry, donate some time to assist an agency or person in need. Your parish or diocese may already have just such a ministry that you can join.

**Offer mercy.** Do one or more of the Corporal Works of Mercy: feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked, shelter the homeless, visit the sick, visit the imprisoned, and bury the dead. Or, consider the Spiritual Works of Mercy: admonish the sinner, instruct the ignorant, counsel the doubtful, bear wrongs patiently, forgive injuries, and pray for the living and the dead.

**Open their eyes**. During Lent, you can help a child to read, an adult to succeed in his job, a senior maintain her independence — just by donating your old eyeglasses. Lions Clubs International has a nationwide program to recycle eyeglasses and provide sight to low-income people who need it. To find a recycling center in your area, call the Lions Clubs at 630-571-5466 or visit the website: www.lionsclubs.org.

## Q & A — I want to pray more, especially during Lent, but it's hard to concentrate. What can I do?



Ever wonder how you can be riveted by a cheap novel or mindless TV show for hours, but spend no more than a few minutes in prayer before your mind wanders?

Believe it or not, distractions can be useful in enriching prayer life. Our minds wander to those things that are really important to us. We might as well admit to them and make them a part of our prayer.

For example, if your mind wanders while praying, bring it back to the point of your prayer ... "Lord, thank you for the beautiful gift of my home and its comfort. Of course, I better clean out the gutters or the roof will leak all over the furniture. That would be bad, even if the furniture isn't as nice as my neighbor's. They have so much money. But forgive me Lord for feeling envy, and help me to be grateful for what I have. Also help me to show my neighbors the love of Christ, the only possession worth having." And so on.

The idea is to acknowledge the distraction and ask God's help in overcoming its source. Then use it as a tool to get back on track.

Think of prayer as a conversation between two people who love each other. So there is no one right way to pray. As in any loving relationship, it is most rewarding when you talk to your loved one as often as possible. Pope John Paul II said, "Pray any way you like, so long as you do pray." God is always ready to listen.

Remember, prayer is not a rigid routine we have to get right. It's a conversation with someone we love who loves us back.

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