

Growing in FAITH™

Discovering hope and joy in the Catholic faith.

February 2023

St Mark Church - St James Church

Emporium - Driftwood Pennsylvania

One Minute Meditations

Flee temptation

Christians are meant for Heaven.

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



Serve without complaint

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

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



Take steps to share your faith during Lent

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

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

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

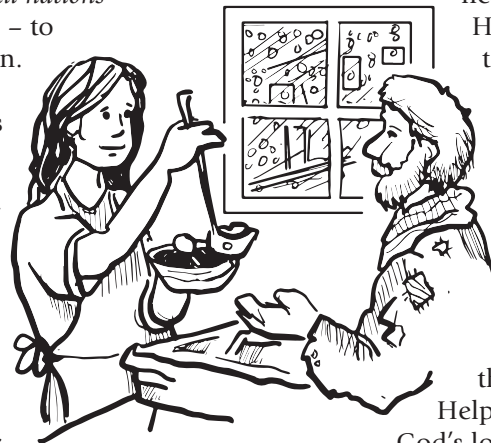
Bring Christ out into the world. Jesus asked that we care for the poor and needy, thus acting as

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

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

Help others know that God's love is personal and He has a specific plan for each of us.

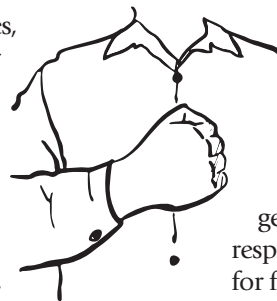
Invite. Some people will be ready to "come and see," so consider inviting seekers to Mass. Others might be ready to "take up and read." Share your favorite inspirational reading. If you need other suggestions, ask your pastor or favorite religious.



Why Do Catholics Do That?

Why do Catholics strike their chests?

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



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

Lent leads us back to God

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

"Return to me with your whole heart." Throughout the year, sin creeps into our daily lives almost without our noticing. A bad habit such as using bad language or gossiping can keep



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

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

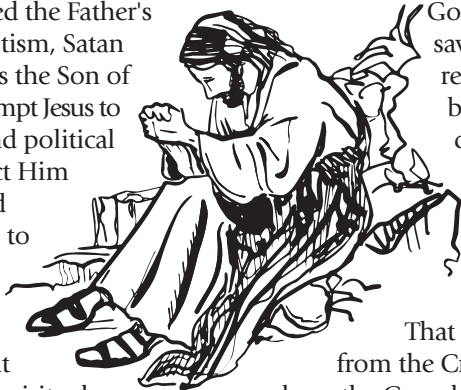
"Gather the people, notify the congregation." Become more active in your parish to build it up. Consider attending Mass more often than just once a week.

from Scripture

Matthew 4:1-11, Victory in the wilderness

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

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



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

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

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

Q & A What's a simple way to explain the Faith, if asked?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



Feasts & Celebrations

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

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

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

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

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

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



Our Mission

To provide practical ideas that promote faithful Catholic living.

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(Unless noted Bible quotes and references are from the Revised Standard Version and the New American Bible)