

Growing in FAITH™

Discovering hope and joy in the Catholic faith.

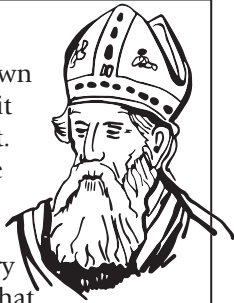
February 2020

Gathered in Christ's Love
Fr. Richard Piontkowski, Pastor

One Minute Meditations

St. Blaise

Not much is known about his life, but it is certain that St. Blaise was the bishop of Sebaste in fourth-century Turkey, and that he was arrested for being a Christian. On his way to jail, he healed a young boy who was choking on a fish bone. According to one legend, the boy's mother also gave St. Blaise two candles in gratitude. Refusing to deny his faith, the bishop was tortured and martyred by the local governor.



Lenten Obligations

Catholics between the ages of 18 and 59 are obliged to fast on Ash Wednesday (February 26th) and Good Friday (April 10th). In addition, all Catholics 14 years old and older must abstain from meat on Ash Wednesday, Good Friday and all the Fridays of Lent.

The U. S. bishops define fasting as eating one full meal. Some food (not equaling another full meal) is permitted as necessary to maintain strength.



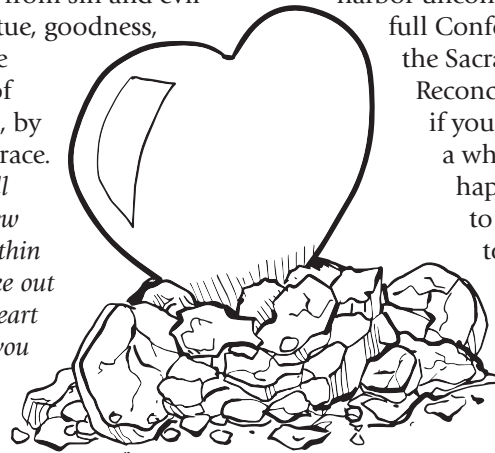
Find your new heart during Lent

The root of the word "convert" means to "change," or "transform." Think of turning from sin and evil toward grace, virtue, goodness, and God. It is the transformation of the human heart, by an act of God's grace. *"A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will take out of your flesh the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh"* (Ezekiel 36:26).

A new heart. God desires our conversion more than we ever could. With the perfect heart of a Father, he pursues and draws us to himself. Conversion begins by offering him our whole heart so he can remake it as his own.

Break the heart of stone. There can be no healing or conversion when we harbor unconfessed sin. Make a full Confession to a priest in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Don't worry if you have been away for a while. The priest will be happy to guide you and to welcome you back to God's friendship.

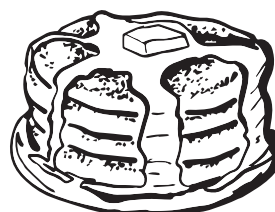
A new spirit. When we have a soft and tender heart of flesh, we are able to receive God's holy will. Our new spirit requires renewal every day. Daily prayer, frequent Confession, and regular reception of the Holy Eucharist will keep our hearts filled with God's love.



Why Do Catholics Do That?

Why do Catholics call Fat Tuesday "Shrove" Tuesday?

Commonly known as Fat Tuesday or Mardi Gras, the Tuesday before Ash Wednesday has been traditionally spent feasting (especially on pancakes). It is also called "Shrove Tuesday," recalling the tradition of going to Confession. The



word "shrove" comes from "shrive" — the English word for confessing one's sins and receiving absolution.

In fact, there was a custom of churches ringing the "shriving bell" on this day. The goal was to start Lent with a clean soul and a repentant spirit.

Choose Heaven over Earth

Life on Earth lasts but a moment compared to our eternal life, yet we often let earthly concerns take priority over preparing for Heaven. If we put Heaven first, however, God will take care of everything else.

What is important to you? Make a list of what you do each day, from morning to bedtime. The activities that absorb most of your time are your real priorities. If it isn't in God's service, you need a change.



How do you make decisions? Do you look to friends or coworkers for advice? Or do you turn to prayer and Scripture for guidance? Resolve to take your eyes off of the world and place them on Christ. If we base all choices and decisions on God, we will never choose wrong.

Do you trust God to make you happy? *"For I know well the plans I have in mind for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare, not for woe! Plans to give you a future full of hope"* (Jeremiah 29:11).

from Scripture

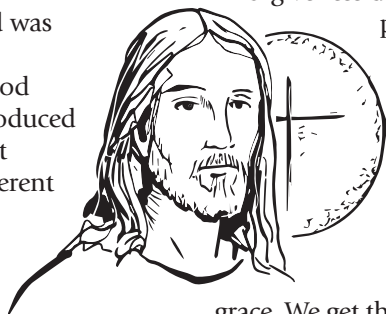
Matthew 5:38-48, Forgive and pray

The ancient concept of justice – *"an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth"* – is from Exodus 21:24, Leviticus 24:20 and Deuteronomy 19:21, and was originally meant to limit violence and prevent blood feuds. Instead, Jesus introduced a new approach, one that would bring about a different kind of justice.

Jesus directed his followers and us to *"be perfect,"* which includes being merciful. God requires our treatment of others – enemies included – to mirror his treatment of his enemies. As Christians, we are to imitate Christ, who forgave his executioners from the

Cross: *"Father, forgive them, they know not what they do"* (Luke 23:34).

Forgiveness doesn't mean letting the person get away with their offense. Forgiveness means letting go of our anger at the offender and entrusting the situation to God's care. We can't do this alone: we rely on God's grace. We get this from the Holy Spirit and also from receiving the Eucharist at Mass. By receiving the Eucharist, we are nourished by the Body and Blood of Christ, who strengthens us to lead a more perfect life.



Q & A How can I fit more prayer into my busy day?

"Pray constantly" sounds challenging but it doesn't have to be. Actually, busy days offer many great opportunities for prayer if we know where to look.

Consider these suggestions:
Pray throughout the day. Consider praying the Rosary on the way to work, saying grace before lunch, offering a quick *"I love you,"* or praying for guidance for important decisions. Even job-related tasks can become *"prayers in action."*

Fifteen minutes a day. Good friends know text messages can't replace being together. It's the same with God. He loves us and wants our company. Aim for 10-15 minutes of daily prayer. Thank God for your blessings, meditate on Scripture, offer him your day, or simply enjoy his company.

It's the love that counts. For her love and humility, Jesus commended a poor but generous widow for her small donation (Mark 12:43-44). Sometimes, we have little time or energy for *"good prayer."* Remember, what pleases God is not the elegance or number of our prayers, but the love with which we offer them.

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)

Feasts & Celebrations

Feb. 2 – Presentation of the Lord. In accordance with the Law of Moses, Mary and Joseph brought Jesus to the Temple forty days after his birth, and Simeon praised God for revealing the long-awaited Savior.

Feb. 2 – St. Catherine of Ricci (1590). St. Catherine was born to a prominent banker. Against her father's wishes, she joined the Dominicans when she was twelve. She is known for her visions of the Lord's Passion, which she experienced every Friday.

Feb. 17 – The Seven Holy Founders

(13th century). Seven Italian noblemen who withdrew from the immorality of the times to live in prayer, simplicity and penance. Their order, the Servants of Mary, was later approved by the Holy See in 1304.

Feb. 26 – Ash Wednesday. First day of Lent. Ashes from burnt palms are placed on the forehead as a sign of penance. Ash Wednesday is a day of abstinence from meat and fasting – one regular meal and two smaller meals that together don't equal a full meal.

