

LENT by the Numbers

4

Times “I am the Lord” appears in the Feb. 23 reading from Leviticus where the Lord is speaking to Moses about various laws of conduct. [Lv 19:1-2, 11-18]

10

Middle school actors, ages 11-13, are performing the shadow Stations of the Cross at St. Matthew Church in Winder. The young thespians perform the 14 stations in costume behind a large screen, where they are projected as silhouetted images before the congregation.

130

Years between the birth of Saint Katharine Drexel and her beatification by Pope John Paul II. [Feast Day, March 3]

3

Days it took Jonah to go through the city of Nineveh announcing the message of the Lord as written in the Feb. 25 reading from the Book of Jonah. [Jon 3:1-10]

86

Age of St. Polycarp, the second century Bishop of Smyrna (an archdiocese in Asia Minor), at the time of his martyrdom. [Feast Day, Feb. 23]

2,262

Sandwiches distributed to those in need from the parish hall at the Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, Atlanta, in the first two weeks of February.



LENT

From Page 9

the expulsion from the Garden and introduction into the desert of self-regard and fear.

Quote: God doesn't stay in the Garden, waiting for us to come back; rather, he ventures into our fear and dysfunction and, on our behalf, rolls back the power of sin.

First Friday of Lent, day 3: "The Great Lie"

Our God is a living God, and God wants us to share his life. This is why “God planted a garden in Eden ... and he placed there the man he had formed.”

In Eden he gave us near total freedom as a sign of his good will in our regard and his desire that we fulfill ourselves in every direction. Politics, art, science, literature, philosophy, music, sports, entertainment—all that conduces to human flourishing is desired by God.

Enter the serpent. Like us, the serpent is a creature of God. He is totally dependent on God for his life. He is not some sort of co-equal rival to God. The fact is the Church has always taught that evil is parasitic on the good, not a substantive opponent.

Nevertheless, he is a wily opponent. He forces Eve to wonder about the prohibition: “Did God really tell you not to eat from any of the trees in the garden?” When she clarifies, he says, “You certainly will not die! God knows well that the moment you eat of it you will be like gods knowing good and evil.”

This is the great temptation and the great lie. The serpent places in the minds of Adam and

SIGN UP

Father Bob Barron will be offering daily email reflections throughout the season of Lent. Each day from Ash Wednesday (February 18) through Easter Sunday (April 5), Father Barron will send you a short email with an uplifting spiritual reflection. The reflections will be available in both English and Spanish.

Those interested can sign up at LentReflections.com.

Eve the conviction that unless and until they determine the meaning and purpose of their lives, they will not be free. To put it in modern terms, their lives will not be lived to the fullest.

But the knowledge of good and evil is the godlike prerogative to set the agenda for one's life, to determine the difference between right and wrong. And this belongs to God alone. Just as he breathed life and being into us, so he breathes moral and spiritual purpose into us.

When we convince ourselves that we live on our own terms and that we choose on our own terms, we cease to be really free and really alive.

When Adam and Eve grasped at this knowledge, they were expelled from the garden. Not because God is vindictive, but because it is the natural consequence of making oneself into God. When we grasp at divinity, whatever life we have dries up. We become small souls, locked in the prison of our egotism, victims of the Great Lie.

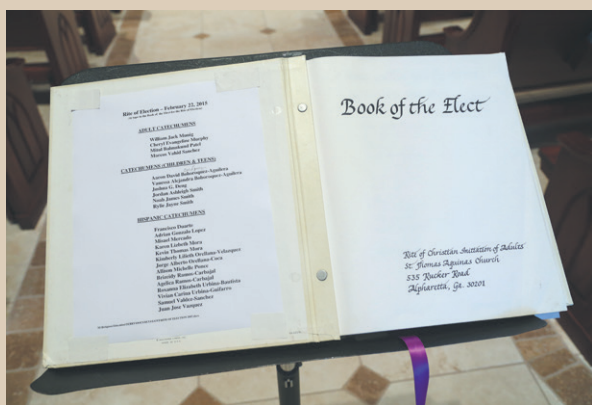
Quote: God comes that we might have life and have it to the full.

Lenten regulations

The following fasting and abstinence regulations are observed throughout Lent:

- Abstinence from meat is observed on Ash Wednesday (Feb. 18), Good Friday (April 3) and all the Fridays of Lent by all Catholics 14 years of age and older.
- Fasting is observed on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday by all Catholics who are 18 years of age but not yet 59 years of age. Those bound by this rule may take only one full meal. Two smaller meals are permitted as necessary to maintain strength according to one's needs, but eating solid foods between meals is not permitted.
- Those who are sick, pregnant, or nursing, or whose health would adversely be affected by fasting or abstinence, should not consider themselves bound by these norms.
- During the season of Lent, all Catholics are called to embrace penances and to perform works of charity that reflect a deep desire for conversion of heart. Also they are called to pray fervently for those Catechumens and Candidates who will celebrate the Easter Sacraments with the Church this year. May this Lent lead all to a deeper union in Christ with one another.

LENT by the Numbers



1,956

Sum total of catechumens and candidates entering the Catholic Church of the Atlanta Archdiocese this coming Easter.

20

Pieces of silver Joseph was sold for to the Ishmaelites as written in the March 6 Old Testament reading from Genesis. **[Gn 37:3-4, 12-13, 17-28]**

170+

Countries and regions where the World Day of Prayer, an international movement of Christian women across different traditions, is observed as an annual day of prayer on the first Friday of March.



38

Years the man, cured on a sabbath by Jesus at the Bethesda pool in Jerusalem, had been afflicted with illness. This incident unfolds in John's Gospel on March 17. **[Jn 5:1-16]**

7

Washes prescribed in the waters of the Jordan by the prophet Elisha to Naaman to be cured of his leprosy as told in the March 9 reading from the Second Book of Kings. **[2 Kngs 5:1-15]**

1858

Founding year of the Hibernian Benevolent Society of Atlanta and the first Atlanta St. Patrick's Day Parade. The Society, one of the sponsors of the 2015 parade, also sponsors the annual St. Patrick's Day Mass, which is currently held at the Cathedral of Christ the King.



During Lent, pope offers handy tips to prepare for confession

BY CAROL GLATZ
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—As Catholics are encouraged to make going to confession a significant part of their lives during Lent, Pope Francis offered some quick tips to help people prepare for the sacrament of penance.

"After a brief explanation of why people should go to confession—"because we are all sinners"—the pope listed 30 key questions to reflect on as part of making an examination of conscience and being able to "confess well."

The guide is part of a 28-page booklet in Italian released by the Vatican publishing house. Pope Francis had 50,000 free copies distributed to people attending his Angelus address Feb. 22, the first Sunday of Lent.

Titled "Safeguard your heart," the booklet is meant to help the faithful become "courageous" and prepared to battle against evil and choose the good.

The booklet contains quick introductions to Catholic basics: it has the text of the Creed, a list of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, the Ten Commandments and the Beatitudes. It explains the seven sacraments and includes Pope Francis' explanation of "lectio divina," a prayerful way of reading Scripture in order to better hear "what the Lord wants to tell us in his word and to let us be transformed by his Spirit."

The booklet's title is based on a line from one of the pope's morning Mass homilies in which he said Christians need to guard and protect their hearts, "just as you protect your home—with a lock."

"How often do bad thoughts, bad intentions, jealousy, envy enter?" he asked. "Who opened the door? How did those things get in?"

The Oct. 10, 2014, homily, which is excerpted in the booklet, said the best way to guard one's heart is with the daily practice of an "examination of conscience," in which one quietly reviews what bad things one has done and what good things one has failed to do for God, one's neighbor and oneself.

Some key questions for penance

- Do I only turn to God when I'm in need?
- Do I attend Mass on Sundays and holy days of obligation?
- Do I begin and end the day with prayer?
- Am I embarrassed to show that I am a Christian?
- Do I rebel against God's plan?
- Am I envious, hot-tempered, biased?
- Am I honest and fair with everyone or do I fuel the "throw away culture?"
- In my marital and family relations, do I uphold morality as taught in the Gospels?
- Do I honor and respect my parents?
- Have I refused newly conceived life? Have I snuffed out the gift of life? Have I helped do so?
- Do I respect the environment?
- Am I part worldly and part believer?
- Do I overdo it with eating, drinking, smoking and amusements?
- Am I overly concerned about my physical well-being, my possessions?
- How do I use my time? Am I lazy?
- Do I want to be served?
- Do I dream of revenge, hold grudges?
- Am I meek, humble and a builder of peace?

Catholics should go to confession, the pope said, because everyone needs forgiveness for their sins, for the ways "we think and act contrary to the Gospel."

"Whoever says he is without sin is a liar or is blind," he wrote.

Confession is meant to be a sincere moment of conversion, an occasion to demonstrate trust in God's willingness to forgive his children and to help them back on the path of following Jesus, Pope Francis wrote.

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217

Consecutive Saturdays since Jan. 22, 2011 the Feed the Hungry Ministry, originating out of St. Thomas the Apostle Church, Smyrna, has served the hungry and needy along a 1.5-mile stretch of Hollowell Parkway in Atlanta.



25

Years the Spanish-born St. Turibius served as the archbishop of Lima, Peru. He is the patron saint of Latin American bishops. **[Fest Day, March 23]**

9

Time in the morning when Jesus was crucified as indicated in Mark's Gospel on March 29. **[Mark 14:1-15:47]**

172

People from six different churches committed to daily Lenten prayer vigils, 12 hours a day, seven days a week, in front of an abortion clinic on Alpharetta Highway for the Roswell 40 Days for Life campaign.



151

Pints of blood collected during a quarterly Ed Oudt Memorial Blood Drive at Church of the Transfiguration, Marietta, March 9.



1,287

Average number of meals served during each of the six Friday fish fries at All Saints Church, Dunwoody. With the help of over 200 volunteers, a complete meal was served to a guest every 6.29 seconds during the first hour of each fish fry. Over 75,000 meals have been served at All Saints' fish fries since 2005.

Time for a change: Holy years proclaimed to encourage spiritual renewal

BY CAROL GLATZ
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—A holy year as a time of spiritual renewal has its biblical roots in the jubilees observed by the Jewish people at 50-year intervals, when debts were pardoned and slaves were freed.

The term “jubilee” itself comes from the Hebrew word “yobel,” meaning a ram’s horn, which was used to make the trumpet that signaled the beginning of this time of forgiveness.

For the Catholic Church, a holy year remains a time of great spiritual significance, and emphasis is placed on the examination of conscience and conversion, the forgiveness of sins, reconciliation, concrete acts of solidarity and initiatives to restore justice.

The jubilee is called a holy year because it aims to encourage holiness, strengthen faith in Christ and inspire greater communion within the church and society.

The first Holy Year was proclaimed by Pope Boniface VIII in 1300, when thousands of Christians from throughout Europe came on pilgrimage to Rome. Among those who journeyed to the Eternal City for the first celebration was the Italian poet Dante Alighieri, who is commonly said to have found the inspiration for his “Divine Comedy” during that pilgrimage.

In the 15th century, Pope Paul II set a 25-year timetable for holy years, which has been the norm since, in order to allow each generation the possibility of experiencing at least one holy year.

As a way to stress the importance of forgiveness and renewing one’s relationship with God, plenary indulgences are offered during holy years. An indulgence—that is, the remission of temporal punishment for sins—is customarily granted to those who make a pilgrimage to Rome and fulfill certain other conditions: reception of the sacraments of penance and the Eucharist, visits and prayers for the intention of the pope and performing simple acts such as visiting the sick.

Those who do not make a pilgrimage to Rome can gain the same indulgence by receiving penance and the Eucharist and praying for the pope during a visit or a community celebration in a church designated by the local bishop.

The Holy Door, symbolizing the doorway of salvation, marks the “extraordinary” spiritual passage offered the faithful during a jubilee year. There are only seven Holy Doors: four at the major basilicas in Rome and one each in France, Spain and Canada.

On Christmas Eve 1999, St. John Paul II changed the traditional Holy Door ritual at St. Peter’s Basilica when he did not strike the wall sealing the door. Instead, he pushed open the Holy Door—the wall had been dismantled beforehand.

Bishop Piero Marini, then-master of papal liturgical ceremonies, said, “Elements of the old ritual which have become obsolete will be replaced by others which better express the biblical and liturgical significance of the Holy Door.”

When Pope Alexander VI opened the Holy Door on Christmas 1499, “he used a mason’s hammer, and the blows were not completely symbolic; the pope tried to break through part of the wall,” Bishop Marini said. For centuries, the opening ceremony included a long pause to allow masons to finish taking the wall down before the pope crossed the threshold.

In addition to an “ordinary” holy year set at 25-year intervals, occasionally a special jubilee is proclaimed to mark some outstanding event. The custom of these so-called “extraordinary” jubilees began in the 16th century, and they can vary in length from a few days to a year.

There have been 26 “ordinary” holy years so far, the last one being the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000. There were no jubilee celebrations in 1800 and 1850 because of political turmoil at the time.

There have been two extraordinary jubilees in the last century: 1933, proclaimed by Pope Pius XI to mark the 1,900th anniversary of Christ’s redemption, and 1983, proclaimed by St. John Paul II to mark 1,950 years since the redemption.