

## St. Martin of Tours Parish

Jason Fightmaster, Principal    Laurie Huff, Director of Religious Education



### Thoughtful Moments

#### St. Dominic Savio

Born to a peasant family in Riva, Italy, St. Dominic became a student at St. John Bosco's Oratory. Even from a young age, he was roundly recognized for his holiness. Dominic also had mystical experiences in prayer that he called his "distractions." He made a resolution to receive Confession and Communion as often as possible and encouraged his peers to do so. He died from a lung infection when he was about 15.



#### Share the load

Jesus said, "Take my yoke upon you" (Matthew 11:29). In Jesus' day, a farmer used a yoke to link two farm animals together to plow a field more effectively. Likewise, when we are wearied by family burdens, we can "link up" with Jesus. He promises to be with us always. If we stay connected to him, he will bring us through any trial.

"Shame not a repentant sinner; remember, we all are guilty" (Sirach 8:5).



## Teach children to be cheerful penitents

Invite children to go for a swim or a bike ride, and you'll hear squeals of delight. Ask them to accompany you to Confession and you may hear groans instead. In fact, the Sacrament of Reconciliation is more refreshing than a swim and more strengthening than a bike ride. It is our gift from Jesus to help us experience his grace and make things right with God. Try these tips to brighten the family trip to the confessional:

**Establish the background.** Explain that Jesus created this Sacrament (Matthew 16:19) not to blame us or "catch" us breaking the rules, but because he loves us and knew we needed help to stay holy.

**Work out the jitters.** It's normal to be

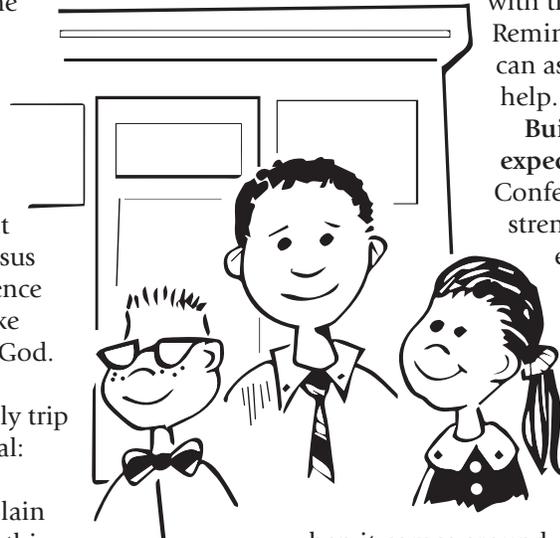
anxious about admitting wrong and taking responsibility for our actions. Rehearse ahead of time so that it will feel familiar when your child is faced with the real thing. Remind her that she can ask the priest for help.

**Build the expectation.** Regular Confession will strengthen the entire family.

Pick a set day and time – once a month, for example – so that no one is surprised

when it comes around. Mark it on the calendar and schedule around it.

**Celebrate.** Then go for a swim or a bike ride to celebrate the entire family coming back into friendship with God.



## Why Do Catholics Do That?

### Why do Catholics fast before Communion?

In the Bible, people fasted before coming into God's presence or doing a special job for him. In addition, the Church recognizes that prayer involves the spirit and the body. By fasting, we prepare our bodies to enter God's presence in



the Mass, as well as preparing our souls.

In fasting, we experience a physical hunger, which expresses our spiritual hunger for God. Finally, fasting shows respect for Jesus in the Eucharist; it's a concrete way to give him top priority.

## Help children unwrap the gift of Lent

The Catholic practice of giving something up for Lent – abstaining from a favorite food or activity – develops self-control, serves as penance for sin, and can lead to a greater appreciation of our blessings. Even young children can benefit from a Lenten sacrifice but choosing one that's too hard can turn Lent into a chore. Try these ideas to help choose a rewarding sacrifice:

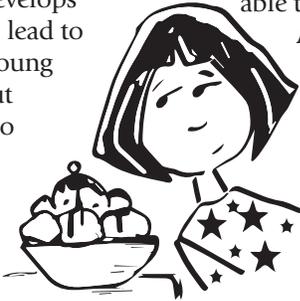
**Give up something valuable.** This can be a favorite dessert, game, toy or activity.

**Make it reasonable.** The sacrifice should be

something specific and age appropriate so that she will be able to see it through.

**Add back.** An alternative to giving something up is to add instead: more prayer, an extra chore, a daily devotion such as the Rosary.

**Give up luxuries.** Consider encouraging your youngster to pick something that may not be good for him anyway. For example, sweets, soft drinks, or television watching during the week, make healthy choices for Lenten abstinence. He may even decide to do without it when Lent is over.



### Scripture LESSON

#### John 9:1-41, See as Jesus sees

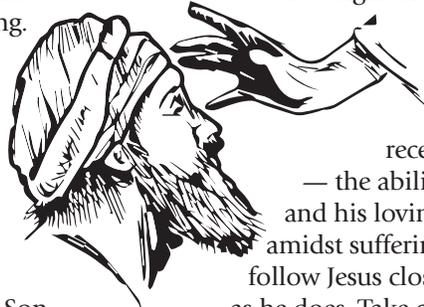
In Jesus' day, it was believed that suffering was a punishment for sin. So, when Jesus encountered a blind beggar, his disciples asked for whose sins the man was suffering. Jesus explained the man's suffering was not for punishment but for God's purpose. His subsequent cure was twofold: Jesus gave the man physical sight which enabled him to believe in Jesus as God's Son.

The faith of the blind man attracted others to Christ. Some of the Pharisees were convinced that Jesus was from God. Others condemned him as a

sinner for curing the man on the Sabbath. These Pharisees were so focused on following the Law, they lost sight of God and his priorities.

*What can a parent do?* In baptism, we receive the gift of faith

— the ability to "see" God and his loving plan, even amidst suffering. When we follow Jesus closely, we learn to see as he does. Take children to Mass at least weekly and Confession at least monthly and make prayer part of daily life. That will help to sharpen children's spiritual "vision."



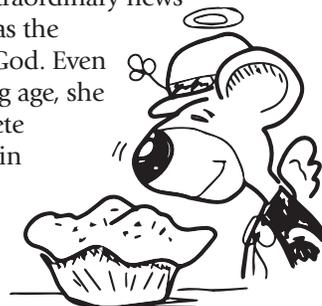
### Feasts & Celebrations

**March 15 – Pope St. Zachary (752).** Born in Calabria, Italy, St. Zachary was pope at a time of civil unrest in Italy. A skilled diplomat, he successfully negotiated peace for Italy on several occasions. He was integral to St. Boniface's German mission and was also a generous patron of restoring churches. He is also known for freeing slaves sold by Venetian merchants.

**March 17 – St. Patrick of Ireland (461).** Born in Scotland, St. Patrick was the son of a Roman citizen, Calpornius. He was kidnapped by pirates at the age of sixteen and brought to Ireland as a

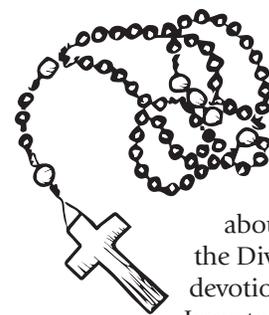
slave. He escaped but later returned to become the bishop of Ireland and is credited for having established the Church there.

**March 25 – The Annunciation of the Lord (1st century).** The angel Gabriel visited the Blessed Virgin Mary with the extraordinary news of her role as the mother of God. Even at her young age, she had complete confidence in God's grace and trusted in his wisdom.



### Parent TALK

This year I wanted to shake up our practice of Lent. Normally, we made our usual sacrifices of candy, TV, and video games, and those are all good sacrifices to offer, but I wanted to find a way to make more time for prayer. The



problem is that with young children, it's hard to get through an entire Rosary.

Then I learned about the Chaplet of the Divine Mercy. This devotion was revealed by

Jesus to St. Faustina, a simple Polish nun. The Chaplet is prayed on regular rosary beads and takes less time to pray than a Rosary. Even my young children enjoy saying the short, easy-to-remember prayers.

We say the Chaplet together at bedtime. What a great reminder of Jesus' great sacrifice and God's unending mercy! It has become one of our favorite bedtime rituals. Most importantly, it helps us to place our focus on Jesus during Lent.

#### Our Mission

To help parents raise faithful Catholic children  
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# Lent Family Calendar

Jason Fightmaster, Principal

Laurie Huff, Director of Religious Education

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 = a day of fasting and abstinence from meat

 = a day of abstinence from meat

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<p>"Lent is the liturgical season of forty days which begins with Ash Wednesday and ends with the celebration of the Paschal Mystery (Easter Triduum). Lent is the primary penitential season in the Church's liturgical year, reflecting the forty days Jesus spent in the desert fasting and praying" (<i>Catechism of the Catholic Church</i>).</p>			<p><b>1</b> Take your family to an Ash Wednesday liturgy and wear the cross of ashes all day.</p> 	<p><b>2</b> Pick a family Lenten offering, such as giving up TV one night a week, praying a family Rosary regularly, or attending daily Mass.</p>	<p><b>3</b> St. Katherine Drexel used what she had for God by serving others. Ask each person to share a game, toy, or treat with someone else in your home.</p> 	<p><b>4</b> Set up a family prayer altar. Pick a table or shelf in a quiet room and decorate it with religious items: a crucifix, statues, candles, a Bible. Use it for individual prayer.</p>
<p><b>5</b> Pick a saint depicted in one of the statues in your church and learn about him or her. Ask the saint to pray for your family during Lent.</p>	<p><b>6</b> Put a picture or statue of Jesus in a central place in your home to help you focus on him. Ask him to guide you and your family this Lent.</p>	<p><b>7</b> Today, practice being peacemakers. Instead of bickering, choose not to be offended and move on to something else.</p>	<p><b>8</b> Tonight, say an extra prayer for the refugees fleeing from their homelands.</p>	<p><b>9</b> Cover the dinner table with a purple cloth. Explain that purple reminds us that Jesus, our king, suffered on the cross for us.</p>	<p><b>10</b></p> <p>To honor Jesus' Passion on Good Friday, share a meatless family meal together.</p> 	<p><b>11</b> Turn off the television, unplug the computers, and take the phone off the hook for a half hour to pray a family Rosary.</p>
<p><b>12</b> Listen carefully to the Gospel and the homily at Mass. Afterwards, talk about ways to live the Gospel this week.</p>	<p><b>13</b> Cut a large cross out of construction paper. Together, decorate it with symbols that remind you of Jesus, Lent, Holy Week, Easter and display it prominently.</p>	<p><b>14</b> Pick a charity to which you want to donate. Fill a box or a jar with loose or spare change and donate it at the end of Lent.</p>	<p><b>15</b> At dinner tonight, encourage everyone to think of a person he or she doesn't like and say three nice things about that person.</p>	<p><b>16</b> Make up a box for a needy family or homeless shelter. Fill with canned goods, clothing, toiletries, and gently used toys.</p>	<p><b>17</b> St. Patrick was devoted to evangelizing Ireland. In his honor, make and deliver thank you cards to your religious education teachers.</p> 	<p><b>18</b> Make cookies or other treats for residents at a local nursing home. If you can, bring an extra tray of cookies for those who work there.</p>
<p><b>19</b> St. Joseph, husband of Mary and foster-father of Jesus, is also the patron of families, fathers, and travelers. Today, ask for his intercession for all who will travel on Easter.</p>	<p><b>20</b> Each day remaining in Lent, put a jelly bean in a jar whenever someone does a good deed. Share the jelly beans at Easter!</p>	<p><b>21</b> Say a short prayer in front of each cross or crucifix in your home.</p>	<p><b>22</b> Review your Lenten offerings and refresh your commitment to them.</p>	<p><b>23</b> Foster a sense of gratitude. At dinner tonight, encourage each family member to name at least one blessing for which he or she is grateful.</p>	<p><b>24</b> Serve pretzels as a reminder that Catholics used to give up milk, butter, eggs, cheese, cream, and meat.</p> 	<p><b>25</b> Today is the feast of the Annunciation, when the angel Gabriel visited Mary and asked her to be the mother of Jesus. Read all about it in Luke 1:26-38.</p>
<p><b>26</b> <b>Laetare Sunday</b></p> <p>Today, have a special meal to celebrate the halfway point of Lent.</p>	<p><b>27</b> Hot cross buns are a traditional Lenten treat. Defrost frozen bread dough and shape into rolls. After baking, put icing crosses on buns and enjoy!</p>	<p><b>28</b> Ask each family member to make an examination of conscience, using the Ten Commandments and eight Beatitudes as guides.</p>	<p><b>29</b> Pick a friend or neighbor and perform an anonymous good deed for him or her.</p>	<p><b>30</b> Encourage everyone to make a sacrificial offering, such as doing an extra chore without being asked. Doing it cheerfully wins!</p>	<p><b>31</b> Go on a screen fast (from recreational use) from noon to 3, in memory of the three hours Jesus hung on the cross.</p> 	<p><b>1</b> Go to Confession as a family. Go out for a special treat afterwards to celebrate God's forgiveness.</p>
<p><b>2</b> Light a candle in church for someone who passed away or needs special help. Stay for a few minutes afterwards to pray for him or her.</p>	<p><b>3</b> Collect stuffed animals or soft pillows in good condition and bring them to a local nursing home. Older folks love soft things to hug!</p>	<p><b>4</b> Using colored markers, decorate tracing paper with Easter symbols. Hang them in front of windows to let the light shine through.</p>	<p><b>5</b> Give up a favorite toy or treat just for today.</p>	<p><b>6</b> Place any final donations in the box you set up on March 16. Make a family trip to deliver it to its destination.</p>	<p><b>7</b> Forgive someone who hurt you today. Ask forgiveness of anyone you may have offended.</p> 	<p><b>8</b> Family story night! Cuddle up tonight and read Easter-themed books, such as the <i>Legend of the Three Trees or The Week That Led to Easter</i>.</p>
<p><b>9</b> After Mass, place palms around each of the images of Jesus in your home to welcome the Messiah!</p>	<p><b>10</b> Tonight and every night this week, say a special prayer for those entering the Church during the Easter Vigil.</p>	<p><b>11</b> Ask each family member to write a letter to Jesus thanking him for his sacrifice on the Cross</p>	<p><b>12</b> Get up 15 minutes earlier than usual today and pray as a family.</p>	<p><b>13</b> Read the story of the Last Supper (Matthew 26:20-30). Wash and dry each other's feet in commemoration of Jesus washing the feet of his Apostles.</p>	<p><b>14</b> Pray the Stations of the Cross today, and meditate on each one.</p> 	<p><b>15</b> Today, color Easter eggs as a symbol of the new life we have in Christ.</p>