

Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time

February 19, 2023

The Catholic Parishes of Saint Francis Xavier & Saint Wendel

Saint Francis Xavier Church
10 N. St. Francis Avenue PO Box 100
Poseyville, Indiana 47633

Holy Angels Campus
805 Main Street PO Box 795
New Harmony, Indiana 47631

Saint Wendel Church
10542 W. Boonville New Harmony Road
Evansville, Indiana 47720

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Saint Francis Xavier Campus
Parish Office 812-874-2220



Saint Wendel Campus
Parish Office 812-963-3733
Parish & School Fax 812-963-3061
School Office 812-963-3958
Pastor's Cell/Home 812-499-9700

Parish Office Hours - Saint Wendel Campus
Monday thru Thursday - 8:30 am to 4:00 pm

 Online Giving - Set up automatic contributions online. A simple, secure way to give.

Saint Wendel:
www.osvhub.com/saint-wendel-parish/giving/funds

Saint Francis Xavier:
www.osvhub.com/saint-francis-xavier/giving/funds

 School Website - www.saintwendelschool.org
 Parish Website - www.saintwendelparish.org



"Saints Wendel and Francis For Youth (SWAFFY)"
"Saint Wendel Catholic School"
"Saint Wendel Catholic Church"

Reconciliation

See the bulletin for scheduled individual opportunities or schedule an appointment by phoning Father Ed.

Baptism

Celebrated during weekend Masses. Parents should contact the Parish Office for information.

Marriage

Contact the Parish Office at least six months prior to the wedding for information.

Bulletin Deadline

Items are due in the Parish Office by 9:00 am on Monday for the following weekend. Phone or email items to: rfehrenbacher@evdio.org.

The Catholic Parishes of Saint Francis Xavier and Saint Wendel

Liturgy Schedule

Monday, February 20

Tuesday, February 21

7:30 am - Mass - at Saint Wendel Church

†*Sister Joanna Trainer*

Wednesday, February 22 - Ash Wednesday

7:30 am - Mass - at Saint Wendel Church

†*Sister Sharon Marie Blank*

7:00 pm - Mass - at Saint Francis Xavier Church

†*Maggie Rapp*

Thursday, February 23

No Mass - at Saint Wendel Church

Friday, February 24

Saturday, February 25

4:30 pm - Mass - at Saint Wendel Church

†*Silverius & Rose Mary Tenberge*

Sunday, February 26

7:00 am - Mass - at Saint Francis Xavier Church

†*Francis Scheller*

8:30 am - Mass - at Saint Wendel Church

†*Mary Abernathy* †*Barbara Goedde*

†*Rosie Adler* †*Leroy & Henrietta Wilderman*

10:00 am - Mass - at Saint Francis Xavier Church


†*Rita Allen* †*Alvin & Loretta Schmitt*

Thoughts on Stewardship


"But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you..." Matthew 5:44

Love your enemies, easier said than done. But, remember, the foundation of stewardship is prayer. When we are in close communication with God, it opens our heart and it turns our attention away from "me" and moves it towards God and others. It changes my heart and actions, allowing for a little more empathy for "my enemy." When we pray for others, even our enemies, it may soften their hearts as well.

Mass Live-streamed - The Saturday evening 4:30 pm Mass will continue to be live-streamed on Facebook each week from Saint Wendel Church. You may watch it live at that time on the Saint Wendel Catholic Church Facebook page or view it later on the Saint Wendel Facebook page when it is posted.

 **Rest In Peace** - We extend our sympathy to Dianna Thorsen and Roger Pritchett of Saint Wendel Parish upon the death of their sister Delores Jean Strupp who died on February 5, 2023.

Ash Wednesday - Mass with Distribution of Ashes is scheduled for this Wednesday, February 22, at 7:30 am at Saint Wendel Church and at 7:00 pm at Saint Francis Xavier Church. No Mass on Thursday, February 23.

 **Reconciliation During Lent** - There will be an opportunity for individual confessions on these Monday evenings during Lent from 6:00 to 7:00 pm at Saint Wendel Church: March 6, March 13, March 20, March 27. Contact Father Ed 812-499-9700 to schedule another time that is convenient for you.

Weekly Calendar

Sunday, February 19

NO RELIGIOUS ED AT SFX

8:30 AM - CHILDREN'S LITURGY OF THE WORD AT SW

2-6 PM - GRACE MARRIAGE SESSION IN THE SWS

CAFETORIUM

6:00 PM - WALKING WITH PURPOSE IN ROSE OF LIMA RM.

Monday, February 20

12:30 PM - SW QUILTING IN THE ROSE OF LIMA ROOM

7:00 PM - SAINT ANN'S AUXILIARY MEETING

Tuesday, February 21

9:00 AM - SFX QUILTING IN THE RECTORY BASEMENT

6:00 PM - WALKING WITH PURPOSE IN ROSE OF LIMA RM.

7:00 - 10:00 PM - BLESSED SACRAMENT EXPOSITION

AT SAINT WENDEL

Wednesday, February 22 - Ash Wednesday

7:30 AM - MASS AT SAINT WENDEL

2:30 PM - AMATA BIANCA IN SW CHURCH

6:00 PM - SFX GIRL SCOUT MTG. IN SFX CLASSROOM 3

6:30 PM - RCIA IN THE SW PARISH CENTER

6:30 PM - MEN'S BIBLE STUDY IN THE WASSMER ROOM

7:00 PM - MASS AT SAINT FRANCIS XAVIER

Thursday, February 23

7:00 PM - SW COMMUNITY OUTREACH MTG. IN THE

WASSMER ROOM

Friday, February 24

Saturday, February 25

Sunday, February 26

BLACK & INDIAN MISSION COLLECTION

8:30 AM - CHILDREN'S LITURGY OF THE WORD AT SW

8:30 AM - RELIGIOUS ED AT SFX

2:00 PM - RITE OF SENDING / RITE OF ELECTION AT

SAINT BENEDICT CATHEDRAL

5-7 PM - CONFIRMATION FORMATION AT SWS

CAFETORIUM

5:00 PM - HIGH SCHOOL RELIGIOUS ED AT SFX

6:00 PM - WALKING WITH PURPOSE IN ROSE OF LIMA RM.



Not by Bread Alone - Daily reflection booklets for Lent are available at the church doors. Prayerfully journey through Lent with fresh and meaningful reflections on the daily Mass readings. In just minutes per day, the insightful meditations of "Not by Bread Alone" can deepen your experience of this solemn season of prayer and penance. "The Word Among Us" books for Lent are also available at the church doors.

New Endowment - Saint Wendel Parish acknowledges a new endowment which has been established: "The Leo O. and Diana M. Mayer and Family Endowment" designated for the general support of Saint Wendel Catholic Parish. Annual distributions from this endowment will benefit the people and ministries of Saint Wendel Parish in perpetuity. If you would like more information about establishing an endowment and creating a "Living Legacy" for your parish, contact Father Ed at the parish office at 812-963-3733 or 812-499-9700 (cell).



On the Cover - Reflections on a lake on Saint Wendel Cynthiana Road on a cold and peaceful winter morning.

Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time - February 19, 2023



Lenten Alms Change Lives - Each Lent, Catholic families and individuals across the country unite to put their faith into action through prayer, fasting, and almsgiving.

Through CRS Rice Bowl, families learn about how our sisters and brothers across the globe overcome hardships like hunger and malnutrition, and how through Lenten alms, we have the power to make the world a better place for all. Rice Bowl boxes are available at the church doors. Please take one and place your alms in the Rice Bowl box during Lent. Return your box to church during Holy Week. Your Lenten alms change lives globally and in our own community. 75% of your CRS Rice Bowl donation supports the work of Catholic Relief Services around the world; 25% of gifts stay in each U.S. diocese for hunger and poverty alleviation efforts. Please be generous this Lent!

Your Assistance is Needed - We are in need of someone with a truck and trailer hitch to volunteer to transport the Saint Wendel Fall Festival booth from West Franklin Street back to Saint Wendel on Sunday morning, October 8, 2023 at the conclusion of the 2023 Fall Festival. If you are able to volunteer for this job, contact the parish office at 812-963-3733, Pam Muensterman at 812-228-7503, or Father Ed at 812-499-9700. Thanks! We have a volunteer who is able to transport the booth from Saint Wendel to West Franklin Street at the beginning of the Fall Festival, but need someone at the conclusion of the Fall Festival.



The New Pictorial Directory - has had some delays. The goal is to have it ready in the next couple of months. More information will be posted in the bulletin when it is complete and ready for pick up.

Adoration - time before Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament is available to you at Saint Wendel Church each Tuesday evening from 7:00-10:00 pm.



Source + Summit Youth Retreat - will be held March 17, 18, and 19, at Memorial High School. "Through Him and With Him and In Him" featuring Jackie Franchois Angel, a favorite at NCCY, SEEK and Steubenville Youth Conferences and Father Leo Patalinghug renowned chef, NCCY presenter, founder of Plating Grace and "Savoring our Faith" on EWTN. Father Giles, CFR, Brother Damien, CFR, the Nashville Dominicans, Father Tyler Tenbarger, Giancarlo Bernini and many others. Friends, fellowship, prayer, faith, and FUN! Ages 13 and up. For complete information and how to register go to www.sourcesummit-evansville.org or call 812-453-1024 or email sourcesummit@evdio.org.

Source + Summit Adult Retreat - will be held Saturday, March 18, at Christ the King Church. "Through Him and With Him and In Him" Same great speakers as the Youth Retreat! Be prepared for the critical challenges facing you, your family, and our church today by using the graces available to you by living *Through Him and With Him and In Him*. Join the hundreds who have been empowered to live their Faith fully! Reconciliation, adoration, prayer, food and fellowship. For complete information go to the Adult Retreat link at: www.sourcesummit-evansville.org or call 812-453-1024 or email sourcesummit@evdio.org.

Saint Francis Xavier Prayer Network - Prayer requests may be made to Marge Hamman (812-874-2264) or Margaret Shaffer (812-874-3338 or 812-550-0488).

Saint Wendel Prayer Network - Prayer requests may be made to Margie Tomes (812-550-5978), Diane Angermeier (812-499-3577) or Martha Schmitt (812-431-6813).



Mission Evansville 2023 - June 14-17th, 2023, at the Catholic Diocese of Evansville Catholic Center. Grab a friend and make a difference this summer spreading the Love of Christ. Inspired by Mother Teresa's words "do small things with great love," we invite high school youth and adult leaders & chaperones to 4 days & 3 nights of fun, service, bonding, music, good people, great food, Jesus, prayer & maybe even snow cones! Mission Evansville is a Catholic Mission for the Evansville area designed for high school youth. 4 DAYS THIS SUMMER: For High School Youth! Register NOW! Contact Sherie to register at scooley@evdio.org or 765-427-8199! Visit www.missionevansville.com for more information. Registration deadline is Monday, March 6.

The Knights of Columbus Council - will sponsor a Pilgrim Icon Prayer Service in Honor of Saint Joseph. The icon of Saint Joseph will be the centerpiece of a special prayer service on Thursday, February 23, beginning with a Rosary at 6:30 pm at Saint Boniface Parish located at 418 N Wabash Avenue of Flags, Evansville. The prayer service, flowing from the Year of Saint Joseph declared by Pope Francis in 2021, and inspired by his apostolic letter "Patris Corde", is sponsored by Knights of Columbus Evansville council# 565 to honor Saint Joseph and pray for his intercession in preserving, cultivating and passing on the Catholic faith to future generations.

Annual Creation Care Conference - Tri-State Creation Care will be holding its Annual Creation Care Conference on Saturday, February 25, at Aldersgate United Methodist Church (5130 Lincoln Ave). John Mundell, the Pope Francis appointed Director of the Vatican's Laudato Si' Platform, will give the keynote address. The conference will also include breakout sessions on gardening, energy efficiency, and a youth presentation on the environment. The event begins at 9:00 am and lasts till 12 noon with registration beginning at 8:30. This event is free and all are welcome. Visit www.tristatecreationcare.org or email tristate.creation.care@gmail.com for more information.



Stewardship through the Saint Vincent de Paul Society

In today's Gospel, Jesus challenges us by saying: "You must be perfected as your heavenly Father is perfect." This month, through your gifts, the Society of St. Vincent de Paul was able to assist families by providing food and assisting with utility and rent bills. Thank You!

Way of the Cross & Lenten Soup Suppers

The Way of the Cross will be prayed on these Wednesdays of Lent followed by a Lenten Soup Supper:

Wednesday, March 1, 6:00 pm

Saint Francis Xavier Church & Cafeteria

Wednesday, March 8, 6:00 pm

Holy Angels Church & Community Center

Wednesday, March 15, 6:00 pm

Saint Francis Xavier Church & Cafeteria

Special Presentation following supper:

"The Eucharist: What We Believe and Why"
by Steve Leugers and Linus Lampert

Wednesday, March 22, 6:00 pm

Saint Wendel Church & Cafeteria

Saint James Famous Fish Fries - are back! Friday, February 24 and Friday, March 10. Baked or fried Alaskan cod or grilled cheese, German potato salad, slaw, baked beans, mac & cheese, cornbread, desserts and drink! Dine-in Madden Hall or carry-out in the cafeteria from 4:30 - 7:30 pm. Cost \$14.00 for adults / \$7.00 kids.



Life-Giving Wounds - a Catholic apostolate dedicated to the spiritual healing of adult children of divorce or separation, will host a seven-week online support group this Lent. Taking place over seven evenings, from March 2 to April 12, the support group will include presentations and guided small group discussions on topics relevant to adult children of divorce, including setting goals for healing, overcoming shame, dealing with financial anxiety, and more. Cost: \$199 regular, \$119 college students/consecrated. Scholarships available! More information and registration here: <https://www.lifegivingwounds.org/lentsupportgroup>.

Saint Wendel Knights of Saint John - will host a fish fry dinner on Friday, March 3, and Friday, March 24, from 5-7pm. Dine in or drive thru. The menu will include fried fish, potato salad, baked beans, macaroni & cheese, cole slaw, cornbread, and drink. Grilled cheese available. Contact 812-454-9375 for more information.



End of Life Ethics & Advanced Care Planning - Come learn what the Catholic Church teaches on end of life issues and how to put it into practice on Tuesday, March 7, from 6:30 - 8:00 pm at Saint Benedict Cathedral Woodward Hospitality Center located at 530 Harlan Ave, Evansville. Presentation by Elliot Bedford, director of ethics at Ascension St. Vincent. Learn more at archindy.org/humanlifeanddignity/hospice.html. RSVP at bit.ly/endoflifeplanning or contact community outreach at 812-485-1504.

LENTEN FASTING & ABSTINENCE



Fasting	Abstinence
Ash Wednesday Good Friday	Every Friday during Lent
Ages 18-59	Ages 14+

How do we fast?

When fasting, a person is permitted to eat one full meal, as well as two smaller meals that together are not equal to a full meal.

Am I excused from fasting and abstinence?

Those that are excused from fast and abstinence outside the age limits include the **physically or mentally ill** including individuals suffering from **chronic illnesses** such as **diabetes**. Also excluded are **pregnant or nursing women**.

For more information on fasting and abstinence, visit uscbb.org.



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18th Annual Relay for Life Card Party - will take place on Thursday, March 9, at the Saint Francis Xavier Cafeteria. Come join us for an evening of fun. Doors open at 5:30 pm. Tickets are available at First Bank in Poseyville. \$5.00 donation. Chinese auction, special raffle, basket raffle, door prizes, \$300.00 money tree, and half pot. Concessions will be available.

Fish Fry - Come enjoy a great fish dinner, Friday, March 3, and Friday, March 17, from 5-7pm at Saint Joseph Vanderburgh County. Carryout only. Menu will include fillets, German potato salad, baked beans, slaw and cornbread. Cost \$14.00.



Pinewood Derby - Pack 393 is hosting their Pinewood Derby on Saturday, March 18, at 1:00 pm in Wendel Hall. This is open to the public. Boys K-5th can join Cub Scouts at any time. Contact Anna Kunkel 812-549-7645 if you are interested in joining and to pick up a Pinewood Derby Kit. There will also be a kids' STEM area with coding robots and microscopes donated through a grant from the Posey County Women's Fund (part of the Posey County Community Foundation).

Peace In The Mourning - This retreat will be held on Saturday, March 25, from 8 am to 5:15 pm at the Catholic Center, located at 4200 N. Kentucky Ave, in Evansville. This healing retreat is for widows of any age or in any stage to come together with other women. The cost is \$75.00 and includes continental breakfast, catered lunch, snacks, drinks, materials, and a day of prayer and support. To register visit <https://www.osvhub.com/evdio/forms/peace-in-the-mourning>. Questions contact Eric Girten at 812-424-5536.

Kent M. Sunderman Memorial Scholarship - The Evansville North Civitan Club is accepting applications for the Kent M. Sunderman Memorial Scholarship through Saturday, April 15. Multiple scholarships of up to \$1,000.00 are available. Qualified recipients must be: (1) a college junior, senior, or graduate student in the 2023-24 academic year maintaining at least a 3.0 GPA on a 4.0 scale. (2) attending a 4-year college/university or graduate school located in Vanderburgh County or else residents of Vanderburgh County attending any accredited 4-year college/university or graduate school. (3) planning a career in Human Services. For more information, or to request an application, contact Lou Ann Gilbert at lagilbert25@gmail.com.

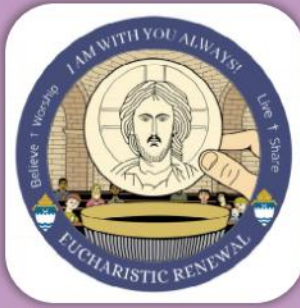
STEWARDSHIP OF TREASURE	
	February 5
SAINT FRANCIS XAVIER CHURCH	
Collection:	\$2,345.00
Electronic Giving:	\$880.00
Weekly Budgeted Amount Needed:	\$4,271.00
Haiti Parish-Saint Albert the Great:	\$760.00
SAINT WENDEL CHURCH	
Collection:	\$14,577.00
Electronic Giving:	\$5,421.00
Weekly Budgeted Amount Needed:	\$14,200.00
Youth Collection:	\$45.00
Haiti Parish-Saint Michael the Archangel:	\$417.00
Building & Grounds Improvement Fund:	\$156.00
Central & Eastern Europe Collection:	\$10.00
Black & Indian Mission Collection:	\$10.00

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Encountering the Eucharist

Believe ✦ Worship ✦ Live ✦ Share



Wherever the Eucharist is reserved, a "Sanctuary Lamp" should be burning. This is a wax candle, is generally in a red glass container and is kept burning day and night wherever the Blessed Sacrament is reserved in Catholic churches or chapels. It is an emblem of Christ's abiding love and a reminder to the faithful to respond with loving adoration in return. In Judaism, the sanctuary lamp is known by its Hebrew name, *Ner Tamid* (Hebrew: "eternal flame"). Hanging or standing in front of the "ark" in every Jewish synagogue where the sacred scrolls are kept. It also symbolizes God's eternal presence and is therefore never extinguished. In a sense, the Sanctuary Lamp can be likened to the "beating heart" of every church.

What We Believe... Love Divine, All Loves Excelling

During the month of February our thoughts usually turn to expressions of love and other amorous acts of affection such as giving or receiving Valentine's Day cards, bouquets of roses, and boxes of chocolate candy. Whatever one's opinion about Valentine's Day, each of us look for affirmation, acceptance, and affection from others. It's simply part of our human nature. Those are legitimate human needs that we desire. But have we ever thought about the fact that Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ also desires to receive affirmation, acceptance and expressions of loving affection? This might sound slightly odd, that Jesus would *need* or *desire* any-

Second Person of the Trinity He assumed a *fully* human nature, Chalcedon says that in the ed a true human nature and confusion, mixture, division, words, when the Son of possessed the divine nature, nature, each nature retained nature did not become hu- did not become divine. Nei- together such that Christ



thing. Nevertheless, when the took flesh in the Incarnation, nature. The Definition of one person of Christ is unit- a true divine nature without or separation. In other God, who from all eternity added to Himself a human its own attributes. The divine man and the human nature ther were the natures mixed was a strange human-divine hybrid, neither truly human nor truly divine. No, Christ was and remains the God-man. Therefore, in His human nature, Jesus also looks to receive affirmation, acceptance, and affection from us. But how often do we actually give Him these expressions of love? Don't we often come to Him and ask Jesus to *give us* something? How often are we even conscious of His presence? Unfortunately, at best Jesus is maybe taken for granted or, at worst, utterly ignored. During the month of February we see lots of heart shapes to symbolize human love. As far back as the antient Greek philosophers, it was agreed that the heart was linked to our strongest emotions, including love. Curiously, whenever there has been a validated Eucharistic miracle where the host has turned into actual flesh, the subsequent scientific investigations of the substance have usually all concluded that the structure of the transformed fragment of the host was identical to the myocardial (heart) tissue of a living person who is nearing death. Thus, in the Eucharist, Jesus is *giving us* His heart! In other words, Jesus is trying to show His affirmation, acceptance, and affection towards us, His bride! Unfortunately, His gestures are more often met with unrequited love. Jesus has strong intimate feelings toward us but often we do not feel the same way. When this happens between persons, there arises feelings of profound sadness, disappointment, and frustration accompanied by a sense of rejection. As Christ has a fully human nature, there is a way in which He still suffers when His divine love is not returned. It might be worth considering that, as we are being more intentional offering tokens of love to each other this month, perhaps we might also offer an act of love to our Lord Jesus Christ too. "Jesus, I desire to comfort, unite and offer myself in union with Thee."

Sharing Our Very Life: Eucharistic Adoration



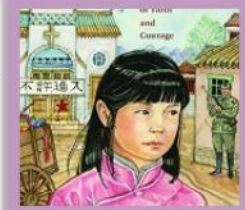
“You should adore our Lord Jesus Christ, who makes Himself present to us on the altar, so that we might offer Him the homage and adoration we owe. Your most loving Heart, O Jesus, dwells in this Sacrament burning with love for us. It is there continually performing thousands of good deeds towards us.”

-St. John Eudes

One traditional Catholic devotion that seems to be coming back is Eucharistic Adoration. When Catholics say they are “going to Adoration,” they are typically referring to Eucharistic Adoration. Which, in the most basic terms, is the worship of the Eucharist outside of the Mass. The Eucharistic Host is displayed in a monstrance on the altar so that all can see and pray in the presence of Christ. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* explains that, “Adoration is the first attitude of man acknowledging that he is a creature before his Creator. It exalts the greatness of the Lord who made us and the almighty power of the Savior who sets us free from evil. Adoration is homage of the spirit to the ‘King of Glory,’ respectful silence in the presence of the “ever greater” God. Adoration of the thrice-holy and sovereign God of love blends with humility and gives assurance to our supplications” (CCC #2628). We can show our adoration to God in many ways, but in Eucharistic Adoration, we spend time adoring the true presence of Christ in the Eucharist. Mother Theresa says, “The time you spend with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament is the best time that you will spend on earth. Each moment that you spend with Jesus will deepen your union with Him and make your soul everlastingly more glorious and beautiful in heaven, and will help bring about an everlasting peace on earth.” Perhaps spending some time in adoration this month would be the perfect way to give back to Our Lord the affirmation, acceptance, and affection that He always shows us every day.

Life in the Eucharist: Little Li: Child Martyr of the Eucharist

The little Catholic girl has been given a name—Li—but we don't know if that was really her name. Her age is usually given as 10 or 11, but we don't really know about that, either. We know she lived in the twentieth century, and there is a strong likelihood that it was the mid-twentieth century, right after Mao Zedong completed his communist takeover of China. Government



troops invaded her parish church and imprisoned the parish priest. Then the soldiers broke into the tabernacle, took the ciborium because it was made of gold, and scattered the Hosts on the floor in an act of desecration. After nightfall, Li slipped back into the church and observed a Holy Hour in front of the Hosts scattered on the

church floor. After she finished the devotion, she carefully bent down and consumed just a single one of the Hosts with her tongue. Li patiently returned to the church night after night to observe her Holy Hour and consume another precious piece of the Body of Christ. There were 32 Hosts on the floor. On the very last night, she was caught by a soldier guarding the church and killed. The imprisoned priest watched all this from his window.

Adoro te Devote: Feast of The Eucharistic Heart of Jesus

On 9 November 1921, Pope Benedict XV instituted the feast of the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus to be celebrated on the Thursday within the Octave of the Sacred Heart. In instituting the feast, Pope Benedict XV wrote: “The chief reason of this feast is to commemorate the love of Our Lord Jesus Christ in the mystery of the Eucharist. By this means the Church wishes more and more to excite the faithful to approach this sacred mystery with confidence, and to inflame their hearts with that divine charity which consumed the Sacred Heart of Jesus when, in His infinite love, He instituted the Most Holy Eucharist, wherein the Divine Heart guards and loves them by living with them, as they live and abide in Him. For in the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist He offers and gives Himself to us as victim, companion, nourishment, viaticum, and pledge of our future glory.” Eucharistic Heart of Jesus, gracious companion of our exile, I adore Thee. I will keep silent in order to listen to Thee.





Living the Faith

JOURNEY TO THE FOOT OF THE CROSS: BISHOP RICKEN OFFERS 10 THINGS TO REMEMBER FOR LENT

Bishop David L. Ricken of Green Bay, Wisconsin, former chairman of the Committee on Evangelization and Catechesis of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), offers “10 Things to Remember for Lent”:

1. Remember the formula. The Church does a good job capturing certain truths with easy-to-remember lists and formulas: 10 Commandments, 7 sacraments, 3 persons in the Trinity. For Lent, the Church gives us almost a slogan—Prayer, Fasting, and Almsgiving—as the three things we need to work on during the season.

2. It’s a time of prayer. Lent is essentially an act of prayer spread out over 40 days. As we pray, we go on a journey, one that hopefully brings us closer to Christ and leaves us changed by the encounter with him.

3. It’s a time to fast. With the fasts of Ash Wednesday and Good Friday, meatless Fridays, and our personal disciplines interspersed, Lent is the only time many Catholics these days actually fast. And maybe that’s why it gets all the attention. “What are you giving up for Lent? Hot dogs? Beer? Jelly beans?” It’s almost a game for some of us, but fasting is actually a form of penance, which helps us turn away from sin and toward Christ.

4. It’s a time to work on discipline. The 40 days of Lent are also a good, set time to work on personal discipline in general. Instead of giving something up, it can be doing something positive. “I’m going to exercise more. I’m going to pray more. I’m going to be nicer to my family, friends, and coworkers.”

5. It’s about dying to yourself. The more serious side of Lenten discipline is that it’s about more than self-control—it’s about finding aspects of yourself that are less than Christ-like and letting them die. The suffering and death of Christ are foremost on our minds during Lent, and we join in these mysteries by suffering, dying with Christ and being resurrected in a purified form.

6. Don’t do too much. It’s tempting to make Lent some ambitious period of personal reinvention, but

it’s best to keep it simple and focused. There’s a reason the Church works on these mysteries year after year. We spend our entire lives growing closer to God. Don’t try to cram it all in one Lent. That’s a recipe for failure.

7. Lent reminds us of our weakness. Of course, even when we set simple goals for ourselves during Lent, we still have trouble keeping them. When we fast, we realize we’re all just one meal away from hunger. In both cases, Lent shows us our weakness. This can be painful, but recognizing how helpless we are makes us seek God’s help with renewed urgency and sincerity.

8. Be patient with yourself. When we’re confronted with our own weakness during Lent, the temptation is to get angry and frustrated. “What a bad person I am!” But that’s the wrong lesson. God is calling us to be patient and to see ourselves as he does, with unconditional love.

9. Reach out in charity. As we experience weakness and suffering during Lent, we should be renewed in our compassion for those who are hungry, suffering, or otherwise in need. The third part of the Lenten formula is almsgiving. It’s about more than throwing a few extra dollars in the collection plate; it’s about reaching out to others and helping them without question as a way of sharing the experience of God’s unconditional love.

10. Learn to love like Christ. Giving of ourselves in the midst of our suffering and self-denial brings us closer to loving like Christ, who suffered and poured himself out unconditionally on the Cross for all of us. Lent is a journey through the desert to the foot of the Cross on Good Friday, as we seek him out, ask his help, join in his suffering, and learn to love like him.





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