

Restore the Roots



February

2 Feast of the Presentation of the Lord



Processions and blessed candles, this is a BIG feast! Read about it on page 3.

5 St. Agatha



As one of the seven female martyrs listed in the Roman Canon (Eucharistic Prayer I), Saint Agatha is a highly venerated virgin-martyr in the Catholic Church. She lived in Sicily in the third century during the Christian persecution under Emperor Decius, and she dedicated her life to Christ as a virgin. According to tradition, the Roman prefect of Sicily wanted to marry Agatha, but she refused, staying true to her vow of celibacy and faith in Christ. In anger, he had her sent to a brothel, then to prison, and ultimately subjected her to many horrific forms of torture, including having her breasts cut off. Patron of many things including martyrs, breast cancer patients, rape victims, and nurses, and invoked against natural disasters and fires. In Sicily, a traditional way to celebrate St. Agatha is by enjoying “minne di Sant’Agata” pastries. You could have a white cupcake with a cherry on top! See the prayer on page 3 as well.

10 St. Scholastica



St. Scholastica, the twin sister of St. Benedict, is revered as the patroness of Benedictine nuns and an important figure in Christian monasticism. Born in the late 5th century in Italy, Scholastica chose a life of prayer and devotion to God, founding a monastic community for women at Plombariola, near her brother's abbey at Monte Cassino. Her life was marked by deep faith, simplicity, and a profound love for God. Scholastica is most well-known for her close relationship with her brother, St. Benedict, with whom she shared a deep spiritual bond. According to tradition, the two would meet annually to discuss spiritual matters and pray together, and during one such meeting, Scholastica is said to have prayed for a storm to prevent her brother from leaving. She died three days after the storm and Benedict, through a vision, saw her soul ascend to heaven in the form of a dove, which confirmed her death. Today, pray for women in religious life or those discerning a vocation to monasticism. And, if you have siblings, call them today! (If they have passed away, be sure to pray for them.)

17 Seven Holy Founders of the Servite Order



The Seven Holy Founders of the Servite Order, also known as the Order of the Servants of Mary, were seven men from the city of Florence, Italy, who, in 1233, sought to live a life dedicated to prayer, penance, and service under the guidance of the Blessed Virgin Mary. They were originally laymen and came together with the shared goal of living out the Gospel in a radical way. The charism of the Servite Order is centered on honoring and emulating the Sorrows of the Virgin Mary, which they do through their prayerful reflection on her sufferings and a life devoted to service to others. They are particularly known for their ministry of compassion, promoting peace, and caring for the poor and marginalized. A special way to celebrate the Feast of the Seven Holy Founders would be through prayer and meditation on the Seven Sorrows of Mary, offering time for personal reflection or participating in a community service project in her honor, as this mirrors the spirit of selfless service that the Founders exemplified. You can also attend Mass or gather for a communal meal, sharing the joy of fraternity, while invoking the intercession of these holy men and the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Monthly Devotion: *The Holy Family*



Lent



Editor's note: Lent does not fall within the month of February this year, but we wanted to get you to start thinking of what you will do for Lent ahead of time. The only way to have a truly fruitful Lent is by prayerfully preparing and making a plan. Sometimes that means ordering a book or devotional for yourself or getting things ready to do as a family. Our Lent issue will be out in a few weeks, but if you want to start looking at our recommended resources, scan this code.



*But I also bring you good news! Until Ash Wednesday, traditionally this time was known as Carnival or Mardi Gras. Not just limited to one day, but a whole season, because, before we fast, we feast. **So, feast my friends!***

As the farmer's life is marked with both abundance and drought, so does the Christian life know both feasting and fasting. Lent is an excellent opportunity to strip ourselves of all that is not of God in order to enter more fully into the mystery of Christ's life and death, and when Easter comes, his resurrection and ascension. "Without me, you can do nothing," Jesus says in John's Gospel. We take Jesus as our model and guide during Lent and turn especially to three moments from his life.

First, we consider the temptation in the desert. After his baptism and before beginning his public ministry, Jesus fasts for 40 days, where he is tempted by the devil. Satan's three temptations are the same three to which we most easily succumb and are remedied by the Lenten practices of fasting, almsgiving and prayer. "Command that these stones become loaves of bread," Satan says to the hungry Christ. Lust of the flesh (gluttony, sexual deviancy) plagues the world, and denying our carnal desires for a period of time helps us to order them. In fixing his will solely on the Father, Jesus teaches us that "one does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes forth from the mouth of God."

In Luke's account, Satan next shows Jesus all the kingdoms of the world and offers, "I shall give to you all this power and their glory, if you worship me." Lust of the eyes (greed, or the desire for worldly status and gain) leads us to serve a creature rather than the Creator. Christ is clear: "You shall worship the Lord, your God, and him alone shall you serve." Giving alms and growing in detachment from material things helps us to become servants of God rather than

mammon.

Last, Satan tempts Jesus to test God: to jump off the Temple wall and let the angels catch him. The early writers call this a temptation to the "pride of life." Pride of life can be manifest in many ways, but fundamentally, it occurs when we think we know better than God and desire to become God or to control the operations of His wisdom, rather than letting Him work in our lives. The remedy is prayer and humility. "You shall not put the Lord, your God, to the test," Jesus counters. Rather, we should gratefully and confidently turn to Him in prayer, offering Him our thanks and petition.

We can also learn from a small moment from Mark 9:14-29. Here, Jesus exorcises a demon after his disciples fail to cast it out. When the disciples wonder why they were unable, Jesus tells them, "This kind can only come out through prayer and fasting." Strength of will is not enough; to overcome the most grievous attacks requires spiritual exercise, that is, "praying without ceasing" and "making no provision for the desires of the flesh."

Finally, this Lent, read Matthew 6. There we find some of Christ's most penetrating words: the Our Father, the command not to worry about tomorrow, the teaching that our treasure is where our heart is. We also find instruction on how to pray, fast and give alms— in secret and with humility. We do not engage in Lenten practices so that others may see our heroic actions; rather, we pray, fast and give alms so that we may better know the Father. And to know Him is the greatest of rewards.

FEB
2

Candlemas Feast of the Presentation



The Feast of the Presentation of the Lord, also known as Candlemas, commemorates the presentation of the infant Jesus at the Temple in Jerusalem, as described in the Gospel of Luke (2:22-40). According to Jewish tradition, Mary and Joseph brought Jesus to the Temple 40 days after His birth to fulfill the law of Moses, which required a firstborn son to be consecrated to God. During this event, the prophet Simeon and the prophetess Anna recognized Jesus as the Messiah, the one to guide people out of darkness.

This day is also associated with the blessing of candles, symbolizing Jesus as the "Light of the World." This is where the name "Candlemas" comes from, as churches traditionally bless candles to be used throughout the year. It's a beautiful celebration of light, not just in the physical sense, but also in the spiritual sense, as it marks the revelation of Christ to the world. Just as candles provide physical light in the world, they represent the presence of Christ, who brings spiritual light to all humanity. The tradition of blessing candles emphasizes the importance of Christ as the light that dispels darkness, offering guidance, hope, and salvation.

These blessed candles are not just used in church but also at home, particularly in times of prayer and in moments of need, as a reminder of Christ's eternal presence and His role as the Light of the World.

Because February 2 falls on a Sunday, it is customary for parishes to do a procession before Mass and to bless candles. If your parish is not doing this, ask your priest to bless candles for you! Years ago, every Catholic household would have at least one blessed candle in it, used especially at the anointing of the sick. If you don't have blessed candles, make or purchase some candles that you will set aside as prayer candles, preferably beeswax, and take them to get blessed. Then, use them in times of distress, anxiousness, dangerous storms, uncertain times, sickness, anointing of the sick or when someone is near death, to drive away all evil and bring in the light of Christ.



Prayer to St. Agatha, Patroness of Breast Cancer

FEB
5

St. Agatha, woman of valor, from your own suffering we have been moved to ask your prayers for those of us who suffer from breast cancer. We place (person's name) before you, and ask you to intercede on their behalf. From where you stand in the health of life eternal, all wounds healed, and all tears wiped away, pray for (prayer intention), and all of us.

Pray God will give us His holy benediction of health and healing. And, we remember you were a victim of torture and that you learned first hand of human cruelty and inhumanity. We ask you to pray for our entire world. Ask God to enlighten us with a "genius for peace and understanding."

Ask Him to send us His Spirit of Serenity, and ask Him to help us share that peace with all we meet. From what you learned from your own path of pain, ask God to give us the Grace we need to remain holy in difficulties, not allowing our anger or our bitterness to overtake us.

Pray that we will be more peaceful and more charitable. And from your holy place in our mystical body, the Church, pray that we, in our place and time will, together, create a world of justice and peace.

Amen.

FEB
10

Looking for a great video to show your kids on St. Scholastica? Check out the episode on Sts. Benedict and Scholastica from *Littlest Saints* on *Formed!*



Editors: Msgr. Richard Gilles and Natalie Elskamp
Special thanks to all the contributing writers and proofreaders.
No part of this may be edited, copied or distributed without the express permission of the editors.
Interested in bringing Restore the Roots to your parish? Email us! RestoretheRootsLax@gmail.com

Spes non confundit “Hope Does Not Disappoint”



The Jubilee Year

In the Catholic Church, a Jubilee year is a special, joyful year for the forgiveness of sins and remission of the punishment due to sin through opportunities for repentance, reconciliation, and pilgrimages.

The tradition of the Jubilee year has its roots in the Old Testament. According to Scripture, the ancient Israelites were to work and harvest their fields as usual for six consecutive years and on the seventh year let the land lie fallow for a sabbath year. Following the sabbath year was the Jubilee year in which slaves were set free, debts were forgiven, and property was returned to the original owners. As such, the Jubilee year was meant to restore equality among all Israelites, offer a chance to start over for those who were poor or enslaved, and remind the rich that their slaves should be their equals. The prescriptions of the Jubilee year, while they may not have been perfectly practiced in antiquity, served as a foretelling of the freedom that would be won by the Messiah. “The spirit of the Lord God is upon me... He has sent me... to proclaim liberty to the captives, release to the prisoners, to announce a year of favor from the Lord...” (Isaiah 61:1-2).

Pope Boniface VIII declared the first modern Jubilee year in 1300. Since the late 1400s, the Catholic Church has celebrated ordinary Jubilee years every 25 years. Sometimes, popes declare an extraordinary Jubilee year for special circumstances as Pope Francis did in 2015 with the Jubilee Year of Mercy. The Jubilee Year of Hope, 2025, was announced by Pope Francis with the bull of indiction, *Spes non confundit* (“Hope Does Not Disappoint”) on the feast of the Ascension, May 9th, 2024.

Holy Doors

A Holy Door, which is only opened during a Jubilee year, symbolizes Jesus as the way to eternal life: “I am the gate. Whoever enters through me will be saved” (John 10:9). This year’s Jubilee began on Christmas Eve when Pope Francis opened the Holy Door of St. Peter’s Basilica. The other papal basilicas in Rome, St. John Lateran, St. Mary Major, and St. Paul Outside the Walls, also each have a Holy Door for Jubilees. In addition to the four traditional Holy Doors in Rome, Pope Francis designated a special fifth Holy Door at Rebibbia Prison in Rome for the Jubilee Year of Hope, inviting prisoners to look to the future with hope and a renewed sense of confidence (*Spes non confundit*).



Pilgrims to Rome can obtain a plenary indulgence (remission of all temporal punishment—time in Purgatory—due to sin) by passing through one of these Holy Doors along with fulfilling the other four conditions for a plenary indulgence: receiving Holy Communion, praying for the intentions of the Pope, and detachment from all sin and receiving the sacrament of reconciliation two weeks before or after the pilgrimage. Pope Francis extended the offer of a plenary indulgence to pilgrims who cannot make it to Rome this year by declaring each diocesan Cathedral a Jubilee pilgrimage site and allowing bishops to designate other pilgrimage sites within their dioceses. The Jubilee year will end for all diocesan churches on December 28th, 2025 along with the closing of all the Holy Doors in Rome, except for St. Peter’s Basilica which will close on January 6th, 2026, officially ending the Jubilee Year of Hope.

Want more?

The *Poco a Poco* Podcast recently released an excellent episode all about the Jubilee year. They go more in depth than what we can touch on here. Look for the January 1 episode.

(Editor’s note: If you aren’t familiar with Poco a Poco, they chat at the start of every episode so feel free to fast forward 13 minutes to get to the main show!)

Go on Pilgrimage!

A pilgrimage is a spiritual journey to a special destination, usually a holy site, in order to encounter God and grow in one’s faith. Between now and the end of the Jubilee Year of Hope, make a plan to go on pilgrimage. If you cannot travel to Rome this year, make instead an intentional pilgrimage to one of the designated Jubilee pilgrimage sites in our Diocese: the Cathedral of St. Joseph the Workman, the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Sacred Heart of Jesus Church in Eau Claire, Church of the Resurrection in Wausau, or Sacred Heart of Jesus Church in Nekoosa. When you make a pilgrimage, consider fulfilling the other four conditions for obtaining a plenary indulgence as listed above to participate fully in all the richness the Jubilee has to offer. (You do not need to enter a certain door at these sites, just go with the intention to receive the indulgence!) You can also look up pilgrim sites in neighboring dioceses or anywhere you’ll travel this year. Make this a Holy Year!

