

# FAITH MATTERS



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*On December 13, married couples and their families gathered at St. Luke's Anniversary Mass to celebrate milestone wedding anniversaries. Sixteen couples were honored for their years of commitment to each other and their sacred vows (see page 5). Photo Credit: Rob Leugers*

## National Marriage Week

*February 7 through 14*

Celebrate National Marriage Week, February 7–14, and World Marriage Sunday on February 8!

National Marriage Week gives us a chance to appreciate matrimony as a profound gift. This year's theme, *Man and Woman He Created Them: Together with Purpose*, comes from the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). It encourages couples to discover and embrace their unique strengths. As a result, couples can build each other up in joy and unity, deepening harmony in their relationship.

To access resources from the USCCB Secretariat on Laity, Marriage, Family Life, and Youth—including an at-home retreat and a marriage-centered Lectio Divina—please visit [foryourmarriage.org](http://foryourmarriage.org).

National Marriage Week USA is also holding seven broadcasts this year, focusing on building a strong foundation of purpose together as a couple. To reserve your spot, go to [marriageweek.org/broadcasts](http://marriageweek.org/broadcasts).

# Ash Wednesday and the Season of Lent

by Fr. Andrew J. Templeton



## What Is Ash Wednesday?

Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of Lent. On this day, Christians gather for prayer and liturgy and receive ashes on the forehead in the shape of a cross. As the ashes are imposed, we hear the call: “Repent and believe in the Gospel” or “Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return.” This simple yet powerful gesture is both a public sign of our faith and a reminder of our need for conversion.

The ashes themselves carry deep meaning. They remind us of our human frailty—“Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return”—and of our total dependence on God. Fittingly, these ashes are made from the palm branches blessed on Palm Sunday the previous year, linking Christ’s triumphal entry into Jerusalem with the humility of the Cross and the call to repentance.

Ash Wednesday is also a day of fasting and abstinence for Catholics. After the feasting often associated with Mardi Gras (Fat Tuesday), we begin Lent with intentional simplicity and self-denial. As the Church teaches in the Code of Canon Law:

“Ash Wednesday and Good Friday are obligatory days of fasting and abstinence for Catholics. In addition, Fridays during Lent are obligatory days of abstinence.

For members of the Latin Catholic Church, the norms on fasting are obligatory from age 18 until age 59. 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. The norms concerning abstinence from meat are binding upon members of the Latin Catholic Church from age 14 onwards.”

~ USCCB complementary norm to canon 1253

When fasting, one should always be attentive to personal health and one’s state of life, such as pregnancy or medical conditions.

## What Is Lent?

With the reception of ashes, we enter the season of Lent—a forty-six-day journey (forty days, excluding Sundays) that prepares us for Easter. Lent recalls the forty days Jesus spent fasting and praying in the desert after His baptism, where He resisted temptation and prepared for His public ministry.

During Lent, the Church invites us to walk with Christ toward the Cross, reflecting on His sacrifice and looking forward with hope to the joy of the Resurrection. Though Lent can be challenging, it is not meant to be burdensome. Rather, it is a gift—a time for honest self-reflection, spiritual growth, and renewed closeness to Christ. As we journey through this holy season together, may each day draw us closer to Jesus and strengthen our love for one another.

## Ash Wednesday and the Season of Lent

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### How Do We Observe Lent?

Lent is traditionally marked by three pillars: prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. While these practices are part of Christian life year-round, Lent offers a special opportunity to renew our commitment to them.



#### Prayer

Prayer is at the heart of Lent. This season invites us to deepen our relationship with God through more intentional prayer—reading Scripture, attending Stations of the Cross, praying before meals, or setting aside quiet moments each day to listen to the Lord. Lent also encourages us to remove distractions and unnecessary noise in our lives.

*“Silence is not just the absence of noise, but the path that enables human beings to go to God...”*

*“God is silence, and this divine silence dwells within a human being.”*

*“Silence is the language of the heart. In silence, God speaks, and the soul listens.”*

~ Cardinal Robert Sarah



#### Fasting

Fasting helps us grow in self-discipline and reminds us of Christ’s sacrifice. Whether giving up a favorite food, a habit, or a distraction, our sacrifice should be meaningful yet prudent, and respectful of our responsibilities. The goal is not deprivation for its own sake, but a deeper reliance on God. As St. John Henry Newman wrote, “Even in our penitential exercises, Christ has gone before us to sanctify them to us.”

Meaning that anything we do in penance—fasting, sacrifice, self-denial, discipline—is never something we face alone. Jesus has already done it first. Christ fasted. Christ endured hardship. Christ embraced suffering out of love and obedience to the Father. Because Jesus lived these things perfectly, our small sacrifices are no longer empty struggles. They are made holy—sanctified—because we unite them to His ultimate sacrifice on the cross. Our fasting matters not because it’s impressive, but because it’s joined to Christ’s own self-gift.

*“Miss no single opportunity of making some small sacrifice,*

*here by a smiling look, there by a kindly word.”*

~ St. Thérèse of Lisieux

Sundays during Lent are always celebrations of the Resurrection—often called “mini-Easters”—and remind us that penance is ultimately ordered toward joy and hope. For this reason, one may rightly relax fasting and penance on Sundays. Even so, we are called not to indulge, but to enjoy appropriately. Temperance in all things—even in our feasting—keeps our hearts focused on what truly matters.



#### Almsgiving

Lent also calls us to generosity. Through giving of our time, talent, and resources, we imitate Christ’s self-giving love and care for those in need. Acts of charity help us detach from excess and refocus on what truly matters: love of God and neighbor.

*“Not all of us can do great things. But we can do small things with great love.”*

~ St. Teresa of Calcutta

# The Inspiring Journey of St. Josephine Bakhita

Patron saint of human trafficking

A student once asked St. Josephine Bakhita, "What would you do if you were to meet your captors?" Without hesitation, she replied, "If I was to meet those slave traders who abducted me and those who tortured me, I'd kneel down to them and kiss their hands, because if it had not been for them, I would not have become a Christian or a religious person."

## A Childhood Scarred by Violence

Josephine was born in Sudan around 1869. As a child, she was kidnapped by slave traders and forced to walk 600 miles barefoot to El-Obeid.

After arriving in El-Obeid, Josephine was bought and sold numerous times. There, she endured severe abuse at the hands of her owners, repeatedly subjected to beatings and forced scarification—a Sudanese practice where slaves are permanently marked by cutting patterns into the skin with a razor and rubbing salt into the wounds. In total, 114 patterns were carved into Josephine's body.

*Josephine recalled, "During all the years I stayed in that house, I do not recall a day that passed without some wound or other. When a wound from the whip began to heal, other blows would pour down on me."*

## A Turning Point

By the end of 1883, Josephine's owner was an Italian vice consul in Sudan who treated her kindly. When he was recalled to Italy, Josephine asked to accompany him. She was smuggled from Sudan, and on arrival in Italy, her ownership transferred to the Michieli family.

She lived with the Michieli family until they decided to move to Sudan. Josephine was temporarily placed with the Canossian Sisters in Venice until her living arrangements in Sudan were finalized.



Saint Josephine Bakhita

wikipedia.org

It was during her time with the sisters that Josephine encountered Christianity for the first time. She later recalled, "Those holy mothers instructed me with heroic patience and introduced me to that God who from childhood I felt in my heart without knowing who He was."

When the Michieli family returned for Josephine, she refused to leave. The court ruled in her favor, and Josephine was finally free.

## Vowing Her Life to God

Josephine entered the novitiate of the Canossians and took her vows. She was assigned to the convent in Schio, Italy, where she spent the rest of her life witnessing to God's love. She visited other Canossian communities in Italy, speaking about her experiences and helping to prepare young sisters for work in Africa. Her gentle nature, calming voice, and smile endeared her to all. She died on February 8, 1947.

St. Josephine Bakhita is the patron saint of Sudan, of human trafficking, and modern slavery. Her feast day is February 8. Catholic Charities and the Sisters of Mercy are offering a human trafficking seminar on Sunday, February 8, from 2:30 – 4:00 pm at St. James the Greater Catholic Church in Concord. To attend, please email [scaeducation@ccdoc.org](mailto:scaeducation@ccdoc.org) by Wednesday, February 4.

Sources: *Butler's Lives of Saints*, [Catholic.org](http://Catholic.org), [bakhitacharities.org](http://bakhitacharities.org)

# Anniversary Mass

Congratulations to the following parishioners celebrating a milestone anniversary! They were honored in our Anniversary Mass on Saturday, December 13.

## 10 Years

Francisco Guerrero and Blanca Chavez  
Marcus and Lacey Conti

## 15 Years

Alejandro Cervantes and Elba Juarez

## 20 Years

Paul and Maria Frye

## 25 Years

Justin and Teresa Jackson  
Kevin and Elizabeth Hutchins

## 30 Years

Ronald and Nancy Klapchar

## 35 Years

Scott and Lysa Long  
Andrew and Catherine Brennan  
David and Jill Reed

## 40 Years

Steven and Emily Shepard

## 50 Years

Gerald and Leslie Gates

## 55 Years

Alfonso and Marianne Maione

## 60 Years

Al and Jean Turgeon  
Joe and Marjorie Volk



Father Andrew Templeton  
Parochial Vicar at St. Luke

## ASK FATHER TEMPLETON

We asked children in our Faith Formation Program and Teens for Chris to submit questions to Father Templeton about things they would like to know about him or about the Catholic religion in general. Father has kindly agreed to answer one or two questions each month in this newsletter and on our social media accounts. Follow us [@stlukesminthill](https://www.instagram.com/stlukesminthill)

### Q: What is your discernment story?

**A:** Like many priests, I was inspired by other priests when I was young. I saw their love for Jesus and His truth, their reverence at Mass, and the way they united themselves to Christ as both priest and victim. They devoted themselves fully to Christ and His Church. They sacrificed themselves for others, and that was something I felt deeply drawn to. Later, when I was in high school (15 years old), I went on a youth retreat to the Shrine of the Most Blessed Sacrament in Hanceville, Alabama, founded by Mother Angelica. The monastery has a monstrance—a beautiful golden vessel used to display the Eucharist for adoration—that is almost eight feet tall. While I was there, among many other things, I felt a tug at my heart during adoration to give myself to Christ as a priest and to serve His people however He desired.

Fast forward: I entered the seminary (the school for priestly formation). During that time, I studied philosophy and Latin for my undergrad and theology for my master's. I also grew in my relationship with Jesus and learned a great deal about myself, the Church, and God.

# February

To see a full list of Mass times, ministry meetings, Faith Formation classes, please go to our website calendar at <https://www.stlukechurch.net/full-calendar>. For current volunteer opportunities, please go to <https://www.stlukechurch.net/volunteer>.

**Sun., Feb. 1** Teens for Christ, 6:00 - 8:00 pm, Narthex, FREE, for teens in grades 7-12

**Mon., Feb. 2** Catholic Foundations, 7:30 - 9:00 pm, Family Life Center (Lawyers Rd.), FREE, drop-in

**Fri., Feb. 6** First Friday Adoration, 9:00 - 10:00 am, Church  
Room in the Inn

**Sat., Feb. 7** Blood Drive, 7:00 am - 12:00 pm, Parish Hall (Lawyers Rd.)

**Sun., Feb. 8** OCIA Rite of Sending, 9:00 - 10:00 am, during Mass  
Teens for Christ, 6:00 - 8:00 am, Narthex

**Mon., Feb. 9** Catholic Foundations, 7:30 - 9:00 pm, Family Life Center (Lawyers Rd.), FREE, drop-in

**Fri., Feb. 13** Room in the Inn

**Sat., Feb. 14** Family Adoration, 2:30 - 3:30 pm, Church

**Sun., Feb. 15** No childcare at the 9:00 and 11:00 am Mass  
Family Cookie Decorating, 10:00 - 11:00 am, in the Narthex  
Teens for Christ, 6:00 - 8:00 pm, Narthex

**Mon., Feb. 16** Office closed  
Catholic Foundations, 7:30 - 9:00 pm, Family Life Center

**Wed., Feb. 18** Ash Wednesday Mass Times: 6:30 am, 8:00 am, 11:00 am, 5:00 pm, and Spanish at 7:00 pm

**Fri., Feb. 20** Room in the Inn  
Knight of Columbus Fish Fry, 4:00 - 7:00 pm, Lawyers Rd.  
Stations of the Cross in English, 6:00 pm, Church  
Stations of the Cross in Spanish, 7:00 pm, Church

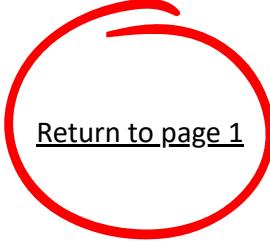
**Sat., Feb. 21** Parish Lenten Retreat, 10:00 am - 3:30 pm, offsite  
Projects for Christ, 2:00 - 4:00 pm, offsite

**Sun., Feb. 22** Holy Hour, 2:00 - 3:00 pm, Church  
Teens for Christ, 6:00 - 8:00 pm, Narthex

**Mon., Feb. 23** Catholic Foundations, 7:30 - 9:00 pm, Family Life Center

**Fri., Feb. 27** Room in the Inn  
Knights of Columbus Fish Fry, 4:00 - 7:00 pm, Lawyers Rd.  
Stations of the Cross in English, 6:00 pm, Church  
Stations of the Cross in Spanish, 7:00 pm, Church

**Sat., Feb. 28** Anointing of the Sick Mass, 10:00 am - 12:30 pm, Church

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