

# Growing in FAITH™

Discovering **hope and joy** in the Catholic faith.

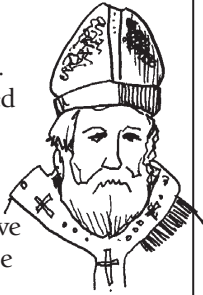
March 2014

St. Francis of Assisi Parish  
Rev. Anthony Francis Spilka, OFM Conv., Pastor

## One Minute Meditations

### St. Patrick

Born in Scotland, St. Patrick was kidnapped as a teenager and brought to 5th century Ireland as a slave to a warlord. He worked as a shepherd for six years before he escaped. Back home, he became a priest and returned to the land of his captivity as a missionary. While many legends are told about him, it is enough to say that St. Patrick eventually became bishop of Ireland and is credited for having established the Church there.



### A hearty welcome

Welcome is part of our Christian life. We are asked to extend a warm welcome to anyone who may be new or unfamiliar to our parish church. Jesus said, *"whoever welcomes you welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me"* (Matthew 10:40).

### Our choice

*"I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of the wicked"* (Psalm 84:11).



## Plunge into the desert during Lent

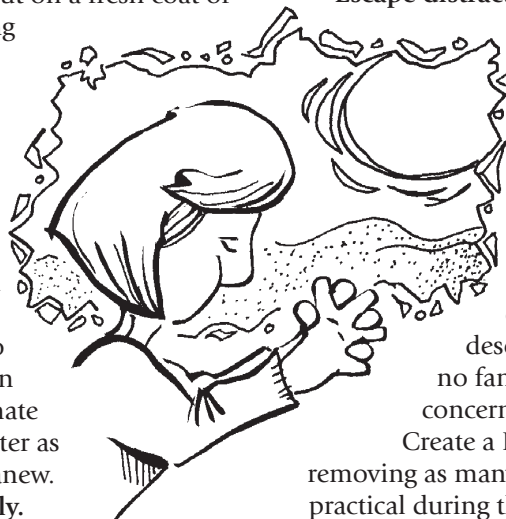
Humans are doers. When faced with a problem, we want to make a list, clean it up, or put on a fresh coat of paint. But during Lent, it's not enough to give up a favorite food or drink and call it a season. That's little more than a thin coat of paint. Lent is when we can do battle with sin in our lives, eliminate it, and greet Easter as creatures born anew.

**Do battle daily.** Determination to avoid sin and embrace virtue is a war that requires daily battle. Start in Lent by committing to new prayer habits for morning, afternoon, and evening prayer. Stay faithful and you will be

rewarded by God's grace to begin to live differently.

**Escape distractions.** God often sent his best prophets into the desert to prepare for important tasks he chose for them. Consider Lent your trip to the desert. There are minimal distractions in the desert – no electronics, no fancy food, no daily concerns. Just you and God. Create a Lenten desert by removing as many distractions as are practical during the season.

**Take the long view.** Life can be difficult and painful but it won't last forever. Life in Heaven will. Eliminate whatever you may have chosen to make this life bearable if it distracts from your goal of Heaven.



## Why Do Catholics Do That?

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches that our neighbor is someone whose origins we know and who deserves particular attention. This includes our relatives since they share our origins. Fellow citizens share

## How do we define "neighbor"?

residence in our country. Anyone who is baptized is a fellow child of our mother the Church and shares our spiritual origin. And every person is another child of God. By all these definitions, we are responsible for looking after anyone who needs our help or care.

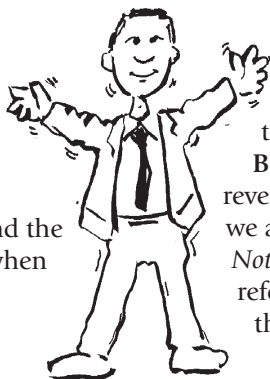


## The Eucharistic Dance

The celebration of Mass is not confined to our minds, hearts, and voices, but is meant to involve our bodies as well. Like a joyful dance, each posture is significant and has meaning.

**Standing.** Standing is a sign of respect, so we stand when the celebrant – representing Christ – enters and leaves. We also stand for the Gospel, and the bishops of our country decided to have us stand when receiving the Eucharist.

**Kneeling.** From the early days of the Church, kneeling has been a gesture of penance but more



recently has come to show adoration. Thus we kneel for the Eucharistic prayer.

**Sitting.** We sit for the pre-Gospel readings and the homily in a posture of listening and meditation.

**Bowing.** In our culture a bow usually expresses reverence and honor, and the bishops have decided that we are to bow before we receive Communion.

*Note:* for more information ask your parish priest or refer to *Postures and Gestures at Mass*, available from the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, (202)542-3000, www.usccb.org.

### from Scripture

#### John 9:1-41, A blind man sees the truth

God's power is so great that he can take ordinary materials like dirt and water and perform miracles.

A blind man came to Jesus for healing and Jesus made a paste out of clay and saliva and spread it on the man's eyes. Then he encouraged the man to wash to cleanse the dirt from his eyes so he could see. Sometimes God makes us uncomfortable before revealing his truth to us.

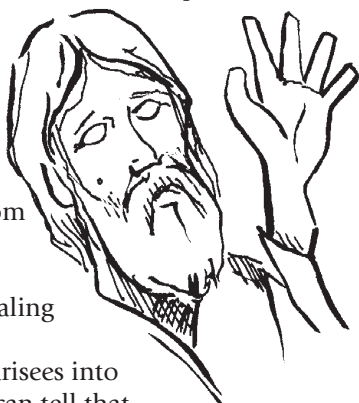
This miracle sent the Pharisees into a tizzy and this is how we can tell that they were false shepherds. Seekers of the truth ask questions sincerely, with a

willingness to find God. The Pharisees were so anxious to hold on to their positions that they made silly

conclusions such as, if this man were from God he wouldn't heal on the Sabbath. In fact, they led people away from Jesus – a very serious error.

The man believed in Jesus because he saw the truth and believed in it. When we seek God sincerely with a

willingness to obey him, he will always lead us to the truth.



### Q Who goes to & Purgatory A after death?

Sincere repentance includes a desire to repair the damage done by our sins.



That may or may not be complete before we die. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches that, "All who die in God's grace and friendship, but still

imperfectly purified, are indeed assured of their eternal salvation; but after death they undergo purification, so as to achieve the holiness necessary to enter the joy of heaven" (1030). The Church calls this final purification, "Purgatory," since this is our last chance to be purged of our sins.

There is suffering during this purification because the souls in Purgatory long to be with God, but there is also joy. Purgatory is a sure stepping stone to Heaven.

What is important is that we recognize Jesus' power over our eternity. When the world ends at the Final Judgment, there will be only two possibilities: Heaven or Hell. We who celebrate Jesus' Resurrection look forward to sharing in that victory, and we pray that our loved ones may do the same.

### Feasts & Celebrations

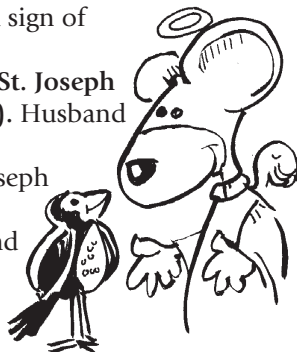
**March 3 - St. Katharine Drexel (1955).** A Philadelphia heiress, St. Katharine Drexel gave up her fortune to become a nun. She established 50 missions for Native Americans in 16 states and founded Xavier University in New Orleans, the first university for African-Americans in the U.S.

**March 4 - St. Casimir (1483).** Born a prince of Poland, St. Casimir was endowed with a very strong conscience by a great teacher, John Dlugosz. When his father sent him to take over Hungary, fifteen-year-old Casimir

assessed the odds against winning the war and turned back out of concern for his troops. He resolved never to be involved in war again.

**March 5 - Ash Wednesday.** To mark the first day of Lent, ashes from the burnt palms of the previous Passion Sunday are blessed and placed on foreheads as a sign of penance.

**March 19 - St. Joseph (first century).** Husband to the Blessed Mother, St. Joseph is a model of fatherhood and a protector of families.



#### Our Mission

To provide practical ideas that promote faithful Catholic living.

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(Unless noted Bible quotes and references are from the Revised Standard Version and the New American Bible)