



## Parish of Greencastle, Co. Tyrone (Diocese of Derry)

St. Patrick's, Greencastle      Our Lady of the Wayside, Broughderg

**The Ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time [Year A] Day of Prayer for Temperance (6th March, 2011)**

The Parochial House, 164, Greencastle Road, Sheskinshule, Omagh, BT79 7RU

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**Day of Prayer for Temperance:** What a great legacy and gift it would be for our children in this new emerging country of ours if we would be the generation brave enough to promote and work for an attitude and culture of moderation rather than excess in our use of alcohol. If we could promote abstinence or moderation and create attitudes towards alcohol use that are conducive to a better and healthier way of life, then indeed we would be leaving a wonderful inheritance to future generations.

*Pastoral Letter from Irish Bishops 2007. This letter is available on catholiccommunications.ie*

*Irish Bishops' Drug & Alcohol Initiative (IBDAI), Columba Centre, Maynooth. Co. Kildare. ibdai@iecon.ie*

**Liturgy Schedule for the Ninth Week in Ordinary Time [Year A] (7<sup>th</sup> March, 2011 – 13<sup>th</sup> March, 2011)**

<b>Saturday Evening Vigil</b>	St. Patrick's	<b>5.30pm</b> Confessions <b>6.00pm</b> Vigil Mass for Sunday: Michael Devenney (Month's Mind)
<b>Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> March</b> Ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time [Year A] Day of Prayer for Temperance	St. Patrick's Our Lady of the Wayside	<b>9:00am</b> Mass: Misso Pro Populo <b>10.30am</b> Confessions <b>11.00am</b> Mass
<b>Monday 7<sup>th</sup> March</b> St. Perpetua and St. Felicity (martyrs)	St. Patrick's	<b>10.00am</b> Mass <i>Sick and Housebound will be visited</i>
<b>Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> March</b> Ninth Week in Ordinary Time	St. Patrick's	<b>10.00am</b> Mass
<b>Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> March</b> Ash Wednesday (Day of Fast and Abstinence)	St. Patrick's	<b>10.00am</b> Mass (Blessing of Ashes) <b>8.00pm</b> Mass (Blessing of Ashes)
<b>Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> March</b> After Ash Wednesday	St. Patrick's	<b>10.00am</b> Mass
<b>Friday 11<sup>th</sup> March</b> After Ash Wednesday	St. Patrick's	<b>7.30pm</b> Stations of the Cross <b>8.00pm</b> Mass
<b>Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> March</b> After Ash Wednesday	St. Patrick's	<b>10.00am</b> Mass
<b>Saturday Evening Vigil</b>	St. Patrick's	<b>5.30pm</b> Confessions <b>6.00pm</b> Vigil Mass for Sunday: Mary McCaffrey (1 <sup>st</sup> Anniversary) Pauline Montague (3 <sup>rd</sup> Anniversary)
<b>Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> March</b> First Sunday of Lent [Year A]	St. Patrick's Our Lady of the Wayside	<b>9:00am</b> Mass: Misso Pro Populo <b>10.30am</b> Confessions <b>11.00am</b> Mass

**Missionary Awareness:** Fr. Noel Murphy C.S.Sp. (Holy Ghost Missions) wishes to express his gratitude for the welcome he received in our parish last weekend and for your generous donations to his mission amounting to **£729.69**.

**Weekly Offerings:** Thank you for your generosity to last week's collection which amounted to **£905**. *Please support your community by using your envelope even if you must attend Mass outside your parish, thank you. Envelopes received from visitors coming to Mass in Greencastle are returned to those parishes.* Please remember the parish when making your will. If you are a taxpayer please consider a Gift-Aid declaration, your contribution will be worth 25% more to your parish.

**Remembering Our Dead:** We pray for **Sara Ann McCullagh** and **Teresa McCullagh** whose anniversaries occur at this time.

**Diocesan Pilgrimage to Lourdes (Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> July to Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> July):** Cost: £599. Booking forms available in the Sacristy at St. Patrick's now.

**Lough Derg – A Day of Friendship and Prayer:** You are warmly invited to join us on Ash Wednesday (9<sup>th</sup> March).

**Prayer for the canonisation of Matt Talbot:** O Jesus, true friend of the humble worker, you have given us in your servant Matt Talbot a wonderful example of victory over vice, a model of penance and of love for the holy Eucharist; grant, we ask you, that we your servants may overcome all our unruly passions and make our lives holy with penance and love like his. And if it be you will that your servant Matt be glorified by the Church, then show by your heavenly favours the power he enjoys in your sight. You who live and reign forever. *Amen*.

**Congratulations to our most senior parishioner Katie Fox who will celebrate her 101<sup>st</sup> birthday on Thursday. Mary and John offer you a warm welcome to their home on that day**

**Next Sunday's Readings:** Genesis 2: 7-9, 3: 1-7; Psalm 50; Romans 5: 12-19; Matthew 4: 1-11 (Lectionary I, page 201) (Sunday: Year A) (Weekday: Year 1)

**Lotto Results:** A – B – E – G – U (30 winners with 3 letters, 5 drawn – £10 each) **Next Jackpot:** £4,400

**Trócaire – please support our Lenten Campaign as generously as you can this year**

Week	6.00pm Saturday Vigil	Offertory Gifts Rota	9.00am Sunday Morning
49	Saturday 5 <sup>th</sup> March The family of <b>Michael McCann</b>	Ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time	Sunday 6 <sup>th</sup> March The family of <b>Shaun Coyle</b>
50	Saturday 12 <sup>th</sup> March The family of <b>Daniel McCrory</b>	First Sunday of Lent	Sunday 13 <sup>th</sup> March The family of <b>Michaela Gillen</b>
51	Saturday 19 <sup>th</sup> March The family of <b>Shane McKenna</b>	Second Sunday of Lent	Sunday 20 <sup>th</sup> March The family of <b>Jordan Gumley</b>
52	Saturday 26 <sup>th</sup> March * The family of <b>Leah McGuigan</b>	Third Sunday of Lent	Sunday 27 <sup>th</sup> March The family of <b>Cahair Hughes</b>
<b>* Do This In Memory Week 7</b>			
As the wider parish community we thank these young people and their families for this important task.			
<b>Gathering together to celebrate the Eucharist:</b> Following on from last week's programme in The Sacred Heart Church, Omagh preparing us, the combined parishes of Drumragh, Cappagh, Greencastle, Newtownstewart, Castlederg, Drumquin and Gortin for the Eucharistic Congress (in 2012), we will now concentrate on preparing to hear the Word in our own parishes. Prayer Guides will lead us on the following Tuesday mornings after Mass: 15 <sup>th</sup> , 22 <sup>nd</sup> and 29 <sup>th</sup> March and 5 <sup>th</sup> April. Each prayer session will last no longer than 30 minutes. Please join in after Mass. We will gather in the Confessional Room at the entrance to St. Patrick's Church. Thank you for your participation. <i>Check the Novena website at eucharist2012.com</i>			
<b>Eucharistic Novena Prayer 2012</b> Lord Jesus, You were sent by the Father to gather together those who are scattered. You came among us, doing good and bringing healing, announcing the Word of salvation and giving the Bread which lasts forever. Be our companion on life's pilgrim way. May your Holy Spirit inflame our hearts, enliven our hope and open our minds, so that together with our sisters and brothers in faith we may recognize you in the Scriptures and in the breaking of bread. May your Holy Spirit transform us into one body and lead us to walk humbly on the earth, in justice and love, as witnesses of your resurrection. In communion with Mary, whom you gave to us as our Mother at the foot of the cross, through you may all praise, honour and blessing be to the Father in the Holy Spirit and in the Church, now and forever. Amen.			
<b>The 2011 Lenten Season:</b> Our observance of Lent begins on Ash Wednesday (9 <sup>th</sup> March), a day of fast and abstinence for Catholics. At Mass on Ash Wednesday the imposition of ashes replicates an ancient penitential practice and symbolises our dependence upon God's mercy and forgiveness. During Lent, the baptised are called to renew their baptismal commitment as others prepare to be baptised through the <i>Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults</i> , a period of learning and discernment for individuals who have declared their desire to become Catholics. The three traditional pillars of Lenten observance are prayer, fasting and almsgiving. The Church asks us to surrender ourselves to prayer and to the reading of Scripture, to fasting and to giving alms. The fasting that all do together on Fridays is but a sign of the daily Lenten discipline of individuals and households: fasting for certain periods of time, fasting from certain foods, but also fasting from other things and activities. Likewise, the giving of alms is some effort to share this world equally—not only through the distribution of money, but through the sharing of our time and talents. The key to fruitful observance of these practices is to recognise their link to baptismal renewal. We are called not just to abstain from sin during Lent but to true conversion of our hearts and minds as followers of Christ. We recall those waters in which we were baptised into Christ's death, died to sin and evil, and began new life in Christ. On the website <a href="http://usccb.org/lent/">usccb.org/lent/</a> you will find a variety of suggestions and resources to support your Lenten practice, enhance your prayer, and embrace your baptismal commitment.			
<b>Lenten Guidelines:</b> <b>Fasting</b> is to be observed on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday by everyone aged 18 years of age and older, who has not yet celebrated their 59 <sup>th</sup> birthday. On a fast day, one full meal is allowed. Two other meals, enough to maintain strength, may be taken, according to each one's needs, but together they should not equal another full meal. Eating between meals is not permitted, but consuming liquids, including milk and juices is allowed. <b>Abstinence</b> is observed by everyone 14 years of age and older. On days of abstinence no meat is allowed. Note that when health or the ability to work would be seriously affected, the law does not oblige. Ash Wednesday, all the Fridays of Lent, and Good Friday are days of abstinence. If a person is unable to observe the above regulations due to ill health or other serious reasons, other suitable forms of self-denial are encouraged.			
<b>Burning Hearts – Reflection on the Sunday Gospels of Lent.</b> The IOSAS Centre and Celtic Prayer Garden are holding morning <i>Lectio Divina</i> reflections on Wednesdays during Lent beginning on Wednesday 9 <sup>th</sup> March (Ash Wednesday). Each session will start at 11:30am in St Canice's Oratory and will involve quiet reflection, prayer and sharing. No previous experience of lectio divina is necessary. A light lunch will be available afterwards for those who wish to avail of it. Cost (incl. lunch, tea & coffee) is €6/£5pp per session. <i>If interested in participating, contact Máire Carlin at <a href="mailto:goldenagecentre@hotmail.com">goldenagecentre@hotmail.com</a> or on (00353) 74938 4866</i>			
<b>Millennium Forum, Derry – The Pope John Paul II Award Ceremony:</b> Monday 7 <sup>th</sup> and Tuesday 8 <sup>th</sup> March. Guest of honour will be Cardinal Theodore McCarrick, retired Archbishop of Washington DC			

*Items for inclusion should be forwarded to the Parochial House by the Wednesday evening prior to publication*

## Dates for the Diary in 2011

### Sacramental Celebrations

<b>Friday 1<sup>st</sup> April</b>	St. Patrick's	<b>6.30pm</b> First Confession
<b>Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> April</b>	Our Lady of the Wayside	<b>5.00pm</b> Sacrament of Confirmation (Bishop Lagan)
<b>Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> June</b>	Our Lady of the Wayside	<b>11.00am</b> First Holy Communion
Feast of the Ascension		

### Solemn Annual Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament

<b>Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> May</b>	St. Patrick's
<b>Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> August</b>	Our Lady of the Wayside

### Derry Diocesan Society Masses in our Parish (St. Patrick's)

Wednesday 30 <sup>th</sup> March	Sunday 22 <sup>nd</sup> May
Monday 11 <sup>th</sup> July	Tuesday 30 <sup>th</sup> August
	Wednesday 19 <sup>th</sup> October
The weekday Masses will be celebrated at 10.00am in St. Patrick's Church while the Sunday Mass will be celebrated at 11.00am in Our Lady of The Wayside Church.	

### Public Prayers for our Deceased (Cemetery Sunday) (2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> July)

<b>Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> July</b>	St. Patrick's	<b>7.00pm</b> (after Vigil Mass)
<b>Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> July</b>	Our Lady of the Wayside	<b>12.00am</b> (after 11.00am Mass)
<b>Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> November</b>	St. Patrick's	<b>8.00pm</b> Commemoration of All Souls (remembering all who died during the year)

'Do This In Memory' liturgies for candidates preparing for the Sacraments of First Reconciliation and First Holy Communion

<b>Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> March</b>	Third Sunday in Lent	<b>6.00pm</b> Vigil Mass
<b>Friday 1<sup>st</sup> April</b>		<b>6.30pm</b> First Confessions (Reconciliation)
<b>Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> April</b>	Palm Sunday	<b>6.00pm</b> Vigil Mass
<b>Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> May</b>	Third Sunday of Easter	<b>6.00pm</b> Vigil Mass
<b>Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> June</b>	Feast of the Ascension of the Lord	<b>11.00am</b> First Holy Communion
<b>Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> June</b>	Feast of Corpus Christi	<b>6.00pm</b> Vigil Mass

**Couples planning to Marry in 2011** please confirm your details with Fr. Hasson as soon as possible.

### ACCORD Marriage-Preparation Courses

11 <sup>th</sup> and 12 <sup>th</sup> March	8 <sup>th</sup> and 9 <sup>th</sup> April
13 <sup>th</sup> and 14 <sup>th</sup> May	10 <sup>th</sup> and 11 <sup>th</sup> June
Applications to the Secretary, ACCORD, Mount St. Columba Pastoral Centre, 48, Brook Street, Omagh BT78 5HD Tel: (028) 8224 2439. Email: <a href="mailto:accordomagh@btopenworld.com">accordomagh@btopenworld.com</a>	
Courses are limited to <b>15 couples</b> . Course should be completed at least <b>six months</b> before your wedding.	

### Pope Benedict XVI's Intentions for March (please remember these in your personal prayer)

<b>General:</b>	That the nations of Latin America may walk in fidelity to the Gospel and be bountiful in social justice and peace.
<b>Missionary:</b>	That the Holy Spirit may give light and strength to the Christian communities and the faithful who are persecuted or discriminated against because of the Gospel

**NIE Energy, as part of Age NI's Spread the Warmth campaign**, is inviting people to pledge an act of kindness towards older people this winter. For every individual's pledge to carry out an act of kindness for an older person, **NIE Energy will donate £5 to Age NI** to help provide practical help for older vulnerable people this winter. Your act of kindness can be something as simple as bringing the bins out and in for an older neighbour or offering a lift to someone who doesn't drive. If you are interested in participating, visit [nieenergy.co.uk/services/pledge.php](http://nieenergy.co.uk/services/pledge.php).

**St. Joseph's Church, Galliagh, Derry – Annual Diocesan Mass for those with Special Needs and their Families and Friends:** This will take place on Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> April. If you have a child who wishes to receive the Sacraments of Confirmation or First Holy Communion at this Mass please contact the Catechetical Centre on (028) 7126 4087.

**Samaritans Volunteers – Spring Recruitment Campaign:** Would you like to find out about the vital service that Samaritans provide? Maybe you could help in our work? Come along to our information evenings on Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> February, at 7.30pm in Silver Birch Hotel, Omagh.

Call (028) 8225 1530 or email [recruit.omagh.samaritans@btconnect.com](mailto:recruit.omagh.samaritans@btconnect.com) for information/application form

**There has been a lot of media coverage about the increasing incidence of suicide within our society. Samaritans believe that offering people the opportunity to be listened to in confidence and accepted without prejudice can alleviate despair and suicidal feelings. Could you help us to provide this vital service?**

**Camara:** This is a charity which takes in used computers, refurbishes them and sends them to schools and colleges in Africa. In 2011 we will refurbish over 10,000 computers which will be supplied to schools in Uganda, Lesotho, Kenya, Ethiopia, Zambia, Tanzania and Rwanda. Every summer Camara sends teams of Volunteers for four very busy weeks to Africa to assist our local partners deliver essential training to teachers in the schools we supply. The assignment is for four or five weeks, departing Ireland in early July or early August depending on destination.

Camara Belfast, Unit 23 and 24 Townsend Enterprise Park, Townsend Street, Belfast, BT13 2ES

Tel: (028) 9033 2470 Email: [belfast@camara.ie](mailto:belfast@camara.ie) Online: [camara.ie](http://camara.ie)

**Recommended Website – godtube.com:** GodTube is a free video sharing website much like the infamous YouTube but which specialises in Christian-themed videos. The website has a huge selection of themes, from Christian music videos to fascinating insights on how the liturgy is celebrated in other countries and cultures.

**Family Care Society – Adoption:** Could you make a child happy again after a difficult start in life? Family Care Society is presently seeking adoptive families who would be interested in parenting children aged between 3 and 8 years and who need the love and attention of a caring and understanding family. Could this be you?

For more information contact Family Care Society on (028) 9069 1133 (Belfast) or (028) 7136 8592 (Derry).

[email@familycaresociety.org](mailto:email@familycaresociety.org) [familycaresociety.net](http://familycaresociety.net)

**Foyle Hospice – Free Adult Counseling Service:** Offered on Tuesdays to help support those with a life limiting illness and their families / carers. Counseling is also available for the bereaved and there is a children's bereavement support group.

For more info please contact the Hospice on (028) 7135 1010

**Knock Marriage Introduction Bureau:** The aim of the Bureau is to introduce people considering marriage to a suitable marriage partner. Over 800 marriages have taken place as a result of these introductions. If you are searching for a suitable partner, why not consider applying? For further information contact the Bureau at Knock, Co. Mayo. Phone 00353 94937 5960 or visit our website at [www.knockmarriagebureau.com](http://www.knockmarriagebureau.com) and read about the workings of the Bureau.

### Seeing your life through the lens of the gospels – Matthew 7:21-27:

- Some people speak fine words but may not be so ready to back these up with action. What difference has it made to you when fine words were accompanied with sharing time, energy or talents? What benefits have you received when you have met people like this? What difference has it made when you have been able to act in a similar way?
- Jesus says that his teaching offers us a sure and solid foundation for life. When we hear the words of Jesus and act on them we are wise because we will have built our house on rock. Have you found the truth of this in your life?
- Perhaps you have also learned wisdom from the contrary experience, ignoring the teaching of Jesus and learning from that mistake. How have your mistakes in life taught you wisdom?

John Byrne OSA ([john@orlagh.ie](mailto:john@orlagh.ie))

### Questions people ask:

- What do you think of people who are always praying or reading holy books but never lift a hand to help somebody?
- These people are said to be so heavenly minded that they are no earthly good. It is a false piety which is used as an escape from the harsh demands of practical charity. In today's Gospel Jesus touches on the point: 'It is not those who say to me "Lord, Lord", who will enter the kingdom of heaven but the person who does the will of my Father in heaven.' Talk is cheap and actions speak more loudly than words. St John asked, how can you say you love God whom you've never seen if you don't love the person whom you do see?

Fr. Silvester O'Flynn OFM Cap ([silvesteroflynn@gmail.com](mailto:silvesteroflynn@gmail.com))

### **The Deep End – Flimsy Foundations:**

What a fall it had, that house built on sand. On summer holidays as a child, the challenge was always choosing the right place on the beach to build your sandcastles. Too far up the beach and the sand was too dry to stick together. Too close to the water and the whole thing could be swept away with one big wave. It's how I imagine the house in today's Gospel, with its flimsy foundations, would fall.

There are times when we are called to reflect on the foundations on which we build our lives. We have recently enough had to come to terms with just how shaky the foundations of our 'Celtic Tiger' were, how easily economic and political forces could pull asunder the security we thought we had. But what about our faith? I have always liked the quote commonly attributed to St Francis of Assisi (though it did not actually appear in his writings): 'Preach the Gospel; if necessary use words.' I don't think it is an argument for foregoing the proclamation of the Gospel in favour of good deeds and social action. Jesus is clear in today's Gospel that he wants people to listen to his words and to act on them. We are to proclaim Christ not only with our lips but with our actions; that is the rock solid foundation.

*Jane Mellett (janemellett@yahoo.com)*

### **Pope Benedict XVI's Message for Lent 2011**

Pope Benedict XVI has published his 2011 Lenten Message. The text, dated 4 November 2010, has as its title a passage with a theme from Colossians: "You were buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him." (cf. Col 2: 12) The full text is given below:

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

The Lenten period, which leads us to the celebration of Holy Easter, is for the Church a most valuable and important liturgical time, in view of which I am pleased to offer a specific word in order that it may be lived with due diligence. As she awaits the definitive encounter with her Spouse in the eternal Easter, the Church community, assiduous in prayer and charitable works, intensifies her journey in purifying the spirit, so as to draw more abundantly from the Mystery of Redemption the new life in Christ the Lord (cf. Preface I of Lent).

1. This very life was already bestowed upon us on the day of our Baptism, when we "become sharers in Christ's death and Resurrection", and there began for us "the joyful and exulting adventure of his disciples" (Homily on the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord, 10 January, 2010). In his Letters, St. Paul repeatedly insists on the singular communion with the Son of God that this washing brings about. The fact that, in most cases, Baptism is received in infancy highlights how it is a gift of God: no one earns eternal life through their own efforts. The mercy of God, which cancels sin and, at the same time, allows us to experience in our lives "the mind of Christ Jesus" (Phil 2: 5), is given to men and women freely. The Apostle to the Gentiles, in the Letter to the Philippians, expresses the meaning of the transformation that takes place through participation in the death and resurrection of Christ, pointing to its goal: that "I may come to know him and the power of his resurrection, and partake of his sufferings by being molded to the pattern of his death, striving towards the goal of resurrection from the dead" (Phil 3: 10-11). Hence, Baptism is not a rite from the past, but the encounter with Christ, which informs the entire existence of the baptized, imparting divine life and calling for sincere conversion; initiated and supported by Grace, it permits the baptized to reach the adult stature of Christ.

A particular connection binds Baptism to Lent as the favorable time to experience this saving Grace. The Fathers of the Second Vatican Council exhorted all of the Church's Pastors to make greater use "of the baptismal features proper to the Lenten liturgy" (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum concilium*, n. 109). In fact, the Church has always associated the Easter Vigil with the celebration of Baptism: this Sacrament realizes the great mystery in which man dies to sin, is made a sharer in the new life of the Risen Christ and receives the same Spirit of God who raised Jesus from the dead (cf. Rm 8: 11). This free gift must always be rekindled in each one of us, and Lent offers us a path like that of the catechumenate, which, for the Christians of the early Church, just as for catechumens today, is an irreplaceable school of faith and Christian life. Truly, they live their Baptism as an act that shapes their entire existence.

2. In order to undertake more seriously our journey towards Easter and prepare ourselves to celebrate the Resurrection of the Lord – the most joyous and solemn feast of the entire liturgical year – what could be more appropriate than allowing ourselves to be guided by the Word of God? For this reason, the Church, in the Gospel texts of the Sundays of Lent, leads us to a particularly intense encounter with the Lord, calling us to retrace the steps of Christian initiation: for catechumens, in preparation for receiving the Sacrament of rebirth; for the baptized, in light of the new and decisive steps to be taken in the sequela Christi and a fuller giving of oneself to him.



← The First Sunday of the Lenten journey reveals our condition as human beings here on earth. The victorious battle against temptation, the starting point of Jesus' mission, is an invitation to become aware of our own fragility in order to accept the Grace that frees from sin and infuses new strength in Christ – the way, the truth and the life (cf. *Ordo Initiationis Christianae Adultorum*, n. 25). It is a powerful reminder that Christian faith implies, following the example of Jesus and in union with him, a battle "against the ruling forces who are masters of the darkness in this world" (Eph 6: 12), in which the devil is at work and never tires – even today – of tempting whoever wishes to draw close to the Lord: Christ emerges victorious to open also our hearts to hope and guide us in overcoming the seductions of evil.

The Gospel of the Transfiguration of the Lord puts before our eyes the glory of Christ, which anticipates the resurrection and announces the divinization of man. The Christian community becomes aware that Jesus leads it, like the Apostles Peter, James and John "up a high mountain by themselves" (Mt 17: 1), to receive once again in Christ, as sons and daughters in the Son, the gift of the Grace of God: "This is my Son, the Beloved; he enjoys my favor. Listen to him" (Mt 17: 5). It is the invitation to take a distance from the noisiness of everyday life in order to immerse oneself in God's presence. He desires to hand down to us, each day, a Word that penetrates the depths of our spirit, where we discern good from evil (cf. Heb 4:12), reinforcing our will to follow the Lord.

The question that Jesus puts to the Samaritan woman: "Give me a drink" (Jn 4: 7), is presented to us in the liturgy of the third Sunday; it expresses the passion of God for every man and woman, and wishes to awaken in our hearts the desire for the gift of "a spring of water within, welling up for eternal life" (Jn 4: 14): this is the gift of the Holy Spirit, who transforms Christians into "true worshipers," capable of praying to the Father "in spirit and truth" (Jn 4: 23). Only this water can extinguish our thirst for goodness, truth and beauty! Only this water, given to us by the Son, can irrigate the deserts of our restless and unsatisfied soul, until it "finds rest in God", as per the famous words of St. Augustine.

The Sunday of the man born blind presents Christ as the light of the world. The Gospel confronts each one of us with the question: "Do you believe in the Son of man?" "Lord, I believe!" (Jn 9: 35. 38), the man born blind joyfully exclaims, giving voice to all believers. The miracle of this healing is a sign that Christ wants not only to give us sight, but also open our interior vision, so that our faith may become ever deeper and we may recognize him as our only Savior. He illuminates all that is dark in life and leads men and women to live as "children of the light".

On the fifth Sunday, when the resurrection of Lazarus is proclaimed, we are faced with the ultimate mystery of our existence: "I am the resurrection and the life... Do you believe this?" (Jn 11: 25-26). For the Christian community, it is the moment to place with sincerity – together with Martha – all of our hopes in Jesus of Nazareth: "Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, the one who was to come into this world" (Jn 11: 27). Communion with Christ in this life prepares us to overcome the barrier of death, so that we may live eternally with him. Faith in the resurrection of the dead and hope in eternal life open our eyes to the ultimate meaning of our existence: God created men and women for resurrection and life, and this truth gives an authentic and definitive meaning to human history, to the personal and social lives of men and women, to culture, politics and the economy. Without the light of faith, the entire universe finishes shut within a tomb devoid of any future, any hope.

The Lenten journey finds its fulfillment in the Paschal Triduum, especially in the Great Vigil of the Holy Night: renewing our baptismal promises, we reaffirm that Christ is the Lord of our life, that life which God bestowed upon us when we were reborn of "water and Holy Spirit", and we profess again our firm commitment to respond to the action of the Grace in order to be his disciples.

3. By immersing ourselves into the death and resurrection of Christ through the Sacrament of Baptism, we are moved to free our hearts every day from the burden of material things, from a self-centered relationship with the "world" that impoverishes us and prevents us from being available and open to God and our neighbor. In Christ, God revealed himself as Love (cf. 1Jn 4: 7-10). The Cross of Christ, the "word of the Cross", manifests God's saving power (cf. 1Cor 1: 18), that is given to raise men and women anew and bring them salvation: it is love in its most extreme form (cf. *Encyclical Deus caritas est*, n. 12). Through the traditional practices of fasting, almsgiving and prayer, which are an expression of our commitment to conversion, Lent teaches us how to live the love of Christ in an ever more radical way. Fasting, which can have various motivations, takes on a profoundly religious significance for the Christian: by rendering our table poorer, we learn to overcome selfishness in order to live in the logic of gift and love; by bearing some form of deprivation – and not just what is in excess – we learn to look away from our "ego", to discover Someone close to us and to recognize God in the face of so many brothers and sisters. For Christians, fasting, far from being depressing, opens us ever more to God and to the needs of others, thus allowing love of God to become also love of our neighbour (cf. Mk 12: 31).



← In our journey, we are often faced with the temptation of accumulating and love of money that undermine God's primacy in our lives. The greed of possession leads to violence, exploitation and death; for this, the Church, especially during the Lenten period, reminds us to practice almsgiving – which is the capacity to share. The idolatry of goods, on the other hand, not only causes us to drift away from others, but divests man, making him unhappy, deceiving him, deluding him without fulfilling its promises, since it puts materialistic goods in the place of God, the only source of life. How can we understand God's paternal goodness, if our heart is full of egoism and our own projects, deceiving us that our future is guaranteed? The temptation is to think, just like the rich man in the parable: "My soul, you have plenty of good things laid by for many years to come...". We are all aware of the Lord's judgment: "Fool! This very night the demand will be made for your soul..." (Lk 12: 19-20). The practice of almsgiving is a reminder of God's primacy and turns our attention towards others, so that we may rediscover how good our Father is, and receive his mercy.

During the entire Lenten period, the Church offers us God's Word with particular abundance. By meditating and internalizing the Word in order to live it every day, we learn a precious and irreplaceable form of prayer; by attentively listening to God, who continues to speak to our hearts, we nourish the itinerary of faith initiated on the day of our Baptism. Prayer also allows us to gain a new concept of time: without the perspective of eternity and transcendence, in fact, time simply directs our steps towards a horizon without a future. Instead, when we pray, we find time for God, to understand that his "words will not pass away" (cf. Mk 13: 31), to enter into that intimate communion with Him "that no one shall take from you" (Jn 16: 22), opening us to the hope that does not disappoint, eternal life.

In synthesis, the Lenten journey, in which we are invited to contemplate the Mystery of the Cross, is meant to reproduce within us "the pattern of his death" (Ph 3: 10), so as to effect a deep conversion in our lives; that we may be transformed by the action of the Holy Spirit, like St. Paul on the road to Damascus; that we may firmly orient our existence according to the will of God; that we may be freed of our egoism, overcoming the instinct to dominate others and opening us to the love of Christ. The Lenten period is a favorable time to recognize our weakness and to accept, through a sincere inventory of our life, the renewing Grace of the Sacrament of Penance, and walk resolutely towards Christ.

Dear Brothers and Sisters, through the personal encounter with our Redeemer and through fasting, almsgiving and prayer, the journey of conversion towards Easter leads us to rediscover our Baptism. This Lent, let us renew our acceptance of the Grace that God bestowed upon us at that moment, so that it may illuminate and guide all of our actions. What the Sacrament signifies and realizes, we are called to experience every day by following Christ in an ever more generous and authentic manner. In this our itinerary, let us entrust ourselves to the Virgin Mary, who generated the Word of God in faith and in the flesh, so that we may immerse ourselves – just as she did – in the death and resurrection of her Son Jesus, and possess eternal life.

*BENEDICTUS PP XVI*