



Parish of Greencastle, Co. Tyrone (Diocese of Derry)
St. Patrick's, Greencastle **Our Lady of the Wayside, Broughderg**
Second Sunday of Lent [Year A] (20th March, 2011)
 The Parochial House, 164, Greencastle Road, Sheskinshule, Omagh, BT79 7RU
Website: greencastleparish.com **Tel:** (028) 8164 8474 **Email:** greencastlepp@yahoo.com



Liturgy Schedule for the Second Sunday of Lent [Year A] (21st March, 2011 – 27th March, 2011)

Saturday Evening Vigil	St. Patrick's	5.30pm Confessions 6.00pm Vigil Mass for Sunday: John Tuohey (3 rd Anniversary)
Sunday 20th March Second Sunday of Lent [Year A]	St. Patrick's Our Lady of the Wayside	9:00am Mass: Misso Pro Populo 10.30am Confessions 11.00am Mass
Monday 21st March St. Enda (abbot)	St. Patrick's	10.00am Mass
Tuesday 22nd March Second Week of Lent	St. Patrick's	10.00am Mass 10.30am Prayer Guides' Reflection
Wednesday 23rd March Second Week of Lent	St. Patrick's	10.00am Mass
Thursday 24th March Second Week of Lent	St. Patrick's	11.00am Mass
Friday 25th March Feast of the Annunciation of the Lord	St. Eugene's Cathedral St. Patrick's	7.30pm Mass with Bishop Hegarty 7.30pm Stations of the Cross 8.00pm Mass
Saturday 26th March Second Week of Lent	St. Patrick's	10.00am Mass
Saturday Evening Vigil <i>Do This In Memory (Week 7)</i>	St. Patrick's	5.30pm Confessions 6.00pm Vigil Mass for Sunday: William John Morris (4 th Anniversary)
Sunday 27th March Third Sunday of Lent [Year A]	St. Patrick's Our Lady of the Wayside	9:00am Mass: Misso Pro Populo 10.30am Confessions 11.00am Mass

Weekly Offerings: Thank you for your generosity to last week's collection which amounted to **£1,180**. 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. **Irish Language Street Collection:** Taken up this weekend to assist children who will be attending the Gaelteacht in the summer. *Refer to Anne Clarke*

Remembering Our Dead: We pray for **John Tuohey** whose anniversary occurs at this time.

Episcopal Ordination: Sunday 20th March is the anniversary of the Episcopal Ordination of our auxiliary bishop, Most Rev. Bishop Francis Lagan (1988). Remember him in your prayers.

Mass for Expectant Mothers: Bishop Hegarty has asked me to inform you of a Mass for Expectant Mothers, which he will celebrate in St. Eugene's Cathedral, Derry on Friday 25th March (Feast of the Annunciation of the Lord) at 7.30pm.

Greencastle Health and Well-Being Day (Saturday 26th March // 12noon – 2.00pm): Free Blood pressure checks, cholesterol checks, information on healthy eating, home security, drugs and alcohol information, cancer information, local support services. Everyone welcome, supported by DARDCCP.

Pioneer Total Abstinence Association – Annual Buffet and Dance: The Shepherd's Rest on Friday 29th April at 8.30pm. Tickets are £12.50. Anyone eligible for a Gold or Silver pin should contact the committee ASAP

Next Sunday's Readings: Exodus 17: 3-7; Psalm 94; Romans 5: 1-2, 5-8; John 5: 4-2
(Lectionary I, page 245) **(Sunday: Year A) (Weekday: Year 1)**

Lotto Results: C – F – I – S – U (9 winners with 3 letters, 5 drawn – £10 each) **Next Jackpot:** £4,500

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

Week	6.00pm Saturday Vigil	Offertory Gifts Rota	9.00am Sunday Morning
51	Saturday 19 th March The family of Shane McKenna	Second Sunday of Lent	Sunday 20 th March The family of Jordan Gumley
52	Saturday 26 th March * The family of Leah McGuigan	Third Sunday of Lent	Sunday 27 th March The family of Cahair Hughes
53	Saturday 2 nd April The family of Michelle O'Brian	Fourth Sunday of Lent	Sunday 3 rd April The family of Rachel McAleer

*** Do This In Memory Week 7**

As the wider parish community we thank these young people and their families for this important task.

Gathering together to celebrate the Eucharist: Following on from the 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: 22nd and 29th March and 5th 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.
Check the Novena website at eucharist2012.com

Take a Look at Our Diocesan Website: The website is regularly updated with news and resources for use in parishes. During Lent a special feature will be full of resources to assist individuals or parish groups who wish to undertake Lectio Divina using the Sunday gospels. Hope you find it helpful!
derrydiocese.org

Age NI First Connect Service: We offer emotional and practical support at difficult times to people later in life. The First Connect Coordinator will visit each client at home or at an alternative suitable venue to discuss their needs and provide them with information on the services that are available. This could be as simple as involving them in the community by organising access to a day centre or community group, a benefits check to ensure they are getting what they are entitled to, providing home safety measures etc. In agreement with the client, the First Connect Coordinator will signpost them to the services and make sure they are in place.
For more information or to make a referral to the First Connect service contact Age NI at:
Freephone 0808 808 7575. Alternatively you can contact the First Connect Coordinator for the Western Area, Eimear McKearney on (074) 2562 0194 or email eimear.mckearney@ageni.org

Trocaire – Reflection Day: For young adults (18 – 35) on 8th and 9th April in St. Patrick's College, Maynooth. The day is aimed at giving young adults the opportunity to explore how our faith relates to experiences of justice and injustice in today's world and to inspire us to work for a more just world. Those participating in World Youth Day in Madrid this year might be particularly interested. Cost €40 (€25 for students and unwaged), including meals and Friday night accommodation on campus. *For more info and to download a booking form visit to trocaire.org/parishresources. Booking deadline is 25th March*

Classes offered at Rouskey Community Centre:	Beginners Computers: Closing Date: Friday 1 st April
Tai Chi: 6 th , 13 th and 20 th April and 4 th May. £20 for 4 weeks. Tutor: Sean O'Kane.	
Flower Arranging: Over 55s with Pearl Feathers, Monday 28 th March at 2.00pm for 4 weeks. £5	<i>Materials not included</i>
Felt Making: Over 55s with Teresa Pontz. Friday 6 th May at 2.00pm. Participants will be making small felt bags.	6 Places
Keep Fit: Thursday 24 th March at 7.30pm for 4 weeks. £15.	<i>Need 10 to 12 people to run the class</i>
Anyone one interested in any of these classes can call (028) 8164 8706 or (078) 4745 9428	

This Week's Calendar of Feasts and Saints:

Monday 21st March – St. Enda (abbot) Considered to be one of the three great late vocations (athlaech) of Ireland. His sister Faenche, a nun, set his thoughts on a religious vocation. He made a small foundation in Cell Aine, Co. Louth and after studies in Scotland under Ninian made several foundations in the Boyne valley. On Faenche's urging he went to Aran. Thought to have died in 520 and is considered as one of the early models of ascetic monasticism in Ireland.

Wednesday 23rd March – St. Turibius of Mongravejo (bishop) [1538-1606] A layman when he was appointed archbishop of Lima, Peru by King Philip II. He combated all the abuses of the conquerors in Peru and built up the Church there.

Thursday 24th March – St. Macartan (bishop) Belongs to a very early generation of saints in Ireland and is recognised as the first 'Bishop of Clogher'. He is known as Patrick's 'Strong Man' for his dedication and faithfulness.

Friday 25th March – The Annunciation of the Lord Giving her consent to God's word, Mary becomes the mother of Jesus. Espousing the divine will for salvation wholeheartedly, without a single sin to restrain her, she gave herself entirely to the person and to the work of her Son; she did so in order to serve the mystery of redemption with him and dependent upon him, by God's grace.
CCC, 494

**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

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

Solemn Annual Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament

Sunday 15th May	St. Patrick's
Sunday 21st August	Our Lady of the Wayside

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

Wednesday 30 th March	Sunday 22 nd May
Monday 11 th July	Tuesday 30 th August
Wednesday 19 th 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) (2nd and 3rd July)

Saturday 2nd July	St. Patrick's	7.00pm (after Vigil Mass)
Sunday 3rd July	Our Lady of the Wayside	12.00am (after 11.00am Mass)
Wednesday 2nd November	St. Patrick's	8.00pm 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

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

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

ACCORD Marriage-Preparation Courses

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

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

General:	That the nations of Latin America may walk in fidelity to the Gospel and be bountiful in social justice and peace.
Missionary:	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

Collection for Moldova: A collection of clothes etc. will take place in St. Colmcille's GFC Grounds, Carrickmore during the month of March. Bags or boxes of all types of ladies', gent's and children's clothes and shoes, bed linen, curtains, towels, crockery, cooking utensils and small items of furniture etc., can be left in the GREEN CONTAINER between 11.00am. and 8.00pm daily. The container will be locked nightly. To donate larger items of furniture, contact any of the persons listed below. Everything will go to United Christian Aid, Craigavon where it will be sorted. The proceeds will go directly to Moldova to help UCA support the poorest families. Contact Briege (028) 8076 0667 / 07867 934684; Conor (028) 807 61594 / 07585 223195 or Collette (028) 807 61493

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 9th 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.

Volunteer Walk Leader Training course – Cookstown Leisure Centre on Wednesday 23rd March:

Purpose: To lead short, accessible, community based health walks for people (1/2 - 1 hr). Health walk insurance cover is provided for all health walks. All new walk leaders will be provided with a luminous safety tabard and whistle. For more information or to book your place, contact Nicola Browne, Physical Activity Coordinator, Northern Health and Social Care Trust Tel: (0280) 2563 5575 or Email: nicola.browne@northerntrust.hscni.net

Further information: The Walking for Health programme aims to improve the health and wellbeing of people in the Northern Health and Social Care Trust area by encouraging them to increase their level of physical activity through participation in regular health walks, which last approximately 30 minutes to 1 hour.

Specific Tasks and Duties

- Research and risk assess routes for health walks.
- To become familiar with the risk assessment completed for the walk and the route you are leading.
- To commit to leading a regular walk (once a month, fortnight or weekly) or provide holiday/sick cover for other volunteers.
- To ensure that new walkers complete a health walk questionnaire before they take their first walk and with further annual updates.
- To keep participants information confidential
- To keep a written register for each walk.
- To welcome the group and give a brief talk before starting off including information on the walk route and possible risks.
- As front leader, to indicate to walkers when to start 'brisk' walking, when to cool down and if necessary, when to change direction.
- As back leader to carry the first aid kit as well as a whistle or mobile phone. To ensure that everyone completes the walk and if anyone needs to abandon the walk that they are assisted to return.
- To attend regular supervision and support meetings.
- To assist with developing a walk programme and help to publicise the Walking for Health Programme.

Role Volunteer Walk Leader

Purpose To lead short, accessible, community based health walks within the Northern Health and Social Care Trust area for people wishing to improve their health through moderate exercise.

Skills needed

- enthusiasm for walking;
- good communication skills;
- friendly, warm, sociable personality;
- reliable and punctual;
- non-judgemental attitude;
- willingness to undergo basic training and work closely with others.

Location Most health walks will take place within the Northern Health and Social Care Trust area (this includes the following Councils: Antrim, Ballymena, Ballymoney, Carrickfergus, Coleraine, Cookstown, Larne, Magherafelt, Moyle, Newtownabbey).

Walk leaders are encouraged to join an already established group within their locality or establish a new walking group with support from the local Physical Activity Coordinator.

Training and Support All walk leaders will be required to attend a one-day health walk training course prior to leading any walks. Optional Heartstart Emergency Life Support Training will also be provided. After initial training, walk leaders training sessions will be organised to address any specific areas identified by volunteer walk leaders.

Insurance Cover Health walk insurance cover is provided for all health walks within the UK. In order to be covered all volunteers must ensure that they are registered on a database held by the Physical Activity Coordinator based within the Northern Health and Social Care Trust. In addition walk leaders must complete a risk assessment of the walking route, maintain a register of all people on the walk and ensure that each participate has completed a health walk questionnaire. *Please note that for insurance purposes a parent or guardian must accompany children under the age of 16 on a walk.*

Resources Provided All new walk leaders will be provided with a luminous safety tabard and whistle. A first aid kit will be provided to all leaders who complete Heartstart Training.

Supervision Regular network meetings will be organised by the Physical Activity Coordinator to provide volunteer walk leaders with the opportunity to discuss any concerns. The Physical Activity Coordinator can also be contacted by telephone or email on a regular basis to discuss any issues or concerns.

Commitment Volunteers will be able to participate for as few or many sessions as they wish, although it is hoped that volunteers will wish to participate on an ongoing basis.

Accountability Volunteer walk leaders are accountable to their Volunteer Scheme Manager: Nicola Browne, Physical Activity Coordinator, Northern Health and Social Care Trust Tel: 028 2563 5575 or Email:

nicola.browne@northerntrust.hscni.net

Suicide Awareness Training, Cookstown: Free Training is being offered by PIPS Suicide Prevention at Gortalowry House, 94 Church Street, Cookstown, BT80 8HX on Thursday 10th March from 10.00am to 4.00pm (refreshments will be provided).
For further information and for reservations contact
PLACES ARE LIMITED Davna Bell on (079) 2624 2519 or email emerald89a@yahoo.co.uk

Sperrin View Livery Equestrian Weekend in Aid of Foyle Hospice: Sponsored Horse Ride Saturday 28th May, Sponsored Horse Drive Sunday 29th May, routes available for all abilities and levels, refreshments provided on both days, entry fee £25 per event.
Contact Kathleen, Sperrin View Livery, Glendera Road, Feeny, 07709159016 or Jamie 07871970997

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

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 Online: camara.ie

Eucharistic Novena Prayer 2012

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 recognise 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.

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 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 and read about the workings of the Bureau.

Questions people ask:

- Q. The transfiguration was an occasion of great light, but what is the significance of the cloud? Was it to foretell the future suffering of Jesus?
- A. You are on the right track in associating the cloud with the darkness of suffering. It was a bright cloud, showing that God was the light and voice behind that darkness. The people of the Exodus were led by a flame at night and a cloud by day. In the journey of faith we receive enough light to carry us through the dark times, but the cloud indicates that our limited human minds cannot fully grasp the gloriously bright reality of God.
Fr. Silvester O'Flynn OFM Cap (silvesteroflynn@gmail.com)

Seeing your life through the lens of the gospels – Matthew 17:1-9:

1. The transfiguration experience was one that, for Jesus, clarified his relationship with his Father and strengthened him for the future. What have been the experiences, the moments of insight, that have clarified your sense of who you are, and what is your relationship with God?
2. On the mountain the disciples saw Jesus in a new way. Sometimes in friendship there are moments of sharing in which we get to know a friend in a new and deeper way. Have you had that experience in human friendship, or in your relationship with Jesus and God? Recall when that happened, and what it was like for you.
3. The clear vision of Jesus with Moses and Elijah was followed by a frightening experience of being in a cloud and it was in the midst of the cloud that the disciples were instructed 'This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him.' Have you had the experience of learning the truth about life and about your relationship with God from moments of confusion as well as from times of special joy?
4. After their special experience the disciples came down the mountain again. We cannot live each day at the level of special spiritual experiences, but the memory of them can strengthen us in difficult times. What memories encourage you in time of trouble?

John Byrne OSA (john@orlagh.ie)

The Deep End – Seize the Moment:

'Thanks for coming'. 'Thanks for having me'. 'It's great to see you'. 'Welcome home'. Life is full of little opportunities to acknowledge the importance of the presence of other people. Moments like these cause us to pause and do something that can be a rare occurrence in our busy lives – appreciate others at the very time we are in their presence. Often we appreciate the presence of others most when we haven't had 'quality' or 'one-on-one' time with them for a while.

When Jesus brings Peter, James and John up the mountain, Peter realises that he is in the midst of a great moment. Not only are these three 'inner circle' disciples getting some alone time with their friend and teacher, but all the signs point to a greater presence in Jesus – his face shines like the sun, his clothes become brilliant white, Moses and Elijah appear. Overcome with the enormity of the occasion, Peter exclaims 'Lord, it is wonderful for us to be here'. Many belief systems, and happily also many writers on Christian spirituality, have emphasised the value of living in the present moment and being fully aware of it. Fr Ronald Ronheiser writes: 'Too often we are not present to the beauty, love, and grace that brim within the ordinary moments of our lives... The secret to prayer is not to try to make God present, but to make ourselves present to God.'

Peter recognised the importance of this moment in the presence of God. How often can we say the same?

Triona Doherty, Athlone, Co. Roscommon (trionad@gmail.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 baptised, imparting divine life and calling for sincere conversion; initiated and supported by Grace, it permits the baptised to reach the adult stature of Christ. →

← A particular connection binds Baptism to Lent as the favourable 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 realises 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 baptised, 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 Adulorum, 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 divinisation 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 favour. 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 recognise him as our only Saviour. 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 fulfilment 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-centred relationship with the "world" that impoverishes us and prevents us from being available and open to God and our neighbour. 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 recognise 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 internalising 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 favourable time to recognise 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 realises, 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.

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