



FEAST OF ST JOSEPH MARCH 19



Everything we know about the husband of Mary and the foster father of Jesus comes from Scripture and that has seemed too little for those who made up legends about him.

We know he was a carpenter, a working man, for the skeptical Nazarenes ask about Jesus, "Is this not the carpenter's son?" (Matthew 13:55). He wasn't rich for when he took Jesus to the Temple to be circumcised and Mary to be purified he offered the sacrifice of two turtledoves or a pair of pigeons, allowed only for those who could not afford a lamb (Luke 2:24).

Despite his humble work and means, Joseph came from a royal lineage. Luke and Matthew both mark his descent from David, the greatest king of Israel (Matthew 1:1-16 and Luke 3:23-38). Indeed the angel who first tells Joseph about Jesus greets him as "son of David," a royal title used also for Jesus.

We know Joseph was man of faith, obedient to whatever God asked of him without knowing the outcome. When the angel came to Joseph in a dream and told him the truth about the child Mary was carrying, Joseph immediately and without question or concern for gossip, took Mary as his wife. When the angel came again to tell him that his family was in danger, he immediately left everything he owned, all his family and friends, and fled to a strange country with his young wife and the baby. He waited in Egypt without question until the angel told him it was safe to go back (Matthew 2:13-23).

We know Joseph loved Jesus. His one concern was for the safety of this child entrusted to him. Not only did he leave his home to protect Jesus, but upon his return settled in the obscure town of Nazareth out of fear for his life. When Jesus stayed in the Temple we are told Joseph (along with Mary) searched with great anxiety for three days for him (Luke 2:48).

We know Joseph respected God. He followed God's commands in handling the situation with Mary and going to Jerusalem to have Jesus circumcised and Mary purified after Jesus' birth. We are told that he took his family to Jerusalem every year for Passover, something that could not have been easy for a working man.

Since Joseph does not appear in Jesus' public life, at his death, or resurrection, many historians believe Joseph probably had died before Jesus entered public ministry.

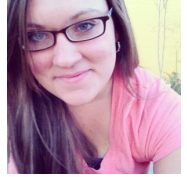
Joseph is the patron of the dying because, assuming he died before Jesus' public life, he died with Jesus and Mary close to him, the way we all would like to leave this earth. Joseph is also patron of the universal Church, fathers, carpenters, and social justice.

There is much we wish we could know about Joseph -- where and when he was born, how he spent his days, when and how he died. But Scripture has left us with the most important knowledge: who he was -- "a righteous man" (Matthew 1:18).

"Never forget that there are only two philosophies to rule your life: the one of the cross, which starts with the fast and ends with the feast. The other of Satan, which starts with the feast and ends with the headache."
Bishop Fulton J. Sheen

WHAT TO GIVE UP FOR LENT: 20 WEIRD IDEAS

Ready to move beyond just giving up chocolate? Last year we gave you 25 Creative Ideas for Lent. This year, I thought it'd be fun to expand upon that list.



by Christina Mead
www.lifeteen.com

Except, if you know us at Life Teen, you know we like to make things a bit... well... more interesting. So here's a list of weird things to do for lent. The best part is that even though they're a bit odd, they will actually help you to be holy!

- ◇ Don't eat the last bite of your food
- ◇ Park at the very back of the parking lot
- ◇ Put a popcorn kernel in your shoe every day
- ◇ Don't use your apps
- ◇ Get to know your neighbors
- ◇ Pray the "Hail Mary" and do an ab crunch for every single word
- ◇ Stop complaining and/or being negative
- ◇ Give up texting and call whomever you need to talk to
- ◇ Don't use utensils
- ◇ Give away 10 shirts, 2 pairs of pants, and a pair of shoes
- ◇ When you wake up, jump out of bed, kiss the floor, and learn humility
- ◇ Wear the same 4 outfits for all of lent
- ◇ Everyday do 20 (or 100) pushups and offer it up for someone who's sick
- ◇ Leave a post-it with a positive message on it wherever you go
- ◇ Cut out all screen-time (phone, TV, computer) after dinner
- ◇ Use your weekends to babysit for free
- ◇ Send a different person from the Life Teen Staff an affirmation email every day of Lent
- ◇ Don't straighten or curl your hair
- ◇ Sit and stand up straight – don't slouch!
- ◇ Every day take a picture of something or someone you're grateful for and hang the pictures in your room

Of course you could combine any of those ideas, or put your own spin on them! Don't forget that Lent is about stretching ourselves. It's about doing something that's uncomfortable in order to deny our "flesh" and make more room for God. I'm praying for you. Have a holy Lent.

**DO YOU KNOW YOUR SACRAMENTS?
CONFESSION & EXTREME UNCTION CLASS
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 19, 2014 @ 7:00 PM**

Father Murphy will have a class on the sacraments of Confession and Extreme Unction in Henderson Hall. The class is open to everyone wanting to increase their knowledge of the Catholic faith.

March 19 is the Feast of St. Joseph (a first class feast day) so fasting is abrogated. Please bring an appetizer, dessert or beverage to share.

ENTERING INTO PRAYER

By Anthony Lilles



Art detail from "The Adoration of the Child" by Piero di Cosimo

For those struggling to pray, one challenge in prayer is entering into silence. It seems the moment one goes into a chapel or room or some other private place, a thousand thoughts and feelings suddenly flow. Sometimes, in fact, it is to find some relief from particularly painful feelings or haunting thoughts that we find ourselves driven to prayer. Whatever the case, it can happen that the psychological activity in terms of thoughts, feelings and memories are so intense that they completely prevent someone from praying. Brooding over injury, feeling sorry for oneself, stirring up anxious thoughts, entertaining one's self with various visual or emotional fantasies – none of this is prayer. Prayer is interpersonal and it requires leaving all of these efforts behind and searching for Jesus in one's heart.

If we keep the eyes of the heart fixed on the Lord, all these distractions are quickly left behind. So, Teresa of Avila suggests thinking about a scripture passage or reading the Bible as ways of turning our attention away from distracting thoughts. She also advises thinking about our lives and how Jesus has been present to us. Therese of Lisieux, in her spiritual struggles, identifies with the bride from the Canticle of Canticles and calls out to Jesus, "draw me." Elisabeth of the Trinity asks Jesus to fixate her on him. Occasionally, even naming the distraction and offering to Jesus is helpful. For example, one might pray, "Lord, this anxiety or injury is distracting me from seeking you. I entrust this to you with all the love of my heart. Have mercy on me and free me from myself so that I can find you. I know you are waiting for me."

Whatever the method, God's love is stronger than our self-occupations. If we are confident and determined in prayer, He comes and frees us from distractions. In fact He is coming now, in an eternal act. He is the God who comes. We have every confidence because the abyss of his mercy is much deeper than the abyss of our ego. We can be determined because He is even more determined. Once we have found Him, whatever we had to suffer along the way seems like nothing at all. Most of all, He has confidence in us.

THE PROOF OF LOVE

By Dan Burke

After the Incarnation, the Cross of Jesus is the greatest proof of His love for man. Similarly, mortification, which is suffering eagerly accepted for the love of God, is one of the greatest proofs of love that we can give Him. It means freely giving up a satisfaction or a pleasure in order to impose on ourselves, for love of God, something which is contrary to our own natural inclinations; we thus prove that we prefer to satisfy God rather than ourselves. Every act of voluntary mortification, whether physical or moral, says to God, "Lord, I love You more than myself!" And since a soul in love has an ardent desire to give proof of its love, it is very vigilant not to miss a single opportunity for renunciation.

It was in this sense that St. Teresa Margaret of the Heart of Jesus resolved "not to let a single occasion for suffering escape, as far as she was able—and always in silence between God and herself." In fact, she made every effort "to find at each moment some occasion for suffering or bodily pain, so as never to satisfy the slightest appetite or desire, and she sought ways to make even what was necessary, painful and wearying to her body" (*Spirituality of St. Teresa Margaret of the Heart of Jesus*). Her ardent love for God found an outlet in this generous, untiring exercise of mortification.

Using a different expression, St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus called this practice "scattering flowers," that is, profiting by every least opportunity to suffer in order to give God a proof of her love. Knowing that the value of mortification depends upon the generosity of the dispositions with which it is done, the Saint said, "I shall always sing, even should my flowers be gathered from the midst of thorns" (*Story of a Soul*, 13).



WHAT I GAVE UP BY NOT BEING A PRIEST

by John Clark



Like many Catholic fathers, I often pray that if my boys have vocations to the priesthood, they accept their callings. Sadly, as Jesus told us, many do not. The corollary to my prayer is the

additional plea that I be given the graces to properly assist them along their way.

There are some obvious ways to do that: talk about my (very imperfect) love of God, pray with them, and take them to liturgy and the sacraments. But I also believe that part of that grace is the ability to explain the priesthood in a positive and encouraging light. Historically, we fathers might not be too good at this.

Given the dearth of seminarians in America, I wonder if we fathers are presenting the priesthood to our children in the right way. I'm guessing that, far too often, we begin with talking about the perceived negatives of the priesthood. Specifically, we may not be doing justice to the vocation by starting with saying that, as a priest, "you are giving a lot up." This has become a Catholic cliché. "You're thinking about becoming a priest, Billy? Sounds great, but just remember, you're giving a lot up to become a priest!"

It's odd that, with all the magnificence of the priesthood, we begin so many discussions—not with what the priesthood is—but with what it isn't.

My sixteen-year-old son Demetrius and I were talking about this recently. And I explained to him that every commitment involves giving up something else. Even on a natural level, things like becoming a good basketball player require the time and effort of practice. Shooting one-hundred free throws means giving up something that might be more fun. But if you hadn't given those things up, you wouldn't end up hearing too many cheering crowds.

I explained to Demetrius that when his mom and I were married, we both gave things up, too. We were giving up regular sleep (although we didn't quite understand how much at the time). We were giving up many freedoms. For instance, once you have children, your freedom of travel is quite restricted. You can no longer hop in a car and drive to Atlantic City for the weekend. You are also giving up a lot of time you used to spend with your friends—time that is now devoted to your family. You are giving up the financial rewards known largely to the single life. Had I never gotten married, for instance, I could easily have afforded to travel the world and drive a Mercedes. But, as I explained to Demetrius, his mom and I don't sit around and wonder what it would have been like if we had never surrendered those freedoms.

We believed that we were receiving something better in return: the unique form of friendship that is found only in marriage, the cooperation with God to create life, and the love and happiness of children. And that is what we received.

We call that fulfillment.

I would conclude that, for their own states of life, priests have that feeling of fulfillment, too. I am not a priest, so I can't speak as though I am. But I can speak as a man who seems to be gaining an increasing understanding of what it's like not to be a priest.

I'll never know the joy of forgiving the sins of the penitent. I'll never know what it is like to regularly bring babies into the state of sanctifying grace in Baptism.

I'll never know the unique intimacy with God that is accomplished in consecrating the Eucharist.

I'll never know what it is like to comfort one in death with the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick. I'll never know the happiness of helping husbands and wives unite in love before God in a wedding ceremony.

Men do give up a lot to be priests, but we married men give up a lot not to be priests. Yes, priests give up many goods by taking their vows, but I stand in awe of what they gain. So should we all.

Here begins the discussion.