

The Bell Ringer

ST. FRANCIS XAVIER, HYANNIS + MARCH 2021



Lent: It's Not Over Yet

*"It's Never Too Late to Repent ...
But The Time Is Now"*

By Pope Francis

"Jesus . . . calls us to a change of heart. He calls us to make a radical turn on the journey of our life, by abandoning compromises with evil . . . and decisively taking the path of the Gospel. But here again the temptation is to justify ourselves: 'But what do we need to be converted from? All in all, we're good people.' How many times have we thought: But all in all I'm good, isn't that right? We believe, we practice our faith enough? And we think we are justified.

"Unfortunately, each of us greatly resembles a tree that, for years, has given many proofs of its barrenness. But fortunately for us, Jesus is like the vinedresser who, with limitless patience, continues to obtain a reprieve for the barren fig tree: 'Let it alone, sir, this year also,' he says to the master [. . .] And if it bears fruit next year, well and good.'

"A 'year' of grace: the time of Christ's ministry; the time of the Church before his glorious return; the time of our lives, punctuated by a number of Lents, which are offered to us as opportunities for repentance and salvation; the time of a Jubilee Year of Mercy.

"Jesus' invincible patience! Have you thought about God's patience? Have you also thought about his unyielding concern for sinners and how this should move us to impatience with ourselves. It is never too late to convert, never. Up to the last moment . . . the patience of God that waits for us. Do you *(Continued on page 2)*

friendship loyal
rely group positivity
fidelity
dedication support reliance

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Lent: It's Not Over Yet . . .

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remember the little story about St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus, when she prayed for the man who had been condemned to death, a criminal who did not want to receive the comfort of the Church. He refused the priest, he didn't want to see him: he wanted to die as he was. And she was praying in the convent. And when the man was right on the verge of being executed, he turned to the priest, took the crucifix and kissed it.

"The patience of God. And he does the same with us, with all of us. How many times — we don't know, we will only know in heaven — how many times we are there, right there [about to fall] and the Lord saves us? He saves us because he has great patience with us. And this is his mercy. It's never too late to repent, but it is urgent, and the time is now. Let's begin today.

"May the Virgin Mary support us, so that we may open our hearts to God's grace, to his mercy. And may she help us never to judge others but to allow ourselves to be spurred on by daily misfortunes to make a serious examination of conscience and mend our ways." +

This article was excerpted from Pope Francis' Angelus address for the Third Sunday of Lent, February 28, 2016, in St. Peter's Square, Rome.

FIDELITY is this month's virtue. Fidelity denotes steadfastness in the vicissitudes of life. Everyone needs steadfast love, that is, fidelity, when they are encountering confusion, suffering, or failure.

Often, failure means one proceeds in fidelity and finds in failure what God intends for the fruitfulness of His will. Too often we think of fidelity as only meaningful in our personal relationships, especially marriage.

Certainly, that is a paramount virtue to those in the married state. But the pope noted fidelity is for every vocation, not just marriage.

"Christ reveals authentic love. He is the faithful friend who welcomes us even when we make mistakes and He always wants what is best for us, even when we don't deserve it," he said. "Indeed, no human relationship is authentic without fidelity and loyalty," the pope added.

One definition of fidelity reads: "Faithfulness to a person, cause, or belief, demonstrated by continuing loyalty and support." It compares with fealty, or 'sworn loyalty.' Fidelity is loyalty that's been commanded, conscripted, pledged for good.

For a Christian, a relationship with God is essential. Pope Benedict XVI reminds us "that we cannot give into compromise when it comes to

our love for Christ, for his Word, for his Truth. The Truth is the Truth; there is no compromise. The Christian life requires, as it were, the 'martyrdom' of daily fidelity to the Gospel; the courage, that is, to allow Christ to increase in us and to direct our thoughts and actions," When we "imitate" Christ's fidelity to us, it follows we must imitate his fidelity to family, friends and the Church.

Father Kenneth Baker, S.J., writes of the need for fidelity precisely at this time. "Fidelity to one's word, to one's promises, and to one's vows to God is not something that can be taken for granted. . . . We live in a time of massive infidelity.

"Contracts are broken, infidelity in marriage is not only practiced but even lauded . . . Many religious men and women have abandoned their solemn lifetime commitment to God" to embrace social or political work. "My thoughts turn to the importance and need of fidelity precisely at this time when the Church is being tested, both from within and from without. Fidelity in the 'faithful' cannot be assumed. It demands a constant struggle against the Evil One. . . a struggle which requires watchfulness and prayer (Matt. 26:41)."

Let us turn for guidance to Mary, whose fidelity to Our Lord knows no bounds. +

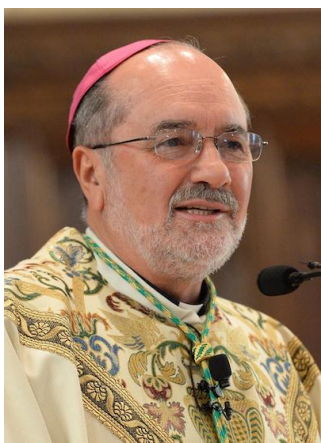


Celebrating the Year of St. Joseph

Both the Diocese of Fall River and Our Parish Offer Ways to Honor the Saint

Bishop da Cunha's Message on the Declaration of the Year of St. Joseph

“Like many of you, I have a special devotion to St. Joseph. First developed through my family and Brazilian traditions, it grew stronger when I



joined the Society of Divine Vocations, also known as the Vocationist Fathers. My religious order, the Vocationists, is under the patronage of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. Personally, I connect to St. Joseph's simplicity and unassuming, quiet role in the life of Jesus and Mary.

Bishop da Cunha We do not have a single word spoken by him in the Scriptures, yet no one can deny the important role he played in salvation history and the life of the Church.

“Pope Francis announced last December 8 that a Year of St. Joseph would take place in the Catholic Church from that date until December 8, 2021. The Pope's declaration of the special year marked the 150th anniversary of the saint's proclamation as patron of the Universal Church by Pope Pius IX on December 8, 1870.

Diocesan Consecration to St. Joseph

“**Father Donald Calloway**, who is a priest of the Congregation of Marian Fathers of the Immaculate Conception of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary, has written a new book titled *Consecration to St. Joseph: The Wonders of Our Spiritual Father*. Father Calloway will offer a virtual presentation on Living the Year of St. Joseph for our Diocese at 7 p.m. on Tuesday, March 2.

David Carvalho, senior director for Faith Formation, Youth, Young Adult and Family Life Ministries in the Fall River Diocese, explained that Father Calloway “has undertaken exhaustive research into St. Joseph, bringing to light an important figure in salvation history who is otherwise not well known.”

Father Calloway will speak on how we can live this year as a prequel to the Diocesan Consecration to St. Joseph, with preparation for the consecration beginning on March 30.”

The Diocese is pleased to host this event at no cost to participants. To register, please visit: fallriverfaithformation.org/stjoseph.

Other Diocesan Events Planned

The Diocese also announced that Bishop da Cunha will be celebrating Mass on March 19, the Solemnity of St. Joseph, as well as on May 1, the Feast of St. Joseph the Worker.

Later in the year, St. Joseph's Church in Fall River will be hosting a Holy Hour for the Year of St. Joseph on June 8 at 8 p.m. On July 12, a Holy Hour for the Family will be held at Holy Family Parish Center, Easet Taunton at 7 p.m.

On August 21 at 1 p.m., Dr. Mark Miravalle will conduct a virtual talk, *Meet Your Spiritual Father*. Later in the Fall, Katie Warner will be conduct a virtual talk on October 5 at 7 p.m. on *Strategies for Becoming Stronger Spiritual Leaders of Your Family*.

To register for these events, please visit: fallriverfaithformation.org/stjoseph.

St. Francis Xavier Events

Our Pastor, Father Michael Fitzpatrick, has announced that celebration of the Year of St. Joseph will begin formally on March 1, the start of the month traditionally devoted to St. Joseph.

Pope Leo XIII's prayer to St. Joseph has already been included in the daily Rosary said after daily Mass on Wednesdays and on the 19th day of the month since January. That prayer will now be added for all the weekend Masses following the Intercessions. Prayer cards have been distributed for personal use.

A statue of St. Joseph will echo the journeys St. Joseph embarked on — to Bethlehem for Christ's birth, to Egypt to save Him from King Herod, and the return to live again in Nazareth — as it will be traveling to the homes of parishioners for a week (**Continued on page 4**)

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of family devotion. A booklet featuring a month of *Daily Devotions to St. Joseph* is being distributed to all parishioners as well. The prayers were written by St. Alphonsus Ligouri and provide an ongoing devotion for parishioners to use throughout the year.

Ideas for Celebrating St. Joseph's Year

The Diocesan newspaper, *The Anchor*, recently printed some seven ideas for individual and families on celebrating the Year of St. Joseph.

1. Mass. Attend Mass in person or watch virtually online on March 19, the Solemnity of St. Joseph, and May 1, the Feast of St. Joseph the Worker.

2. Consecration. Take part in the Consecration of St. Joseph, which will occur on May 1, or choose on the other appropriate days in the year for this Consecration.

3. Family Rosary. Pray the Rosary together as a family and recite Pope Francis' Prayer to St. Joseph at the end. [*Above right.*]

4. Pilgrimage. Visit the Oratory of St. Joseph in Montreal online at saint-joseph.org/en/ or visit churches dedicated to St. Joseph in the Diocese. (They are located in Fall River and Fairhaven.)

5. St. Joseph Altar. Make a traditional St. Joseph Altar for March 19, which can feature an

Pope Francis' Favorite Prayer to St. Joseph

Hail, Guardian of the Redeemer, Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary. To you God

Son; in you Mary placed her trust; with you Christ became man.

Blessed Joseph, to us too, show yourself a father and guide us in the path of life.

Obtain for us grace, mercy, and courage, and defend us from every evil. Amen.



image of St. Joseph, flowers and bread. Collect food items for the altar and then donate them to a local Food Pantry.

6. Daily Prayer. Incorporate one of the various prayers to St. Joseph into your daily routine. Set aside time to pray in Eucharistic Adoration.

7. Service. Honor St. Joseph the Worker by supporting Catholic Social Services, Diocesan Health Facility, or help those in need of work. +
More ideas at @fallriverfaithformation.

The Pope's Prayer Intention for March

Evangelization

Let us pray that we may experience the Sacrament of Reconciliation with renewed depth, to taste the infinite mercy of God.

Prayer for the Holy Father

Almighty and everlasting God, have mercy upon Thy servant, Pope Francis, our Supreme Pontiff, and direct him, according to Thy loving kindness, in the way of eternal salvation; that, of Thy gift, he may ever desire that which is pleasing unto Thee and may accomplish it with all his might. Through Christ Our Lord. Amen.

Our Father. Hail Mary. Glory Be to the Father.

The Healing Power of Confession

What we often refer to as Confession is one of the great gifts Catholics enjoy. Confession is one of the two sacraments of healing — formally referred to as the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation — the other is the Anointing of the Sick.

Confession offers pardon from God's mercy for offenses committed against Him. It also reconciles one with the Church, which is wounded by the sins and which by charity, by example, and by prayer labors for the penitents's conversion.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church lists five names for this sacrament and its powers:

“It is called **the Sacrament of Conversion** because it makes sacramentally present Jesus' call to conversion, the first step in returning to the Father from whom one has strayed by sin.”

“It is called **the Sacrament of Penance**, since it consecrates the Christian sinner's personal and ecclesial steps of conversion, penance, and satisfaction.

“It is called **the Sacrament of Confession**, since the disclosure or confession of sins to a priest is an essential element of this sacrament. In a profound sense it is also a ‘confession’ — acknowledgment and praise — of the holiness of God and of his mercy toward sinful man.

“It is called **the Sacrament of Forgiveness**, since by the priest's sacramental

absolution God grants the penitent ‘pardon and peace.’

“It is called **the Sacrament of Reconciliation**, because it imparts to the sinner the love of God who



reconciles: ‘Be reconciled to God.’ He who lives by God's merciful love is ready to respond to the Lord's call: “Go; first be reconciled to your brother.”

“Christian initiation has not abolished the frailty and weakness of human nature, nor the inclination to sin that tradition calls concupiscence.

This inclination “remains in the baptized such that with the help of the grace of Christ they may prove themselves in the struggle of Christian life.

“This is the struggle of conversion directed toward holiness and eternal life to which the Lord never ceases to call us.”

The Catechism points out that Jesus calls us to conversion and this call is an essential part of the proclamation of the kingdom.

“Baptism is the principal place for the first and fundamental conversion. It is by faith in the Gospel and by

Baptism that one renounces evil and gains salvation, that is, the forgiveness of all sins and the gift of new life.

“Christ's call to conversion continues to resound in the lives of Christians. This second conversion is an uninterrupted task for the whole Church who, ‘clasping sinners to her bosom, [is] at once holy and always in need of purification, [and] follows constantly the path of penance and renewal.’ This endeavor of conversion is not just a human work. It is the movement of a ‘contrite heart,’ drawn and moved by grace to respond to the merciful love of God who loved us first.” . . .

“Jesus' call to conversion and penance, like that of the prophets before him, does not aim first at outward works, ‘sackcloth and ashes,’ fasting and mortification, but at the conversion of the heart, interior conversion. Without this, such penances remain sterile and false; however, interior conversion urges expression in visible signs, gestures and works of penance.

“Interior repentance is a radical reorientation of our whole life, a return, a conversion to God with all our heart, an end of sin, a turning away from evil, with repugnance toward the evil actions we have committed.

“At the same time it entails the desire and resolution to change one's life, with hope in God's mercy and trust in the help of his grace.“ +

Pray Like Your Life Depends on It!

If we are speaking of eternal life, it REALLY does!

Peter Kreeft in his book, *Prayer for Beginners*, opens the first chapter entitled: “Necessity: Why Praying is More Important than Eating.”

He explains: “Eating keeps your body alive, and prayer keeps your soul alive. Praying is more important than eating because your soul is more important than your body. Your soul is you, your personality, your self. You will get a new body after death, in the resurrection at the end of the world. But you will not get a new soul, you will only purify and sanctify your old one, because you *are* your soul. The ‘you’ that will get a new body is your soul.”

What food is to the body, prayer is to the soul, the book explains. But if one were to reflect on how much time we spend thinking about what we eat — how, what, and when we eat — most of us would admit it far outways — I mean really far — the time spent on how and what and when we pray. Sure, we say a morning offering, maybe the Divine Mercy Chaplet, even a Rosary, especially if we are in the habit of daily Mass. Oh, and when we remember, we say Grace before meals, and an evening prayer as we roll into bed.

In terms of food, that prayer routine might be looked upon as a starvation diet, especially, if we heed the words of St. Paul. “Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.”

Without ceasing! How does one do that? St. Josemaria Escriva, as the core of Opus Dei, believes one can remain in God’s presence all day by devoting all you do to God. “Here is a point for daily examination. Have I allowed an hour to pass, without talking to my Father God? Have I talked to him with the love of a son? You can,” he insists if you take the time to get to know him.

“Prayer is the way to know God, and this is Jesus’ definition of eternal life: ‘This is eternal life: that they know thee, the only true God.’” notes Kreeft, quoting from John 17:3.

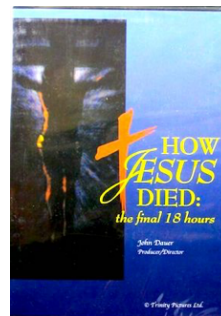
He goes on: “To know someone, you must not just know thousand of things *about* him, you must

know him, you must *meet* him, you must spend time with him.”

The goal of getting to know, meet and being with him is to love him, to have a relationship with him. That means spending time with him, to have regular conversations with him.

Conversations with God may include telling him what makes you fret, what frightens you, but it also involves thanking him for all he has given you — your life, your family, your talents, etc. That alone can keep you in his presence in gratitude for hours. Reading the Bible, slowly and pausing to ask the Holy Spirit for what those words mean for you. It takes time and prayer!

When a person truly knows Jesus, it is on the basis of a relationship; friends spend time together and talk regularly. When you know Jesus, you also know the Way, the Truth and the Life. So your life does depend on prayer, doesn’t it? +



**To Understand
the Love
Jesus Showed Us
During His
Passion
We Should
Understand
What He Suffered!**

**On Friday, March 26, at 9:45 a.m.
in the Lower Church Hall**

**Deacon David Boucher
will facilitate the showing of
the DVD, “How Jesus Died,”
which he wrote about in the
February *Bell Ringer*.**

***Seating is limited due to Covid
Registration Required
Name & email to adalco@comcast.net***

DVD running time 35 minutes

The Way of the Cross Some thoughts from Caryl Houelander

“The Passion of Christ was an experience which included in itself every experience, except sin, of every member of the human race.

“If one may say this with reverence, the 14 incidents of the Stations of the Cross show not only the suffering but the psychology of Christ.

“Above all they show, in detail, his way of transforming suffering by love. He shows us, step by step, how that plan of love can be carried out by men, women, and children today, both alone in the loneliness of their individual lives and together in communion with one another.

“Different though each human being is from every other, uniquely his own though each one’s experience is, there are certain inevitable experiences which are common to all men and from which none can escape. One of these is death. Another is love.

“Every human being alive is on the road to death. Everyone is capable of love for someone, even if it is only for himself, and the price of love, perhaps particularly of self-love, is suffering. But the power of love, and this does not apply to self-love, is to transform suffering, to heal its inevitable wounds.

“Now it is easier to understand what it is that brings [an] incongruous motley of people together to “make the Way of the Cross.” Each one

meets himself on the *Via Crucis*, which is the road through death to life.

“In Christ he finds the meaning of his own suffering, the power of his own capacity for love. He finds the explanation of himself in Our Lady, too, the mother of Christ



in whose soul he is formed perfectly, as he was once formed perfectly in her body.

“And in those others, too, who are taking part in the Passion of the Son of Man — Simon of Cyrene, Magdalen and John, Veronica, the women of Jerusalem, the good thief, the centurion, the man who lent his tomb, the scattered apostles who crept back and ran to the empty tomb on the morning of resurrection. Those in whom, through grace and mercy, Christ is being formed, and growing from the darkness of the buried seed to his full flowering.

“Yes, in the Stations of the Cross he who has the eye of faith sees the story of Christ’s historical Passion — his own individual story — and the story of the suffering world, in which Christ’s Passion goes on

through time; the way of the cross which, though it leads to the tomb and the dark sleep of death, leads on beyond it to the waking morning of resurrection and the everlasting springtime of life.

“For us, here and now, there is more immediate and more practical meaning in those 14 incidents on the way to Calvary. It is a showing not simply of the way of sorrows which we are all destined to walk, if we will or not, but of the way of love which heals sorrow, and which we all can take if we walk in the footsteps Christ has marked out for us, and not only imitate him but identify ourselves with him.

“The stations show us how each one can lighten the heavy cross that is laid upon the bent back of the whole human race now, how each one in the power of Christ’s love can sweeten his own suffering and that of those who are dear to him.

“This is why the prayer, “We adore thee, O Christ, and we bless thee, because by thy Holy Cross, thou hast redeemed the world,” echoes down the centuries, not in tones of fear and reluctance but as a cry of welcome, a tender cry, in the tones of a lover’s greeting, to him whom every man must meet on the way of sorrows, changed for him to the way of love.” +

*An excerpt from **Way of the Cross** by Caryl Houelander (1901-1954) an English lay theologian.*



**Words^{OF}
WISDOM**

"The Passion is described as the mystery of Christ's suffering. It was a mystery at the time because people could not reconcile it with what they had expected. In the sense that we can never fully understand the idea of God suffering, the Passion is still a mystery. Now if our sufferings are somehow or other to fit into the Passion of Christ — and this is no fiction because this is where they belong — there will surely be an element of mystery about them. They will make demands on our faith."

— **Fr. Hubert van Zeller**

"You must accept your cross; if you bear it courageously it will carry you to Heaven."

— **St. John Vianney**

"What was the first rule of our dear Savior's life? You know it was to do His Father's will. Well, then, the first end I propose in our daily work is to do the will of God; secondly to do it in the manner He wills; and thirdly, to do it because it is His will."

— **St. Elizabeth Ann Seton**

"And so, the idea of peace came down to do the work of peace: The Word was made flesh and even now dwells among us. It is by faith that he dwells in our hearts, in our memory, our intellect and penetrates even into our imagination. What concept could man have of

God if he did not first fashion an image of him in his heart? By nature incomprehensible and inaccessible, he was invisible and unthinkable, but now he wished to be understood, to be seen and thought of. But how, you ask, was this done? He lay in a manger and rested on a virgin's breast, preached on a mountain, and spent the night in prayer. He hung on a cross, grew pale in death, and roamed free among the dead and ruled over those in hell. He rose again on the third day, and showed the apostles the wounds of the nails, the signs of victory; and finally, in their presence he ascended to the sanctuary of heaven. How can we not contemplate this story in truth, piety and holiness?" — **St. Bernard**

"Winnow not in every wind, and do not start off in every direction (Sirach 5:11). It is essential to discern what the Spirit wants when we are making important choices in our lives. Through prayer, fasting, spiritual reading, spiritual advice, discernment of signs, sorting out our hidden motivations, etc., we develop a sense of what God wants of us."

— **Rev. Jude Winkler, O.F.M.**

"Fix your minds on the passion of our Lord Jesus Christ. Inflamed with love for us, he came down from heaven to redeem us. For our sake he endured every torment of body and soul and shrank from no bodily pain. He himself gave us an example of perfect patience and love. We, then, are to be patient in adversity." — **St. Francis of Paola**

"In her voyage across the ocean of this world, the Church is like a great ship being pounded by the waves of life's different stresses. Our duty is not to abandon ship but to keep her on her course." — **St. Boniface**



Words^o_F
WISDOM

The Road to Sanctity

"I believe that if those souls that tend towards sanctity were instructed as to the conduct they ought to follow, they would be spared a good deal of trouble. I speak as much of people in the world as of others.

"If they could realize the merit concealed in the actions of each moment of the day: I mean in each of the daily duties of their state in life . . . they would indeed be happy.

"If, besides, they understood that to attain the utmost height of perfection, the safest and surest way is to accept the crosses sent them by Providence at every moment, that the true philosopher's stone is submission to the will of God which changes into divine gold all their occupations, troubles, and sufferings, what consolation would be theirs! What courage would they not derive from the thought that to acquire the friendship of God, and to arrive at eternal glory, they had but to do what they were doing, but to suffer what they were suffering, and that what they wasted and counted as nothing would suffice to enable them to arrive at eminent sanctity: far more so than extraordinary states and wonderful works." — **Fr. Jean-Pierre de Caussade**

"Above all, it is necessary to ask of God every morning the gift of perseverance, and to beg of the Blessed Virgin to obtain it for

you, and particularly in the time of temptation, by invoking the name of Jesus and Mary as long as the temptation lasts. Happy the man who will continue to act in this manner, and shall be found so doing when Jesus Christ shall come to judge him. 'Blessed is that servant, whom, when his Lord shall come, he shall find so doing' (Matt. 24:46)." — **St. Alphonsus De Liguori**

"No one can make excuses, because anyone can love God; and he does not ask the soul for more than to love him, because he loves the soul, and it is his love."

— **Blessed Angela of Foligno**

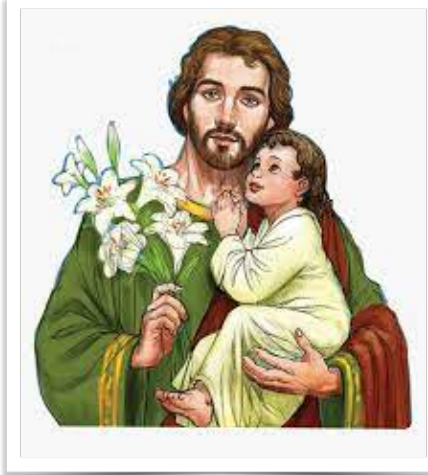
"Whoever confesses his sins ... is already working with God. God indicts your sins; if you also indict them, you are joined with God. Man and sinner are, so to speak, two realities: when you hear 'man' - this is what God has made; when you hear 'sinner' - this is what man himself has made. Destroy what you have made, so that God may save what he has made ... When you begin to abhor what you have made, it is then that your good works are beginning, since you are accusing yourself of your evil works. The beginning of good works is the confession of evil works. You do the truth and come to the light."

— **The Catechism of the Catholic Church**

"O my God, teach me to be generous, to serve you as you deserve to be served, to give without counting the cost, to fight without fear of being wounded, to work without seeking rest, and to spend myself without expecting any reward, but the knowledge that I am doing your holy will. Amen." — **St. Ignatius of Loyola**

The Month of March 2021

Monthly Focus: St. Joseph



March is the month of St. Joseph, whose feast falls on March 19th. This year, the holy Year of St. Joseph, provides extraordinary opportunities for the faithful to honor him as a personal advocate, as well as Protector of the Church. As in these and other areas of the Christian life, St. Joseph is a great exemplar for us of Lenten virtues that we do well to ponder and emulate.

Prayer Intention: Evangelization

Let us pray that we may experience the Sacrament of Reconciliation with renewed depth, to taste the infinite mercy of God.

The Virtue: Fidelity

Fidelity can also connote steadfastness in the vicissitudes of life. One needs steadfast love, that is, fidelity, when one is encountering confusion, suffering, and failure. Failure simply means one proceeds in fidelity and finds through failure what God intends for the fruitfulness of His will.