

# THE YOUNG FRANCISCAN

Autumn Newsletter 2018

Vol #2

## LENT

**As** we continue on our Lenten journey many of us have decided to give up something as our Lenten sacrifice – perhaps chocolate, our favourite food, social media or online shopping. Often we find ourselves feeling miserable about not having these small luxuries and spend the whole of Lent awaiting Easter simply so that we can once again indulge in all those pleasures we have given up!

It is important to remind ourselves “Where am I going? Where is all this ‘giving-up’ taking me?”

Our Lenten penance is meant to bring us closer to Jesus. Often we give up things that we can live without anyway! However perhaps this Lent we need to give up those things that distance us from the love of Jesus – and try to give them up for good.

If chocolate is an obstacle in our lives and causes us to sin, then Yes – get rid of it! But perhaps the things we most need to give up are those things that stop us from being a real disciple of Jesus.

## Lent is not only about giving up!

Lucky for us Catholics, the Church reminds us that Lent is not only about giving up the bad things in our lives, but also about adding some good things as well to prepare ourselves to celebrate Easter. For centuries now Catholics have been guided by the following practices:

**1. Prayer** Lent is a time when we can ‘kick-start’ our prayer lives. All of us can pray more! Perhaps try to find 5 minutes extra each day where you can spend some quiet time in prayer to God. Maybe you can even attend a weekday mass. Of course, an excellent prayer we can all make is for those who may not be so nice to us, or for those who make our lives more difficult.

**2. Fasting** When we think of fasting we mostly associate it with starving. However, God does not wish for us to starve! Pope Francis reminds us that fasting makes sense if it benefits someone else. So, what can we do less of this Lent that might benefit someone else?

**3. Almsgiving** Connected with fasting, this is where we can show our charitable side to others. Perhaps this is a good time when all that money we saved from giving something up can go to a charity instead?



## How did St Francis do Lent?

**In the 14<sup>th</sup> century manuscript titled “The Little Flowers of St Francis” we read a story about how St Francis spent one of his Lents completely alone on an island for 40 days in prayer, with nothing but two small loaves of bread.**

*St Francis, one day of the Carnival, was near the Lake of Perugia, in the house of one of his devout children, with whom he had spent the night, when he was inspired by God to go and pass the time of Lent in an island on the lake. St Francis begged his friend, out of love to God, to conduct him in his boat to an island uninhabited by man, and to take him there into the night of Ash-Wednesday, so that none might know where he was. His friend, because of the great devotion he bore to St Francis, granted his request and conducted him to a desert island. St Francis took nothing with him but two small loaves.*

*When they had reached the island, his friend left him and returned home; the saint earnestly entreated him to reveal to no one where he was, and not to come and fetch him before Holy Thursday; to which he consented. St Francis being*

*quite alone, and there being no dwelling in the island in which he could take shelter, he entered a thick part of the woods all overgrown with brambles and other creeping plants, and forming as it were a kind of hut, and there began to pray and enter into the*



*contemplation of divine things. He passed the whole of Lent without drinking or eating nothing but half of one of the small loaves he had taken with him, as we learned from his friend,*

*who went to fetch him on Holy Thursday, and found one of the loaves untouched and the other only half consumed. It is presumed that St Francis ate this half out of the respect to our blessed Lord, who fasted forty days and forty nights without taking any material food; for by eating this bit of bread he put aside the temptation to vain-glory, and yet fasted forty days and forty nights in imitation of the Saviour.*

*In later times God worked many miracles, through the merits of the saint, on the spot where St Francis had fasted so wonderfully; on which account people began to build there, and little by little a town rose up, with the convent called the Convent of the Isle, and even to this day the inhabitants of that town hold in great respect and great devotion the spot in which Saint Francis passed the time of Lent.*

# Did you know?

## 40 days

Lent is the symbolic 40 days from Ash Wednesday to Easter. Sundays during Lent are not counted, so in fact Lent actually lasts 46 days. The number '40' is significant throughout the bible: Jesus spent 40 days in the desert. Noah had to wait 40 days for his ark to float. Moses and his followers travelled for 40 years in the desert before reaching the Promised Land.

## Moveable Feast

Easter is a moveable feast, meaning that its date will change from year to year (unlike Christmas which always falls on the same date). The date is determined by the full moon of the Pashal, or Passover, full moon. Easter will always fall between March 22<sup>nd</sup> and April 25<sup>th</sup>. There are mathematical formulas that determine when Easter will fall in any year.

## End of Lent

Lent does not actually end on Easter. It ends on Holy Thursday – the day we commemorate the Last Supper of Jesus.

In a 2014 survey chocolate was the number one food most people were willing to give up during Lent!

## Fasting

Today Catholics are required to fast on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. But don't worry, on those days the equivalent to one meal can be consumed, however the meat from warm-blooded animals should be avoided.

Fish is allowed to be eaten on days of fasting as it is not a warm-blooded animal. In fact, in the US the Bishops Conference has given the OK for alligator meat to be eaten on days of fasting as it is considered seafood!

The severity of fasting on other days throughout Lent is up to each individual.

"Lent" comes from the Middle English word "lente" which means springtime.

On all Fridays of the year it is a good practice to perform an act of penance such as:

- A. prayer (attending mass, visiting a chapel, making the Stations of the Cross, Rosary etc).
- B. Self-denial (fasting, giving up entertainment, etc),
- C. Helping other (giving special attention to the poor, sick, elderly, lonely, etc).

**PURPLE** is the liturgical colour of Lent as it symbolises pain and suffering. It is also the colour of royalty. Pilate placed a purple robe on Jesus, whom he called "King of the Jews."

# Secular Franciscan Saints



## MARCH

**Bl. Mary Jane of Maille**

**1332-1414**

From an early age Jane felt a tender devotion towards the Blessed Virgin Mary, thus adding the name of Mary at her confirmation. She strove for Christian perfection and practiced self-denial, prayer and charity. After the death of her father she was placed under the care of her grandfather, who died on the evening of Jane Mary's wedding day. Jane Mary and her husband's first concern was to live a Christian lifestyle within their home. Only God-fearing persons could enter, and all had to faithfully observe the commandments of God and of the church. Shallow conversation, cursing, swearing and gambling were not tolerated. Jane Mary never sent a person away from their door without giving assistance. After the death of her husband Jane Mary joined the Third Order Franciscans. She spent her time nursing the sick and the poor. She also spent much time in prayer; praying especially for priests and the universal church.

## APRIL

**St Zita of Lucca**

**1218-1278**

St Zita was born into a family of devout Christians. When she was twelve years old she went to work as a servant girl for the Fatinelli family who ran a prosperous wool and silk weaving business. She worked there for the next forty-eight years until her death.

Zita attended holy mass each morning and led a very prayerful and penitent life. She gave much of the good food she received to the poor while she herself ate scraps or fasted. She wore the poorest of clothes and never wore shoes – not even in the winter.

For some years Zita suffered much abuse at her work from her fellow workers who despised her way of life and repeatedly insulted and degraded her. She bore this suffering patiently and without complaint. Zita continued to do her work so diligently that over time she gained respect from the whole household, including the other workers.

## MAY

**Bl. Waldo**

**d.1320**

As a young man, Waldo became a student of the very saintly priest Father Bartolo, who inspired Waldo to join the Third Order Franciscans. After Fr Bartolo fell ill with leprosy, Waldo accompanied him to the hospital and cared for him for the next twenty years. After Fr Bartolo died in 1300 Waldo decided to withdraw from the world. While walking through the woods near his home town he came across a large hollow chestnut tree. The hollowed tree was just big enough for Waldo to enter and kneel. Waldo spent the remaining twenty years of his life as a hermit living inside the tree. There he prayed constantly.

In May 1320, the bells of the nearby town miraculously began to ring on their own accord. Shortly after, a hunter in the forest found Waldo dead inside the tree, kneeling as if he was in prayer. The hunter returned to town and announced the death of Waldo. As soon as he had finished speaking the bells stopped ringing.



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