

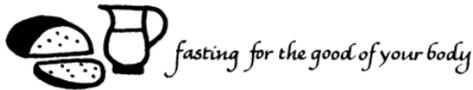
St. Stephen Church

The First Sunday of Lent
February 21, 2021



Lent teaches how to live the love of Christ

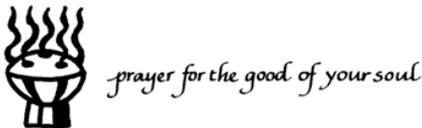
Through the traditional practices of fasting, almsgiving, and prayer, which are an expression of our commitment to conversion, Lent teaches us how to live the love of Christ in an ever more radical way.



Fasting . . . 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.



In our journey, we are often faced with the temptation of accumulating and love of money that undermines God’s primacy in our lives . . . 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.



Prayer . . . allows us to gain a new concept of time: without the perspective of eternity and transcendence, 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,” (Mark 13:31) opening us to the hope that does not disappoint, eternal life.

Pope Benedict XVI, 2011 Message for Lent

Readings for the First Sunday of Lent

Reading I: Genesis 9:8-15 Psalm 25

Reading II: 1 Peter 3:18-22

Gospel: Mark 1:12-15

The full text of these readings is available at <https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/022121.cfm>. Keep the readings in mind as you ask yourself the questions of the week:

Teens/Adults: How could you step away from your daily responsibilities to renew yourself, so that you can do a better job of following in the footsteps of Jesus?

Children: What good habit could you work on during Lent so you could grow closer to God?

Intercessions for Sunday, February 21

For the Church, may the Lord guide and protect her in proclaiming the kingdom of God to all, we pray to the Lord...

For those who serve in state and local governments, may the Holy Spirit inspire them in working to protect the most vulnerable, especially the unborn, we pray to the Lord...

For those burdened to the point of despair, may God’s grace poured out upon them strengthen and uphold them, we pray to the Lord...

For this faith community, may the Lord’s presence here in Word and sacrament open our hearts more fully to the Gospel message, we pray to the Lord...

For the faithful departed, may they soon rejoice with all the angels and saints in heaven, we pray to the Lord...

410-592-7071 | Parish website: ssparish.org | 8030 Bradshaw Road, Kingsville, MD 21087

Mission Statement: We, the parish of St. Stephen, will carry out the mission of Jesus Christ as a welcoming, worshipping, Catholic community by sharing, growing and living the Gospel.



Coming to know the Lord better

The waters shall never again become a flood. Genesis 9:15

Doesn't it seem odd to begin Lent with the story of Noah's ark? Could it be because Noah spent forty days riding out a huge flood and Jesus endured forty days "among wild beasts" (Mark 1:13)?

Well, that is part of the reason. But beyond that, there is a promise hidden in God's covenant with Noah. By vowing never again to destroy the earth in a flood, he pointed toward a *better* way to overcome sin and evil: Jesus' death and resurrection. And Lent gives us forty days to prepare for it!

In today's second reading, St. Peter tells us why Noah and his family are perfect Lenten companions for us. Through the flood, they escaped a sinful environment and entered a new life with God -- just as we escape sin and enter new life through the floodwaters of Baptism.

If you are preparing for Baptism this Lent, you have a special reason to rejoice. You will be passing through waters into salvation firsthand. But if you are already baptized, you can rejoice too, especially if you spend these forty days renewing your baptismal promises. Renounce the devil and all his temptations. Affirm your faith in the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Recall God's covenant with you. As you dedicate yourself to God this Lent, you will come to know the Lord better. And that will make you more confident in his love and his grace.

So, find extra time to pray this Lent. Give more of your time and money to people in need. Choose to fast, either from food or from a negative activity or habit. You might feel like Noah on the ark sometimes, and it might get messy. But the journey is worth it because when you finally reach the joy of Easter Sunday, you will be stepping into a fuller understanding and experience of God's faithfulness and his salvation.

Lent has just begun. Let's get on the boat!

"Lord, help me follow you into new life this Lent."

Reference: *The Word Among Us*, Meditations
Lent 2021

February 20 & 21 Mass intentions

4:30 pm (Hall)	Bill Button (D)
6:00 pm	Harkins Family (L+D)
8:00 am (Hall)	Parish
9:15 am	Dorothy Kahl
10:30 am (Hall)	Steven Danaher

The First Sunday of Lent

For the six weeks of Lent that precede Easter, we invite you to join us as part of your Lenten journey to meditate each week on the Last Words of Jesus. "[B]y entering into the paschal mystery and being made like Christ in death, [we] will look forward, strong in hope, to the Resurrection." (*Gaudium et Spes*, nn. 19)

In our meditation we can ask Jesus to join with him as he suffers on the cross, and in so doing look forward to our participation in his Resurrection.

Week One: Jn 19:28 "I thirst." Having been tortured, flogged, humiliated with a crown of thorns, and now having spent hours on the cross, Jesus is about to die. To his Roman executioners, the religious authorities whose jealousy condemned him to death, and to the gathered crowd who mock him, Jesus asks a small mercy, "I thirst." A lone bystander dips a sponge in common wine and offers it to Jesus. In what way can I join this bystander in offering a small mercy to Jesus by an act of kindness to someone I know?

O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console.

Lent at St. Stephen

Drive-up Confessions are available every Saturday during Lent from 10:00-10:30am. Enter the parking lot by the driveway next to the soccer field, and at the top of the hill follow the signed directions.

Virtual Stations of the Cross will be prayed each Friday during Lent. Join us on [Facebook Live](#) at 7:00 pm on February 19 and 26, and March 5, 12, 19, and 26.



February 28 - Community Sunday, 4th Sunday of the month: Join us for an online gathering of parish family and friends each month, following the 9:15 livestream Mass on Facebook. Go to www.zoom.com and click "join a meeting." Enter meeting ID # 821 9046 8315. You must email Robin to obtain the password! Please email her by end of business on Friday, February 26 at robin@sspish.org.

Kenya Day ~ Sunday, April 25

Please mark your calendar for this date to celebrate our annual Kenya Day Mass as we unite in spirit with our sister parish in Mombasa, Kenya and honor 22 years of our partnership. Though we are not yet sure if we will be able to gather in person or online, we hope to mark the day with special prayers and celebrations! More info will be forthcoming.

Youth Ministry Update

#HSYM: All parish youth in grades 9-12 are encouraged to join us twice each month online for topical conversations, social time, service projects, and prayer. We meet online the 2nd and 4th Sunday of each month. To access the zoom on February 28th, please check your email for the zoom meeting ID & passcodes! Didn't get the email? Check with parents, and check your junk folders. Please set your log in name to First Name, Last Initial, and grade.

February 27-28: weekend celebration of Scouts!

Scouts will be celebrated at all Masses this weekend. Those attending in-person Mass are asked to wear their uniforms; There will be no assigned seating, you will be seated with your family. A reservation for Mass through the Sign Up Genius must be made as is the usual protocol now. There will be a blessing of Scouts at all Masses, including for those who attend remotely via the Facebook Livestream at 9:15. Thank you for supporting Scouting at St. Stephen!

Parish Pastoral Council Elections

We are looking for candidates to stand for election in May to fill three-year terms on the Parish Pastoral Council beginning June 2021. Any interested candidate must (1) have attained the age of sixteen years by the date of elections; (2) be baptized, confirmed, and officially registered as a member of the parish in good standing; (3) maintain a posture not inconsistent with Church teachings; and (4) be a contributing member of the parish. If you are interested in being a candidate, know of someone who may be interested, or just want additional information, please contact Drew Bonthron at 410-877-3816 or email drew.bonthron@gmail.com by March 8, 2021.

Hunger in Our World

Jesus told us that whatever we did for one of these least brothers of his we did for him. Reflect on the challenge of global hunger— it is a reality for millions of our sisters and brothers. What will you do to support the hungry in our community and around the world? Visit crsricebowl.org to learn more.



Or celebrate Lent with a home-made CRS Rice Bowl:

If you are unable to pick up a Rice Bowl in person, you can print the label found [here](#) and tape it onto a jar or can. Additional resources to guide you and your family through Lent with the Rice Bowl can be found at <https://www.crsricebowl.org/families>

During Lent, we are being asked to pray for the seminarians of the Archdiocese of Baltimore, a different one each day. Here are the names for this week:

Sunday, February 21: Daniel Andrades

Monday, February 22: Pascal Atunzu

Tuesday, February 23: Tre Bart

Wednesday, February 24: Jeremy Belk

Thursday, February 25: John Bilenki

Friday, February 26: James Bors

Saturday, February 27: Michael Carroll

Respect Life Baby Shower—thank you!

Thank you for all the many beautiful gifts given to moms and babies in need during our annual baby shower. St. Stephen parishioners are outstanding in their generosity—God bless you! We delivered the donations to Birthright and the Women's Care Center on Monday, February 15, and we will do a second delivery this coming week.



Donations in church basement



Women's Care Center employees and a teen volunteer with the gifts delivered on Monday

Free Marriage Enrichment Seminar

A great idea for couples to do together during Lent—from your home, at your pace. MarriageinChrist.com is an easy to use online program with video presentations, a downloadable workbook, discussion starters etc. It is simple, practical and fun! Just 5 sessions. Free for couples who register by March 31 (\$40 value).

"We are learning how to make a more conscious and deliberate effort to strengthen our relationship. With three young kids, demanding jobs, and a full schedule of extracurricular activities, we realized it was very easy to get into autopilot mode when relating to each other. Since attending the Marriage in Christ seminar, we have found ways to find time to intentionally communicate to ensure we continue to grow together." - Eric & Liz

Lenten Speaker Series

We invite you to enter into Lent more deeply by participating in our annual speaker series. Each of the 3 sessions planned for this year (on February 28, March 14 and March 21) will offer insights into spiritual themes that impact our lives, with a Franciscan perspective. You can attend one, two, or all three. These are virtual meetings; see below for ways to attend.

February 28: Speaker Series Presents: Navigating COVID – 19: The “Land of Not Knowing”

As we live into the challenging reality of the COVID-19 pandemic and its unfolding impact on our daily existence, we find ourselves living each day in the “Land of Not Knowing!” We have come to realize how this new reality has impacted our body, mind, and spirit. Eleven months in, we are very aware of Covid-19’s devastating effect on every aspect of our lives, particularly our mood and our relationships with others. Our healthy experience of human connections has drastically changed.

Bombarded with statistics, death tolls, quarantine guidelines, overwhelming media coverage, we may be experiencing feelings of stress, anxiety, depression, anger, powerlessness, grief and loss. You are invited to take some time apart to reflect on your own personal experience of this pandemic, on the feelings that it engenders within, and how we can intentionally frame our response through the lenses of positive thinking, hope, and gratitude.

Our presenter is Sr. Lynn Lavin, OSF, PhD, a member of the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia, is a therapist, spiritual director, group consultant, and facilitator, residing and working in Wilmington, DE.

All Speaker Series presentations will be online at Noon - 1:15pm. Please register at the [Sign Up Genius link](#) or call the Parish Center for help at 410-592-7071. A Zoom link will be provided after you register. You can call in to the talk from a regular phone; you won't be able to see the speaker, but you will be able to hear the presentation and gain Sister's insights.

Questions? Contact Sr. Angela (redsdef@comcast.net or 410-592-8666) or Drew Bonthron (drew.bonthron@gmail.com or 410-877-3816)



40 Days for Life

From now through March 28th, you're invited to stand and peacefully pray during a 40-day vigil in the sidewalk public right-of-way in front of the Belair Beltway Plaza 7600 Belair Rd, Fullerton, MD where Whole Woman's Health (abortion facility) is located, and also to help spread the word about this important community outreach.

New for this campaign: pray a decade of the Rosary for Life each day. Go to 40daysforlife.com/Fullerton for

audio files of the five decades of this beautiful version of the rosary. The scripture, meditations, and prayers will accompany you and enrich your prayer. Praying a decade each day is a way for those who can't join us in person to participate in our vigil.



If you'd like more information – and especially if you'd like to volunteer to help, please contact: Diane Alvarez at 40daysforlifefullerton@gmail.com or go to our website, 40daysforlife.com/fullerton

Q & A

Q: If Jesus was really God, why did Satan try to tempt him? Doesn't he know that God can't sin?

A: Yes, he does know, which is why he tried to tempt him. If Jesus had succumbed to the temptation, the devil would have known that Jesus wasn't the real Messiah.

Remember, the devil isn't God. He isn't omniscient or infallible and so doesn't know everything. He can make mistakes. As Aquinas puts it:

The minds of demons are utterly perverted from the Divine wisdom, they at times form their opinions of things simply according to the natural conditions of the same. Nor are they ever deceived as to the natural properties of anything; but they can be misled with regard to supernatural matters; for example, on seeing a dead man, they may suppose that he will not rise again, or, on beholding Christ, they may judge him not to be God. (ST I:58:5)

Thus, to establish that Jesus was God, the devil needed to do a little testing.

Catholic Answers (Catholic.com)