



**FEBRUARY 28, 2020 | 2<sup>ND</sup> SUNDAY OF LENT**

## **HOLY FAMILY PARISH**

312 Tazewell Avenue, Tazewell, VA 24651

(276) 988-4626 | email: [theword1875@verizon.net](mailto:theword1875@verizon.net) | facebook: search Holy Family SWVA

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**ST. ELIZABETH'S**  
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## GIVING UP OUR ISAAC

Once went to condole with a couple that lost their only son and child in a ghastly motor accident. To recall the visit is even painful! I remember sitting there and looking at the couple cry out their hearts while battling with the right thing to tell them that could make a little sense: God is good? Merciful? Kind? Faithful? Loving? Yes! He is all these and more but the truth that remained was that an only child of a couple (who have lost all the biological preconditions for further procreation) is gone and for ever! What I could finally offer was deep empathy and prayers.

Take a little time and think about what takes most of your time and attention! Put in another way, think about what occupies your mind from morning till night and makes you smile even when you are by yourself—that which constitutes your joy! Whatever it is must be precious and dear to you. It must be something you would not like to let go! Some people may call this treasure just as our Lord Jesus Christ would say: “where your treasure is there will your heart also be” (Matt.6:21).

To give up something we are deeply connected with is one of those difficult tasks to undertake. It is difficult to let go for a while but more painful to let go forever. We may have been faced with the loss of a job that we are so passionate about; it could be saying goodbye to someone we may not see again and who means so much to us. It could be an opportu-

nity that slips away from us suddenly. It could also be the death of a family member, friend or relation which could be very disheartening. In life, we often need to let go of something in order get some other greater thing.

One man and his wife went through the harrowing experience of childlessness for many years. Though they believed that God would bless them one day, they remained restless. God finally blessed them with a son and he became a great treasure and source of joy to them.

By the time the child was coming of age something happened. God asked the man, whose name was Abraham, to take his only son called Isaac to a specified place where he would be killed and used as a victim for a sacrifice to Him (God).

Abraham did not ask God why he should do so. He simply took the child and the other materials for the sacrifice and left to Moriah, the destination for the sacrifice. He was about to kill the child for the sacrifice when God sent an angel to stop him and he was given a ram to use instead of his son.

At the beginning of this reflection, we were asked to think about one thing that is so precious to us, that thing that takes our time and our attention. We ended up calling it our treasure, however we have a new name for it today: “our Isaac.” Our Isaac represents those things that are of great worth to us. Those things that take foremost places in our life.

Those things we believe that are so important to us that letting them go appears impossible.

Let us take a closer look at Abraham’s Isaac. Abraham and his wife sought for him for a very long time and when Abraham was a hundred years old his wife Sarah gave birth to him. Isaac was thus a blessing to his aged parents. God Himself described Isaac as the beloved of Abraham (Gen 22:2).

It is not usually an easy thing to let go of our possessions generally—not to mention the ones that are so precious to us. But that is what we are called upon to do this season, to let go of that which is very precious to us.

In the Second Reading today (Romans 8:31-34) we are told that God did not spare his own Son but gave him up for our benefit. What this means is that God gave up what is most precious to Him. We have the confirmation of the value God placed on his Son Jesus Christ in the Gospel Reading where he said: “this is my Son the beloved...” In the context of our reflection, God gave up His “Isaac” so that we can be blessed.

Today there is a call on all of us to give up our Isaac so that we can receive something more. In fact our Isaac lies between us and our blessings. Often we have many Isaacs blocking our blessings.

Remember that Isaac represent all those things that stand in the gap between us and the fulfilment of God’s promises. There are so many

of them coming in various forms and shapes. We have some Isaacs in the form of fashion, material possessions, technology, selfish desires and a good number of others.

In the Gospel Reading (Mark 9:2-10), we are shown in a practical way how we can give up our Isaac. We are told that our Lord Jesus Christ took with him three of his apostles who constitute the inner caucus: Peter, James and John (a typical expression of the trinity) and went up on a high mountain. We can recall also that Abraham took Isaac to a mountain in Moriah.

*“We are  
transfigured when  
we live for God  
and not just for  
ourselves.”*

On the mountain of transfiguration, our Lord Jesus Christ gave up his normal appearance and took up another appearance. On the mountain at Moriah, Abraham gave up his son Isaac. To climb a mountain, a serious minded person must give up his load at the foot of the mountain in order to climb effectively.

The word *transfiguration* simply means change of figure. Put in another way, it means giving up the present figure and obtaining another one. To experience transfiguration one needs to let go of certain things at the foot of the mountain. The

Lenten season is a period of mountain climbing; a time we are expected to let go those Isaacs that distract us from God. The time we are required to let go and let God to let in our blessings.

There is no better time for us to let go our Isaacs than this Lenten season. That is why we are at this time called to practice abstinence. There is productive and active correlation between abstinence and giving up our Isaacs. It is instructive then for us to be conscious of the fact that our abstinence must be based on those things that have strong grips in our lives—the Isaacs in our lives.

Our transfiguration comes after giving up our Isaacs. There will be no transfiguration unless there is a decisive letting go of the contending Isaacs in our lives. We are transfigured when we live for God and not just for ourselves. We become transfigured when we come forth and remain in God’s exciting presence and when we are able to exclaim like Peter, “it is good for us to be here!”

As we move further into this season of Lent, let us carefully check ourselves in order to identify those Isaacs that need to be moved from our lives. If we don’t let go of our Isaacs we may not attain our transfiguration. If we don’t let go of the Isaacs we may not be able to hear the voice of God calling us His beloved sons and daughters.

May we have a great Second Sunday of Lent and a blessed week ahead.

## PASTOR

Fr. Eric Anokye  
eanokye@richmonddiocese.org  
(276) 385-7312

## OFFICE MANAGER/ BOOKKEEPER

Lydia St. Peter

## OFFICE HOURS

Mon–Fri 9:30AM – 2:30PM

Please call the parish office to make arrangements for the **Sacraments of Baptism, Anointing of the Sick or Holy Matrimony** as well as funerals. **Reconciliation** is available from 30 minutes before a scheduled Mass.

## MASS TIMES

### SATURDAY

4PM – St. Joseph’s

6PM – St. Mary’s

### SUNDAY

9AM – St. Elizabeth’s

11:30AM – St. Theresa’s

### MON | WED | FRI

10AM – St. Theresa’s

Cover image:

*The Transfiguration of Christ* by  
Carl Bloch, 1872

# DISCOVERING THE SECRET TO LIVING LENT TO ITS FULLEST

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KATHRYN JEAN LOPEZ, *AngelusNews*



*Thanks be to God for Lent!*

I know what you might be thinking: Haven't we been living Lent for a year? With the COVID-19 pandemic keeping people at home, sometimes without the sacraments and often in fear and even despair, it has felt a lot like Lent, even as liturgical seasons have come and gone. But Lent isn't a feeling. It is an invitation to mercy and action.

All of that darkness all around that seems to be suffocating and strangling people? It's a clear call to be God's light. Now is the time to take those feelings and bring them to God with a rededication to what it means to be Christian.

Lent isn't giving up chocolate or beer or even praying more. It's an opportunity to finally become who we are meant to be as Christians. That requires vulnerability and rigor. Now is the time to get to know what penance and reparation are all about. They are acts of faith and love. They help us live "Jesus, I trust in you."

Here's how St. Caesarius of Arles (A.D. 470-542), one of the lesser-known of the Church Fathers, said in a sermon that it is in fact "through the mercy of God the season of Lent is approaching."

The days of Lent, the French saint told his flock, are "salutary for bodies and healing for the soul" and are meant to "lead to progress for us and not judgment."

After a year in which instead of slowing down, many of us tried to be more productive, become indispensable at work, demonstrate our usefulness, looked for all kinds of escapes from a reality we fear, his words are as pertinent as they were when he first preached them:

*"For if we lead a careless life, involving ourselves in too many occupations, refusing to observe chastity, not applying ourselves to fasting and vigils and prayers, neither reading Sacred Scripture ourselves nor willingly listening to others read it, the very remedies are changed into wounds for us. As a result of this we shall have judgment, where we could have had a remedy."*

Lent is a time we can't afford not to take advantage of. Get to be friends with saints who will intercede for you. Take a half-hour each day during Lent to read the Catechism of the Catholic Church, so you can talk about what you believe with more confidence. But most importantly, remember what it means to be Catholic or learn it for the first time by really meditating on Christ on the cross.

Doesn't every kind of suffering make more sense when we continuously think about what Jesus did for us? We complain about so many little things, and can find the bigger ones unbearable. But what did he bear? The greatest injustice there ever was. God comes for us in complete love and gets brutally killed for it.

And yet that love is victorious. Do we really truly believe that? If we do, we have no reason to be afraid, because I don't know about you, but I am plenty afraid about many things. By giving our fears — and ourselves — totally to God this Lent, we can discover a peace that only he can give.

I'm constantly reminded of a poem by Father John Duffy on the Annunciation that the late Archbishop of New York Cardinal John O'Connor liked to quote: "And nothing would again be casual or small."

That phrase is what's on the back of the medals worn by the Sisters of Life, the community of women religious he founded 27 years ago with a charism for protecting life. It's an idea that guides their charism: to take nothing as casual or small.

Obviously, these sisters live this call in a way that is vocational, as brides of Christ called to this very specific life. But treating nothing as if it is casual or small would work toward undoing this "throwaway culture" that Pope Francis talks about so much.

How we ignore people on the streets, or are transactional with the people in our lives — always expecting something in return for our love — are symptoms of something deeper that God wants to heal this Lent, by calling us to prayer, to service, to make small acts of faith.

Perhaps no one describes this better than St. Caesarius, in his counsel about Lent:

*"Devoting ourselves to God out of love for eternal life, during these days let us with all solicitude strive to repair and compose in the little ship of our soul whatever throughout the year has been broken or destroyed or damaged or ruined by many storms, that is, by the waves of sins. And since it is necessary for us to endure the storms and tempests of this world while we are still in this frail body, as often as the enemy wills to lead us astray by means of the roughest storms or to deceive us by the most voluptuous pleasures, with God's help may he always find us prepared against him."*

After a year that has tested so many of us, we have a chance to ask him to burn away anything keeping us from him. Look around in your life at the things we say, do, and search for. Do they belong to him? If someone followed you around all day, would they know that you are a Christian?

For our failings, we have the sacrament of confession, which we can turn back to during this Lent, too. We can think of heaven, and how the pleasures here are nothing compared to eternity with God. Remembering that only God can satisfy our deepest longings, and that life is short, can help us reorder the priorities in our lives. And our Church. And our world.

*mass intentions*

**Date Intention**

**2/27 SATURDAY**

4PM

6PM

**2/28 SUNDAY**

9AM Lori Hale

11:30AM

*council members*

**PARISH COUNCIL:**

Tonya Hylton, Frannie Minton, Ralph Shawver, Cindy Deskins, Barbara Jones, Donna Lambert

**FINANCE COUNCIL:**

Kathy & Bob Buchanan, Randy Bolling, Doug Vance, Anne Danko, Jim Talbert, Jackie Shawver, Janet McDonagh

*please pray for*

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Margaret Shawver  
Billy Akers  
Scotty McBride  
Gerry Hankins  
Eric Pellerin  
Clarence Moore  
Lexi Cox  
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Leo Brown  
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Carolina Ferrare  
Junior Aiken  
Mary Spencer  
Shirley Hylton  
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Jeanne Hash  
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Jim Shumate  
Doug Vance  
Andrew Satmary  
Frank Mauceri  
Lori Hale

Donations Received as of February 21 (Week 34)		
CHURCH	ATTENDANCE	RECEIVED
St. Joseph's	12	\$173
St. Elizabeth's	16	\$235
St. Mary's	10	\$540
St. Theresa's	31	\$1,410
Total Offertory	69	\$2,358
Outside Donations		
Year to Date Received		\$80,050
Goal		\$75,192
Ahead/Behind Goal		+\$4,858

*stewardship of treasure*

**OUTSIDE DONATIONS—THANK YOU!**

St. Francis, Staunton, VA: \$1,152

Mineral, VA donor: \$40

**BUILDING FUND:**

St. Elizabeth's: \$600

St. Mary's: \$325

**ANNUAL DIOCESAN APPEAL: \$1,394**

## HOLY FAMILY NEWS

Mass continues to be livestreamed Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays at 10AM from St. Theresa's and the church will be open for anyone who wishes to attend in person. Masks are mandatory! The 11:30AM Sunday Mass at St. Theresa's will also continue to be livestreamed for those who are not yet able to join us in person.

Every Wednesday evening at 7PM, Fr. Eric leads us in a study of Sacred Scripture. We are currently studying the Gospel of Matthew. Why not start a new relationship with the Word! Come in person or join us on Facebook. Questions and comments always welcome!

**Join us every Friday in Lent at St. Theresa's at 10AM** for Exposition and Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, the Divine Mercy chaplet, and Stations of the Cross. Daily Mass will begin at 11AM following Benediction.

Have you checked out Fr. Eric's "**Cast into the Deep**" column on our Facebook page? Fr. Eric carefully crafts a reflection every day on the readings. Use it daily and grow your faith!

[facebook.com/holyfamilyswva](https://facebook.com/holyfamilyswva)

## ANNUAL DIOCESAN APPEAL

Today's readings are ALL about sacrifice and love. Love and sacrifice. In the first reading, Abraham wanted a son so badly and God gave him one through a wife that was supposed to be unable to get pregnant. God tested Abraham's love for him. Did he love his new son more or did he love God more? Abraham loved God and trusted in him, and Isaac was saved. Abraham sacrifices a ram in thanksgiving to God.

In the Gospel, God transfigures Jesus into dazzling white and says to all, "This is my beloved Son. Listen to him." God loves US so much he sacrifices his own son (the Lamb) for our sins.

How much do we listen to Jesus, as God asked us to? What sacrifices do we make, especially during Lent, in thanksgiving to God for all He gives to us? How much do we trust in God? Enough to give him control of our finances? **Make the Annual Diocesan Appeal part of your Lenten almsgiving.**

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birthdays & anniversaries:

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## MARCH

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**BIRTHDAYS**—4: Lisa Neal

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