

February 10 - Feast of St. Scholastica

family MATTERS

February 6 - Feast of St. Paul Miki and Companions

February 11 - Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes

February 14 - St. Valentine's Day



THE MONTH OF FEBRUARY

February 23rd - Feast of St. Zebinus - proof that there really are saints from A to Z!

It's February, but wait, didn't we just celebrate New Year's?

The month itself is "short", it normally only has 28 days, but, for some reason the month can drag on forever.

February can be snowy and dark and with not much to do. Thankfully, the church calendar is full of liturgical celebrations and feast days that we can participate in. Observing holy days and feast days are very beneficial. They call us back to the "important" things in life. As we celebrate these days, we take time to pray, to be inspired by the saints and grow together spiritually as a family.

February 2- The Presentation of the Lord- Candlemas

This feast recognizes the day that Mary and Joseph take Jesus to the temple. It was traditional Jewish law that baby boys were presented at the temple 40 days after their birth. The Presentation also was a time when the church would bless candles for people to use in their homes. When you go to mass, bring a candle, consider having it blessed this day and use it in your home for special occasions.



February 3 - Feast of St. Blaise

St. Blaise was a physician who cured, even performing miraculous cures, so those who were sick, invoked his intercessions. Eventually, the custom of the blessing of throats arose, whereby the priest held two crossed candles over the heads of the faithful or touched their throats with them while he invoked the prayer of the saint and imparted God's blessing. This practice continues today in many parishes on St. Blaise's feast day. Have you or anyone in your family had their throats blessed?

"Through the intercession of St. Blaise, bishop and martyr, may God deliver you from every disease of the throat and from every other illness, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."



February 13- Mardi Gras, Fat Tuesday or Shrove Tuesday

Always celebrated the day before Ash Wednesday.

The official colors are gold, purple and green. Gold represents power; purple, justice; and green faith.

Traditionally, pancakes were eaten in abundance on Fat Tuesday so that the kitchens could be cleared of all butter, eggs, and milk since these were not eaten during Lent. "Pancakes" have become so important on this day, that many cities even hold pancake races.

Yet, another tradition, the King Cake, with the hidden plastic baby inside. The finder of the baby in their piece of cake is King for the rest of the day.

A favorite tradition across Polish communities, eating Paczki, a dense yet puffy fruit-filled doughnut.

How will you celebrate Mardi Gras with your FAMILY this year?

February 14-March 29- Lent

Lent last for 40 days. Its purpose is to call us back to Christ, bring us closer to our Lord, especially in response to his love for us shown in his suffering, death, and resurrection. The church has given us some traditional practices to help us to do that.

- P** -Prayer: Stations of the Cross, Mass, Confession, Adoration
- A** -Almsgiving: "Rice Bowl" - crsricebowl.org
- U** -Useful service and acts of charity: help at food bank, soup kitchen, or nursing home
- S** -Self-sacrifices: give up something that benefits others and become acts of charity
- E** -Educating ourselves: Study scripture, learn devotions, watch a good Catholic movie

These are the start of simple and meaningful Lent ideas that you can do with your family. Choose what you feel would work best, or try to come up with your own ideas. Why not make it a family tradition?

February 14-Ash Wednesday

We begin lent, with Ash Wednesday, one of the most popular and important holy days in the liturgical calendar. The practice includes the wearing of ashes on the forehead. The ashes do not announce holiness to others, but rather, sinfulness from which we must repent. Adults and children alike are asked questions from non-Catholics on this day, some are too embarrassed to answer the questions. Here is a list of questions and answers that may help to explain this Catholic practice to our non-Catholic friends.

- Q:** Hey, your forehead's dirty. What's that on your forehead?
- A:** Ashes... they're from church.
- Q:** Why did your church put dirt on your forehead?
- A:** It's not dirt; they're ashes. Today's Ash Wednesday, the first day of Lent. Catholics wear ashes to show that we want to change to get ready for Easter.
- Q:** Are they supposed to be in a shape or something? Just looks like a smudge to me.
- A:** It's supposed to be in the shape of a cross - like the one that Jesus died on.
- Q:** So you think you're something special because you're wearing ashes on your forehead?
- A:** No, just the opposite. It shows that without God, this is all we are - ashes. It's a way of admitting how much we need God.
- Q:** So how're you gonna change... gonna become all holy on us?
- A:** Just trying to become what God wants me to be... a good person.
- Q:** I hear you guys give up stuff for Lent too. What for?
- A:** Giving up stuff - like snacks or watching TV or swearing - is kinda like exercise - it's hard work but it makes us stronger.
- Q:** So you can't have any fun for how long?
- A:** I can still have fun, I'm just gonna be doing some stuff a little differently for 40 days... that's how long until Easter.
- Q:** Then you can go back to being your old self?
- A:** No, that's the point, hopefully I'll be an even better version of myself!