

# FMA

# FOCUS




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Franciscan Mission Associates  
Mt. Vernon, N.Y. 10551

Missions in Guatemala - Honduras - El Salvador, Central America

## Virtue: PRUDENCE



“Be on guard, and pray,” Jesus warned Peter, James and John, “that you may not undergo the test.” The Apostles had fallen asleep [the first of three times] on that dark night of the Lord’s Agony in the Garden (of Gethsemane). They were awakened just an hour after vowing to keep vigil.

So the Lord reminded them why prudence trumps even the best intentions. “The spirit is willing,” he explained, “but nature is weak.” (Matthew 26:41)

The cardinal virtue of prudence, the backbone of conscience, helps us recognize right from wrong. Given some practice, prudence prioritizes, sorting among even the best of good choices - the path to holiness.

This Lent, ask the Holy Spirit’s help in writing Jesus’ prudence equation on your heart: 1) Be on guard. And, 2) Pray, always. ■

## Lent, Year 2010



The words of the February 17th Ash Wednesday Liturgy make it official: Lent, our season of repentance and preparation for Easter comes calling once again.

This year’s celebration marks the first decade of Lent in a new century, the 21st. Yet, the words of the liturgy are timeless in time. They sound a call to a road of pilgrimage which Christians have trod for over 2,000 years. And back further still, to penitential practices yet more ancient. We remember:

† What Moses did, before daring to ascend a sacred mountaintop seeking guidance for his stiff-necked, pilgrim people. Before approaching the Most High, Moses would spend 40 days in prayer and penitence.

† What Jesus did, honoring the same 40-day period of preparation.

The Gospels tell us the Lord often went apart to the mountain tops or desert, before important ministries. And we know that he spent 40 days (and nights) in the desert, before beginning his mission.

The words of the Prophet Joel, in the First Reading on Ash Wednesday, reveal what is at the core of such retreats. “Even now, says the Lord, return to me with your whole heart, with fasting, and weeping, and mourning... Rend your hearts, not your garments, and return to the Lord, your God.” (Joel 2:12-18)

The Second Reading resounds with St. Paul’s exhortation: “We implore you, in Christ’s name: be reconciled to God! ... Now is the acceptable time! Now is the day of salvation!”

As we receive the Sign of the Cross, traced on our forehead with ashes, we again hear unmistakable words that carry us through the six weeks of Lent (seven, if we count the days from Ash Wednesday up to the First Sunday of Lent).

We hear in the priest voice Jesus’ proclamation: “Turn away from sin and be faithful to the gospel.” (Mark 1: 15)

Or God’s words to Adam: “Remember, man, you are dust and to dust you will return.” (Genesis 3:19)

This year, the Sunday Readings of

Lent (from the Cycle C rotation featuring St. Luke’s Gospel) bring us back to Christ’s 40 days in the desert, and the temptations he rejected.

As we listen, we know that these temptations are the same calls to idolatry that we, Christ’s Body on earth, face each day (Luke 4: 1-13). Thus, the Church brings us to our own 40 days in the desert, and more.

Lent offers us time to look to our baptismal promises, which we renew at Easter Vigil and on Easter Day. How have we done over the past year? And what must we do in the year ahead to live up to our baptismal calling and heritage?

In that powerful Second Reading proclaimed on Ash Wednesday, St. Paul offers insight. “For our sakes, God made him who did not know sin to be sin, so that in him we might become the very holiness of God.” (2 Cor 5: 21)

Again, we hear it: Christians are called to work toward holiness - truly, a lifetime pilgrimage.

Don’t be afraid to call on St. Paul as Lent begins. Ask his help as we try to do whatever it takes to “return to God with all our hearts.” The better to know what God’s will holds out for us as Easter people in all those days that follow Lent. ■



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# You and the Prophets

Coming to Mass on any Lenten Sunday or weekday, we know they will be there: the Prophets. The Readings bring us face to face with that fearsome band who bombards us with their scorching words, spoken at God's behest. Words that sear our comfort zones slice and dice our complacency. And more: We find those prophetic words redounding to our hearts, and echoing into our daily lives – all Church year long.

So who are The Prophets?

The Patriarch Moses, also revered as one of the greatest Prophets, dispels the usual misconceptions by spelling out who Prophets are NOT.

“Let there not be found among you...” he warns his people as they finally reach the border of the Promised Land, “...a fortune-teller, soothsayer, charmer, diviner, or caster of spells, no one who consults ghosts and spirits or seeks oracles from the dead.” (Deuteronomy 18: 1-22)

Moses labels such charlatans, apparently abounding in pagan cultures, “an abomination to the Lord.” For their theatrics lure people into the terrible darkness of sinful deeds and practices rampant in pagan cultures - and in all times.

Thousands of years later, St. Jerome saluted true prophets. In his biblical commentaries, he explains that the prophetic call and mission comes via “God speaking within the soul of the prophets.”

Moreover, a true prophet is “not



only a prophet, but an evangelist and an apostle as well.” He cites God’s call to Isaiah: “Whom shall I send, who will go to my people?”

St. Jerome, revered as the Father of Biblical Scholarship, then spotlights Isaiah’s answer: “Here I am; send me.”

Like the disciples, like missionaries of all times, the prophet is first and foremost a contemplative: one who waits on God, and God’s will. The prophet lives a life of prayer and listening, followed by speaking God’s truth to God’s people whether or not they wish to hear it.

We can find the same “portfolio” in the history of nearly all the prophets we meet during the Lent and Easter seasons; including Joel, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, and yes, even going back to Moses or forward to St. John the Baptist.

We need only look to the great saints to see the same pattern of total surrender to God. Ditto, for the many dedicated men and women of modern times, not yet declared to saints. For as members of the Body of Christ, we too are called to a prophetic life by our baptism. In baptism, we answer God’s call as did the prophets of old. As did the Lord Jesus... before the world was created: “Here I am. I will go.” The renewal of our Baptismal Vows at Easter serves to remind us of that calling: to listen for, and hear God’s truth; then to live it, daily. ■

# ST. ANTHONY'S AID

“May your love grow in knowledge and understanding,” St. Anthony prayed, “so that you may know how to discern not only between good and evil, but also between what is good and what is even better.”

In plain words, St. Anthony zeroes in on prudence and the road to holiness. With one more factor added: Prudence is fueled by the proportion of love we bring to God - in homage and awe of God's enduring love for us.

For St. Anthony, one more honest question is factored in:

† What would Jesus do...What do the Gospels show me?

There is but one answer: Seek first, God's will.

This great saint's life shows us that he knew whereof he spoke.

Fernando de Bulhom was just 15 years old, the son of a noble family serving the court of Portugal's King Alfonso II, when he entered religious life, first as an Augustinian canon, a priest of brilliant scholarship and holiness. Then, in the year 1221, and inspired by the missionary zeal of a new Order, the young Portuguese priest transferred to the Franciscan Order, taking the name of Anthony.

We know the rest of the story:

Friar Anthony set sail for North

Africa where he expected his missionary vocation to end in martyrdom. A serious illness and obedience to his superiors placed this faith-filled priest back in Europe, this time in Italy. There, and elsewhere in Europe, God chose to use Anthony's missionary talents and zeal in ways the young Friar could never have foreseen.

By 1230, Friar Anthony's Lenten sermons drew thousands of people daily. It is said that no chapel or church could hold all those people, eager for their “retreat” to hear Friar Anthony's plain-talk homilies, and be with him as this holy priest offered Holy Mass.

Most came from all walks of life, rich man...poor man...beggar man... thief. Many made life-changing choices; some of them even altered the course of history. All of them, men and women, learned to seek and accept God's grace in the course of experiencing the faith-fueled zeal of this priest-scholar-confessor and yes, missionary. By God's will.

This Lent, ask St. Anthony to help you find a greater sense of your own calling from God - with a look to God's plan for you. Your goal: to keep on questing for the best way you can learn more about and accept God's will for you, thus doing your part in bringing about God's kingdom on earth. ■

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## VOCATIONS

Please pray for the young people at home and in the missions who are ready and eager to dedicate their lives to God and the spiritual welfare of His people.

Often all they really need is the special courage to hear God's call and to answer him. Please join us in daily prayer, for God's grace in providing devoted brothers, sisters, priests, and religious for Christ's work in today's world.

For further information please write Fr Robert, O.F.M. at  
Franciscan Mission Associates, P.O. Box 598, Dept. 3104, Mount Vernon, NY 10551-0598

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# Lenten Penances

Lent is our 'penitential season.' That's a given, going way back.

Penitence, demonstrated by specific acts, was an essential prayer form in the early centuries of Christianity.

First, converts from paganism prepared for baptism at Easter in many ways, including "acts" of penance that expressed their conversion. Likewise Christians, whose serious sins separated them from the Christian community showed their sorrow with public acts of penance during Lent. And with the dawn of Easter, they were received once again to full life in the community.

Later, the Church began to see the Lenten season as a kind of communal retreat for all. A time when men and women reexamined their own lives to shake off any idols of world-flesh-devil – those sins and untidy lapses in practice, picked up and sheltered since their last Easter.

Clearly recognized by all of us baptized into the Body of Christ - no one is perfect. Everyone falls short. With God's grace, however, we can get back on course.

Jesus taught that penitence is necessary for salvation. "Be converted and believe in the Gospel," he preached (Mark 1:15). And again: "Unless you do penance, you shall all likewise perish." (Luke 13:3)

The Church has sifted out and refined the various definitions of penance to basic categories, including:

Prayer - inviting God's grace to open our heart, mind and will to God's

loving presence in our lives, handing our concerns over to God's care, by asking forgiveness and willingly allowing the Holy Spirit to do the rest.

Fasting, almsgiving and works of mortification - acts that demonstrate commitment to our change of heart and turning back to God's ways.

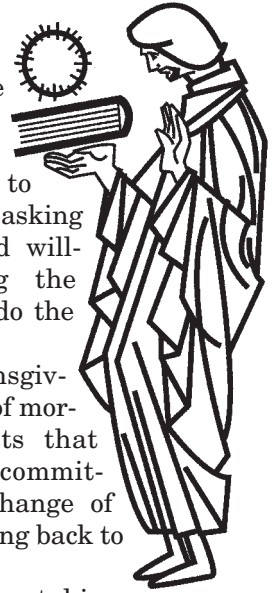
Repentance - taking steps that put our conversion into action in daily life.

To "do something" in terms of Lenten penances need not rely on the old lists giving up candy, staying away from entertainment, etc.

For example: Perhaps gossip shows up on our personal Lenten Review Radar Screen of Recognized Faults.

It can take courage and humility to put a stop to gossip. Clear words, seasoned with gentle humor can help. As in: "You know, I don't feel comfortable talking about someone else's life. And frankly, I need to save all the energy I can gather these days, just to work on my own problems!"

Repentance begins with personal responsibility. Should we need guidance, our confessor is always a reliable source. For in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, it is Jesus, himself, who is present, to us and to our confessor. ■



# ST. DYMPHNA'S TRAVELS

Can you imagine it? Being just 11 or 12 or 13 years old, yet faced with life and death decisions - and for every minute of this frightening time, you are truly alone.

That's the "fine kettle of fish" as the saying goes, confronting St. Dymphna. While mourning the death of her mother, a devout Christian, this Seventh Century Irish princess discovered that her powerful father, the pagan king of the realm, had grown insane. He planned to replace the queen by marrying Dymphna.

His late wife had raised her child as a Christian; and indeed, that proved to be the greatest heritage the Queen could bequeath to her daughter.

So Dymphna knew right from wrong and far more. She knew she could count on her Father in Heaven for true strength and safety. In that spirit, she sought counsel from her chaplain/teacher/confessor, Fr. Gerebernus. And along with two -companions, he helped the Princess to flee.

In secret, they set out to sea, navigating the choppy and perilous waters between their island home and coast of Europe. Their journey brought them to the shores of present day Belgium. Awaiting them was a mission of prayer life and service to society's outcasts: the very poor, the sick, the disabled. It was a mission that ended in martyrdom at the hands of Dymphna's relentless father and king.

When the graves of this little martyred band were discovered at Gheel in the 13th Century, many miracles, especially among the sick and

disabled, became public knowledge.

We know that human nature changes very little. Violence and brutality - physical, psychological, and spiritual - still abound. Most surely so for millions of young people all over the world today, boys and girls not much older than Dymphna when she faced a similar junction in life.

Keep them and all who face great transitions in life in your prayers this Lent. And as baptismal vows are renewed at Easter, thank God again for the gift of faith and God's guidance. Recall that you are among the baptized called to serve as Christ's heart, hands and love in this world, a world still so in need of God's living presence.

And keep in mind St. Dymphna's courage and deep faith. There is no greater role model, as you pray for endangered young people in your own community. Many are poised as she once was, between a bleak present, and a tomorrow of faith, hope and the enduring love of God. ■

## REMEMBRANCE

**You can continue to carry on your own good work for the missions and the people they serve by remembering them in your will. To do so, simply make a bequest of whatever you wish to: FRANCISCAN MISSION ASSOCIATES, Mount Vernon, NY 10551. If you wish additional information about how to do this, please feel free to contact:**

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# Director's Letter

Fr. Robert, O.F.M.

FRANCISCAN FRIARS/P.O. BOX 598/MOUNT VERNON, N.Y. 10551-0598

TEL. AREA CODE: 914 664-5604



Dear Friend,

During this holy season of Lent a word that comes up in many homilies over and over is sacrifice. To some it means a week without television, to others a few months without sweets. When you set upon your own Lenten path, why not try to turn around conventional wisdom?

Some Christians spend weeks fighting off the urge to eat chocolate only to have baskets of it come Easter. Don't get me wrong; I would truly miss chocolate if I ever gave it up, but that is a short-lived gift to God. A favorite Aunt of mine used to give this advice: instead of trying to give something up, do something for Christ during Lent.

You have heard the phrase "pay it forward" – think about ways you could help others during Lent. So many people are still affected by the recent downturn in the economy. How about setting up an annual food bank at your children's school and donating the proceeds to a needy group? Or you could volunteer to help the elderly in your neighborhood get to the grocery store and to church.

Pope Benedict XVI has spoken about giving selflessly in Christ's name. "Those who are in a position to help others will realize that in doing so they themselves receive help; being able to help others is no merit or achievement of their own. This duty is a grace." One that sustains in times of trouble.

Christ made the ultimate sacrifice because he loved us. Why not show the Lord how much you love him this season by becoming a better person and really making changes to the world around you? The joy you create is its own reward.

Have a holy and prayerful Lenten Season.

Gratefully yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Fr. Robert, ofm". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Fr. Robert, O.F.M.

# WALKING WITH CHRIST IN EL SALVADOR

*By Fr. Michael, O.F.M.*

Of the many things that can be said of the little town of Ataco in El Salvador, one thing is for certain; they love their processions. And there are many to love! Ataco, in fact, hosts a total of nine solemn processions during Holy Week alone, one lasts over 15 hours and all provide the faithful a unique opportunity “to go forth with Christ.”

Fr. Rafael, O.F.M., the pastor of the Immaculate Conception Parish, is amazed to see how the processions have grown since he instituted them twenty years ago.

Each night has a different theme or focus. Monday is dedicated to the Animas, (all souls), Tuesday is for the sign or symbol of hope, and Wednesday focuses on St. Peter and papal authority. Thursday has two processions, one of the cross by itself and a later silent procession with a statue of a Christ blind-folded and led by the Roman guards. Friday's procession, the largest and most solemn, includes a statue of St. John and Mary the Mother of God who follow along after Christ. Saturday's procession features the sorrowful mother Mary alone in mourning for her dead son. Finally on Sunday the resurrected Christ is processed in the morning from the new Calvary Church to the parish.

One may ask what can be gained by walking throughout the night, what is the point? The answer was revealed to me slowly as the real meaning of the procession unfolded during the walk.

Each night before the statues begin their nightly rounds they are beautifully arrayed with flowers that are donated by select families.

The streets are carefully prepared with



extravagantly decorated alfombras laid out ahead on the path of the procession. Alfombras are natural aromatic ‘street carpets’ comprised of bright flowers as well as dyed sawdust or salt, fruits, berries, and

even stones or bottle caps wrapped in tin foil.

Spontaneous songs are sung along the way, led by three or four women in traditional costumes leading the procession. Behind these women are twelve boys, each representing a different Apostle who will later have their feet washed on Holy Thursday. A young boy carrying incense directly precedes the statue. The town band follows along behind the statue playing a dirge. Finally, not far behind the statue can be heard a gas generator hooked up on a makeshift go-cart which provides the electricity for the neon lights which illuminate the statue and otherwise dark streets. The huge crowd slowly winds its way along the streets gently and patiently throughout the town.

It all began to make sense as I heard two people talking about the alfombras "Imagine working all day to make these beautiful works of art, only to be trampled on and destroyed by the float bearers in seconds." Another man explained that the alfombras

can be seen to symbolize the passion itself, or God's love, which was freely given to us as a gift and trampled upon and ultimately crucified. And yet God's extravagant display of love is not a waste but a revelation and the very measure of the depth of his Infinite Love. It is, in fact, the Pascal mystery. Another older man, whose face radiated a deep peace, joyfully spoke a profound truth when he seemed to sum up the whole experience in saying "Isn't it wonderful we get to accompany Christ."

The procession is a perfect definition of Christianity. A people gathered around Christ on a journey of faith. After he said that the sacramental dimension of the procession, of actually walking with Christ and accompanying him in his suffering on the way to Calvary came alive. This dimension can only be seen by those with faith. Ironically this truth was embodied in one of the people that Fr. Rafael stopped for along the way, Marguerita, and she was blind. Fr. Rafael took the time to describe the features





of the statue of Christ and the different colors of flowers around it. You could see how she was so filled with excitement and seemed to drink in every detail. She could see what many others could not with perfect eyes. She was on a journey of faith and so with the eyes of her heart, she could see Christ among his people.

The whole procession is a metaphor for our spiritual journey which at times may feel long, difficult and burdensome and at other times light and joyful. I found myself forgetting my sore feet while speaking to several young men who were discerning vocations. At other times I walked alone and the journey felt heavy. The procession echoes so many different aspects of our journey. On our walk we often stumble or even stray from the pack and lose our way. Sometimes we find ourselves getting ahead of Christ, forgetting he must lead and we follow. The reality that the journey can be difficult surprises only those who forget Christ leads us to the cross. The journey does not end there, but instead offers us new life. In the end, the procession is an invitation to participate in the mystery of the passion and so enter into a journey of faith. Few devotions offer the opportunity to accompany Christ in both a physical and spiritual way. This ancient tradition thus presents a uniquely rich and meaningful experience that can be powerfully transformative. ■



# Words Worth Noting



*On the human chessboard, all moves are possible.*

Miriam Schiff

*Those who often pray are necessary to those who never pray.*

Victor Hugo

*Forgiveness is the remission of sins. For it is by this that what has been lost, and was found, is saved from being again.*

St. Augustine

*The times in which I said 'yes' to a sacrifice were the greatest and most important moments.*

Pope Benedict XVI

*A man who views the world the same at fifty as he did at twenty has wasted thirty years of his life.*

Muhammad Ali

*Self-denial is not a virtue; it is only the effect of prudence on rascality.*

George Bernard Shaw

*The truth always turns out to be simpler than you thought.*

Richard Feynman

*I would never read a book if it were possible for me to talk a half an hour with the man who wrote it.*

Woodrow Wilson

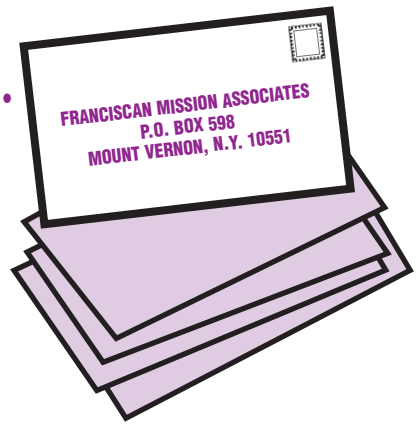
*Contrary to the cliché genuinely nice guys most often finish first or very near it.*

Malcolm Forbes

*Pearls are no value in a desert.*

Hindu Proverb

# Our Readers gladly write...



Dear Fr. Robert,

I received your most beautiful and consoling letter. I've never received a letter like it that offered Masses for my intentions and one that said mine were yours as well. My Dad always said "One for all and all for one." I've remembered it joyously and often say it to others. That's why a hymn like "Gather us In" by Marty Haugen has so much meaning to me too.

Would you please send me ten pamphlets each of the Faithful Departed and the Sick and Homebound? I would like to give them to a prayer group I belong to.

Enclosed is a donation for the last delivery. May God's most choice blessings be on you all.

Sincerely,  
M.H.  
Mooresville, NC

Dear Father Robert,

Thank you for the beautiful Christmas ornament of our Blessed Mother and her son Jesus. Also for the prayers offered for us during Masses celebrated at the chapel of the Franciscan Mission Associates. Your thoughtfulness and kindness are most appreciated. May you receive God's blessings for a healthy, peaceful year.

C. & A. U.  
Knox, IN

Dear Father,

I feel as though I am constantly praying a Novena for one of my children and their health issues or general life issues. I wish to thank St. Anthony and St. Joseph for helping get my prayers answered. They are the saints who get to hear them all, big and small. St. Anthony is truly a great, powerful and loving Saint and he seems to help me with all my true desires and urgent needs. I trust him because he is also helpful in my small matters.

I also prayed a Novena to St. Jude for my daughter's latest health issue, unsure of what to expect from this great Saint. I wish to thank St. Jude for answering my prayer. He is a powerful helper and I will urge those in need to look to these great Saints for help. Thank you for your support, prayers and encouragement. God bless you Franciscans.

D.E.  
Albuquerque, NM

## A Day at a Time

As the days of Lent march on, moving us to the glory and wonder of Easter, we often feel the shadow of St. Paul's call to action... Now is the acceptable time! Now is the day of salvation! For there is so much to do, we feel, waiting for the "right" time to work on our spiritual preparation for Easter.

Yet, we know, St. Paul is correct. The only acceptable time for leading a Christian life is always NOW.

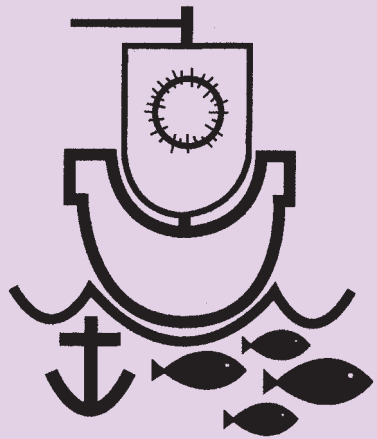
Lent is a helpful yearly look at our personal pilgrimage - our pathway to holiness and moving home to God. For come Easter, we want to feel "ready" to celebrate the Lord's Resurrection, and then to step ahead with all the Church, into the spirit of Pentecost and further to the Lord's Ascension.

For, it is we who must be Christ's hands, heart and compassionate presence in the world today. Indeed, every Mass (each itself an Easter) dismisses us, asking that we take our role in the work of the Resurrected Lord in the world outside today.

The great saints defined that reality as "the Sacrament of the Present Moment." And they lived it. For doing God's work is always a matter for "now." No matter what the "now" involves.

† St. Francis welcomed "Sister Death" in those "now" moments as he felt his health growing more and more frail. He accepted and welcomed this moment as God's will for him - and encouraged others to rejoice with him.

† St. Clare chose to follow God's call to a radical life of evangelical



poverty, chastity and obedience - despite the misgivings of well-meaning family and public. She didn't wait for a better day; she acted in her "now" moments. Helping God define a life thousands of Poor Clares worldwide now live daily.

† St. Anthony chose to welcome his life's calling to mission in a way far different from his youthful dreams. Instead, he found God's plan for him as a popular priest for thousands, a theologian, religious reformer, even miracle worker.

Today, we too can be sure that what the saints called "the Sacrament of the present moment" is a mission for us all. No one can hope to achieve a life of holiness by putting it off for later - or by wishing they had lived in an earlier "more golden era."

Rather, just as the saints did, we must move through our Lent then onward to Easter, accepting from God our part in salvation history, One Day at a Time. ■

Visit us on the web  
[franciscanmissionassoc.org](http://franciscanmissionassoc.org)

# BEARING UP...ACCEPTING THAT CROSS

Accepting and bearing our crosses in life is, we learned early in life, a “sacrifice.”

The Catechism of the Catholic Church reminds us, however, that such a sacrifice is more than that; it is a prayer, and a prayer of worship. Part of the virtue of religion, in fact, and yes, worship of God.

“It is right to offer sacrifice to God as a sign of adoration and gratitude, supplication and communion,” the Catechism states (#2099).

As we grow older, we can understand “offering it up” or “bearing our crosses” as sacrifice. We also know the English word, sacrifice, comes from two Latin words that mean “make holy.” Even that doesn’t make accepting our crosses any easier.

Not easy, yet not options either. The prophets of old would put it this way; hear the word of the Lord, in this case, Jesus himself.

“If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.” (Matthew 16:24)

We know even the Apostles failed to understand the teaching of Jesus about self-sacrifice. They failed him, some more than once. Yet with God’s grace, they could seek forgiveness.

And so those “crosses” - whether their own faults, or sacrifices on behalf of others whose crosses they chose to bear - those crosses became a prayer.

And more: A means to

discover and accept the will of God, as Jesus had done, He who was All Holy, He who provided an example in all cases. “What I just did was to give you an example; as I have done, so you must do.” (John 13:15)

The Catechism again reminds us, citing St. Paul’s explanation to the Hebrews: “The only perfect sacrifice is the one that Christ offered on the cross as a total offering to the Father’s love and for our salvation.”

Hear, again, The Catechism on our role: “By uniting ourselves with his (Christ’s) sacrifice we can make our lives a sacrifice to God.” (# 2100)

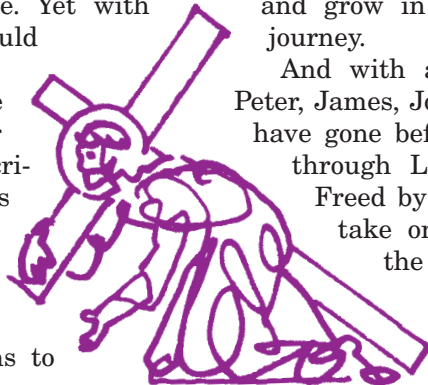
As Lent begins, ask the Holy Spirit to open your eyes to your true “crosses.” Thank God for all the good you are aware of in your life. And then ask for the grace to acknowledge, accept, and offer thanksgiving to God for the dark side as well - those crosses of everyday life.

The lives of the saints show us that it may take a long time, even a lifetime, to offer your whole life to God - as sacrifice, as worship.

For it is in admitting our own true crosses, that we admit God’s grace - and grow in holiness, a life-long journey.

And with all the saints - like Peter, James, John - and others who have gone before us, we can move through Lent to Easter glory.

Freed by God’s grace, you can take on your role willingly, the role in building the Kingdom of God on earth as it is in heaven. ■



# GOD'S WILL...AND YOURS

For Christians, the most perfect prayer is The Our Father, or The Lord's Prayer. This is the prayer Jesus taught his disciples, and through them, all of us.

The Mass for Tuesday, of the First Week of Lent, brings us face to face with the origin of this prayer and what makes it so different, in God's eyes. (Matthew 6: 7-15)

At the heart of this beautiful prayer which most of us learn at an early age, with our parents as teachers: "Thy will be done," we pray, "on earth as it is in heaven."

What the Lord tells us in these words is often obscured by the fear that somehow, uniting ourselves with God's will interferes with achieving our own goals in life ... or even with having fun.

The Lord taught otherwise, of course. "Your Father knows what you need before you ask him," Jesus reminded the disciples. As St. Paul would later rephrase it: "It is God's will that you grow in holiness." (1 Thess 4:3)

Among the many theologians and saints who understand God's will in the same way is St. Francis of Assisi (often called a 'walking Gospel' in his own time). Hear St. Francis' own words, in a deep meditation para-

phrasing The Lord's Prayer:

"Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven,  
so that we may love you  
with all our heart - by always  
having you in mind;  
with all our soul - by always long-  
ing for you;  
with all our mind - by determining  
to seek your glory in everything;  
and with all our strength of body  
and soul - by lovingly serving  
you alone."

Doing God's will on earth, St. Francis says, has to do with freeing us to love God. Thus grounded in God, we will remain free of the negative powers and idols that obscure our true goal: holiness. For we are God's adopted children, his sons and daughters.

In other words, in seeking and doing God's will on earth, we discover the gifts unique to each of us. Striving to live out God's will keeps us free, happy and loving. Indeed, on the way to holiness.

In surrendering to God's will, we keep our heart, mind, soul, and strength focused on God - as Jesus did. Thus anchored in God, we walk in the footsteps of Our Lord, the pilgrim's path to holiness, in Lent and all year long. ■

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## ST. ANTHONY'S BREAD

Offerings in honor of St. Anthony, either in petition for a favor sought, or in thanksgiving for a favor received, are used to assist the poor. Thus, they have received the name, St. Anthony's Bread. Such offerings are also used to help educate priests and religious.

Father Robert will gladly send you a leaflet explaining the origin and purpose of this devout practice, now centuries old. Please write:

**St. Anthony's Bread, Franciscan Mission Associates**  
**PO Box 598, Dept 3103, Mount Vernon, NY 10551-0598**

# FMA Spiritual Exercises Lent-Easter 2010

For the petitions and special intentions of all our benefactors, Franciscan Mission Associates will conduct this series of spiritual exercises during the Lenten and Easter season.

You are cordially invited to join us in prayer for your own needs and petitions, for those of our Franciscan missionary friars and their people, and for all who cooperate by prayer and sacrifice for the spread of the faith.

During the Lenten-Easter Season these Novenas of Masses have been arranged:

- February 2-10 / February 11-19 .....Our Lady of Lourdes
- February 17 - March 28.....Lenten Masses (40)
- March 23 - 31 .....Feast of Easter
- April 4 - 12.....In Thanksgiving for the Risen Christ
- April 13-June 8 .....9 Tuesdays to St. Anthony

Holy Mass is offered each day for all Franciscan Mission Associates benefactors and the special intentions they request. So kindly forward your petitions for the Novenas scheduled.

**Father Robert, O.F.M., Franciscan Mission Associates  
PO Box 598, Dept. 3101, Mount Vernon, NY 10551-0598**

## ST. DYMPHNA - REMAIN IN HOPE

**BLESSING WITH RELIC  
AND COMMUNAL RIGHT OF ANOINTING OF THE SICK**

**Special Mass: Tuesday, June 8, 2010 - 6:30 p.m.**

**ST. PATRICK'S CATHEDRAL IN NEW YORK CITY**

**Ask St. Dymphna to intercede for your intentions.**

**She is patroness of those who suffer from emotional, mental or psychological difficulties. This includes Alzheimer's and Autism.**

*May the Lord ensure that no one is alone or abandoned in a time of need, but, on the contrary, can live illness too in accordance with human dignity - Pope Benedict XI*

**COME JOIN US - REMAIN IN HOPE!**

**Join us on Pilgrimage**

**Lourdes, Shrines of Spain and Fatima**

**13-Day Pilgrimage - May 16-28, 2011**

**Lourdes – Barcelona – Zaragoza – Madrid – Avila – Fatima**

Dear Father, Please send information on Pilgrimage to Lourdes, Fatima, Shrines of Spain

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

CITY \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE \_\_\_\_\_

**Mail to: Pilgrimage Office, Dept. F, P.O. Box 598, Mount Vernon, NY 10551-0598**

**Tel: 914-664-5604 or 914-664-1747**