

# Adult Faith Formation

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To deepen our understanding of our Faith and increase our Love for God

March 2009

## March Focus



The anticipation of spring helps us get through the cold and dreary days of this month. The changing weather of cold, snow, wind, and rain can be a reminder of our Lenten journey as well. How are we preparing our hearts and minds to conform more deeply with God's? Jesus was in the desert for 40 days in preparation for his passion and death. What purifications are we undergoing this Lent to prepare us to receive Jesus more worthily and give praise and thanks for his opening the Gates of Heaven to us?

*"As you did hunger and did thirst,  
So teach us, gracious Lord,  
To die to self and so to live  
By your most holy word."*

verse text — Lord Who Throughout These Forty Days, verse 3

## Upcoming Events

- > Stations of the Cross—7:30 PM, Fridays beginning February 27th.
- > Palm Braiding—Palm Sunday, April 5th—After the 8 AM and 10 AM Masses. Come Join Us!

## Parenting Tip of the Month

Young children are the most giving people on the face of the earth.

During this Lenten time help your children follow the Church's teaching by asking them what they would like to give to the poor and needy of our community and world. Explain the word *almsgiving* to them (see the box to the left for an explanation), and participate in the Rice Bowl Lenten collection or other out-reach activity.

Also bring them with you to the Stations of the Cross and the Sacrament of Penance. All are small ways to bring us closer to Christ.

*"Let the children come to me, and do not prevent them; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these."*

Matthew 19:14

## Dictionary for the Laity

**Conscience**—The interior voice of a human being, within whose heart the inner law of God is inscribed. Moral conscience is a judgment of practical reason about the moral quality of a human action. It moves a person at the appropriate moment to do good and to avoid evil (CCC 1777-1778). An *examination of conscience* is recommended as a preparation for the reception of the Sacrament of Penance (CCC 1454).

**Contrition**—Sorrow of the soul and hatred for the sin committed, together with a resolution not to sin again. Contrition is the most important act of the penitent, and is necessary for the reception of the Sacrament of Penance (CCC 1451).

**Conversion**—A radical reorientation of the whole life away from sin and evil, and toward God. This change of heart or conversion is a central element of Christ's preaching, of the Church's ministry of evangelization, and of the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation. (CCC 1427, 1431, 1423; cf.821).

Catechism of the Catholic Church, Glossary

## What are the three things Catholics are asked to do during Lent?

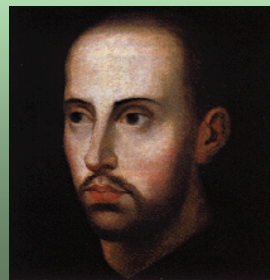
**Fasting**—Refraining from food and drink as an expression of interior penance, in imitation of the fast of Jesus for forty days in the desert. **Prayer**—Every sincere act of worship or devotion revives the spirit of conversion and repentance within us and contributes to the forgiveness of our sins. **Almsgiving**—Money or goods given to the poor as an act of penance or fraternal charity.

Source—Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1434 and Glossary

Our saint for the month spent many years not practicing his Catholic faith. It wasn't until he was in his 40's that he returned to the faith of his childhood. He knew the wealth of forgiveness in Confession and then lived a life of atonement and service to God. Use his life as an example of how to return to God, especially in this time of Lent. Learn to love of the sacrament of Confession, it is a sacrament of healing and of building your relationship with God.

"If we look forward to receiving God's mercy, we can never fail to do good so long as we have the strength. For if we share with the poor, out of love for God, whatever he has given to us, we shall receive according to his promise a hundredfold in eternal happiness. What a fine profit, what a blessed reward! With outstretched arms he begs us to turn toward him, to weep for our sins, and to become the servants of love, first for ourselves, then for our neighbors. Just as water extinguishes a fire, so love wipes away sin."

St. John of God



## Pope Benedict XVI

### March Prayer Intentions

**General:** That the role of women may be more appreciated and used to good advantage in every country in the world.

**Mission:** That in the light of the letter addressed to them by Pope Benedict XVI, the Bishops, priests, consecrated persons, and lay faithful of the Catholic Church in the Popular Republic of China may commit themselves to being the sign and instrument of unity, communion and peace.

## St. John of God — March 8th



John was born in Monte-mayor-el-Novo, in Portugal, in 1495. His parents were poor and very religious. When he was 8 years old he was kidnapped. He found himself an out-cast in Castile, on the Spanish peninsula. He settled down as a shepherd-boy in the neighboring countryside and remained there until he was 22.

This was an era of wars and conquests. John joined a company of soldiers and fought for the emperor Charles V, first against the French and later in Hungary against the

Turks. For eighteen years he was employed as a soldier in various parts of Europe. He lost whatever faith and devotion he once possessed. He laid aside his morals; he was ashamed to be thought better than his fellow soldiers. But no matter how wild his life might have been, John had always a soft spot in his heart for the poor and suffering.

John was 44 when his regiment was at last disbanded. Immediately he set out to making something of himself. He went on a pilgrimage and put himself right before God by a good confession. He was determined that in some way the rest of his life should be spent in atonement.

### A New Life

He returned to Spain and found work as a poor shepherd once more. Compassion for the distressed led him to leave his job in the hope that by crossing to Africa he might comfort and help the Christian slaves detained there. At Gibraltar he met a Portuguese gentleman whose estate had been confiscated. John was so full of pity for this exile and his wife and children that he sold all he had and helped support this family. He even hired himself out as a day-laborer at the public works in order to earn a little money for their benefit.

John went to Granada where he opened his own store and there sold pictures and pious objects. Later he went on a pilgrimage to Our Lady of Gaudalupe (see box below), and there he discovered his true vocation. He came back to Granada, rented a house, and began to gather in it all the sick, poor, and homeless people of the town. He would wash his patients and dress their sores; he would sit by their side and encourage them, and then he would urge them to go to confession and to pray.

John considered himself bound to try to help every distressed person he heard about. He organized strict inquires into the needs of the poor and sick throughout the whole province, relieved some in their homes, provided work for others, and made the greatest sacrifices to comfort and assist all the afflicted members of Christ. Crucifix in hand, he would often seek out hardened sinners and would exhort them to repentance.

### A Beggar for the Poor

To maintain his hospital, John went out to beg, rattling a tin can in his hand, shouting as loud as charity would allow him. Very soon there grew up about his house a group of more wealthy men and women who took pride in calling themselves his benefactors. The Archbishop of Granada gave him the name of "John of God" and prescribed a kind of habit for him.

Although his life seemed to be one of continual action, John accompanied it with frequent prayer and self sacrifice. His charity was fed and inflamed by frequent meditation on the sufferings of Christ, to whom he often used to say: "Lord, Your thorns are my roses and Your sufferings my paradise."

In one of his letters John wrote: "Whenever I see so many people who are poor and those who are my neighbors suffering beyond their forces and afflicted with so much pain both in soul and in body that I cannot assuage, I am overcome with sadness. But I place my trust in Christ, for He knows my heart. This is why I say: 'Accursed is the person who places his trust in human beings rather than in Christ alone.' For — whether you want it or not—you will be separated from humans. But Christ is faithful and is always with us, for He provides all things. Let us give thanks to Him at every moment."

Worn out by fifteen years' hard service on behalf of the sick, John died a victim of charity. The cause of his illness was over-exhaustion. His acts of mercy in the service of the sick and poor had proved too much of a strain on his heart. On March 8, 1550, the nurses found the saint dead, still kneeling, his face resting on the crucifix. He was canonized in 1690. In 1886 Pope Leo XIII declared him the heavenly patron of all hospitals and the sick. His feast is celebrated on March 8th, on which the Church prays: "O God, You filled St. John with the spirit of compassion. Grant that by practicing works of charity we may deserve to be numbered among the elect in Your Kingdom."

Source—Best - Loved Saints by Fr. L. G. Lovasik, S.V.D.

## Friendly Defenders

### Confession - Hypocrisy

Question #3: Catholics think, "I can sin today, and go to confession tomorrow."

Catholic Response: If any Catholics think that, they're as wrong as any Protestant Christian who says, "I can sin because I'm saved." We must always...

Bible Verse: "Exhort one another...that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin." *Hebrews 3:13*

Description: Both Catholics and Protestants alike must be aware of self-deception.

Related Verses: *Matthew 24:42-44, 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11, 2 Peter 3:10-18*

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~ Our Lady of Guadalupe  
and St. John of God ~  
Pray for us and for our children.

## Hey, I thought Our Lady of Guadalupe appeared in Mexico. Where did St. John of God go to? Surely not to Mexico!



**Answer:** The shrine statue of Our Lady with the Infant was sent by Pope St. Gregory I to St. Leander (550-600) in Spain before the Moorish conquest. To save it from capture by the enemy, it was buried in a cave together with papers telling of its origin and to whom it belonged. Centuries passed before it was unearthed in 1326 by a cowherd who said a lovely lady had appeared to him and told him where to dig for treasure. The statue he found was made of Oriental wood, unharmed by its years of underground burial. A chapel was built to house the image. This statue was named Guadalupe for the village located near the place of discovery. King Ferdinand (1452-1516) and Queen Isabella (1451-1504) often spent time in Guadalupe and apparently were there in 1486 when Christopher Columbus (1451-1506) traveled with the Court to persuade the Catholic monarchs of Spain to underwrite his adventure. Columbus, himself a devotee of Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe, vowed to make a pilgrimage to Guadalupe in thanksgiving for her protection during a severe storm on his first voyage. While he probably did not fulfill that vow until 1496, it is certain that he was then at the shrine. The baptismal register of Guadalupe shows that on Friday, 29 April 1496, two American natives, Cristobal and Pedro, were baptized at the shrine. The origin of the name Guadalupe, for the Mexico apparitions has always been a matter of controversy. It is nevertheless believed that the name came about because of the translation from Nahuatl to Spanish of the words used by the Virgin during the apparition to Juan Bernardino, the ailing uncle of Juan Diego.

Source—several websites