

The Hope of Grace and Mercy

Lent 2010

**"God reconciling the world
to himself in Christ...."**

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Click on these *links* to find Lent resources for:

Learning—programs to expand your knowledge of the faith

Celebrating—ways to come closer to God through the sacraments

Reflecting—ways to jump start or enhance your prayer life

Serving—ways to join in service to others

Lent traditions— including prayer, fasting and almsgiving

Holy Week and Easter—celebrating the “Crown of the Year”

Each year in Lent, we are asked to turn toward the Lord. We call this ‘conversion.’ We have in front of us each year those who are asking to join the church. Yet, we all must be ‘converts.’

We are asked to turn from sin to the Gospel, from selfishness to service, from alienation to reconciliation.

We are invited, once more, to look carefully at what we believe and to profess that faith again.

We are invited to look at our commitment to Christ and to renew it.

The season is not a time of sadness or despair, but of profound hope. Even if we have lost our way, we know that we can be helped to find the path, to discover once again the miracle of God’s grace and mercy.

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Learning

Click these *links* to find out more about:

Ten Minute Catechism • *Catholicism 101* • *Online resources for learning*



Ten Minute Catechism

Back to the Basics: What are we offered by Christ?

In ten minutes after mass, learn something about your faith!

Join us for one or for all!

When? For 10 minutes at the end of the 5:30 PM (Saturday), 10:30 AM and 5:00 PM (Sunday) Masses. (You can leave as soon as the timer rings. Honest!)

Where? Come to the pews in front of the piano (the south west corner of the church).

February 20/21: What happens when it all falls apart?

March 7: Do we get another chance?

February 27/28: What is our hope?

March 13/14: How crazy *is* God?

What are we promised?

March 20/21: What does God really want?

Are you Catholic, but were never confirmed?

These sessions will serve as preparation for confirmation for Catholics who have received their First Communion. The celebration of confirmation is May 15

Just exploring?

The same sessions are open to anyone looking for an introduction to Catholicism—perhaps if you are engaged to or married to a Catholic, or are just curious about what the Church teaches.

Need a refresher?

Those who think they might not have been paying as much attention as they could have in eighth grade are also welcome! Come to one or all of the sessions.

**Catholicism
101**

**Wednesdays
beginning March 3
7 PM to 9 PM**

**To register and see
the topic schedule,
click here.**

Various Resources Online for Lent

Click on the highlighted words for each link.

Pope Benedict XVI's Lent message *here*.

Busted Halo is an excellent 'online magazine.' They include an interactive *Lent Calendar* this year.

Lent resources from *American Catholic.org*

Lent resources from Loyola Press available *here*.

Video guide to everything you always wanted to know about Lent.

A Lent radio retreat is available *here*.

Lent resources from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops *here*.

There are audio and video meditations for every day of Lent and other features that include "What we believe", "What we celebrate", "How we live" and "How we pray"

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Celebrating

Click these *links* to find out more about:

*Daily Mass • Eucharistic Adoration • Confession Times
Print guide for going to confession • Video walk through of confession*

Daily Mass

Lent marks a time when many people make the commitment to attend daily Mass. Weekday Masses at St. Alphonsus are Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday at 8:30 AM and Wednesday at 6:00 PM.

Daily mass lasts only about a half an hour.

If the times here don't mesh well with your schedule, check out options near where you work, especially at lunch time. In downtown Chicago, St. Peter's, Holy Name Cathedral and Old St. Pat's are all accessible.

One excellent preparation for mass, to make it more meaningful, is to read the Scripture readings ahead of time. Go [here](#) to find them.

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament

Each Wednesday, after the 6:00 PM mass, we begin a Holy Hour of Eucharistic adoration. People come to spend some time with the Lord, in prayer and meditation.

Many enjoy the silence and chance to speak directly to the Lord in prayer.

If you have never experienced this form of prayer, this Lent might be a good time to try it.

If you are looking for a guide, click [here](#) to find a commonsense approach to this form of prayer.

All are welcome!

Celebrating Penance and Reconciliation

The Sacrament of Reconciliation offers a wonderful opportunity to explore and pray over the ways in which we have broken relationships or have failed. God's presence assures forgiveness and offers us the grace of a new beginning on the path.

Lent is a traditional time to 'take stock' and discover the ways in which we can turn more fully toward the Lord. It is a great season in which to celebrate the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation.

The sacrament is Reconciliation is regularly offered twice each week:

Wednesday from 6:30 –7:30 PM; Saturday from 11:00 to 11:45 AM. You can also make an appointment.

Click here for video guides
to confession:
How to prepare.
In the confessional.

Click here for a print guide
to confession.

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Serving

Click these *links* to find out more about:

Operation Rice Bowl • *Volunteer opportunities in the community*



Participate in Operation Rice Bowl

As a parish, we encourage everyone to participate in this collection for Catholic Relief Services.

Your spare change, saved through the season, along with the money you save from your fasting will go to fund hunger projects, clean water initiatives and emergency relief throughout the developing world.

You *can visit their web site* and use its various resources, from prayer resources for Lent to recipes for simple meals that are nourishing for you—and save you money that can go to help nourish others.

Volunteer to help during Lent and beyond

Night Ministry On March 31 and April 1. Volunteer to make sack dinners for homeless youth in our neighborhood (Wednesday) or to spend some time distributing the dinners (Thursday). Contact Vince at vpmeno@gmail.com to volunteer. You can also contact the *Night Ministry* directly for more service opportunities.

Volunteering for the Greater Chicago Food Depository

Volunteers are needed, especially with high demand! Go *here* for details. Family friendly volunteer opportunities are also available once a month.

Volunteer at the Women's Center

What is The Women's Center? It is a pro-life ministry devoted to helping women in problem pregnancies. They have three counseling offices in the Chicago area. Each year their counselors help approximately 5,000 women and their families. If you have a heart for helping us save babies and their mothers, call Katie at 773-794-8807 for information about counselor volunteer training sessions.

Lakeview Pantry is on the St. Alphonsus campus. They welcome both donations and volunteer support. Contact Erin at erin@lakeviewpantry.org

Aquinas Literacy Center is looking for ESL volunteers to teach English to adult learners. Volunteers tutor for about 90 minutes a week. All training is provided. You can find more *information at their web site*.

GED Tutors Needed. Peace Corner Youth Center, supported by Comboni Missionaries, is in need of tutors for all GED subjects, especially math. The Peace Corner is open Monday through Friday from 2:00 PM until 7:00 PM. It is a welcoming and caring environment within a neighborhood characterized by crime and violence. Peace Corner is located at 5014 W. Madison St. in Chicago. *More information at their web site.*

Lincoln Park Community Shelter assists those living on the streets in our neighborhood. Their programs meet immediate needs and work toward moving clients to permanent housing. More information about ways to volunteer is *available on their web site.*

Ronald McDonald House in Lincoln Park serves families and children seeking treatment at Children's Hospital. They need volunteers for a variety of activities. For an application and more information, *go to their web site.*

The Traditions of Lent

In the first centuries of the church, Lent was the time of final preparation for those to be baptized. The rest of the Christian community kept the season with them, joining them in greater prayer, fasting and charity. Each year, we still wait with those to be baptized and received into the church. We also wait for peace to come to our broken world. The traditional disciplines of Lent help to renew us spiritually. They also help us to join in solidarity with all those who hope for peace.

Prayer

As we begin Lent, we are asked to “Repent and believe in the Gospel.” *Repentance* can sound foreign to our modern ears. A better word for us might be to *turn*. Our lives are a continual turning to hear the Gospel more clearly and to follow Christ more fully. Prayer is the conversation which helps us on this journey.

Pray with our catechumens and candidates. We are welcoming forty adults and children into the church at Easter. Pick up a prayer card with the name of one of them and pray daily for that person as we go through Lent.

Remember to pray for peace. Keep in your prayer world leaders and all those who work actively for peace.

Find time to enrich your life with daily prayer. If this is not a habit you have now, you might need to experiment and find the time that works the best for you. Suggestions for ways to begin:

- Pick up the *Black Book* with daily reflections. Available at church.
- Attend daily mass.
- Look on for *more online suggestions* in this guide.

Fasting

Fasting is an ancient spiritual discipline, practiced across cultures and traditions. Going without food or something else which we enjoy reminds us of two things. First, we can live without most of what we want. We can't live without what we need. Our fasting helps us to recognize the difference, and to realize that what we need is supplied only by God's grace and generosity.

Second, we fast in solidarity with those who are hungry most days of their lives. The money we save can help to feed them.

Fasting on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. The tradition of the church is that those who are physically able should fast on these two days. This applies to those from the ages of 18 to 59. It does not apply to those who are pregnant, nursing or ill.

Abstinence from meat on Ash Wednesday and the Fridays of Lent. No meat or meat products should be eaten on those days.

Make a resolution to do without a luxury during Lent. The money saved from not spending on yourself should go to help the poor. You may be amazed at how much you invest in that Starbucks habit!

Resolve to 'fast' from a behavior or habit which harms relationships. The only way to become a better person is to practice being one. Lent is a kind of 'training period' to help us cultivate good habits - and good habits lead to virtue. The idea is to have a new way of behavior in place by Easter, not to revert to your old ways once Lent is over! This kind of resolution goes hand in hand with prayer. God gives us the strength to turn our lives more fully toward God.

Acts of Charity

Like prayer and virtue, charity is not just for Lent. However, the time of Lent has always been set aside to help us show more concern for the poor and to make that concern part of our daily habits.

Make a resolution to do something positive for others. Just as we resolve to 'give up', add a resolution to do something for the peace and welfare of the world. It can take many forms - from walking instead of driving for short errands to making the time to spend with someone who is lonely or elderly.

Contribute to Operation Rice Bowl. Operation Rice Bowl is a program sponsored by Catholic Relief Services. You can just place the money you are collecting in a small bowl to remind yourself. Place there any money you save from fasting as well as your spare change.

At the end of Lent, convert that change into a check and bring it to church. Three quarters of the funds go to feed the hungry overseas; one quarter is distributed to programs for the hungry here in Chicago. ***Note that Catholic Relief Services is one of the largest NGOs working in Haiti. Their resources are taxed by the quake and its aftermath. A great proportion of the funds will go there.*** All that spare change adds up to thousands of dollars .



Holy Week at St. Alphonsus

Passion (Palm) Sunday, March 28

Regular Mass Schedule

Holy Thursday, April 1

7:30 PM Mass of the Lord's Supper
The church will be open until midnight to keep vigil

Good Friday, April 2

3:00 PM Stations of the Cross
7:30 PM Commemoration of the Lord's Passion

Holy Saturday, April 3

7:30 PM Solemn Vigil of Easter
A reception will follow.

Easter Sunday, April 4

7:45 AM Mass in English
9:15 AM Mass in German and English
11:00 AM Mass in English
12:30 PM Mass in Spanish

Join us for the "Crown of the Year" - the celebration of the Triduum

The services of the Triduum (Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and the Easter Vigil) are one complete liturgy, lasting over three nights. Commemorating the great gift of Christ in his death and resurrection, they are the 'crown of the year', the great feast from which all our other feasting springs. You are invited to join us for all of them, or as many as you would like.

Holy Thursday is the solemn beginning to the Triduum.

There is a great entrance procession to begin the three days. During the liturgy, we remember, as we always do, the events of the Last Supper. We listen to the *Mandatum* from John's gospel. Jesus washes the feet of the disciples, and commands us to be servants to one another. The presider for this liturgy takes the Lord at his word and washes the feet of twelve parishioners.

Why come? To remember the great gift of Christ's presence in the Eucharist. We take it for granted sometimes. Holy Thursday reminds us of how we live out the mystery of the Eucharist in our day-to-day lives.

On Good Friday, there are no signs of life in the church.

There are no candles burning. The fonts are dry. The tabernacle is empty. When you come in, it feels 'dead' and vacant, a reminder of what the world would be like without Christ's living presence. As the liturgy in the evening begins, the ministers come in and prostrate themselves in front of the empty sanctuary. The Liturgy of the Word follows. The cross is brought in to be venerated. Each person is invited to come forward and show reverence to the wood of the Cross.

Why come? To remember Christ's sacrifice on the Cross, not just for us, but for all people and for all time. As Christians we believe that this was the center point of history. We gather to reflect on the magnitude of this mystery.

On the evening of Holy Saturday we celebrate the Great Vigil of Easter.

Each year, we mark the night of Christ's triumph, rejoicing in his rising from the tomb. We begin by lighting a huge fire. No light has been in the church since Thursday. Now, we kindle a new fire and from it, light a new Pascal candle. That candle is carried into the dark church, as we sing *Christ our Light*. We all have carried the light of Christ since baptism, so we rekindle our own candles, and together we light the church.

We recount the great events of salvation history, beginning with Creation. Then those to be baptized are led to the font, and immersed in the newly blessed waters. They arise from the font, sharing in Christ's resurrection, and are anointed with chrism, sealed with the Spirit. All present also renew their baptism. Then we process to the altar. Our newly received brothers and sisters share in the Eucharist for the first time, and we join them.

Why come? This is the highpoint, the peak of our year together as Christians. Fire, water, perfumed chrism, bread and wine all speak to us of God's great gift of new life and the promise of resurrection. We have these signs, but we also have the witness of new Christians, who come to the font and the table, sharing with us their faith in these saving mysteries, while we renew our own.

Holy Thursday Pilgrimage

Join fellow St. Alphonsus parishioners following the Holy Thursday Mass for an Adoration Pilgrimage. We will meet in the narthex after Mass, walk to 4 or 5 local churches (including St. Alphonsus) for 15-20 minutes of prayer in each, and plan to return to St. Alphonsus around 11:00 PM. Please contact andrewcastiglioni@yahoo.com or pdcaniz-zaro@gmail.com with any questions.

Stations of the Cross on Good Friday

The Stations will be prayed at 3:00 PM on Good Friday. This might be a good option for those who would rather not venture out at night.

It is also an excellent alternative for families with younger children.

Join Us for the Kid's Vigil!

Do your kids complain that mass is always the same?

Do you dread having to find a place to park, and to sit, on Easter Sunday?

WE HAVE THE SOLUTION!

The Easter Vigil begins with a bonfire, and a dark church lit by hundreds of candles. Then, we will have a special children's Liturgy of the Word, with a little music and dance.

The children rejoin the assembly to watch grownups (and kids) get baptized. There are trumpets, and the organ blasting. There is nothing like it! (And you will have really celebrated Easter in the best way the church offers.)