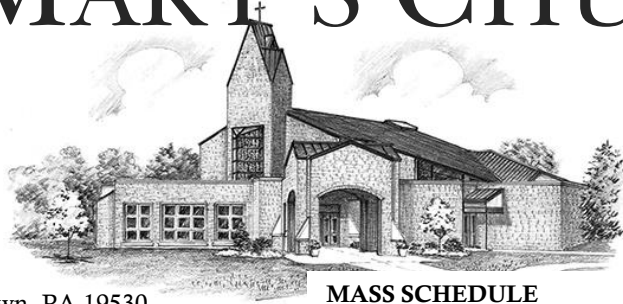


ST MARY'S CHURCH



14833 Kutztown Road ▪ Kutztown, PA 19530

www.StMarysKutztown.com

www.facebook.com/stmaryskutztown

Church, Meeting Rooms, Business & Parish Offices:

Phone : 610-683-7443 ▪ Fax : 610-683-7625

Email: Parish@StMarysKutztown.com

Religious Education Center: 610-683-6454

Email: RelEd@StMarysKutztown.com

PASTORAL MINISTRY

Pastor	Fr John Maria
Pastor Emeritus	Rev. Msgr Walter T Scheaffer
Transitional Deacon	Rev. Mr. N. Romero Brelinsky
Permanent Deacon	Dcn. Howard Schultz
Coordinator/Religious Educ	Mrs. Ann Pergosky
Director of Music Ministry and Parish Secretary	Mrs. Anne Sitarik

PARISH ORGANIZATIONS

Ladies Auxiliary	Theresa Bieak & Deb Massa
Men of St. Mary's	Mr. Tom Cengeri
Pro-Life Committee	Mr. John Tucker, O P
R C I A	Fr. John Maria

DIOCESAN INFORMATION

Diocesan Policies and Procedures on Youth Protection:

www.allentowndiocese.org

Diocesan Victim Assistance Coordinator:

Wendy S Krisak, Direct Telephone: (800) 791-9209

Office of Safe Environment Secretary, Youth Protection and Catholic Human Services: Pamela Russo, MSW, MS ; PO Box F, Allentown, 181-5-1538 Tele. 610-871-5200 x2204

Catholic Bishop Abuse Reporting Service: If you have an allegation of abuse against a bishop, please contact the Catholic Bishop Abuse Reporting Service:

www.ReportBishopAbuse.org or 800-276-1562

MASS SCHEDULE

Saturday Vigil	4:30 pm
Sunday	8:30, 11:00am
Daily Masses	7:30am (Monday – Friday) 8:00am (First Saturdays)

ADORATION OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT - Every

Wednesday, 7-8 pm *and* First Friday of the Month, 8 until 9am

SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM – Baptism is celebrated at various times, often 11a Mass, the 1st Sunday of the month. Baptisms are also scheduled privately upon arrangement with families. Parents must contact the Religious Ed Office to arrange Baptismal Prep sessions and learn all the details.

SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION - Saturday, 3:30-4:20p, Sundays 8:00-8:20; 10:30-10:50 am, Wednesdays 7:00-8:00p and by appointment

SACRAMENT OF ANOINTING OF THE SICK – Those who are dangerously ill or facing serious surgery may receive this healing Sacrament. Please contact Father John Maria to make arrangements.

SACRAMENT OF MATRIMONY – Congratulations! Couples must contact Father John at least six months in advance of desired date. Marriage Preparation is required for proper celebration of a valid and Sacramental marriage.

PROSPECTIVE GODPARENTS/SPONSORS asked to serve as Baptismal Godparents or Confirmation sponsor must request an eligibility certificate from the parish priest. To serve in this special role parishioners must: Be in full communion with the Catholic Church; Attend Mass weekly; have received Sacraments of Baptism, Eucharist, Reconciliation & Confirmation; Married individuals need be validly married in the Catholic Church.

Please contact the Parish Office and allow 2 weeks to process.

HOMEBOUND – Parishioners homebound and unable to attend Mass please contact the Parish Office to arrange visitation, to receive Holy Communion

HOSPITALIZED - Call the Rectory to notify of someone in the hospital so we can pray for and possibly visit them. Each hospital in our Diocesan boundaries is either covered by a local parish or has a priest on call at the hospital.

PARISH MEMBERSHIP - Welcome to St. Mary's Parish! Please contact the Parish Office to meet with Father John and become registered. We also ask those who move to notify the parish

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION – Education for parish children occurs September 10 through April. Contact Religious Education office: 610-683-6454 for registration.

Center-based

- Levels 1 to 5 meet every week, Sundays, 9:40-10:50am
- Level 6-8 meet the 2nd & 4th Sundays, 6-8pm
- Youth Group (9-12) Stay tuned for upcoming events.

Home-based Arrangements may be made for select grade levels, contact Ann Pergosky

This is the time of fulfillment.
The kingdom of God is at hand.
Repent, and believe in the gospel.

Mark 1:15

young-catholics.com

FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT, FEBRUARY 18, 2024

We are a welcoming community called to deepen and share our faith

0195-1

MASS Intentions

Mon 02-19	7:30a	Mary Louise Tucker
Tue 02-20	7:30a	John O'Sullivan
Wed 02-21	7:30a	William and Celestina Keller
	6:00p	Stàs Smith
Thu 02-22	7:30a	Beatrice Benninghoff
Fri 02-23	7:30a	Marlowe Graff
Sat 02-24	8:00a	Father John J. L. Little
	4:30p	Dr. James R. Lynch
Sun 02-25	8:30a	People of the Parish
	11:00a	Jean Vasko

To sponsor Blessed Sacrament Candle in Lent contact the parish office

READINGS and CELEBRATIONS for the WEEK

Sun 02-18	1 st Sunday of Lent - Gn 9:8-15; 1 Pt 3:18-22; Mk 1:12-15
Mon 02-19	Lv 19:1-2, 11-18; Mt 25:31-46
Tue 02-20	Is 55:10-11; Mt 6:7-15
Wed 02-21	Jon 3:1-10; Lk 11:29-32
Thu 02-22	1 Pt 5:1-4; Mt 16:13-19
Fri 02-23	Ez 18:21-28; Mt 5:20-26
Sat 02-24	Dt 26:16-19; Mt 5:43-48
Sun 02-25	2 nd Sunday of Lent- Gn 22:1-2, 9a, 10-13, 15-18; Ro 8:31b-34; Mk 9:2-10

MUSIC MINISTRY

	THIS WEEK	NEXT WEEK
4:30p	Spanier, Amelia Casey, Peggy	Moore, Mark Casey, Peggy
8:30a	Moore, Mark Cebenکو, Steve	Talarico, Tim Cebenکو, Steve
11:00a	DeWald, Heather Talarico, Tim	Thomas, Cathy Talarico, Tim

Collections Info	OLG	In Church	Expenses
Regular Collection	\$2,568.00	\$9,066.00	\$4,609.15
Building Fund	\$5.00	\$1,000.00	
Capital Campaign	\$25.00	\$1,069.00	
Parish Partnership	\$10.00	\$45.00	
SouperBowl of Caring		\$1426.66	
Other Regular Income		\$370.00	

HOW DO I SIGN UP FOR ONLINE GIVING?

1. Visit our church website at www.stmaryskutztown.com
2. Click on the Online Giving link
3. Complete the online registration form. It's that simple! For more info or help setting up your account please contact the parish office: 610-683-7443



Please pray for the sick of our parish.....
..... and those that care for them



Logan Alkons	Ken Gorski	Diana Novi
Evie Barletta	Bijou Greenwood	Joanne O'Connell
Caleb Bauer	Muriel Hadnagy	Benedicta Otchere
Christopher Bennett	Devon Hanna	Rick Padilla
Claudia Berg	Jacqueline Hartz	Ed Pilarski
Greg Bradford	Linda Haurus	Pat Regensburger
Monica Bradford	Hannah Hayduk	Rosemarie Reimert
Bradford family	Kathy Henry	Bill Pettit
David Byer	Lillian Karch	Megan Roth
Nadia Cahill	Michael Karch	Nina Hertzog
Drew Cengeri	Joanne Kear	Rundle
Meaghan Clark	Patricia Keeney	Richard Rusconi
Colleen Wolff	Jane Kern	Sr. Mary Sapanara, MSC
Jerome Costanzo	Milton Kern	Tina Scatamacchia
Kim Costanzo	Joan Kiwak	Helen Sheehan
Nancy Devlin-Litinsky	Carol Korbe	Jim Sherman
Dave Ebling	John Korbe	Barbara Shidisky
Trent Eidle	Cena Knowles	Tracy Snyder
Patricia Farabaugh	Henry Kryeski	Nicole Sosik
Paula Fehlinger	Edward & Rosemary Law	Todd Tanis
Joey Flecher	Harry Lewellen	Ralph Touch
Tammy G.	Julie Lindsey	Amy Turko
Joe Galantino	Eva Malanczuk	Christine VanDoorn
Michelle Galantino	Dennis Martinsen	Phillip Vazquez
Sandra George	Barry, Sharon Miller	Joseph Wawrzak
Lucy Ginsiorsky	Elaine O. Miller	Bonnie Wessner
	Nikolette Nolte	Emily Wickle

Contact office to update list: secretary@stmaryskutztown.com

Please Pray for all those serving our nation

Keenan Albright	Anthony DiPietro	Nick Marakovits
Kyle Albright	Charles Douglass	Melissa Marks
Michael Barron	Joseph Douglass	Laura Miller
Andrew Barthol	Keith Essig	Spencer Morris
Frank M. Bieda	Ryan Flanagan	Heather O'Donnell
John Boyer	Kale Follweiler	Menaka Nayyar & Anthony Pirnot
Matthew Boyer	Michael Allen Haak	Jake Schmeck
Jonathan Cardé	Diane Henry	Phillip Talarico
Ryan Cengeri	Cmdr. Jason Hoch	Steve Ziegler
Eric Cunningham	Joshua Joseph	
Timothy DeVall	Dan King	
	James Knight	

Contact office to update list: secretary@stmaryskutztown.com

We are a welcoming community called to deepen and share our faith

EVENTS THIS WEEK

- Sun 02.18 1ST SUNDAY OF LENT
2nd Collection – Catholic Home Missions
Youth Mass, 8:30a
- Mon 02.19 Parish Office Closed: Presidents' Day
- Tue 02.20 Faith Sharing, 10a
Baptism Workshop (snow date), 6:30p
- Wed 02.21 Daily Mass, 7:30a and 6p
Stations of the Cross, 6:30p
Adoration and Reconciliation, 7-8p
- Thu 02.22 Mary's Café Morning Edition, 10a
Music Ministry, 7p
R.C.I.A., 7p
- Fri 02.23 *Lenten Friday- abstinence*
FORMED: Jesus and the Eucharist, 6:30p
- Sat 02.24 Lenten Saturday *daily* Mass, 8a
Pray the Rosary, 4p
2nd Collection – Parish Partnership

EVENTS NEXT WEEK

- Sun 02.25 2ND SUNDAY OF LENT
2nd Collection – Parish Partnership
9:40a Elementary Religious Education
9:45a Level 3 Parent mtg.
6p Junior High ministry
- Tue 02.27 10a Faith Sharing
- Wed 02.28 Daily Mass, 7:30a and 6p
Stations of the Cross, 6:30p
Adoration and Reconciliation, 7-8p
- Thu 02.29 Liturgy meeting, 8:45a
Music Ministry, 7p
R.C.I.A., 7p
- Fri 03.01 *Lenten Friday-abstinence*
Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, 8-9a
- Sat 03.02 1st Saturday daily Mass 8a
Pray the Rosary 4p
2nd Collection-Easter Flower Memorials

BULLETIN DEADLINE: Submit items by 12n one week prior to Sunday. *Submit full-page items two full weeks in advance.*

PARISH MEMBERSHIP: Welcome! Please register for parish membership. Call 610-683-7443 for an appointment and find out about all the parish has to offer! *Inform us if moving.*

Watch/visit WFMZ TV Stormcenter for parish cancellation notices due to winter weather.



A Word About...Catholic Home Missions
Support the Catholic Home Missions Appeal today! Nearly 40 % of dioceses in the United States and its territories are considered mission territories because they are unable to fund essential pastoral work needed in their communities. Your support funds religious education, seminary formation, lay ministry training, and other programs that build vibrant faith communities right here in the United States. Please be generous. Learn more:
www.usccb.org/home-missions

Your support this week, Feb. 18, is most appreciated

THE DISCIPLE MAKER INDEX SURVEY IS OPEN!

PLEASE READ AND HELP!

It's official! The Disciple Maker Index Survey opened this week, and we need your help!

Please help us participate by completing a 10-15 minute survey as soon as possible.

Go to <https://portal.catholicleaders.org/d/by84db>

There are also opportunities to complete the survey after daily and Sunday Mass and you can obtain a paper copy on the Gathering Area table or contact the parish office: 610-683-7443 or secretary@stmaryskutztown.com

The survey will only be available from February 14 to March 31, 2024, and will ask you to reflect on your own spiritual growth and enable you to provide feedback on our parish's efforts to help you grow. All responses will be confidential, and the parish will only receive information about the community as whole.

We are trying to get the highest response rate possible. This information will be invaluable to Fr. John and our various ministries as we plan for the future and strive to be the best disciples we can be. We will receive the results this spring/summer at which time we will share what we have learned with the entire parish.

Thank you for helping with this important project!



Remember in your Prayers

Father John J. L. Little, retired priest of our diocese. Eternal rest grant unto him, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon him. Amen

SCRIPTURE REFLECTION- FATHER JOHN MARIA

On this First Sunday of Lent, our Gospel from St. Mark describes the temptation of Jesus in the desert. This account is shorter than the accounts of Matthew and Luke, but the most important facts are there – the reality of Satan and his effort to corrupt Jesus.

In just a few words, the sacred author gives us a nugget about the experience of Jesus in the wilderness, but also alludes to deeper mysteries – alluding to Genesis. When sin entered the world with Adam, the harmony God intended – with God, fellow man and creation -- was shattered. But even then, the Lord was planning to repair the shattered harmony. He did not abandon us, and His plan would soon unfold.

In our first reading, we get a glimpse into the next stage of that plan – we hear the happy ending of the story of Noah. The corrupted nature of humanity had run wild - sin built upon sin.

The waters of the flood signify a cleansing, and a new beginning – the desire of God to be in harmony with humanity, to be in covenant. The great flood was a sign of a much greater cleansing in God's plan, the Sacrament of Baptism.

As we begin Lent, let us take seriously the spiritual battles we face, and the sacraments He has given to be united to Him. Above all, in your prayer, self-denial and almsgiving, open your heart to Christ, and the graces He desires to share with you!

We are a welcoming community called to deepen and share our faith

FORMED FRIDAYS-JESUS AND THE EUCHARIST: Fortify your faith this Lent- join us **6:30p Feb. 23, March 8 and 22**, as we explore "Jesus and the Eucharist." As the Church throughout the USA celebrates the Eucharistic Revival, it's the perfect time to go deeper in your understanding of the most precious gift: the Holy Eucharist.

Jesus is Truly Present: Body, Blood, Soul & Divinity. Why do we believe this? What does it mean to say the Eucharist is the source and summit of our faith? Why do we say He is the Lamb of God? What did Jesus teach about the "Bread of Life"?

The **evenings will begin at 6:30pm in the Social Hall** with a video from FORMED, followed by questions for discussion and Q&A. Light drinks and snacks will be available, in keeping with these Lenten Fridays. Don't just give up chocolate for Lent, grow stronger in your Catholic faith. **Join us this Friday, February 23 at 6:30pm!**

MARY'S CAFÉ: MORNING EDITION – **Thursday Feb. 22 at 10a** in the Religious Ed Center, all are invited to join Father John at MARY'S CAFE.

Our topic will be "The Sacrament of Reconciliation". This sacrament of God's mercy is an incredible gift of grace, and yet if we're honest, most Catholics would admit mixed feelings. Even the most devout Catholics feel as though they're not doing it right! We'll address many questions including: Didn't confession get swept away by Vatican II (*spoiler alert; No*) What if you don't like the priest? (*Ouch*) Why must we go to confession? Whose ideas was it to go to a priest? How can we best prepare to confess for success?

Join this informal and informative talk, Q&A and fellowship with your family at St. Mary's. Hope to see you then. **Catch this Morning Edition talk 10a, Feb. 22**

THEY'RE BAAAAAACK: St. Mary's Hoagie Sales coming this Spring-making on March 13/pickup 3/13 pm and 3/14 am; and making April 24/ pickup April 24 pm and April 25 am.



LENTEMBER DAYS:

Celebrate the Ember Days for Lent as a sign of reparation and healing for the Church. On these quarterly observances, three days set aside (Wednesday, Friday and Saturday) we pray in gratitude for the blessings of the season and human labor, to thank God publicly.

Lenten Ember days provide reminders to continue and persevere in the spirit of conversion and penance. In the current laws of the Church, Abstinence would be to abstain from all meat, and fast would be one full meal a day, with the allowance of two smaller meals that do not equal the main meal, and no eating between meals.

The 2024 Lenten Ember Days are: Wednesday, February 21, Friday February 23, and Saturday February 24.

A SEASON FOR REFLECTION: During this holy time, we are called to pause and pay closer attention to our relationship with God and our neighbors. Reflect on how the Lenten pillars of prayer, fasting and almsgiving can guide your journey and how the Eucharist helps us to live in solidarity with our sisters and brothers around the world. Visit



CRSRiceBowl.org

DIOCESAN LENTEN RETREAT SERIES-The Mystery of the Eucharist with diocesan speakers. Weekly schedule: 6:30-7:30p Adoration, 7:30p presentation, 8p refreshments.

- o **Feb 19** - Our Lady of Mt. Carmel, Roseto, Topic "Healing" by Maggie Riggins
- o **Feb 26** - St. Ambrose, Schuylkill Haven, Topic "Presence" by Lillian Fallon
- o **March 4** - St. Catharine of Siena, Reading, Topic "Sacrifice" by Rob Johnson
- o **March 11** - Ss. Peter and Paul, Lehighton, Topic "Promise" by Kristin Osenbach
- o **March 18** - Cathedral of St. Catharine of Siena, Allentown, Topic "Holy" by Fr. John Trigilio

Sign up: allentowndiocese.flocknote.com/signup/152184

ST FRANCIS CLASSICAL CATHOLIC ACADEMY OPEN

HOUSE: 11:15a-1:30p Feb. 25. See the exciting renewal of Classical Catholic education in Bally! Meet faculty, take a tour, meet current families in our PreK-10th grade curriculum—part time option for gr.3-12. saintfrancisclassical.com

BERKS CATHOLIC HS is accepting applications for the Fall. Please contact Nicky Smith: nsmith@berkscatholic.org with questions. Learn how Berks Catholic prepares students to be college- and life-ready. All inquiries are confidential.

MEN'S LENTEN MORNING RETREAT: 9a, March 02, St.

Jane de Chantal Church, 4049 Hartley Av Easton. The Allentown Diocese's Men's Commission invites the men in the Diocese to attend their Lenten morning retreat. This year, the theme is "Brothers In Prayer" featuring Bishop Alfred Schlert, Fr. Alex Brown, and Fr. Keith Laskowski. The morning will include Mass, talks, and confession. Register at: www.MenAliveInChrist.org/events

ATTN: HS SENIORS OF ITALIAN HERITAGE:

Victor Emmanuel II Beneficial Society offers a \$12,000 scholarship available to Berks Co. HS seniors of Italian heritage living in Berks Co. Pick up applications at your local HS guidance office. Return to: VE II by March 15, 2024. Contact Fred Ranalli Jr. 610 406 1131 with question.

LENTEMBER DAY OF PRAYER, REFLECTION:

9a-3p, March 9, Mariawald Renewal Ctr. Reflect on the CRUCIFIED KING with Fr. Brian Miller, St. Catherine of Siena, Reading. Register: 610-777-0135 or mariawaldcenter@gmail.com by **March 05**, Cost: \$40, lunch included. 1094 Welsh Rd, Reading.

GETHSEMANE GRAVE CLEAN OFF:

Beginning March 15 the semi-annual grave clean-off at Gethsemane and St. Mary's Cemeteries will commence. Please retrieve any gravesite items you wish to keep prior to then.



BOWL-A-THON, 3-5p, March 17. Raise money for clients and programs at Mary's Shelter. For each strike both kids and adults get a chance to go to prize table! Food drinks and snacks provided. Register www.marysshelter.org or office@marysshelter.org

CABRINI: HGA will host a private screening of the film Cabrini at 2p Sunday, March 10 at the AMC Fairgrounds Theater, 3050 N. 5th Street Highway, Reading. \$25 Ticket for movie & voucher for a regular-size popcorn/beverage combo OR \$15 Ticket for movie only. Purchase tickets online. You will not need a physical ticket; you will be checked in at the theater on the day of the screening. Only 200 tickets available – don't delay!

What parents need to know: Cabrini has been assigned PG-13 for thematic material, some violence, language, and smoking. Tickets and video trailer: <https://www.hgaparish.com/post/cabrini-private-screening>



NUN RUN 5K
April 13 at 10:00 AM

Join us to support the mission and lives of our MSC Sisters:
Sponsorships
Live & Virtual Options
Visit: MSCreading.org
CWhitmoyer@mscreading.org

T-SHIRT DEADLINE 3/20

MSC Sisters
www.MSCreading.org
Fun Walk 2024



The free Catholic prayer app from the Augustine Inst. that inspires your daily conversation with God

through faithful meditations and nourishing Scripture. Look for it wherever you find apps

EXPLORE *NEW* DIOCESAN EMPLOYMENT NEEDS
Visit: www.allentowndiocese.org/about/employment

DAILY SUBSTITUTES K-8TH GRADE: Work with Holy Guardian Angels Regional School family. Submit cover letter, resume, and all certifications and clearances. Email: kelpre@hgaschool.org

Word of Life: “The essence of our identity is that we are created in God's image and likeness and loved by Him. Nothing can diminish the priceless worth of any human life. Every person is cherished.” ~ USCCB Secretariat of Pro-Life Activities; Respect Life Reflection: Cherished, Chosen, Sent; usccb.org/cherished-chosen-sent-reflection

REFLECTION... by Rev. Leonard N. Peterson

Each Lent we open the Sundays with the account of Our Lord entering the desert. We might naturally picture Him in the land of the ancient pyramids. Or maybe the vast stretches of sand where Lawrence of Arabia fought his epic battles. This scene, however, is not one of endless sand, with the complete absence of water and greenery. The desert mentioned here was a remote area for sure, largely soundless as opposed to the noise of villages and towns. Wild beasts were the only creatures who would lurk around Him from time to time. But mainly it was the kind of place free of the usual distractions, where a person could face his inmost thoughts, hopes and desires, as well as his faults and failures.

Here it was that Jesus went, not contending with any faults or failures, but to commune with His Father and prepare for His unique mission. We know from the other gospel accounts that Satan himself came to disturb and tempt Jesus with the same matters that often lure us into sin: wealth, power and fame, sex, and addictions of all kinds. Not only is Jesus' strength and endurance remarkable as he deals with this confrontation with the same human nature as we have. But He also does so with His divine power armored with humility and the words of the Scriptures.

St. Mark does not give us the details of this high drama. Simply a blunt statement that the Spirit “drove” Jesus to the desert, in itself a remarkable declaration. It comes across as a mandatory requirement for Jesus to begin saving the world from its sin.

Lent has ever since been symbolized in our churches by decorations that include barren growth, perhaps with cactus plants, rocks and even some sand. But more importantly, the Church wants us to go to our own “desert,” whether it's at a nearby park or woods, perhaps even in our parked car, or a corner of our bedroom with a lit candle and a notebook for writing. Certainly, with the cell phone off and packed away. Certainly, a handy copy of the Bible would be helpful. Or a prayer book you favor, or your rosary. Give yourself some time to “shut down” your busy brain and grow calm. Then you can go on to “meet yourself” so to speak. But always be careful to listen to the Lord with less talk from you.

In this simple way, practiced as close to a daily effort as we can, that we can learn the major truths of Lent. To be at peace with the one Person who loves you completely, enough to die for your sake on a cross. To have a focus for your Lent 2024, which, who knows? could be your last.

Eight-ninths of the bulk of an iceberg is below the waterline and out of sight. Only one-ninth is visible above the surface. Our prayer life should be like an iceberg, with about one-ninth showing in public group prayer and eight-ninths out of sight in our personal prayer time.

God love you and give you His peace.

What the Church Teaches about Saying ‘Alleluia’ During Lent

By Jeannette Williams | Ascension Press

Lex orandi, lex credendi. This ancient saying reminds us of the deep, inseparable connection between prayer and faith. Latin is a very rich language, with nuances not easily translated into English, but one good translation is “The rule of prayer is the rule of faith,” or more loosely, “As we pray, so also we believe.” The ancient Church did not need modern psychology to tell her that words, by their very nature, have the power to shape thought.

In the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* we read,

“When the Church celebrates the sacraments, she confesses the faith received from the apostles – whence the ancient saying: *lex orandi, lex credendi* ... The law of prayer is the law of faith: the Church believes as she prays.” CCC 1124

With this backdrop, it’s easy to understand why the Church proscribes the use of the Alleluia during Lent. Alleluia comes from the Hebrew Hallelu-Ya, “Praise the Lord!” (see CCC 2589). Yet the forty days of Lent are meant to remind us of the forty years that the Israelites roamed in the desert. It is a time of reflection and cleansing, a reminder that there was a time when humanity was not redeemed, a time when we wandered in a spiritual desert, awaiting our Savior.

The prohibition of Alleluia is part of a larger orientation of the liturgy toward a more penitential mode; the Gloria, which echoes the words of the angels at Jesus’s birth, is also omitted, and the Responsorial Psalms are drawn from the Penitential Psalms or other psalms that call upon the Lord in times of trial. Flowers are removed from the altar and purple vestments and altar cloths are donned. All these changes help us, according to the principle of *lex orandi, lex credendi*, focus our hearts on repentance and orient our lives more perfectly to the will of God through penance and prayer.

Fasting from Words On the Sunday before Ash Wednesday, the entrance song for Mass at my parish was “All Creatures of Our God and King,” with its splendid, recurring Alleluias. I appreciated that the music director took the opportunity to give us a few more Alleluias before we had to fast from that word for seven weeks.

I think it’s helpful to think of it as a fast, as fasting in not only a lesson in self-discipline but also an entrance

into deeper prayer. St. Isaac the Syrian, seventh century abbot and bishop venerated in the Eastern churches, wrote:

“When a man begins to fast, he straightway yearns in his mind to enter into a converse with God.”

Think of the fast from the Alleluia (and other joy-filled prayers) as part of your larger Lenten practice. In a recent article that I wrote, “Preparing for a Good Lent Starts Now,” I recommended making some modifications in our homes, as the Church does upon the altar, to always remind us of Lent. These changes in décor are a physical reminder of Lent, and refraining from saying or singing “Alleluia” is a sort of verbal reminder.

But Wait, There’s more! There’s a third part to the ancient saying, however, that is often omitted but completes the thought: *lex orandi, lex credendi, lex vivendi*—or loosely, “As we pray, so we believe, and so also we live.” The words we choose—or the words we listen to—not only shape how we think, they shape how we live.

Lent is an opportunity to focus our prayer on recognizing something the modern secular world denies—that we are all sinners in need of repentance and salvation. Though by baptism we have been washed of original sin and clothed in grace, we can sully our holy vestments or even destroy them by sinful thoughts or deeds. When we fast from prayers of joy and acclamation and focus on prayers of repentance, we are taking the time to look closely at our thoughts and our lives to see how we may have strayed from the Father’s plan.

In a broader sense, *lex vivendi* is also a warning to us to look closely at what influences we allow into our minds throughout the year; in an age where noise is ubiquitous and distractions are only a cellphone-click away, we all need to examine our consciences in this area.

What forms of entertainment, what social or political agendas, what personal relationships are leading us away from virtue and the clear teachings of the Church? Are we living according to truth or conforming ourselves to the world? Are we spending our time worthily or wasting it on frivolous activities that are potentially harmful to our souls? Silence and deep prayer are antidotes to the negative forces that surround us, potentially leading us astray.

The Power of One Word One word, in itself, may not seem to mean much. But when viewed in a larger context, fasting from Alleluia opens up for us a deeper, broader message—one of praying in order to believe, and believing in order to live. May we live our fast well, so that we yearn more eagerly for the day when we can all together celebrate with joy the Resurrection of our Lord and in one voice cry out, “Alleluia!”