

# *The Catholic Mother*

INSPIRATION FOR LITURGICAL LIVING



## *Inside*

THE SPIRIT OF PENANCE

.....

HOME ALTAR - LENT

.....

FAITHFUL IN SMALL THINGS

.....

ACTIVITIES FOR FEBRUARY

.....

## *On trusting the process*

by Kim Halloran-Fry

It seems we have just packed away the Christmas decorations and here we are looking ahead to Ash Wednesday on Feb 18<sup>th</sup>. After the joy of Christmas we are face to face with our human frailties and our deep need for a Savior. We begin to contemplate why He came and what we stand in great need of this lenten season.

A recurring theme in my daily reading this month has been the value of silence, of taking a moment before responding, of assessing the true need for our input. Surely there is sometimes need. Surely it is not as often as we like to think.

Mary Reed Newland in writing about lent and silence told her children, "Each time you keep from saying something unkind, it is a triumph of grace and Our Lord

## *On trusting the process*

continued...

will strengthen you with grace for the next time. There are powerful graces coming to us during lent, and we must try to use them to rid ourselves of our faults so that on Easter we can be free of them, like the newly baptized are freed from Original Sin."

Powerful graces are coming. May we make the most of them!

There are suggestions inside this newsletter for your home altar and family Stations of the Cross with enough time to prepare. There are St Brigid cross tutorials to start the month. I have linked the beautiful Song of Bernadette film to watch together to commemorate the apparition at Lourdes.

Check out the book basket links for excellent seasonal titles to to enjoy together.

Our local Confraternity of Christian Mothers will be reading the Little Catechism on the Life of Prayer this month by Fr Gabriel of St Mary Magdalen, famous for the wonderful and highly recommended Divine Intimacy daily devotional book. This also encourages quiet contemplation as we journey towards lent.

And finally there is an inspiring exhortation to look no further than our daily duties for our sanctification. It is that simple - and that challenging. God bless you and your family this month!

Helen  
McLoughlin:

*"Either we live the liturgical year with its varying seasons of joy and sorrow, work and rest, or we follow the pattern of the world,"*



## THE SPIRIT OF PENANCE

*LENT IN PRACTICE 1928*

THE idea of penance is all too commonly associated with the external act. This materialistic notion of penance works one of two evils: its entire neglect or its unworthy performance. The superficial are satisfied in the external act of penance; the self-indulgent find it too burdensome to attempt. So penance has lost its prestige and our age has wandered far from its spirit. A confirmation of this, which needs no commentary, is the dictionary definition which *declares the word obsolete* except as applied to the sacramental penance given by the priest. This is an index of how almost entirely the idea of penance is lost outside the Church, and it would often seem that, even in the minds of the children of the Church, its practice is frequently restricted to this sacred obligation lightly performed.

And yet penance is an essential for everlasting life. And why? Because all true penance is in its nature sacramental: it is an outward sign of inward grace. Its action is twofold: it is not only a turning away from sin but a returning unto God. Indeed the closer union of the soul with God is the primary purpose of penance and it fails of its purpose when it fails in this.

Man was made for God; sin frustrated this purpose; the Passion and Death of the Man-God alone was capable of restoring the union severed by sin: of admitting mankind again to the state of grace; only the application of the merits of Jesus Christ to the individual soul enables it to *“bring forth fruits worthy of penance.”* In other words, outside of the state of grace, no act, however good in itself, is efficacious for expiation. This fact shows that penance indicates a state of grace: sorrow for sin and a certain union with Christ, and implies a strong motion towards closer union with Him.

This interior and necessary quality of penance cannot be too strongly accentuated. Without it a lifetime spent in good works is waste; with it **every simplest thought, word or deed enriches the soul with the infinite treasures of Divine Love and gives immense glory to God:** “In this is My Father glorified; that you bring forth very much fruit, and become My disciples” (John xv. 8).

Truly, therefore, the external act is but a means to an end, and that end is not the self-satisfaction of having expiated personal sin but the impulse of love **to remove all that is obnoxious to the Beloved**, that withdraws the soul from His embrace. It is but the body giving effect to the will of the spirit which vivifies and impels it. The external act of penance is good, even necessary, as the tangible and visible expression of the soul’s purpose to remove every obstacle that impedes its progress towards God, but lacking the true spirit, it resolves itself into dust. This interior purpose shines through every penance prescribed by the Church.

During the seasons of penance, and most especially during Lent, she urges us to turn aside, not only from sinful pursuits but even from those harmless and legitimate, in order to have more time for God: to enter more fully into the life of Christ; to participate in His Passion as willing disciples and explore the depths of His love. We frustrate this purpose when we compromise with this spirit and find ready excuse for frequenting entertainments, not evil to be sure, but time consuming and fatiguing, leaving less time and taste for prayer, an inability to rise for early Mass, an unreadiness for Holy Communion.

The prescription of the marriage ceremony, the counsel to continence has in view the purification and uplifting of the bond of human love. In withdrawal, the soul sees in better perspective the divine purposes of matrimony and its holy responsibilities: abstinence cultivates strength in unselfishness and subordinates lust to reason and will. The very mitigations of the law of fast and abstinence in regard of food, prove that the law was not fashioned as an end in itself, but to cultivate temperance and force home the purpose of appetite: to preserve life; and to enforce the spiritual truth that we must come to God empty, if we would be filled. It thus becomes evident that weakness of body neither excuses nor debars from penance.

The spirit of the law is open to all. And in the practical cultivation of this spirit, the letter of the law will acquire new meaning and attraction. *Far from wishing to elude it, many will seek to fulfill it in larger measure.*

**What we will make of Lent in practice depends upon ourselves. The opportunities are large and the grace of God sufficient.**



**Remember, man, that thou art dust, and into dust thou shalt return**

## On the value of the home altar:

*"An altar or a nursery shrine . . . gives a tone of joy and heavenliness that go down into the soul and take root there to grow into something lasting and beautiful. There are flowers to be brought, and lights, and small processions, and evening recollection with quietness of devotion, with the realization of the "great cloud of witnesses" who are around to make play safe and holy, and there is through it all the gracious call to things higher, to be strong, to be unselfish, to be self-controlled, to be worthy of these protectors and friends in heaven."*

*~ "The Education of Catholic Girls, by Mather Janet Erskine Stuart ~"*



CANDLES NOT INCLUDED

A beautiful tradition in Catholic homes is to set aside a small space to serve as a home altar. It can be as simple as the top of a piano or a low bookcase or perhaps a small table. There is usually a crucifix and a statue of Our Lady and a candle to light when praying. It is helpful to have your rosaries hanging nearby or kept in a small bowl or box.

A small vase for flowers makes even the humblest home altars lovely.

Some ideas for extras might be small frames with the portrait of a saint or feast for the month and a copy of a prayer to work on memorizing. Books to keep handy include missals, the Holy Bible, and lives of the saints.

During lent a favorite tradition in my family is to keep 14 votive candles on the home altar or mantle. Before the Stations of the Cross the candles are all lit. After each station one candle is blown out. At the end of the prayers the light goes out completely, a profound metaphor for the Passion of Our Lord.

I am linking some sets of stickers you can affix to simple glass votive candle holders to make a beautiful set of stations for your home:

[Stations of the Cross 2in Stickers](#)  
[Stained Glass Stations sticker set](#)

**TO MAKE AND DO:**

FEBRUARY AT HOME - VINTAGE CATHOLIC PRESCHOOL  
CROSS OF ST BRIGID TUTORIAL - AUTHENTIC  
ST BRIGID CROSS - PIPE CLEANERS  
LENTEN ACTIVITIES FOR CHILDREN

**TO READ:**

FEBRUARY CATHOLIC SAINT AND SEASON BOOK BASKET  
STATIONS OF THE CROSS BOOKLET  
LENT FOR CHILDREN - 1931 REPRINT  
LENT FOR CHILDREN - BOOKLET

**TO SING:**

HYMN OF LOURDES - IMMACULATE MARY

**TO WATCH:**

CANDLEMAS - TRADKIDSTV  
THE SONG OF BERNADETTE

**CONFRATERNITY MOTHER'S BOOK CLUB SELECTION FOR JANUARY:**

Little Catechism on the Life of Prayer

**CONFRATERNITY OF CHRISTIAN MOTHERS RESOURCES:**

Members Manual Online

Why Enroll?

Pieta Sticker



## A SECURE GATE



It is written of holy David, who came to contemplate and to proclaim so many celestial mysteries that:

*“Chusi was the friend of David.”*

Now this name, Chusi, means “silence” in the Hebrew language. This close friendship between David and silence is reflected in many verses and psalms. For example he writes,

*“I said, I shall guard my ways, lest I should stumble through my tongue.” Ps 39:1*

*“I was made mute and humble and I kept silent even from good words.” Ps 39:2*

In another instance, he implores the Lord to grant him control over his tongue saying:

*“Place, O Lord, a guard over my mouth and set a secure gate at my lips.” Ps 141:3*

...he loved silence and placed a metaphoric guard over his lips and humbly prayed to the Lord to grant him restraint over his speech lest he should be overcome by weakness or flippancy and let ill-chosen or imprudent words escape from his mouth.

Solitude and Silence, St Thomas a Kempis

Before speaking you should consider:

1. Whether what you intend to say can injure charity, modesty, or exact observance.
2. Examine the motive that impels you to speak; for it sometimes happens that what a person says is good, but her intention is bad; she speaks either to appear spiritual, or to acquire a character for talent.
3. Examine to whom you speak, whether to your Superiors, to companions, or to inferiors: whether in the presence of seculars, or of the postulants, who may perhaps be scandalized at what you say.

The Importance of Silence, St Alphonsus Liguori

# THE CHIEF ROAD TO SANCTITY

FR WILLIE DOYLE SJ

“I will strive to perform each action as perfectly as possible, putting my best effort into each duty as it comes around, paying special attention to small duties.

I will try to do each as Jesus would have done it, with the same pure intention, exquisite exactness and fervor; to copy in all my actions -

walking

eating

praying

Jesus, my model in the little house at Nazareth.

By this means I am to find the chief road to sanctity.”



## The Litany of Humility

O Jesus, meek and humble of heart,  
Hear me.

From the desire of being esteemed,  
Deliver me, O Jesus.

From the desire of being loved,  
Deliver me, O Jesus.

From the desire of being extolled, etc.

From the desire of being honored,

From the desire of being praised,

From the desire of being preferred to others,

From the desire of being consulted,

From the desire of being approved,

From the fear of being humiliated,

From the fear of being despised,

From the fear of suffering rebukes,

From the fear of being calumniated,

From the fear of being forgotten,

From the fear of being ridiculed,

From the fear of being wronged,

From the fear of being suspected,

That others may be loved more than I,  
Jesus, grant me the grace to desire it.

That others may be esteemed more than I,  
Jesus, grant me the grace to desire it.

That, in the opinion of the world, others may increase  
and I may decrease, etc.

That others may be chosen and I set aside,

That others may be praised and I go unnoticed,

That others may be preferred to me in everything,

That others may become holier than I,  
provided that I may become as holy as I should,