

OUR LADY OF PROVIDENCE CHAPEL
SAINT VINCENT HOSPITAL
WORCESTER MEDICAL CENTER
Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time
February 4, 2024



When Jesus heals Peter's mother-in-law, she gets a small foretaste of Christ's resurrection life, and she immediately uses it to serve

CHAPEL SCHEDULE

Weekday Mass: (Monday-Friday at 12 noon)

Weekend Masses: Saturday: 4:00pm - Sunday: 7:30am & 4:00pm

Holiday Mass Schedule: afternoon prior at 4:00pm

Holy day proper at 12 noon and 4:00pm

Confessions: First Saturday of every month at 3:30pm

Department Telephone: 508.363.6246

Chapel Website: www.ourladyofprovidence.net

MASS INTENTIONS — LITURGICAL SCHEDULE

Saturday, February 3 *Vigil of the 5th Sunday in Ordinary Time*

4:00pm +Karen Hashey by the alumnae of former SVH School of Nursing

Sunday, February 4 *Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time*

7:30am +Jose Martins Coelho

4:00pm Intentions of CD

Monday, February 5 *Saint Agatha, virgin & martyr*¹

12:00nn In gratitude for the life of Michael Cariglia

Tuesday, February 6 *Ss. Paul Miki & Companions, martyrs*¹

12:00nn +Elinor O'Brien Hunt by the alumnae of former SVH School of Nursing

Wednesday, February 7

12:00nn +Jose Martins Coelho

Thursday, February 8 *Saint Jerome Emiliani, founder and Saint. Josephin Bakhita, virgin*²

12:00nn +Linda Granger

Friday, February 9

12:00nn +For the repose of the soul of Flordan

Saturday, February 10 *Vigil of the 6th Sunday in Ordinary Time*

4:00pm +Marie M. Hagar by her family

Sunday, February 11 *Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time - World Day of the Sick & World Day Marriage*

7:30am +Rosa Gonsalves da Silva

4:00pm +John & Mary Murray by their family

The Key to Understanding the Day's Liturgical Significance: *Sunday* is the day that the Church celebrates the Paschal mystery—the Lord's Day—which, according to apostolic tradition, is the day of Christ's Resurrection. The Sundays of Advent, Lent, and during the Easter Season take precedence over other celebrations. **Solemnities** honor significant religious events, beliefs or saints of the greatest importance and universal in their observance that begin at Vespers (or Evening Prayer) the day before. **Feasts** must be observed, though, less important than solemnities, hence, feasts are only observed on the natural day. **Memorials** are of two types: Either the observance is an **obligatory memorial**¹ or an **optional memorial**².

Toward a Better Understanding of the Gospels

The public activity of Jesus began on the Sabbath in the synagogue where the Lord “taught as one having authority” (Mk 1:22) and, then, confirmed by an exorcism. By the way that Saint Mark composed his Gospel, accompanied by his vibrant style, scholars believe that he was not only directing his account toward fellow believers in Jesus, but also challenging them to renew their faith. This week's Gospel continues to record what took place on that first day in the Lord's public life. Jesus, along with four apostles, leaves the synagogue and goes to “the house of Simon and Andrew.” Upon entering the house, Jesus is informed that Simon's mother-in-law was feverish. Without hesitation, He goes to her and takes her hand. Miraculously, after Jesus helped her get up or arise, the fever left her and she attended to the demands of hospitality. The stark nature of the account underlines the authority Jesus possessed. Up to this point in his narrative, Saint Mark had recounted only one cure – the expulsion in the synagogue of the demon from the man possessed and not long after that, Jesus cured one of His disciples' in-laws. While it is conceivable that those two back-to-back cures serve to illustrate the conception that any disease results from some evil spirit, there is also marked difference between them. In curing Peter's mother-in-law, the evangelist notes that Jesus “helped her up (Gk. ἤγειρεν).” Though translated as *helped up*, the Greek word *ēgeiren* usually means *to raise up* or *to waken*. Then, having been cured of her fever, Simon's mother-in-law “waited on them.” This declaration is not a mark of subservience as it is a testimony to the baptismal obligation to serve others after the example of Christ who, as “the Son of Man, did not come to be served but to serve” (Mk 1:45). As an attempt to fill out the account of the first day in the Lord's public life, with the Sabbath rest over, Saint Mark shows Jesus amid a crowd of people. Sunset marks the end of the Sabbath, which began at the close of the prior day, so normal activity could resume. The townsfolk brought “all who were ill or possessed by demons” to Jesus. Since “many who were sick with various diseases” were cured, even sickness and evil cannot resist the power and authority that are the Lord's alone. Malevolent entities, like the unclean spirit in the synagogue, are the first to recognize the true identity of Jesus – the Holy One of God. After curing the sick and casting out many demons, Jesus stymied those demons from broadcasting His true identity once again. The reason for such enforced silence is puzzling. It's conceivable, though, that Jesus tells

Father Romano Guardini - *The Lord*

...Jesus is not just a great figure of charity with a boundless heart and tremendous capacity for service. He makes no attempt to track human suffering to the root in order to eradicate it. He is no social reformer fighting for a more just distribution of material wealth. The social reformer aims at lessening suffering; if possible at removing it. He tries to meet human needs in a practical manner; to prevent misfortune, to readjust conditions in order that happy, physically and spiritually healthy people inhabit the earth. Once we see this clearly we realize that for Jesus the problem is quite a different one. He sees the mystery of suffering much more profoundly—deep at the root-tip of human existence, and inseparable from sin and estrangement from God. He knows it to be the door in the soul that leads to God, or that at least can lead to him; the result of sin, but also means of purification and return.

the demons to be quiet because He understands that truth in itself is not enough. As essential as truth is, it is not the whole of discipleship. This is because truth, at times falls short, and it can fall short in at least two different ways. Truth can fall short by being *too narrow* or it can fall short by being *too isolated*. The demons know the truth of Jesus' identity, but their truth is both too narrow and too isolated. There is the reason that Jesus tells them to keep quiet. In the Gospel's third segment, Jesus rises early and goes "off to a deserted place, where he prayed." While prayer is essential for Jesus, the time He gave over to doing so took place "very early before dawn," so that His solitary time did not take Him away from teaching the crowds or caring for the sick. Pauses in silence and solitude are essential features to His daily life and, so, sustain the decisive interaction between the Father and Son. Saint Mark provides no specific content as to what Jesus might have said in His prayer. The unique relationship between the Father and Son is without any comparison or analogy. However, the entire life of Jesus was lived as an offering to God the Father and, in addition, Jesus perfectly accomplished every aspect of doing the Father's will. After realizing that Jesus was no longer with them and, likely, prompted by the agitation of the crowds, Simon went with some of his other companions trying to find Jesus. When they do, though, they attempt to urge Him to go back to the crowds who were clamoring for more of Him. Instead of agreeing, Jesus tells them, "Let us go on to the nearby villages that I may preach there also. For this purpose have I come." The demand to press on further and to preach the dawn of the Kingdom echoes in the parable of the sower and the seed. In that parable (Mk 4:1-20), the sower went out (Gk. ἐξῆλθον) and cast seed around by the handfuls, being restrained neither by the amount of seed nor by the strength needed to do so. In this week-end's Gospel, Jesus notes that pressing on to other synagogues and towns is the reason (or purpose) for which He came. The same Greek verb or exēlthen is used in both that subsequent parable and the Gospel (Mk 1:38). After this exchange between the Master and His disciples, they set out aiming to do for all of Galilee what happened on the first day. Later, after rising from the dead and poised to return to the Father, the Risen Lord gives them the great commission, "Go into the whole world and proclaim the gospel to every creature" (Mk 16:15).

National Eucharistic Revival — Jesus said, "I am the bread of life."

The saving Sacrifice of Christ is made present in the celebration of every Mass. The Revival that is underway is meant to rekindle in the Catholic faithful a more intimate relationship with Christ in the Eucharist. The Gospels are organized into a three-year cycle of readings. The years are designated A, B, or C. This year is designated as Year B and is primarily devoted to the Gospel according to Saint Mark. However, due to Mark being the shortest of the Synoptic Gospels, it is augmented by passages from the Fourth Gospel according to Saint John, stretching from July 28-August 25 of this year. That one Johannine chapter, seventy-one verses long, is the sixth Chapter of John's Gospel. In verses 1–21, you will see and hear Jesus feeding the great crowd and walking on the water. In verses 22–59, Jesus instructs those who were listening on the gift of His Body and Blood and, thus, what it means to receive Him in Holy Communion. You will also hear the Lord respond to some (hard) questions from His critics and even from His disciples. In verses 60–71, you will witness a very intimate moment between Jesus and the disciples as well as a moment when you can see the very human and vulnerable side of Jesus when He asks (in v. 67), "Do you also want to leave?" Then, you can see and hear Peter at his very best in verses 68–69. So, when Jesus repeats in John 6 that His "... flesh is true food and (His) blood is true drink ..." (v. 55), you hear His message clearly. When in verse 51, He says, "I am the living bread that came down from heaven; whoever eats this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world," Jesus is not saying something like "it is very important to receive some sort of symbol" that represents His presence, but affirming that He is truly present body, blood, soul and divinity. In the surrounding context of John 6:53, Jesus' words could hardly have been clearer. In verse 51, he plainly claims to be "the living bread" that His followers must eat. And He says in no uncertain terms that "the bread which I shall give . . . is my flesh." Then, when the Jews were found "disput[ing] among themselves, saying, 'How can this man give us his flesh to eat?'" in verse 52, Jesus reiterates even more emphatically, "Truly, truly, I say unto you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you." This biblically attests to the undoubtable fact that Jesus is truly and substantially present in the Eucharist!

These Forty Days of Lent, O Lord!

Introduction

In several sources from the first centuries of Christianity, including the *Didascalia Apostolorum*, the *Apostolic Tradition*, and one or two of the Festal Letters of Dionysius of Alexandria, you would find that there was a one, two, or six-day preparatory fast leading up to Easter, depending on the time and geographical location. As early as the second-century, Christians were preparing for Easter with a two-day, grief-inspired fast. Then, in the third century, Bishop Dionysius of Alexandria spoke of a weeklong fast before Easter, so that initial brief fast was extended what became Holy Week, though the practice was not formalized until the First Ecumenical Council of Nicaea in 325 AD. By that time, the bishops in Nicaea spoke of the forty days before Easter (Lat. *quadragesima paschae*) in such a manner that you can conclude that Lent, even if only understood as a forty day period, was already a well-established custom. By the early 4th century, what had been a six day preparatory fast had developed into Holy Week. The penitential period was extended to 40 days symbolizing the fasts of Jesus, Moses, and Elijah.

Why Forty Days for Lent?

When Lent reached its full development, it took on the nature of a time to imitate Jesus, who after His baptism in the Jordan River, fasted for forty days in the desert and was tempted by Satan. According to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, “By the solemn forty days of Lent the Church unites herself each year to the mystery of Jesus in the desert” (CCC, n. 540). So, it is a time made holy by acts of self-denial. In withstanding the devil’s trials, Christ fulfilled what Adam could not do, thus becoming, as St. Augustine put it, a “Mediator in overcoming temptations, not only by helping us, but also by giving us an example” (ST 3, q.41, a.1). In other words, Jesus became the new Adam and, by doing so, He redeemed the failure of Adam to obey God’s commands. Secondly, and more importantly, Christ went into the desert to prove that He is who He says He is: the Messiah, the Son of God, the Holy One of God who has come to take away the sins of the world, who has come to do the Father’s will. As Origen put it, Christ showed the devil how “by means of the various vices, he was the lord of the world.” These forty days of Lent also parallel a number of Old Testament events beginning with the great flood that covered the earth for forty days and nights. God told Noah, “For seven days from now I will bring rain down on the earth for forty days and forty nights, and so I will wipe out from the face of the earth every being that I have made” (Gen 7:4). Then, after the ark came to rest on the mountains of Ararat. The waters continued to diminish until the tenth month, and on the first day of the tenth month the tops of the mountains appeared. At the end of forty

days Noah opened the hatch of the ark...and he released a raven...then, he released a dove, to see if the waters had lessened on the earth” (Gen. 8:4-8). Fourteen or fifteen centuries before Christ, as a young man around twenty years of age, after witnessing maltreatment, Moses slew the man’s Egyptian overseer and fled to Midian (Ex 2:15). He labored there for forty years as a shepherd in the desert, “Forty years later, an angel appeared to [Moses] in the desert near Mount Sinai, in the flame of a burning bush...the voice of the Lord came, ‘I am the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, and of Jacob.’ Then Moses, trembling, dared not look at it” (Acts 7:30-32). Later in his life, according to the Book of Exodus, “...Moses was [on Mount Sinai] with the Lord for forty days and forty nights, without eating any food or drinking any water, and he wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the ten commandments” (Ex 34:28). The people had asked Moses to approach God and to receive the Word of God as they were afraid for their lives. In Deuteronomy (Dt 9:9-18) you read twice that Moses fasted for forty days and forty nights. The first precedes Moses receiving the two tablets of stone inscribed with the Law. Before He received the law of God for the second time he fasted again. After fleeing Egypt, led by Moses, the Israelites spent forty years wandering aimlessly in the desert – a period of testing and purification to atone for idolatry, “Now the Israelites wandered forty years in the wilderness, until all the warriors among the people that came from Egypt died off because they had not listened to the voice of the Lord” (Jos 5:6). The prophet Elijah, too, spent forty days in the desert. He was also called to do the Lord’s work in the midst of the people, even while they broke the law in their pursuit of idol worship. Elijah flees, firmly discouraged, into the wilderness. At first, he is ready to die because he has nothing to hope for anymore. Following this he is fed by an angel of the Lord, and then travels for forty days and forty nights until he reaches the mountain of God, the place where God revealed himself to Moses, amid a sinful people, God revealed His glory. Time and again, then, it is the Lord who continues to be the God of life for His people. God encourages and resends various prophet to lead that stubborn people. Elijah may differ from Moses, but the people are the same in their sins. The season of Lent lasts from Ash Wednesday until the evening of Holy Thursday. If Sundays are excluded from the count, the season lasts forty days. The forty-day length of Lent is rooted in the biblical usage of the number forty. Forty is typically indicative of a time of testing, trial, penance, purification, and renewal.

Excerpted from United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. Fact of Faith. “Why is Lent Forty Days?”
