



## **Homily Helps: March – *Lent & Feast Days***

### **1. The Feast of St. Patrick – March 17**

- The pious legends surrounding St. Patrick's life are well known, and he is often depicted as larger-than-life. Sometimes it is easy to forget that he was a real person, nonetheless, he was born in the fifth century in England, which at the time was under the control of Rome.
- At 16 years old, he was kidnapped and sold into slavery in Ireland, where he was made a herdsman for sheep. It was in the fields of his captivity that he found true freedom through his belief in the Lord. After escaping slavery, he went home, became a priest and then a bishop, and chose to return to Ireland voluntarily for the salvation of souls.
- St. Patrick adopted local Irish symbolism and culture to appeal to reach the hearts of those he sought to convert. He used the image of the shamrock (three-leaved clover) as a metaphor for the Holy Trinity. Additionally, the Celtic cross has an Irish sun setting behind it.
- Though his life was constantly in danger, he sowed the seeds of Christianity in the hearts of those he encountered and drove out the “snakes” of paganism.
- St. Patrick's story is relevant to us because, like him, we are called to witness to the faith and share the Word of the Gospel at all costs.

### **2. The Solemnity of St. Joseph – March 20**

- On the Solemnity of St. Joseph, we commemorate the life of the earthly and adoptive father of Jesus. His words are not recorded in the Gospels; instead, descriptions of the way he lived speak to who he was as a righteous person.
- Joseph was a working man in Nazareth when he was espoused to Mary. Once he was given an understanding of why she had become pregnant, and with whose child she bore, he graciously accepted the important responsibility of being a father to God himself. He listened to the word of the Lord spoken to him in dreams and acted on the will of God.
- St. Joseph was a carpenter by trade, and he taught Jesus his craft. He is a great exemplar of teacher, defender of the Holy Family, and father.
- St. Joseph holds many honorary titles, including patron saint of the Universal Church, Terror of Demons, Cornerstone of Families, Light of Patriarchs, and Zealous Defender of Christ.
- Let us ask for his patronage in our family lives and strive to imitate him in his humility and devotion to Jesus, his son and Lord.

### **3. Finding time for silence**

- We live in a world that is full of noise. In fact, it can often seem that the quiet moments of our life are few and far between. Some people even dread the silence, as our internal dialogue is loudest without the distractions of our phones, music, work and family life.
- However, it is necessary that we take time for silence every day, even for as little as five minutes. It is necessary for prayer, since in silence we can fully focus on communing with God and listening for his will in our lives. He speaks to us in whispers, as someone who is close and dear to him. As Jesus said, “Whoever has ears ought to hear” (Mt 13:9).
- *Where can we fit in times for silence?* Consider turning off the radio during the daily commute, or on walks around your neighborhood. We are given our best opportunities for silence in the early hours of the morning and late at night before bed, yet most of us tend to drown it out.
- Most ideally, we can find silence in Holy Mass especially after receiving communion. In adoration particularly, we place ourselves in the presence and silence of Christ.
- The world will never be loud enough to drown out our God. We do not need to fill silence! Let it surround us for our prayer life so that we have an opportunity to rearrange our thoughts, examine the trajectories of our lives, and contemplate and appreciate the world that God has made for us.

### **4. 40 days in the desert**

- When the season of Lent arrives each year, we can often become overwhelmed with the thought of offering something up for 40 whole days. As we know, it is a small reminder of what Jesus suffered in love for each of us.
- As the Israelites endured 40 years in the desert, we read in the Gospel of Luke that Jesus, true God and true man, entered into the desert to be tempted and tested. Where it was a punishment for the Israelites, it was a meritorious journey for our perfect Lord.
- Christ took on the entire human experience and sacrificed to redeem us. Beyond braving heat, cold exposure at night, wild animals and scarcity of food, he encountered the adversary.
- The devil offered Christ the earthly power of a king. He also tempted him to throw himself from a high place, knowing that as the son of God, Jesus would be preserved from death. He offered Jesus a respite from the pain that he was undoubtedly experiencing.
- But Jesus endured. He allowed it and, by taking on our form, he showed us how to courageously take on suffering for the good of our brothers and sisters.
- By enduring the 40 days of Lent gracefully, we imitate the God-man who renounced earthly comfort and the temptations of Satan to the point of death for each and every one of us. May the strength of Christ preserve us in our Lent.

### **5. Five Bible verses on Lent**

- “When you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites. They neglect their appearance, so that they may appear to others to be fasting. Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, so that you may not appear to others to be fasting, except to your Father who is hidden. And your Father who sees what is hidden will repay you” (Mt 6:16-18).

- “As the deer longs for streams of water, so my soul longs for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, the living God. When can I enter and see the face of God? My tears have been my bread day and night, as they ask me every day, ‘Where is your God?’” (Ps 42:2-4).
- “For God did not give us a spirit of cowardice but rather of power and love and self-control. So do not be ashamed of your testimony to our Lord, nor of me, a prisoner for his sake; but bear your share of hardship for the gospel with the strength that comes from God” (2 Tim 1:7-8).
- “Be sober and vigilant. Your opponent the devil is prowling around like a roaring lion looking for [someone] to devour. Resist him, steadfast in faith, knowing that your fellow believers throughout the world undergo the same sufferings. The God of all grace who called you to his eternal glory through Christ [Jesus] will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you after you have suffered a little” (1 Pt 5:8-10).
- “Let love be sincere; hate what is evil, hold on to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; anticipate one another in showing honor. Do not grow slack in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, endure in affliction, persevere in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the holy ones, exercise hospitality. Bless those who persecute [you], bless and do not curse them” (Rom 12:9-14).