

The Fatima Faithful newsletter is published once a month and is available in the bulletin, on our website, and accessible through Facebook. Let us know what you think! Email newsletter@ourladyoffatima.org with suggestions and pictures. The Newsletter Team: Vicki Johnson, Angie Feltz and Guest Columnists.

Take a Closer Look at Ashes

"Ashes" represents the product of the combustion of something by fire. This takes on a symbolic connotation of death, the fleeting quality of temporal things, but also of humility and penitence. There are multiple examples of using penitential ashes in the Old Testament. As well, the tradition of placing ashes on penitents dates back to the early Church which symbolizes fragility and mortality, and the need to be redeemed by the mercy of God. In addition to Old Testament biblical accounts, there are examples found in the history of the early church. Back then people placed the ashes on their heads and appeared before the community with a "penitential habit" to receive the sacrament of reconciliation on Holy Thursday. Another use in the eighth century was for those who were dying: they were laid on the ground on top of sackcloth and then sprinkled with ashes and blessed with holy water. Starting in the 11th century, the Church of Rome placed ashes on all the faithful who would come forward at the beginning of Lent. Per the instructions of the Roman Missal, ashes are typically supposed to be made from last year's Palm Sunday palm branches. Given the inconsistency in fineness when locally burning the palms, there are alternatives available to parishes.

Anyone can receive this sacramental, even non-Catholics. As the CCC (# 1670) states: "Sacramentals do not confer the grace of the Holy Spirit in the way that the sacraments do, but by the Church's prayer, they prepare us to receive grace and dispose us to cooperate with it." Anglican, Lutheran, and some other Protestant churches, who also sometimes observe Lent, hold Ash Wednesday services. It is important to remember that like all sacramentals, ashes can only be blessed by a priest or deacon. Ash Wednesday is not a holy day of obligation and therefore receiving ashes is not obligatory. However, it is always recommended to attend this Mass. Far from being a merely external act, the Church has retained the use of ashes to symbolize that attitude of internal penance to which all the baptized are called during Lent. The faithful who come to receive ashes should be assisted in perceiving the implicit internal significance of this act, which disposes them toward conversion and renewed Easter commitment.

When the Heart Prepares: An Invitation Ahead of Lent by Fr Renzo

Some seasons do not arrive abruptly; they approach quietly, almost unnoticed. Lent is one of them. Long before ashes touch our foreheads or strong words challenge our habits, it comes as a gentle question: *Are we living with awareness, or merely moving forward on autopilot?* The Church, in her ancient wisdom, does not rush us. She prepares us. She creates space: space to listen, to reflect, and to recognize that true conversion is not born from urgency, but from attention. This time before Lent is already a grace, inviting us to clarify our inner gaze before changing direction.

From my experience as both a priest and a psychologist, I have learned that deep transformation begins not with action, but with

conscious awareness. Human beings do not change simply because they are told they must, but because they come to understand *why* and *for what purpose*. The Lent that lies ahead will bear fruit only if it begins now, through honest reflection on how we live, relate, and believe.

In his Message for Lent 2025, Pope Francis describes this season as "*a journey together in hope*," reminding us that conversion is never a solitary endeavor but a shared path sustained by God's mercy. Preparing for Lent means accepting that we need time.

time to release what weighs us down, to name what hurts, and to open ourselves to a hope greater than our own efforts.

(press.vatican.va)

In this near but not immediate horizon, a crucial question emerges: Which areas of my life needs to be revisited? Not with judgment, but with truth. Not from guilt, but from a genuine desire to grow. Psychologically, this preparatory moment helps us recognize patterns, resistances, and fears.

Spiritually, it disposes us to listen to God without defenses.

The Lent that is approaching does not demand dramatic gestures, but interior decisions patiently formed over time. It is a school of freedom, where we learn to choose what is essential before letting go of what is merely superficial.

This approaching season does not call for immediate answers, but for interior availability. It invites us to slow down, to make room for silence, and to allow the heart to prepare for an encounter that will be all the more transformative the more conscious it becomes.

May this waiting be fruitful. May it not pass us by. For when the soul prepares itself with humility, grace finds fertile ground.

As Pope Francis reminds us: "God never grows tired of waiting for us; it is we who must learn to pause in order to encounter Him." (press.vatican.va).



The Helping Hand

The Ignatian Workout For Lent: On line retreat with Tim Muldoon (IgnatianSpirituality.com)

Cruz: Daily Lenten Meditations (Ascension App)

Fasting, praying, giving: 25+ ideas for what kids and teens can do for Lent (teachingcatholickids.com)

Bishop Barron Lenten Gospel Reflections (wof.org)

Best Lent Ever + 33 Days of Miracles Wonders and Grace (Dynamic Catholic .com)

Podcast: Every Knee Shall Bow - Evangelizing Without Pushing People Away

Book: The Ear of the Heart (An Actress' Journey from Hollywood to Holy Vows)



Volunteer and Staff Christmas Party



Christmas Decorations at Night 2025



Christmas Mass



Fatima Families Epiphany Children's Pageant and Party



Christmas Program At the Cathedral

Luminaries



OLOF CCW Golden Rose 2026 Recipients





At the beginning of this year, the FOCUS Team and I took 40 students to our annual conference, SEEK, joined by 16,000 others. SEEK is a five-day conference occurring in different locations across the nation annually. It is a time to hear amazing keynote speakers, impact session talks, celebrate the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass with multiple bishops, and spend time in Eucharistic Adoration. It is a moment for lives to change and others to be re-inspired. I want to share a few highlights from this conference that I saw occurring in students' hearts.

First, Vincent, a regular bible study participant and recent convert to the Catholic Faith. He is very polite but doesn't often go deep and usually says "no" to invitations to retreats or Seek. This fall he finally said yes to SEEK, but I was unsure of his openness to all that Seek had to offer. Fast forward to Seek in January, we had a conversation about the power of confession prompted by him going for the first time in a year or so at Seek. In our discussion, I learned he still struggled with going to the sacrament instead of simply confessing to God in private. From my heart, I shared with him the power of grace and how receiving this sacrament monthly would help him fight sin in his life. He received this advice well and is becoming more open to the idea of frequent confession.

Another student, Ricky, is a young 18-year-old who regularly attends bible study but doesn't show a strong devotion to Christ. He is starting the maturation process from Catholicism as a social club to intentionally growing in relationship with Jesus. Ricky enthusiastically signed up for Seek and was ready for an experience. During the conference, I saw him prioritize Mass, go to all the main talks with the group, and generally seemed engaged and trying to learn. After Seek we had a conversation about his experience. He told me he really enjoyed it and wanted more, so he signed up for a more prayerful retreat that our campus is attending this spring. I am looking forward to walking with him at this Father's House retreat, which focuses on the Father's love, and seeing his faith mature.

Thank you for your prayers and support that allows me to walk with these men and so many others.

Saint of the Month - St. Catherine

de' Ricci was born April 23, 1522 in Florence Italy. Named Alessandra Lucrezia Romola de' Ricci by Pier Francesco de' Ricci and Caterina Bonza. Her mother died soon after her birth. At age 6 or 7, she attended a school run by the Benedictine nuns; Alessandra's aunt was the abbess. There Catherine developed a lifelong devotion to the Passion of Christ. At 13, she entered a cloistered community of the Third Order of St. Dominic who followed a strict regimen of the life she desired. Receiving the religious habit from her uncle in May 1535, she became Catherine, named after her deceased mother. Her novitiate was a time of spiritual trial as she is reported to have had visions of Mary and the Christ child. She experienced ecstasies during her routine duties, which caused her to lose sleep and she became clumsy, dropping plates and food and the community began to question her competence and sanity. Eventually they became aware of the spiritual basis for her behavior. By 25, Catherine was elected prioress and was an admired administrator. She advised princes, bishops and cardinals on various topics and corresponded with three men who later became popes. Catherine's advice was sought by many, giving replies in person and through letters. Her meditation on the Passion of Christ was so deep that she spontaneously bled, as if scourged, and bore the stigmata. During deep prayer, a ring-shaped stigma, representing her marriage to Christ, appeared on her finger. She also wore an iron chain around her neck and engaged in fasting and other forms of penance and sacrifices for souls in purgatory. One miracle documented for her canonization was her appearance many hundreds of miles away from where she was physically located in a vision to Philip Neri whom she had maintained a long-term correspondence. Neri, who was reluctant to discuss miraculous events, confirmed the event. She is venerated for her mystic visions and lived in the convent until her death Feb 2, 1590. Canonized in 1746, her feast day is Feb 13th.



Spotlight on The Knights of Columbus by Pat Ross

Founded by Fr. Michael McGivney in Connecticut in 1882. It is the world's largest Catholic fraternal service organization, with more than 1.9 million members in countries around the world, including the US, Canada, Mexico, the Philippines, Dominican Republic, Poland, Lithuania, Ukraine, and South Korea. KoC maintains an active system of local and state councils conducting extensive charitable and volunteer programs. Council 3832 was established at Our Lady of Fatima on April 20, 1954. Our original Charter hangs in the Columbus room.

The KoC mission statement: Charity, Unity and Fraternity. Besides providing financial and manpower support for our church, youth groups and other ministries, we support many charities in the community. Our fraternal activities include 4 areas: faith, family, community and life. Main programs supported include seminarian support, food for families, family friendly activities, food bank support, scholarship sponsors, Special Olympics, PRC support, marches for life, and ultrasound machine purchases.

Council 3832 belongs to District 19, along with Knights of Holy Family in Seymour, Holy Ghost in Knoxville, and Holy Cross in Pigeon Forge. There are 21 districts in TN and the State Council is based in Nashville. We have a state convention every year and Tennessee sends Knights to the annual Supreme convention. Tennessee has had the fastest growth rate for the Knights in the US for the last 3 years. Any male parishioner over the age of

18 years old can become a Knight. The easiest way to join is on-line at www.kofc.org. We are Catholic men who lead, serve, protect and defend. We share a desire to be better husbands, fathers, sons, neighbors and role models and to put charity and community first. We meet on the first Tuesday of the month in the Columbus room at 7 pm, rosary begins at 6:30pm. The Knights have provided many projects at OLOF including the pavilion, flag poles, refurbishing the outdoor stations of the cross, barbecue grill and Blackstone grill. We provide rosaries for the 1st communion classes and flowers for the mothers of the parish on Mother's Day. We recognize our priests and deacons on their ordination anniversaries and at Christmas. We have provided honor guards for funerals, church feasts, visits from the Bishop and at the Cathedral when requested. Fundraising activities provide us the resources to give to our church and community charities. Our largest fundraiser is an annual golf outing every September. In addition, we have quarterly pancake breakfasts and periodic barbecue pork butt and ribs sales. Your participation in our fundraisers helps us continue our work of charity. Do reach out to any of the 140 Knights of OLOF, Council 3832! Finally, to fulfill the purpose of Fr. McGivney to provide support for the church's widows and orphans, the KoC established the largest and highest rated insurance program in the country. Field agents are assigned to the council to offer insurance and investment products to families.