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a community of life and love

family

FEBRUARY 2023

February 2nd—The Feast of the Presentation of Jesus in the Temple

Every mom remembers the momentous days in the lives of their babies. Every "first" is recorded in word and picture. Moms think about those special times and remember what was said and how the relatives and friends gushed over the child with love and welcome. They remember who was there to share their joy over this long awaited child .

On February 2nd we remember, too, another mother who rejoiced, with her husband, as they carried their little one into the temple of the Lord in accord with the custom of their Jewish faith.

They were poor and so could not afford the grander sacrificial offerings that some were able to provide for the priests in the temple. They carried two turtle doves, the offering of the poor.

Expectations were high as they were greeted by an older man who approached the little family. Smiles were wide with the happiness at this special moment when the couple would promise to fulfill the law of Moses which required, 40 days after the birth of a child, for the mother to come to the temple for purification and for the parents to offer the first born son to God.

The older man, Simeon, spoke words to Mary that startled her, troubled her, mystified her. And, we are told, she pondered all these things in her heart.

As with all mothers and their children, Mary, the mother of Jesus and our Heavenly Mother, enjoyed moments of joy and moments of sorrow—over her son's difficulties, his sadness, and any threat to his well being. Mary knows what mothers feel. She understands. Let us go to our Mother, always, in trusting prayer for our children—no matter what age! Luke 2:22-38

Read: [The Presentation of the child Jesus in the Temple - EWTN](#)
[Watch! The Presentation. Ignatius Press](#)

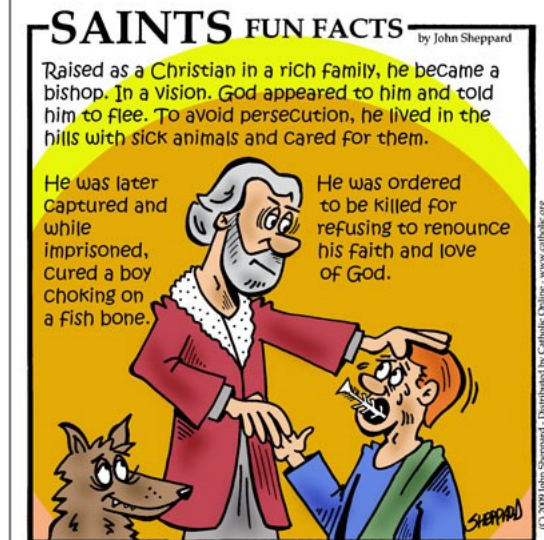
[Children watch: Simeon and Anna - Presentation in the Temple](#) (Crossroads Kids)

Did you know?

On February 3rd each year we celebrate the Feast of St. Blaise.

On this day we go to church and the priest blesses our throats.

What does St. Blaise have to do with a sore throat?



St. Blaise

February 6

St. Paul Miki and Companions



St. Paul Miki was among the first martyrs of Japan. St. Paul, a native of Japan, and a Jesuit priest, was among 26 people martyred for the faith on hill overlooking Nagasaki in 1597.

Among those who died for Christ that day were priests, brothers, laymen, Franciscans, Jesuits and members of the Secular Franciscan order as well as catechists, artists, servants, old men and even children.

When missionaries returned to Japan in the 1800s, they believed they would find no faith among the people. But, to their surprise, thousands of Christians lived around Nagasaki and had secretly kept the faith witnessed to by St. Paul Miki.

[Watch and read: St. Paul Miki and Companions](#)
Franciscan Media

One thing is certain, a martyr is a profound and courageous witness for the love of Christ.

But, do we have to die to become a martyr?

Read surprising ways people can become martyrs without the shedding of blood!

[What is a martyr? Do we have to die to become a martyr?](#)
(Aleteia)

Question: Who was the ONLY Apostles who did not die a martyr? (Answer on page 4.)

February 11

Our Lady of Lourdes

Each year over 2 million people make their way through the mountainous country of southeastern France to Lourdes. They come seeking cures, hoping to find answers, believing and praying. At Lourdes these pilgrims pray in the church, wash in the baths from the flowing stream, and walk, sing, and pray in procession. These people recall the Lady dressed in white with a blue sash, yellow roses at her feet and a Rosary on her arm.

On February 11, 1858, our Blessed Mother appeared to 14 year old Bernadette Soubirous. This was the first of 18 visits, many of them with up to 20,000 people present. When Bernadette asked the Lady's identity, she replied, "I am the Immaculate Conception." Just 4 years earlier the Pope proclaimed it to be dogma that Mary was conceived immaculate, that is, without original sin.

Our Mother came to Lourdes with a message calling sinners to repentance and requesting prayer and penance. She asked that a chapel be built on the site.

Our Lady told Bernadette to dig in the dirt and drink of the stream that would appear. The water continued to flow until the stream was producing over 32,000 gallons of water a day and to this day continues.

Since then there have been over 5,000 cures. **Most of these take place during the blessing of the Blessed Sacrament.**

Most people discover that the greatest blessings of Lourdes happen not to the body but to the heart, soul and spirit. (Saints and Feast Days. Loyola Press)



February 14

St. Valentine's Day



St. Valentine, another martyr for the faith, is known to be the patron of love, young people and happy marriages!

Little is known about his life but we commonly believe he was imprisoned for marrying Christian couples and aiding Christians being persecuted by the Emperor. The legend is that while in prison he healed the jailor's daughter of blindness. Just before he died, he wrote to the girl and signed the letter, "Your Valentine."

As Christians, we follow what we call the "Law of Love." Jesus quoted the first verses of the Jewish Shema..."you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your might." Then he added to it. You shall love your neighbor as yourself." He told us that in keeping the Law of Love, we keep the whole Law! Matthew 22:34-40



Listen and read: [Parents and the Law of Love](#) (Catholic.com)

[Kids Watch! St. Valentine](#)—Stories of Saints

[Children's Activities for Valentine's Day](#)
Catholic Icing

February 20

Presidents' Day

This day was originally celebrated in 1885 in recognition of George Washington's birthday. In 1972 there was legislation to help workers have more three-day weekends and the celebration was moved to the Monday of the week of Washington's Birthday. But, the day has expanded to include other presidents as well. Washington and Lincoln are the most well recognized but this day has become a time to remember all of the nation's chief executives.

This day has become one to celebrate patriotically. In 1932, the date was used to reinstate the Purple Heart, a military decoration originally created by George Washington to honor soldiers killed or wounded while serving in the armed forces. Patriotic groups and the Boy Scouts of America also held celebrations on the day, and in 1938 some 5,000 people attended mass at Saint Patrick's Cathedral in New York City in honor of Washington.

In its modern form, Presidents' Day is used by many patriotic and historical groups as a date for staging celebrations, reenactments and other events. A number of states also require that their public schools spend the days leading up to Presidents' Day teaching students about the accomplishments of the presidents. (History.com)

We remember, on these days of national celebration, to pray for our country, our elected officials—that they may govern with God's heart and mind and according to God's Law of Love!

February 21—Feast of St. Peter Damian

Very often, when we experience some hardship in life, it helps us to be more sympathetic and compassionate. Peter was an orphan and was mistreated by his brother. Because of this he had a special heart for the poor. His older brother helped him and sent him to school. His love for God prompted him to live a very simple life and he was called to serve the Church in a special way.

Listen and read: [St. Peter Damian](#)

CATHOLIC PRAYERS AND PRACTICES



Answer: Who was the only Apostle not to be martyred?

John, the beloved disciple, and, according to Tradition, the caregiver of Mother Mary after Jesus died, was the only Apostle who did not die a martyr. He lived to provide us with John's Gospel and the Book of Revelation. He died an old man on the Island of Patmos.

The Season of Lent—February 22

Ash Wednesday

Like Advent, when we prepare for Jesus's birth at Christmas, Lent is also a liturgical season of preparation, as we get ready for Easter—the Church's greatest celebration.

Just like our weather seasons have unique characteristics, so too do seasons within the Church.

In contrast to Advent and Easter, Lent is more solemn. The sacrament of reconciliation—where we ask God for forgiveness—becomes more popular. The Stations of the Cross, a tradition often taking place on Fridays during Lent, allow us to pray reflecting on Jesus's final hours. Weddings and the big celebrations that accompany this wonderful sacrament are less common during this time.

More solemn songs replace celebratory hymns during Mass. Singing our most joyful hymns during Lent would be like throwing an outdoor pool party in the dead of winter: It just doesn't fit with the season. Lent is far too important of a season to skip over or treat like any other time of the year.

The first day of Lent is always Ash Wednesday, in which ashes on our forehead in the shape of a cross remind us of our own mortality as we begin our journey of penance. (Hallow)

[The Complete Guide to the Holy Season of Lent](#)



Sr. Kevin John Shields, O.P.

Regional Director, Department of Youth Faith Formation

Passed into eternal glory January 28, 2023

Eternal rest, grant unto her, O Lord,
and let perpetual light shine upon her.
May the souls of all the faithful departed
through the mercy of God rest in peace.



ARCHDIOCESE OF NEW YORK
YOUTH FAITH FORMATION
Catechetical

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**For more information
about the Saints and
Feast Days we honor this
month, visit:**

[www.franciscanmedia.org/
saint-of-the-day](http://www.franciscanmedia.org/saint-of-the-day)

www.catholic.org/saints

Movies: for kids—

[Bernadette - the Princess of Lourdes](#)

[The Miracles of Lourdes](#)

Books:

[Catholic Books for Lent - the Catholic Company](#)