



# What's What

*A weekly communication that provides an opportunity for our faith community to grow together in faith.*

## The 40 Days of Lent

Early in Christianity the discipline of fasting became associated with the number forty. This gradually determined the length of Lent. Fasting by catechumens (those studying to become Catholic), and then by other Christians, was done in imitation of Jesus' forty-day fast in the desert (Mat 4:2), Moses' forty days on Mount Sinai (Ex 34:28), Elijah's forty-day fast on his journey to Mount Horeb (1 Kings 19:8), and the forty years the Israelites spent in the desert. To this day the church's official title for Lent, *Quadragesima*, is Latin for "forty."

These forty days of fasting were originally counted from the beginning of the Easter Triduum (Latin,

"three days") that began on Holy Thursday evening. This determined the date of the First Sunday of Lent. Fasting, however, was never done on Sundays, which was always considered weekly memorials of Jesus' resurrection, and therefore as "little Easters." By the 7th century, the six-week sea-

son of Lent was anticipated on Ash Wednesday and included Good Friday and Holy Saturday to keep the days of fasting at forty. The Eastern church excluded both Saturdays and Sundays from fasting, and its Lent begins a week earlier.

*From Catholic Customs & Traditions, Greg Dues, Twenty-Third Publications, 2003, pg 72*

## Ten Tips for Making the Season More Meaningful

**Slow Down**—Set aside 10 minute a day for silent prayer or meditation. It will revitalize your body and your spirit.

**Read a Good Book**—You could choose the life of a saint, a spiritual how-to, an inspirational book or

one of the pope's recent books.

**Be Kind**—Go out of your way to do something nice for someone else every day.

**Volunteer at Your Parish**—Whether it's the

parish fish fry, cleaning the church or helping with the food drive, it will give you a chance to help others.

**Reach Out**—Invite an inactive Catholic to come with you to church.

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### Things to talk about:

- What do you remember about other Lents?
- What are some of the things you are going to do during Lent this year?

**Pray**—Especially for people you don't like and for people who don't like you.

**Tune Out**—Turn off the television and spend some quality time with family members or friends.

**Clean Out Closets**—Donate gently used items to the St Vincent de Paul Society.

**Donate**—Google "Catholic Missions". Then pick one mission and decide how you can help by sending money.

*From Our Sunday Visitor: <http://www.osv.com/Portals/0/images/pdf/LentenGuidePoster.pdf>*

*May Lent be for every Christian  
a renewed experience of God's love  
given to us in Christ,  
a love that each day we, in turn  
must "re-give" to our neighbor,  
especially to the one who suffers most  
and is need.*

*Pope Benedict XVI*



## Saint in the Spotlight — Saints Perpetua and Felicity (d. 203?)

On Saturday, March 7, the Church remembers Saints Perpetua and Felicity.

“When my father in his affection for me was trying to turn me from my purpose by arguments and thus weaken my faith, I said to him, ‘Do you see this vessel—waterpot or whatever it may be? Can it be called by any other name than what it is?’ ‘No,’ he replied. ‘So also I cannot call myself by any other name than what I am—a Christian.’”

So writes Perpetua, young, beautiful, well-educated, a noblewoman of Carthage, mother of an infant son and chronicler of the persecution of the Christians by Emperor Septimius Severus.

Despite threats of persecution and death, Perpetua, Felicity (a slavewoman and expectant mother) and three companions, Revocatus, Secundulus and Saturninus, refused to renounce their Christian faith. For their unwillingness, all were sent to the public games in the amphitheater. There, Perpetua and Felicity were beheaded, and the others killed by beasts.

Perpetua’s mother was a Christian and

her father a pagan. He continually pleaded with her to deny her faith. She refused and was imprisoned at 22.

In her diary, Perpetua describes her period of captivity: “What a day of horror! Terrible heat, owing to the crowds! Rough treatment by the soldiers! To crown all, I was tormented with anxiety for my baby.... Such anxieties I suffered for many days, but I obtained leave for my baby to remain in the prison with me, and being relieved of my trouble and anxiety for him, I at once recovered my health, and my prison became a palace to me and I would rather have been there than anywhere else.”

Felicity gave birth to a girl a few days before the games commenced.

Perpetua’s record of her trial and imprisonment ends the day before the games. “Of what was done in the games themselves, let him write who will.” The diary was finished by an eyewitness.

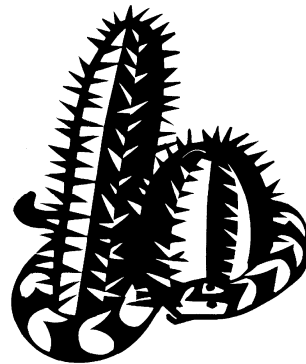
Comment:

Persecution for religious beliefs is not confined to Christians in ancient times. Consider Anne Frank, the Jewish girl who, with her family, was forced into hiding and later died in Bergen-Belsen, one of Hitler’s death camps during World War II. Anne, like Perpetua and Felicity, endured hardship and suffering and finally death because she committed herself to God. In her diary Anne writes, “It’s twice as hard for us young ones to hold our ground, and maintain our opinions, in a time when all ideals are being shattered and destroyed, when people are showing their worst side, and do not know whether to believe in truth and right and God.”

Quote:

Perpetua, unwilling to renounce Christianity, comforted her father in his grief over her decision, “It shall happen as God shall choose, for assuredly we depend not on our own power but on the power of God.

[www.americancatholic.org/Features/SaintOfDay](http://www.americancatholic.org/Features/SaintOfDay)



### Connections to Doctrine & Tradition

- Lent is a time for us to turn back to God (SC 109-110; CIC 1249-1255; CCC 540, 1095, 1438)
- It is a fact that we sin. We are called constantly to conversion to return to God (DeV31, 46; LG 8; CCC 1426, 1433, 1846-169, 1886-1889, 2608).
- We must return to our true purpose, which is to reveal Christ to the world (GS 24-25; CCC 1877).

CCC: *Catechism of the Catholic Church*; GS: *Gaudium et Spes*; NDC: *National Directory for Catechesis*; DeV: *Deei Verbum*; LG: *Lumen Gentium*; SC: *Sacrosanctum Concilium*. These documents can be found online at [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va) or [www.usccb.org](http://www.usccb.org).

“What’s What” is a publication of the Youth Ministry Department of St Mary, Canandaigua, and St Bridget, Bloomfield.

Our Youth Ministry Mission Statement [Draft]:

Building on the mission of our parishes to follow the way of Christ in our thoughts, words, and deeds, and to make Christ more fully present in all who live within our community, the Youth Ministry mission is to empower young people to live as disciples of Jesus Christ in the world today; to affirm the gifts of our youth and provide opportunities for young people to share their gifts with the larger community; and to meet the religious, spiritual and social needs of all youth with the committed leadership, guidance and support of our parish family, providing an opportunity for our entire faith community to grow together in Christian faith.

### Want to know more?

Would you like to know more about Lent? Check out the following books or websites for more information:

- [Catholic Customs & Traditions](#), Greg Dues, Twenty-Third Publications, 2003
- <http://www.americancatholic.org/features/lent/>
- <http://www.catholic.org/clife/lent/>

*These are just suggestions. In providing these we assume no responsibility for, nor do we necessarily endorse these books or websites, their content, or their sponsoring organizations.*