

MONTHLY BULLETIN

February 2026

At Home with the Lord

Carpenters have used pencils for centuries—handy for marking before sawing. I like pencil for writing rough drafts on paper. More accurately, I like the eraser on one end of a pencil—handy when the first wording that comes to mind doesn't quite measure up.

Here's the Rub

On February 18, Ash Wednesday, we begin the season of Lent. Blessing of ashes dampened with holy water includes a reminder that our mortal bodies will turn to dust. Receiving the ashes in the form of a cross on a person's forehead acknowledges sinful mistakes in the past and the need to come before the Lord as a penitent.

We later rub off the ashes. That can mean several things: We're embarrassed about our sinfulness or about publicly declaring our faith. We're

Erase Stray Marks

grateful that our merciful Lord wants to rub out our distress over past sins. We're done with Ash Wednesday and ready to move further into Lent.



Fr. Mark Payne
Chaplain

Saint Paul's Second Letter to the Corinthians put in writing a goal that begins our Lenten season. Become, he challenged, "ambassadors for Christ."

Making Corrections

Traditionally, we engage in prayer, fasting, and almsgiving during Lent. All three help us to become better representatives of Christ, recognizable by our

oneness in love.

In prayer, we can ask God to inspire us with words to begin conversations we have avoided. In fasting, we admit that we overindulge in self-centered ways—too much coffee, too many snacks, too often waiting for somebody else to apologize. In almsgiving, we give to people we don't even know.

From Ashes to Eraser

Erasers started out as plain old rubber. Adding some volcanic ash, which contains pumice, gave erasers a bit of abrasion and a pink color. Then (a little "hallelujah" here), the Eberhard Faber Pencil Company attached pink erasers to its pencils.

Lent gives us a time dedicated to amending and improving our ways. With those changes, we hope to make a better mark in the world.



To order a free **Prayer & Worship Guide** subscription to follow along during TV Mass and use throughout each week, please send the recipient's name and address to Heart of the Nation (see page 4).

TV Mass on The Word Network

Heart of the Nation has added The Word Network to its cable/satellite channel lineup. Tune in Sundays at 4 p.m. ET/3 p.m. CT/1 p.m. PT on DirecTV channel 373, or check cable listings, including AT&T, Cox, Optimum, Spectrum, Verizon FiOS, and Xfinity/Comcast.

“The kids in the choir sang so beautifully. Great job, kiddos!!”

— Jason



“Even the people in the pews seem like friends when I see them every Sunday.”

— Margaret

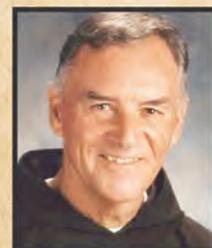


“Your priests bring much-needed joy of the Lord to your listeners.”

— Ellyn

Pass the Salt, Please

Jesus called the Apostles “salt of the earth” and instructed them to go out to all the world. If we could extract and pile up all of the salt in the oceans, it would blanket the world’s dry land with a layer hundreds of feet thick. As disciples, we use the season of Lent to cover some ground in deepening and sharing our faith.



Fr. Tony Scannell
Chaplain

In Biblical times, sprinkling salt on sacrificial offerings of grain or animals signified the covenant between God and His people. Saint Paul advised the Colossians to respond to each other graciously, in words “seasoned with salt.” As salt of the earth, disciples let faith flavor what we do.

Fired Up

On a practical level, salt flavored and preserved food. Locally mined sea salt in the ancient Holy Land had another purpose, too. Its high magnesium content made the salt a great fire starter when coupled with tinder of dried animal scat placed on the heating floor of a clay oven. Jesus knows that we deal with some dung in our lives but wants us fired up with good purpose.

Deep Within

Let’s travel now from the Holy Land to an underground salt mine dating back to the Middle Ages in Poland. Although mining has ceased in the labyrinth of tunnels and chambers, people still come to Saint Kinga’s Chapel—a room in the mine large enough for 400 people to gather.

Over the course of decades beginning in 1896, three miners did most of the work in the chapel, named for the princess who chose—perhaps miraculously—the mine site. Little by little, the miners chiseled true works of art from solid walls of rock salt.

They carved the church’s main altar with its majestic surrounds, the pulpit, side altars, and a towering Crucifix.

Large Biblical scenes, including the Last Supper, stand out in three dimensions from the walls. Even the chapel floor, patterned to look like intricately laid tiles, enhances the worship space. From salt, there emerged a way for the miners to share deep hope in God and give Him glory.

Crystal Clear

Irregularly shaped salt crystals drape elegantly from the wooden frames of huge chandeliers lighted by electric candles in the mine chapel. God’s light can also shine through our human imperfections with dazzling effect.

We can use Lent as a time for mining the words of Scripture and getting to know the Lord more deeply in prayer. This Lent, don’t skip the spiritual salt.

Serving As a Steadfast Light

We sometimes pray without the desired results and stop asking, or we hear the beginning of a Scripture reading and stop listening. On the first Sunday of Lent, Psalm 51 asks for renewal of a steadfast spirit. Your prayers and generosity in donating to Heart of the Nation enable us to encourage one another in steadfast faith.



Prayer for a Meaningful Lent

Lord Jesus, I believe that You do not abandon me, even when, through sin, I turn away. For the many times I have failed to go and sin no more, in sorrow and yet in hope, I pray. Please help me sort out what hinders blessings and grace given, for You know my faults and fears and needs. May struggles that I bear and Lenten sacrifices made set me straight on the way Your love leads. Amen.



Valentine Prayer

Heavenly Father,

Love shared, given, and received enfolds my most joyous memories. For love's inscription on my heart, I give You thanks and glory.

For love shown in many ways and its gift beyond what words can say, for each moment filled with love, I come to You in grateful praise.

Greater love there cannot be than Jesus showed us readily. In hope, I offer You this prayer for life in love eternally. Amen.

Prayer in Sickness



Blessed Virgin Mary,

In your closeness to the Lord, please ask that He bless me with grace in time of sickness, pain, or infirmity.

In your maternal care, may the comfort that I find help me in faith to seek Him with heart and soul and mind.

In your loving presence, may the healing meant to be or suffering endured become blessed for eternity. Amen.

Quiz Time: Lent Q & A

1. When does Lent begin and end this year?

The liturgical season of Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, February 18, and concludes immediately before the Evening Mass of the Lord's Supper on Holy Thursday, April 2. Traditionally, whatever you do or give up as a personal Lenten observance ends right before the Easter Vigil Mass (April 4, 2026).

2. What rules apply for days of fasting and abstinence, health permitting?

Fasting: From midnight at the end of a person's 18th birthday, through midnight at the end of the 59th birthday, fasting occurs on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. Fasting allows three meals, but two small meals together should amount to less than the full one. Liquids are allowed anytime.

Abstinence: Starting at midnight at the end of the 14th birthday, Catholics do not eat meat or poultry on Ash Wednesday, Good Friday, and all Fridays of Lent. (On other Fridays of the year, you may choose a penance more meaningful for you.)

3. Does the Catholic Church require personal Lenten observances?

Canon (Church) law requires Catholics to do penance in their own ways and to abide by the rules for Ash Wednesday and Fridays. In keeping with Lent as a penitential time of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops has explained that Catholics are called to practice self-discipline throughout the Lenten season. Lent and all Fridays of the year are eminently penitential times, but you may skip individually chosen Lenten observances on Sundays, which always celebrate the Resurrection.

Saints Cyril and Methodius

Why, Catholics have puzzled, did the Church change February 14 from honoring Saint Valentine to the Memorial of Saints Cyril and Methodius? People LOVE Valentine's Day!



Legend and fragmentary artifacts muddled history. By 1969, no one knew which of two or more people named Valentine the February 14 feast day honored.



One famous story involves a jailer during Christian persecutions, his daughter miraculously cured through a prisoner named Valentine, and a letter she received from Valentine before his martyrdom. On the other hand, known facts portray Saints Cyril and Methodius, siblings born in ninth-century Thessalonica. Cyril created an alphabet that he and Methodius used to give Slavic peoples of Europe the Bible and other religious texts in a language they could understand.

When a prince in Moravia asked for missionaries to teach Slavs who spoke in unwritten dialects, the Byzantine emperor sent two: a priest named Constantine (Cyril, as a monk) and his brother Methodius, a future priest and archbishop. Unlike the prince, the missionaries had aims more evangelical than political in mind.

Cyril, once a professor, used the Greek alphabet as his starting point. Methodius, who outlived Cyril, received off-and-on Papal permission to use Slavic text at Mass. In the Bible, only Maccabees remained unfinished by the pair.

In a missionary territory that reached modern-day Croatia, Serbia, the Czech Republic and Slovenia, the brothers had found a way to bridge dialects and connect people in faith. Saints Cyril and Methodius serve as patron saints of ecumenism, as well as unity among the Roman Catholic and Eastern churches.

Thank You, Circle of the Heart

Heart of the Nation gratefully includes Circle of the Heart members in perpetual prayers placed at the altar for every Sunday TV Mass. To become a member, please use the enclosed reply slip to pledge a monthly

donation in any amount that you choose. If you need to change or cancel a pledge, just contact Heart of the Nation.



MASS SCHEDULE

Sunday, February 1, 2026
Fourth Sunday
in Ordinary Time

Sunday, February 8, 2026
Fifth Sunday
in Ordinary Time

Sunday, February 15, 2026
Sixth Sunday
in Ordinary Time

Sunday, February 22, 2026
First Sunday of Lent



Sunday, March 1, 2026
Second Sunday of Lent

Online Mass on Sundays and Holy Days:

Available all day at
www.HeartoftheNation.org



Heart of the Nation.
CATHOLIC MASS

For local time and TV channel information, please visit
www.HeartoftheNation.org

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