



# Monthly Newsletter

## Lent means Love

*By Pat Waters*



Lent as the “season of love” reframes the traditional time of sacrifice (prayer, fasting and almsgiving) as an opportunity to deepen one’s relationship with God and others. It is about experiencing God’s profound love and

sharing it.

Traditionally February has been a month connected with all things love as seen through the eyes of Valentine’s Day: A time of showing our love with cards, flowers, candy or other outward signs to express our love and devotion. This year on February 18<sup>th</sup>, just four days after Valentines Day, we will celebrate Ash Wednesday, the beginning of the season of love. Fish, fasting and #Ashtags don’t exactly match with candles, candlelight and #Valentine vibes, and I doubt you’ll find a chalky Valentine card that’s emblazoned with “ASH 2 ASH” or “I FAST 4 U” no matter how hard you look. But that’s a shame, really, because the very awkwardness of the closeness of these two days points out how closely they’re related. Lent, *the Season of Love*, is more than what Valentine’s Day offers as a

day for cupids, roses and good chocolates. The Lenten season calls us to the depths of love, the openness of love and the true gift of love out-poured.

As we journey into the season of Lent – *the Season of Love* and we consider prayer, fasting and almsgiving – we must consider these Lenten anchors with love, not simply with Lenten duty.

- How will **prayer** lead me to love more deeply and to share my love not only within my circle of love but to expand that circle?
- How will **fasting** lead me to be aware of those who are starved of love and left hungry for community, acceptance and hope?
- How will **almsgiving** lead me to a generosity from my heart that is generated out of love not simply charity and a good feeling?

May this **Season of Love** open us up to God’s infinite love. May it touch our hearts and stir in us a greater desire to be ambassadors, for now is the acceptable time to love...it always is. Now is the acceptable time to open our hearts to the endurance it takes for us to live in love. Not tomorrow, or next week, or only during Holy Week, but today and all through the season of Lent so that the true pattern of love which is Christ may be the only season we know...on good days, bad days and everyday.

*For He says,*

*“At the acceptable time I have listened to you,  
and helped you on the day of salvation.”*

*Behold, now is the acceptable time; behold now is the day of salvation.*

2 COR 6:2





# The Jubilee Year Ends

Shared by Wilma Vanderzwaag

On January 6 Pope Leo XIV officially concluded the Jubilee Year. With cardinals and diplomats looking on, Pope Leo knelt down in prayer on the stone floor at the threshold of the Holy Door of St. Peter's Basilica. He then stood up and pulled the two doors shut, symbolically concluding the rarest of Jubilees: one that was opened by a Pope Francis in December 2024, continued during his funeral and the conclave, then closed by his successor a year later.

Archbishop Rino Fisichella shared statistics about the Jubilee Year:

- ◆ Over 33 million pilgrims came to Rome.
- ◆ Of those who came, 62% of the pilgrims came from the European continent, with Italy ranking first in numbers.
- ◆ North America was the second continent with 17% of pilgrims.
- ◆ Of note is that after Italy, most came from the United States, Spain, Brazil and Poland.
- ◆ During the year, 35 major events took place.

Archbishop Fisichella stated, "The spiritual dimension at the base of the Jubilee made it possible to see a people on the move, with a great desire for prayer and conversion." He went on to say that:

- ◆ over 5000 volunteers served throughout the Jubilee
- ◆ and another 2000 members of the Order of Malta provided first-aid service at the four Papal Basilicas.

The volunteers were the final group to cross the Holy Door in St. Peter's Basilica, symbolically bringing the year to a close.

The mayor of Rome expressed his appreciation for the Jubilee Year by saying: "The joy, faith, and hope of the pilgrims touched the hearts of Romans, who in turn showed a welcoming attitude toward them, even when their numbers were extraordinary".

To sum up his report Archbishop Fisichella said, "this Holy Year achieved the goal expressed in the Bull of Indiction of the Jubilee, *Spes non confundit*: to be for everyone an opportunity to rekindle hope".

The following day, January 7<sup>th</sup>, Pope Leo began his pontificate in earnest. He called the world's cardinals to the Vatican for two days of meetings. On the agenda was the issue of the liturgy causing division within the church, the celebration of the old Latin Mass. We look forward with **hope** to the results of these meetings.



## Saints Trivia

We all have our favourite saints that we pray to, but there are so many more to learn about and get to know. Saints don't go out of style, something about the saints attracts and intrigues us. During the season of Lent why not read about some saints? Below are a few patron saints to try to match up to their particular cause or groups. You will learn a little information about these saints and the answers are on the back page. May this entice you to read more about one or more of these saints and they may become a favourite of yours.

- |                                      |                    |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------|
| 1. ____ St. Agnes                    | a) Stress          |
| 2. ____ St. Benedict Joseph Labre    | b) Wine Merchants  |
| 3. ____ St. Caedmon                  | c) Engaged Couples |
| 4. ____ Blessed Jersy Popieluszko    | d) Songwriters     |
| 5. ____ St. Clair of Assisi          | e) Friendship      |
| 6. ____ St. Padre Pio of Pietrelcina | f) The Homeless    |
| 7. ____ St. Amand                    | g) Television      |
| 8. ____ St. John the Evangelist      | h) Retreats        |
| 9. ____ St. Ignatius of Loyola       | i) Human Rights    |

Answers are on page 6, along with a short story about each saint and why they have these patronages.  
(Try not to look until you've guessed! 🤪)

## St. Josephine Margaret Bakhita

(1869 – 1947)

**Feast Day: February 8**

Patron Saint of: Sudan and victims of human trafficking

*“If I was to meet those slave-traders that abducted me and those who tortured me, I’d kneel down to them to kiss their hands, because, if it had not been for them, I would not have become a Christian and religious woman.”*

~ St. Josephine Bakhita

How many of us would be as forgiving toward our captors and torturers as this saint? Perhaps after hearing her story, we will understand how she came to have such a loving heart.

This saint was born into a respected family of the Daju people in the region of Darfur in Sudan. Her father was the brother of the tribal chief and her childhood was happy and carefree, that is, until the age of about seven when she was abducted by Arab slave traders. She was so traumatized that when

asked, she could not remember her name, so her captor mocked her by calling her Bakhita, an Arabic word meaning “fortunate”, as he thought she would bring him good luck.

Upon her capture, she was forced to walk hundreds of miles and was sold several times before arriving at a slave market. Over the next years, she would be sold again and again, be mistreated and endure a Sudanese practice of scarring which involved cutting her skin and grinding salt into the wound. This was to identify her as property.

In 1883, she was sold for the last time to Callisto Legnani, the Italian consul in Khartoum, the capital of Sudan.

Unlike her other captors, Callisto treated her kindly for the next two years. When revolutionaries were about to take control of Khartoum, Callisto escaped to Italy, taking Bakhita with him. In Italy, he gifted her to his friend Augusto Michieli where Bakhita worked as a nanny for his young daughter. One of her jobs as nanny was to accompany the child to a convent school run by the Canossian Sisters in Venice. It was these loving sisters that taught Bakhita about Jesus and guided her to Catholicism.

In 1889, Augusto decided to move to Sudan for business, taking his family and Bakhita with him. However, Bakhita refused to go. So, the Canossian Sisters and the patriarch of Venice petitioned the Italian court on her behalf to have the right to remain in Italy. The



St. Josephine Bakhita  
pictured on a holy card

court ruled in her favour citing that since slavery was illegal in Italy, Bakhita had actually been free since 1885, her arrival date in that country.

Thus, in 1890, Bakhita was baptized, confirmed and received her First Holy Communion, taking the Christian name, Josephine Margaret. Interesting fact: these sacraments were administered to her by Archbishop Giuseppe Sarto who would later become Pope Pius X.

Josephine entered the Canossian convent and made her vows in 1896. In 1902 she was assigned to the convent in Schio, about 100 km northwest of Venice. At the convent, Sister Josephine was responsible for cooking, sewing, serving the poor and welcoming visitors. She was known for her kindness and warm smile.

The horrors and pain she endured as a slave would come back to haunt her in her final days but she died smiling after seeing a vision of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Josephine died on February 8, 1947, and many came to pay their respects as her body lay in state for three days.

She was beatified in 1992 and canonized in 2000 both times by Pope St. John Paul II.

Besides being the patron saint of Sudan, St. Josephine Bakhita is also the patron saint of victims of human trafficking. Sadly, human trafficking is prevalent in the Niagara region due to its proximity to the border, the tourism industry, and the easy access to major transportation routes.

Anyone can anonymously report suspected incidents of trafficking to Crime Stoppers of Niagara.

Alternatively, there is also the Canadian Human Trafficking Hotline at 1-833-900-1010 or [www.canadianhumantraffickinghotline.ca](http://www.canadianhumantraffickinghotline.ca) which provides 24/7 confidential support in more than 200 languages.

*O St Bakhita, we ask for your prayers for those enslaved among us. Intercede with God on their behalf so that they will be released from their chains of captivity and show them that Jesus is a model of faith, hope and love. Amen.*

**The Pope's Prayer**  
**Intention for February**

**For children with  
incurable diseases:**

Let us pray that children suffering from incurable diseases and their families receive the necessary medical care and support, never losing strength and hope.

To read more of the Pope's Prayer Intentions, visit

[https://  
www.popesprayer.va/](https://www.popesprayer.va/)



Lord God, transform me into Yourself. As I journey through Lent, guide my thoughts through prayer, and my actions by fasting and self-denial. Help me to seek You above all things and to serve You with an ever grateful heart. I ask this in the name of Jesus. Amen.



**Heavenly Father.**  
**I put everything in your hands today: my family, my health, my home, my security, and my fears. Thank you for carrying my burdens. Amen**

**PRAYER for FEBRUARY**

God of all goodness, look with mercy on children suffering from incurable diseases, that they and their families may be comforted.

When they are fearful, ease their fear and anxieties.

When they are afraid, give them strength and courage.

When they feel alone, send them someone to listen and to care.

When they are confused, provide reassurance and direction.

When they are in pain, ease their suffering.

When they despair, give them hope.

May they experience Your healing presence in the comfort of a caregiver's calm gaze and tender touch.

We ask this in Your Holy Name. Amen.

**Our newsletter is also available online!**

For current or past issues, go to the church's website:

<https://www.staroftheseachurch.ca>



## Deacon's Franciscan Bench

### MERCY

St. Francis discovered a mercy that was not primarily mercy performed by him for lepers - but, paradoxically, mercy received by Francis by serving the lepers. The mercy was **in the lepers** - and is received by the one who serves them, because the mercy is Jesus Christ Himself, in the least of His sisters and brothers.

In January 2026, all branches of the Franciscan family came together in Assisi to celebrate the beginning of a year long celebration of the **800th anniversary of His death**. The assembly celebrated six "Stages in St. Francis' Legacy." **Mercy, Prayer, Fraternity, Work, Peace, and Blessing.**

Each of the six was explored through readings: from scripture, from Francis' writing, from the first biographies - and by unique reflections on the stages by representatives of the larger communities of friars, sisters, and secular Franciscans.

### #1 MERCY

From the **Testament of St Francis**

*... when I was in sin, it seemed too bitter for me to see lepers, and the Lord Himself led me among them, and I showed them mercy. And as I was going away from them, what had seemed bitter to me was changed into sweetness of soul and body.* Test. I.3

A reflection on mercy came from **Dr. Francesca Di Maolo**, President of the Seraphic Institute of Assisi, an institute that for 150 years has been working for the education, healthcare and inclusion of young people with disabilities. She described the experience of someone coming for the first time to volunteer with disabled youth. Here are excerpts from her words.

Encountering the young person with a disability is hard. *"The diversity frightens us, and the fragility of others lays us bare. It's frightening to see ourselves reflected in those wounds, because it means recognizing them within ourselves as well."* But when you do, *"you discover that it is not suffering that awaits you,"* it is mercy. *"You feel their struggle, but also their joy for everything that fills their life. They don't show you their limitations, but their resources. They participate in life with their talents ... Suddenly, you're no longer a spectator of another's pain and joy: their feelings now belong to you, like their destiny. You wonder how it could have happened..."*

When you join with others in serving them, you *"discover the beauty and strength of brotherhood, which isn't an idea, but a living presence in the looks and gestures that surround you."* And you are drawn into Jesus Christ, because *"you have recognized Him: in the wounded face, and in the one who helps him. It is in that moment that you are moved. It is in that moment that your conversion begins. You have crossed the threshold and found Him, Jesus, in your wounded brother and in those who have the privilege, every day, of serving an infinite love."*

**Br. Armando Trujillo Cano**, TOR wrote the following. *"... The Lord also invites us to overcome personal and communal resistance so that we can reach out to those who carry painful wounds in body and spirit, excluded from material, cultural, and spiritual well-being, to share with them God's consolation and the love of a community capable of becoming neighbours."* cf. Lk 10:29-37 *Today too we can constantly rediscover the sweetness of soul and body when we are merciful, as our Father is merciful."* Cf. Lk 6:36

pax et bonum - deacon maurice o.f.s

### Catechism of the Catholic Church:

**2447** The works of mercy are charitable actions by which we come to the aid of our neighbour in his spiritual and bodily necessities.



## Saints Trivia ANSWERS: 1-c, 2-f, 3-d, 4-i, 5-g, 6-a, 7-b, 8-e, 9-h

### Did you know?

**St. Agnes** never married, nor did she want to marry. She consecrated herself to God. Aside from the fact that there are no canonized engaged persons, we do well simply to trust the sacred tradition that gives us St. Agnes in this role. St Agnes is the patron saint of engaged couples.

**St. Benedict Joseph Labre** at the age of 22 became a lifelong pilgrim in imitation of Christ, who had “nowhere to lay his head” (Matthew 8:20.) He often slept in the Colosseum and became known as the beggar of Rome for his poverty and holiness. Benedict spent his days in churches, especially those where 40 hours of devotion happened. At his funeral the crowd was so great that troops had to maintain order. He was 35 when he died on April 16, 1783. He is the patron saint of the homeless.

**St. Caedmon** was a lay brother who was a herdsman in the mid-seventh century. One night the brothers were singing hymns and Caedmon did not know any. Later in a dream, he received the verses of a hymn in praise of God. The next morning, he wrote down the verses and some additional ones. Shortly after he took monastic vows and was taught Scripture and doctrine. It is said that whatever he learned, he turned into a beautiful hymn. Caedmon is known as the father of English sacred poetry. St. Caedmon, the patron saint of songwriters.

**Blessed Jersy Popieluszko** is a modern-day martyr. Fr. Popieluszko served as chaplain in the Huta Warszawa steelworks during the strikes, which led to the Solidarity labour union. Even though Solidarity was declared illegal by martial law, Fr. Popieluszko presided over “Masses for the Homeland” which was soon copied by other priests throughout Poland. In July 1984 he was charged with “abusing the functions of a priest” and “anti-state propaganda”. Later charges were suspended but he was kidnapped and his bound and gagged body was recovered from a reservoir. He was 37 years old. He is the patron saint of human rights.

**St. Clair of Assisi** died on August 11, 1253, and was canonized in 1255. It was said that when Clare was confined to bed in her final illness and unable to attend Mass, an image of the liturgy in the nearby church appeared on the wall of her cell. Because of this miracle, in 1958 Pope Pius XII declared her the patron saint of television. In fact, Mother Angelica, the American nun who launched the Eternal Word Television Network (EWTN), is a Poor Clare.

**St. Padre Pio of Pietrelcina’s** favourite saying was “pray, hope and don’t worry”, and he became the patron saint of stress. In 1912 Padre Pio experienced on an intermittent basis but invisibly, the wounds of Christ in his hands, feet and side. Because of his poor health he was sent to live with his family but later went to the friary in San Giovanni Rotondo. On September 20, 1918 the stigmata became visible. He became the object of intense investigation by medical professionals. Attempts were made to heal his wounds but nothing had any effect. During his life he was noted for his many extraordinary deeds, including miraculous healings. He died September 23, 1968 and was canonized on June 16, 2002.

**St. Amand** was born in 584. He was ordained a priest in Tours and was a missionary who laboured all over Europe, especially Flanders. Among his many accomplishments was the establishment of a convent at Nivelles in Belgium with the assistance of 2 women who later became saints themselves: Gertrude and Ita. He was 90 when he died at one of the monasteries he established in northern France. He became the patron saint of winemakers and brewers because he spent so much time preaching in wine and beer making regions.

**St. John the Evangelist** was a special friend to Jesus, so it is appropriate that he is the patron saint of friendship. John was a fisherman along with James and called by Jesus to follow Him. John was part of the inner circle of disciples who witnessed many miracles done by Jesus. John was the only apostle to remain at the foot of the cross when Jesus was crucified and Jesus entrusted Mary, his mother into his care. If you need help with a friendship, ask for the intercession of St. John.

**St. Ignatius of Loyola** the founder of the Society of Jesus, has influenced what happens in a retreat. While recuperating from wounds suffered in battle he read and reflected on the gospels and the lives of saints. After his recovery he went on a pilgrimage to Montserrat and then an extended retreat at Manresa. It was here that he wrote the *Spiritual Exercises*. This is still used by religious and laypeople as a guide for discernment and growing closer to God. St. Ignatius motivates us to spend some quiet time with God.

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*“and the smoke of the incense rose with the prayers of the saints from the hand of the angel before God.”*

**Upcoming  
Events:**

On **February 13 at 7pm**, Star of the Sea will be hosting a **free** viewing and discussion of the film, **Triumph of the Heart**.



The film tells the harrowing story of **St. Maximillian Kolbe** and the nine other men with whom he died during World War II. Many know that St. Kolbe volunteered to take the place of a married man to die in a starvation bunker in Auschwitz. Through its portrayal of the brutality of St. Kolbe's final days, the film explores universal themes like love, faith and hope.

**The film contains mature subject matter not suitable for children.** Viewer discretion is advised. Also, because of the nature of the content, we will not be serving snacks or beverages. After the film is over, you are welcome to stay for a discussion about the film.

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## Star of the Sea Church

### Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper

**Tuesday, February 17, 2026**

**2 Sittings: 5:00pm and 6:00pm**

**In the Church Hall**

**Large \$12**

2 pancakes, 3 sausages, apple pie

**Small \$8**

2 pancakes, 2 sausages, apple pie



**Tickets on sale before and after Mass**

**Jan. 31- Feb 1, 2026**

**Feb. 7-8, 2026**

**Feb 14-15, 2026**

Also available at the door



Guess what?  
Star of the Sea Church  
and CWL each have a  
page on



Search for:



**Star of the Sea Catholic Church  
- Port Dalhousie**



**Star of the Sea CWL**



**event day details**  
save the date - cnoy day is february 28, 2026!

Start/Finish: Pen Centre

Participants will gather in the space outside Mark's Work Warehouse.

Park close to the entrance by SportChek and Mark's. These will be the best doors for entering and exiting as the mall will be closing as our event is ending.

We will offer an indoor route for those who find outdoor walking a challenge. The mall is fully accessible.

## Schedule

- **4:00 pm: Meet** Check-in
- **4:45 pm: Muster** Gather for Opening Remarks
- **5:00 pm: Move** Send-off
- **6:00 pm: Munch** Light meal served
- **7:00 pm: Mosey** Thank You! See you in 2027!

**Not able to join us in person at the Main Event?** We hope you'll register, fundraise and walk offsite with friends and family.

For more info and to register/donate go to:  
<https://cnoy.org/location/stcatharines>