

🎵 🎵 Grace Notes from the System Chaplain 🎵 🎵

January/February 2019

I am always somewhat disappointed when the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord happens as it seems to me that we have cut short the celebration of Jesus' birth and childhood. I tend to feel that we have invested more in the anticipation than in the actual celebration of the birth. Later in this missive, I'll explain why my Christmas decorations stay up until the beginning of February in rebellion against the cultural push to put Christmas behind us and get on with Valentine's Day. That said, I do have to acknowledge the beauty of the Church's movement into Ordinary Time.



Have you ever wondered why we have “Ordinary Time” in our Church Year? Although ordinary can mean “plain” or ‘undistinguished’, in this case the word ‘ordinary’ comes from the same root as ordinal – meaning ‘counted’ (one for all the math teachers).

The rhythm of the liturgical seasons reflects the rhythm of life — with its celebrations of anniversaries and its seasons of quiet growth and maturing. Ordinary Time is celebrated in two segments: from the Monday following the Baptism of Our Lord up to Ash Wednesday; and from Pentecost Monday to the First Sunday of Advent. This makes it the largest season of the Liturgical Year. Vestments and liturgical draperies are green during this season, representing eternal life and hope. When we take the time to explore the scripture cycle of Ordinary Time, we find that there is nothing “ordinary” about the revelation of our Lord which comes to us through the readings.



Saturday ,February 2nd, is the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord, also recognised as the Feast of the Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary, or Candlemas. In Leviticus 12, it was ordained that a woman should present herself for ritual purification 33 days after her son's circumcision – or 40 days after the birth. In many countries this is considered the last day of the Christmas season; celebrations continue until then and decorations, especially the Christmas creche, stay up until this observance. Recognising Jesus as ‘the Light of the World’, many Christians bless candles at Mass on this day to be used for the rest of the year.

In Jewish tradition, the *pidyon haben*, or “redemption of the [firstborn] son,” is a ceremony wherein the father of a firstborn male redeems his son by giving five silver coins to a *kohen* (a priestly descendent of Aaron), at least thirty days after the baby's birth. (See Luke 2:22-39) The Gospel passage gives us the beautiful Canticle of Simeon chanted each evening in Compline, the final Office of the day in the Liturgy of the Hours.

Lord, now you let your servant go in peace; your word has been fulfilled: my own eyes have seen the salvation which you have prepared in the sight of every people: a light to reveal you to the nations and the glory of your people Israel. Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be for ever. Amen.

In Western Europe, Candlemas was considered the day to begin preparing the ground for spring planting and was seen as a time of new beginnings, thus the hearth would be cleaned – and possibly a full ‘spring cleaning’ performed - and a new fire set. Pancakes and crepes were

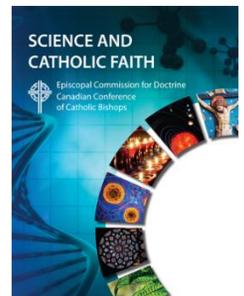
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considered appropriate foods, especially in preparation for the coming of Lent. It was also one of the four 'quarter days' – along with Whitsun, Lammas and Michaelmas – when legal contracts and rents were due. The University of St Andrews, founded in the early 15th C, still calls its two semesters Martinmas (September to December) and Candlemas (February to May).

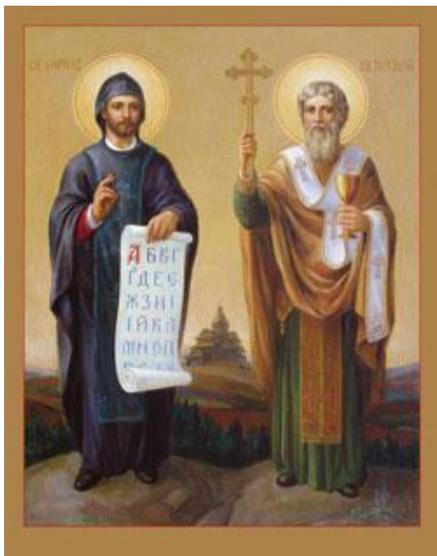
February includes the Memorials of a number of saints, several of them martyrs, whose lives you may enjoy researching: 5th St Agatha, 6th St Paul Miki and Companions, 22nd The Chair of St Peter. Although the Blessing of Throats is often practised on the Feast of St Blaise, February 3rd, using candles blessed on Candlemas and formed into a cross, this feast is not observed this year because it falls on a Sunday.

The fifth week in Ordinary Time (February 10-16) begins with the World Day of the Sick and reminds us of the Church's social teaching and call to healing ministry. Many medical professionals recognise that their efforts are enhanced by the pastoral care of the sick in helping restore people to health and easing their suffering. Historically, the Church has provided care to the sick, suffering and needy and, as of 2010 the Roman Catholic Church was the largest non-governmental provider of health care in the world.

The ongoing tension between Religion and Science is addressed quite well in a new document, **Science and Catholic Faith** available from the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops. Although the book is available for a modest sum, you can download a text version and the accompanying posters from the website at <https://esubmitit.sjpg.com/cccb/index.aspx?component=ProductDetails&id=184-968>



February 14, in addition to being Valentine's Day, is the Memorial of Ss Cyril and Methodius,



who are considered equal to the apostles in the history of the Byzantine (Eastern) Rite, particularly for the Slavs. They were brothers born in the ninth century, one of who became a monk and the other a bishop. For Catholics, they are patrons of ecumenism, which refers to efforts by Christians of different Church traditions to develop closer relationships and better understandings. They were tasked with bringing the Christian faith to the Slavic peoples and translated the Bible into the language now known as "Old Church Slavonic", still used in the liturgies of some Eastern Rite Catholic Churches and Orthodox Churches. The Glagolitic and Cyrillic alphabets are the oldest known Slavic alphabets, and were created by the two brothers and their students to translate the Bible and other texts into the Slavic languages.

St. Valentine, (died 3rd century, Rome; feast day February 14), is the name of one or two legendary

Christian martyrs whose lives seem to be historically based. Although the Roman Catholic Church continues to recognize St. Valentine as a saint of the church, he was removed from the General Roman Calendar in 1969 because of the lack of reliable information about him. He is the patron saint of lovers, epileptics, and beekeepers.

By some accounts, St. Valentine was a Roman priest and physician who suffered martyrdom during the persecution of Christians by the emperor Claudius II Gothicus about 270. He was

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buried on the Via Flaminia, and Pope Julius I reportedly built a basilica over his grave. Other narratives identify him as the bishop of Terni, Italy, who was martyred, apparently also in Rome, and whose relics were later taken to Terni. It is possible these are different versions of the same original account and refer to only one person.

According to legend, St. Valentine signed a letter “from your Valentine” to his jailer’s daughter, whom he had befriended and healed from blindness. Another common legend states that he defied the emperor’s orders and secretly married couples to spare the husbands from war. Valentine’s Day as a lovers’ festival dates at least from the 14th century.

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Don’t forget to sign up for upcoming Adult Faith Formation sessions:

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| Thursday, February 7, 2019: | Bryan DeSousa, Vice-Principal at Christ the King, will explore the faith journey of working with students who have special needs |
| Thursday, February 21, 2019: | Norm Roberts, Vice-Principal at Bishop Reding, will help us to discover the richness of the Liturgy of the Hours as a prayer form for our schools. |
| Thursday, March 28, 2019 | Mary Ellen Chown and Joanne Montague will explore the biblical image of ourselves as “earthen vessels” who can pour out God’s love in our Catholic schools |

Please register on StaffNet Event Registration for these events.



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It’s not too soon to be starting to think about how your school community may want to observe Lent, perhaps beginning with a “farewell to Alleluia” on Shrove Tuesday: a brightly decorated banner with the word ‘*Alleluia*’ is rolled up and cased or put in a decorated box for the duration of Lent to be unfurled with great rejoicing on the first school day after Easter. This reminds us that the singing of the Alleluias (and the Gloria) are suspended for Lent and brought back as a sign of our joy at Easter.



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Especially for children and the child in each one of us:

The caterpillar which metamorphoses into a butterfly has long been considered a wonderful symbol for Lent and Easter. You can make butterflies from circles of coloured cloth and pipe cleaners. (Fold the pipe cleaner in half, gather a circle of colourful cloth through the centre to create 'wings' and wrap the pipe cleaner around the gathers, leaving the two ends as antennae. You then wrap the wings around the body and use the antennae to secure them in place, creating a cocoon. After Easter, the antennae are unravelled, and the wings unwrapped to reveal the butterfly.)



You can also find instructions for an 'accordion' butterfly which brings the same message at

<http://www.sundayschoolkids.com/activities-lent-easter/1-accordion-butterfly-instructions.htm>

Or

a sandwich bag butterfly at

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a6vAeJ-hF-s> (Given that we try not to use food in crafts to recognise that people are hungry in our world, you would probably prefer to use coloured paper in lieu of the fruit cereal)

Pastoral Animators may want to get out the Lenten Ark and its accompanying prayer book, Forty Days and Forty Nights, distributed two years ago, to use in your school. The exploration of biblical themes through the inhabitants of the ark during the 40 days and nights of rain remind us of Noah's effort to save God's creation and inspire us to do our part as stewards of the earth. Note the 'shipboard rules':

1. No matter how hungry you get, don't eat each other. Lent is a time of fasting.

2. Share what you have. Lent is a time of charity.

3. Keep in touch with God. Lent is a time of prayer.

We are also reminded to open a window each day to let in the fresh air!

There will be some additional Lenten resources distributed to the schools.

May you find light in these darker days as you see the face of Christ reflected in those you encounter every day.

With every blessing,

Gillian

System Chaplain and Faith Formation Lead