



# 1<sup>ST</sup> SATURDAY DEVOTION NEWSLETTER

FEBRUARY 2021

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## FROM CHRISTMAS TO CANDLEMAS: THE 40 DAYS OF CHRISTMAS

By Cynthia Millen  
[www.catholicstand.com](http://www.catholicstand.com)

*[Catholic Stand Editor's note: Although this article is late, Catholic Stand is publishing it because it has useful information. Please bookmark it and refer back to it for ways to celebrate future Christmas seasons!]*

A question that is suspended in time, then and now, is "Where is the newborn King of the Jews?" If our answer is "wrapped in tissue paper and put away in the attic," well, that's the wrong answer. Where have we put Jesus since Christmas? — Fr. Bill Rose, Christ the King, Toledo

It's the end of January and my lights are still up.

My tree still has ornaments. (Okay, I have a confession: It's a handmade wooden tree made out of recovered barn siding, so I don't have needles to vacuum.)

My Nativity crèche is still on the mantle.

It's still Christmas season in our home and, according to our liturgical calendar, it should be in every Catholic home as well. We celebrate the Christmas season until February 2, Candlemas.

### The Octave of Christmas

Let's start with the Christmas Octave, from December 25 to January 1, the Feast of Mary, the Mother of God, and another Holy Day of Obligation. There are four "lesser" feasts in between.

**Stephen's Day:** December 26 is called Boxing Day by the British and those formerly in its realm, but before that (and in Ireland), it was always known as the feast of St. Stephen. It's commemorated in the famous carol, "Good King Wenceslas", and it honors the first martyr of Christianity. Your family can celebrate it by reading the Story of the Wren. Once the wren became King of the Birds, he became very proud, and it is said that he directed the enemies of Stephen to him. When he fluttered near some shrubs, he got stuck and ended up dying as well. (Here's the traditional song.) It's a good lesson in burying our pride, and your family can celebrate by going to Mass and having toast with good Irish brown bread.

**The Feast of St. John the Evangelist:** December 27. On this day, we honor the only apostle who stood by Jesus at his crucifixion, and who took care of His mother after He died. He is the patron saint of priests. This is a good day to write your priest a thank you card or give him a gift.

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## FEASTS FOR FEBRUARY

The feasts on the General Roman Calendar celebrated during the month of February are:

- 2 Presentation of the Lord, Feast
- 3 Blaise; Ansgar, Opt. Mem.
- 5 Agatha, Memorial
- 6 Paul Miki and Companions, Memorial
- 7 Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Sunday
- 8 Jerome Emiliani; Josephine Bakhita, Opt. Mem.
- 10 Scholastica, Memorial
- 11 Our Lady of Lourdes, Opt. Mem.
- 14 Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Sunday
- 17 Ash Wednesday

- 21 First Sunday of Lent, Sunday
- 22 Chair of St. Peter, Feast
- 28 Second Sunday of Lent, Sunday

The feasts of Saints Cyril and Methodius (February 14) and St. Peter Damian (February 21), is superseded by the Sunday Liturgy. The feast of the Seven Founders of the Orders of Servites (February 17) is superseded by the Ash Wednesday Liturgy. □

## THANK YOU

*... a small and simple phrase that comes from a grateful heart!*

*Psalm 106:2*

### THANK YOU PRAYER AT THE END OF THE 40 DAYS OF CHRISTMAS

Thank you, God, for sending Your Son on one glorious night to be born of a virgin, to live a perfect life and to die on the cross for my sins. Thank you that He rose from the dead three days later and that this Christmas and every Christmas we can celebrate the gift of eternal life through Jesus Christ. Amen.

### OUR CENACLE CORNER

Seeking a deeper relationship with God  
through meditation of passages from Holy Scriptures

**How to Keep Still  
Pray and Have Faith that  
God is in Control!**

# GOD TOUCHED ME

*Publish his glorious deeds among the nations.  
Tell everyone about the amazing things he does. — 1 Chronicles 16:24*

## A EULOGY FOR VIL CARLOS, A DEVOTEE

*Contributed by some Devotees and Compiled by Fed*

*For if we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord.  
So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's.*

*Romans 14:8*

Death is inevitable and it comes like a thief in the night. In Revelation 3:3, "Remember, then, what you received and heard. Keep it, and repent. If you will not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come against you."

On January 3, 2021, at 6:30 AM, Vil Carlos, our dear friend and co-devotee, passed on. The night before this, she had received the anointing of the sick and we were able to pray the Three Beautiful Prayers on her behalf.

Vil, sometimes called Vi, was a devotee of God the Father. In spite of her back problem, she drove her car with two other passengers, all the way from the West side to St Sharbel Church, which is on the East side, a total of 22 miles one-way, to attend the Eternal Father Devotion mass and prayers. She was also a rosary maker for more than two decades and for each bead that she strung, she prayed the Hail Mary. She also knitted prayer shawls for the sick and as she knitted, she prayed Our Father and Hail Mary and asked for the healing of whoever will wear it. She prayed while making bracelets and necklaces which she sold just for the cost of the materials.

I first met Vil when I joined the rosary makers in 2004. That time, we were going around Las Vegas bringing Sto. Nino for home visits. I asked her if she wants to have the Child Jesus for nine days and she readily agreed. In April 2005, we brought Sto. Nino to her home. Before we left, The Child Jesus (through God's Son Helper) told her that Mother Mary would give her a surprise. After nine days, we went back to pick up the Child Jesus. She was very

excited to show me her Amaryllis plant that bloomed a beautiful big red flower. She said that the plant bloomed in December which is the usual time for it to bloom. After the flower wilted, only the bulb was left, and she just put it in one corner of her garden behind some unused pots. She never even watered it. But then, one of the days when Sto. Nino was at her home, she noticed that there was a flower shoot. So, she brought it out and cared for it. On the First Saturday of May 2005, during our May crowning, she offered this amaryllis flower to Mother Mary.



Vil loved to host formal dinners. She invited a small group on different occasions and gracefully announced the food as it came in. She used her formal dinner ware and glassware, complete with all the silverware needed for each food. We used to tease her saying that she introduced us to the food being served and the appropriate plate and silverware used.

She was very generous and was constantly helping those in need. One time, a shoe store at the swap meet was closing and she bought all the shoes that were there: shoes for men, women, and children. Then, she packed it and we sent it to my brother who lives in a small agricultural town of Bukidnon, Philippines. My brother distributed the shoes to the farmers and their families. Vil called this project, "Shoes for Jesus."

Another time, a nun from the Philippines visited and she brought her to her house and gave her a lot of things to bring home to the Philippines for distribution to those in need.

When we bought the Cenacle House, a condominium unit which we use for prayers, she donated a lot of dining and kitchen items, including a Cuisinart pan, kneelers and chairs.

Vil was always there for people in need, including people who are sick, like Mila Lumba who was hospitalized, then brought to rehab for about a year. She would bring food or do the marketing for them. With her best effort, she also sat with Gary who was on hospice at home so Malou, Gary's wife, could do her errands without worrying about him. A lot of the Las Vegas devotees have experienced her benevolence and are very appreciative of her good deeds.

She was a member of the Couples for Christ, which ultimately branched out as Gawad Kalinga. And she also joined us when we had 2000 Hail Mary and 800 Our Father devotions, including the First Sunday Devotion to the Eternal Father.

She was a daily mass attendee at our parish, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Church. And everyone knows her because of her fancy hats that matched her outfits. Her bright smile and her vivacious and friendly nature, could earn her the title, "Ambassador of Goodwill."

Vil was one who did not mince her words and could not hide her feelings. She was straightforward and was a bundle of emotions. She had a leadership trait and a flair for artistic presentation. As the saying goes, "what you see is what you get."

She loved to talk and one time, she volunteered to give a cenacle about faith with matchsticks and a candle for illustration. Her showmanship made her talk very interesting, amusing everyone.

We have gone on different trips, one day trips or weekend trips, with Vil, Jess, her husband, with Mila Lumba and Vic Batu. We went to the China Ranch Date Farm in Tecopa, CA. Traveling through the southern part of the Death Valley, we were lost but everyone took it as a funny experience. She also brought us to Lake Las Vegas, where we enjoyed the fresh air, the food and the ambience of this scenic and privately owned 320-acre man-made lake with 10 miles of shoreline. She also joined us when we went to the Sto. Nino Feast day celebration in Sacramento, CA and to the Spiritual Army's Santa Fe Pilgrimage.

We will always remember Vil as a generous person, always thinking of others, always generous with her time, talent and treasure. Because of these, her faults and imperfections, are easily forgiven. Therefore, God has touched our hearts through Vil's charitable heart.

In John 11:25-26, Jesus said: "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die." By this Scriptural verse, Jesus is telling us there is life beyond the earthly realm. Therefore, it is customary for us Catholics to say a prayer for the dead to help them on their journey in the hereafter. Vil, here is our prayer for you:

*"Loving God our Father, Your power brings us to life. Your care guides our lives, and by Your command we return to the dust from which we came. Father, those who pass on still live in Your presence, their lives are changed but do not end. We plead in hope for Vil, and for all the dead known only to You. Amen. (Prayer taken from The Catholic Prayer for the Dead.)* ☐

## SPIRITUAL ENRICHMENT RECOMMENDED

### 10 THINGS TO GIVE UP FOR LENT OTHER THAN CHOCOLATE

[www.aleteia.org](http://www.aleteia.org)

Fasting from food is a tough sacrifice, but it's not the only option for Lent.

It's time to start thinking about Lent, and the inevitable yearly dilemma of what to give up. Chocolate, desserts, and other tasty foods are a classic choice for many people, since it really is challenging to go without them for six weeks. You might even choose to do a more rigorous fast, avoiding all processed foods and practicing intermittent fasting.

But giving up food isn't a great option for many people: Maybe you're pregnant or nursing, or have allergies or health conditions that limit your diet already, or a history with eating disorders, or just don't want to give up chocolate yet again. Whatever the reason, there are plenty of things to "fast" from this Lent that don't involve food.

One crucial thing to keep in mind is that Lent has three pillars: prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. Fasting is just one piece of the puzzle for having a meaningful Lent. While these suggestions focus on fasting, don't forget the other two pillars as well. Attending daily Mass more often, praying the Liturgy of the Hours, spending time in Adoration, praying a regular family Rosary, making a Morning Offering every day—there are countless ways to spend more time in prayer this Lent. Along with giving of your time or money to support worthy charities and people in need, you will be set to observe a sacrificial Lent, so that Easter will bring you the jubilation that Christ intended us to have.

Here are 10 ideas to consider when it comes to fasting this Lent (other than chocolate):

**1. Screen time and digital devices.** Our phones were designed to be highly addictive, and it's tough to break the habit. But that's what makes this such a great sacrifice. Lent is the perfect time to fast from screens, whether you forgo TV before bed, random web surfing during the day, or social media until Easter. You might consider going screen-free one day a week or only using your phone for calling and texting (no endless scrolling of Facebook!).

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## Upcoming Events

### MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

#### 1<sup>ST</sup> FRIDAY DEVOTION

FEBRUARY 5, 2021

IN LOS ANGELES:  
VIA ZOOM @ 9:00 PM

IN LAS VEGAS:  
VIRTUAL

#### 1<sup>ST</sup> SATURDAY DEVOTION INFANT JESUS FEAST DAY VIRTUAL CELEBRATION

FEBRUARY 6, 2021

IN LOS ANGELES:  
VIA ZOOM @ 10:30 AM

IN LAS VEGAS: VIRTUAL

#### 1<sup>ST</sup> SUNDAY DEVOTION

FEBRUARY 7, 2021

IN LOS ANGELES:  
VIA ZOOM @ 10:30 AM

IN LAS VEGAS:

ST. SHARBEL CATHOLIC CHURCH  
10325 RANCHO DESTINO RD  
LAS VEGAS, NV 89183  
MASS AT 9:30 AM FOLLOWED BY  
DEVOTIONAL PRAYERS AT THE CHAPEL

#### 800 OUR FATHER DEVOTION SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 20, 2021

IN LOS ANGELES:  
VIA ZOOM @ 10:30 AM

IN LAS VEGAS:  
VIRTUAL

## **FROM CHRISTMAS TO CANDLEMAS**

**The Feast of the Holy Innocents:** December 28. We all know the story of Herod's heinous massacre of infants in order to attempt to kill Jesus, the new King. Sadly, we are still murdering the innocents today through abortion. Nearly 900,000 abortions take place in the U.S. each year. A great pro-life project for your family is to host a "Baby Shower for Mary" and give items to Heartbeat or another local pro-life pregnancy center. Your gift of baby and parent supplies will be deeply appreciated.

**Feast of the Holy Family:** December 31. It's important that God chose to send His son in a simple family, not as a powerful King who descends to earth on the shoulders of angels. If you don't already do so, use this night as the first of regular family meetings to discuss responsibilities, chores, and other issues. End the meeting with a family recitation of the Rosary.

So, is Christmas over after January 1?

By no means! The Twelve Days of Christmas takes you through January 5, or the Eve of the Feast of the Epiphany. But first, there is January 3, which is the feast of the Holy Name of Jesus.

And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus ... (Colossians 3:17)

... [A]t the name of Jesus, every knee shall bow. (Philippians 2:10)

### **Epiphany Activities**

More importantly, you have time to prepare for Epiphany.

Read about "**Chalking the Door**" of your house with the new year. 20 + C + M + B + 19 (Editor's Note: this 2021 year, it is: 20 + C + M + B + 21) should be written above your door by the youngest child who can write. The initials not only signify the first letters of the three Kings (Caspar, Melchior, Balthazar), but also the Latin words *Christus Mansionem Benedicat*, which means, "Christ blesses this house." If you forgot to do it on the 6th, it's never too late!

**Make a King's Cake.** You might have seen this during Mardi Gras, but it begins with Epiphany to celebrate the arrival of the three Kings. A small figurine of the baby Jesus is baked inside, signifying Mary and Joseph saving Jesus from Herod. The colors, purple, green and gold, also have special significance: Jesus is priest, prophet, and king.

Have the kids look up frankincense and myrrh? Why were these brought by the Kings, along with gold?

Did you know that "magi" is the root word for magician? The three Kings or Magi were considered to be astronomers from the East who studied the stars and understood the mysteries of the sky.

### **From Epiphany to Candlemas**

Throughout the month of January, there are many wonderful feast days until we come to February 2. One of my favorites is also on January 6: the feast of St. André Bessette. As a Holy Cross brother, he was considered too sickly and weak to do much, so he was assigned as the lowly doorkeeper to Notre Dame College in Montreal. Because of his deep love for God and especially St. Joseph, he had a particular gift for listening to those who came through the door, and soon became known for his healing abilities. It was through his efforts that that amazing St. Joseph's Oratory was built in Montreal. Other awesome saints in January are St. Francis de Sales whose feast is celebrated on January 24, and St. Thomas Aquinas, whom we honor on January 28. On February 1, we celebrate the feast of St. Brigid, and this year your kids can make a special Brigid's cross out of old palm branches or reeds.

This leads us to Candlemas on February 2, the 40th day after Christmas, and, in my opinion, the true end of the Christmas season. Candlemas is important for many reasons.

First, it's the halfway point between the winter solstice and the spring equinox. Traditionally, it was the time when the soil could first begin to be turned, and the days began to be longer.

Second, and more importantly, it's the time when Mary, 40 days after giving birth to Jesus, would have gone to the Temple for ritual purification. It's also the day when the presentation of the Lord at the Temple is celebrated, and when Simeon recognizes Him as the light of the world. For this reason (and because people would have started to clean out their homes with longer light during the day), new candles for each home were blessed at the church. It was a day to bring new light into one's home and to clean out the hearth as well to set a new fire.

### **Starting Fresh with New Light**

For us, Candlemas can be a time for buying new candles or cleaning out our hearths. It can also be a time for starting fresh with our prayer life in preparation for Lent by cleaning out the cobwebs of old sins from our hearts and letting His grace in.

Just as the darkness begins to fade, it's time to let the new light in. Celebrate Christmas until February 2, and then prepare to let His young light grow in you. ☐

## **10 THINGS TO GIVE UP FOR LENT**

2. **Complaining.** Life is often hard, frustrating, and stressful. It's tempting to focus only on the negative parts of each day, and approach every little setback with woe and self-pity. But endless complaining most likely makes you feel bummed out, and it's not fun for your friends and family to listen to either. This Lent, see if you can hold back your complaints and find something to be grateful for instead.

3. **Hot showers.** This is a simple sacrifice, but a really tough one, especially in February and March. But it's a powerful little way to practice asceticism and self-denial in daily life.

4. **Shopping.** It feels like so much fun to buy new things, so a great Lenten sacrifice would be giving up spending money on anything but the essentials. Once you've paid for rent, groceries, gas or train fare, and other non-negotiables, don't buy anything else for the rest of Lent. Perhaps you can even take the money you've saved and give it as alms.

5. **Snacking between meals.** This can be such a tough habit to break, especially when snacks are a comfort food, as they are for so many people. But it's a great way to enter into the Lenten spirit of fasting.

6. **Listening to music and the radio.** In today's world, most of us are uncomfortable with silence. It's easy to fill every minute of the day with podcasts and playlists. But how can we make room to hear the "still, small voice" of God deep in our hearts when we're always listening to something? This Lent, consider giving up listening to your favorite music and radio shows, and spend that time in prayer instead.

7. **Lazy shortcuts.** Pick something for which you often take the "easy way out" and give it up for Lent. This could include making your bed every morning, getting up right away when your alarm goes off in the morning, parking far away from the door, or doing the dishes right after dinner every night. Eliminate some little "shortcut" you take and offer it up this Lent.

8. **Eating out.** Few things can beat the convenience of grabbing a bite to eat, and giving this up for Lent requires plenty of planning ahead and cooking at home. So it's a great way to grow in patience (and save some money, too!).

9. **Art.** Many churches follow the old tradition of veiling religious images and statues with purple cloth during the latter part of Lent, and you might want to follow the same practice at home. Giving up these lovely images reminds us how barren the world is without the beauty and light of Christ.

10. **Elevators.** Taking only the stairs for all of Lent is not only physically harder but also takes up more time, so it's a good sacrifice to offer up. Just don't pick to give this one up if you live or work on the 45th floor!