



## Thoughtful Moments

### Throat blessing

On February 3rd, many parishes all over the country will celebrate the feast of St. Blaise. St. Blaise was reportedly a physician who healed many ailments of the throat. He was martyred for refusing to renounce his Catholic faith and serves as an example for us of kindness and extraordinary courage.

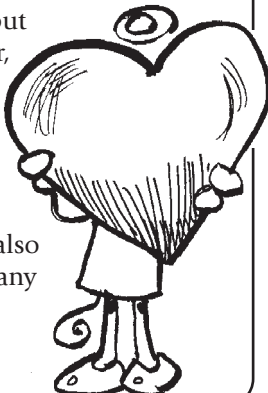


### Gratitude aloud

The more grateful we are for what we have, the more likely we are to value and use it. Let your children hear you thank God for your gifts. Encourage them to do the same.

### Symbols in the Mass

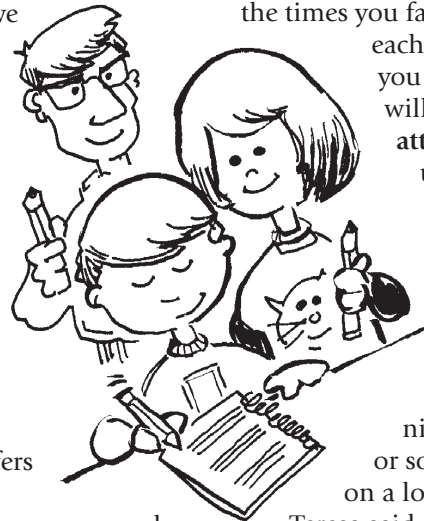
Ever notice how many symbols are used in the Mass? For example, kneeling, shaking hands, the blessing of the water and wine, the elevation of the host. Each is an action in itself but also has another, deeper meaning. They not only help us to reenact Jesus' last supper but also represent the many ways God is present in our lives.



## Teach children to balance Lent

Teaching children to give something up during Lent builds a valuable, lifelong penitential habit. But we can become so focused on this Lenten sacrifice that we neglect the other two pillars of Lent: prayer and almsgiving. All three are necessary to experience the blessings of a fruitful Lent. Try these ideas to teach the other two:

**Prayer:** Demonstrating different methods of prayer during Lent offers children options for putting together their own personal prayer routines. For example, try a **gratitude journal**. At dinnertime or bedtime, take turns writing a line or two in a notebook that talks about



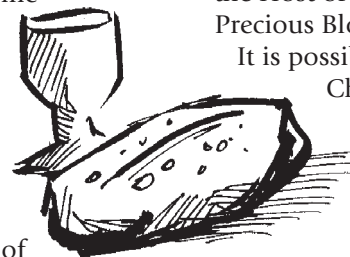
how God blessed each of you that day. Or, demonstrate **P-R-A-Y time**. At least once a day, gather together and Praise God for his goodness, Repent of the times you failed to love him or each other, Ask for what you need, Yield to God's will. Of course, commit to **attending Mass** – the ultimate prayer – on the weekends as a family.

**Almsgiving:** God wants us to share our gifts, not hoard them. As a family, can you spare a night to work at a shelter or soup kitchen? Look in on a lonely neighbor? Mother Teresa said, "never worry about numbers. Help one person at a time and always start with the person nearest you." Why not start the habit during Lent?

## Why Do Catholics Do That?

### Do Catholics believe Christ is in the Precious Blood or the Host?

Once the bread and wine has been consecrated during Mass, Jesus Christ is wholly present under the appearance either of bread or of wine in the Eucharist. In fact, Christ is wholly present in any fragment of



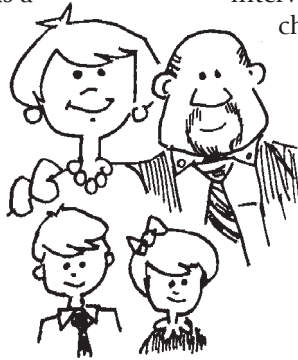
the Host or in any drop of the Precious Blood.

It is possible to receive the whole Christ in just one form or the other. However, it is most fitting to receive Christ in both forms during the celebration of the Eucharist.

## Give your family the gift of "Little Easter"

Every Sunday is a "Little Easter," with Mass as a celebration of Christ's victory over death and sin. For that reason, Sunday Mass is an obligation for all Catholics. Many Catholic families find that developing Sunday habits bring them closer together and closer to God. Try these ideas:

**Family forgiveness:** On Friday or Saturday night, gather together and ask each other for forgiveness for offenses committed against one another. Then go to Confession as a family weekly, monthly, or at some other



interval, as often as you can. (Parents may need to help children with their examinations of conscience.)

**Mass preparations:** Before leaving for Church, go over the readings you will hear at Mass so you can answer questions ahead of time. Or, some families find that driving to Mass in silence leaves time for prayer and reflection.

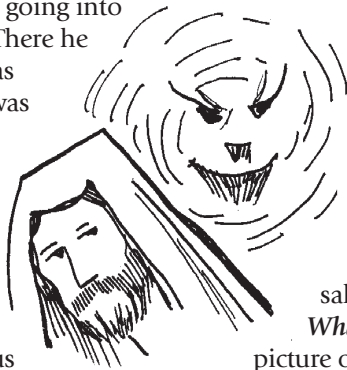
**Mass intentions:** Ask each person to pick someone for whom the family can pray at Mass. Write each name on a list and offer a family prayer for these intentions after Communion.

### Scripture LESSON

### Mark 1:12-15, The Path to Easter

This Gospel describes Jesus' actions after his baptism by John. He prepared for his public ministry by going into the desert for forty days. There he was tempted by Satan, was among wild beasts, and was ministered to by angels.

We can use the lessons of this Gospel to help us prepare not only for Easter, but for the rest of our lives. Temptations surround us. Satan is constantly trying to tear us away from God. The wild beasts represent every kind of danger and evil. But the angels provide God's protection



for us. We can rely on them to help us if we ask for God's help.

We can use Lent to fulfill Jesus' proclamation, "Repent, and believe in the gospel." For our part we can take a realistic look at ourselves. We can do penance and accept the Gospel, that God's salvation is available to us.

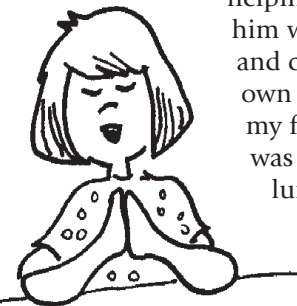
**What can a parent do?** The picture of Satan tempting us can be frightening to children. Reassure youngsters that God sends his angels to watch over and protect us.

### Parent TALK

I had stopped praying. My father had a heart attack last summer and I was

helping Mom care for him while working and caring for my own family. Then my father-in-law was diagnosed with lung cancer and needed care.

Finally, Ken lost his job for the



second time in three years and we had used up our savings the first time. Obviously God wasn't listening. A few nights later I overheard our ten-year old saying her prayers asking God for help. She ended with, "Thanks for listening. Amen." Then she went to sleep. Standing outside her room, I realized Teresa didn't tell God what to do. She asked for help, trusted that it would come, and left it to God. I prayed for the first time in weeks and ended with, "Thanks for listening. Amen." I realized God is always listening. I was the one who had stopped talking.

### Feasts & Celebrations

**February 11 – Our Lady of Lourdes (1858).** A heavenly lady appeared to St. Bernadette Soubirous, a poor and sickly girl from a small village in France. Soon after the first vision, a spring with miraculous healing waters emerged from a nearby cave. The lady revealed herself as the "Immaculate Conception" – the Blessed Virgin Mary. Pilgrims still flock to Lourdes today.

**February 14 – St. Cyril (869).** Along with his brother Methodius, St. Cyril was a missionary, teacher, and patron of the Slavic people. He invented an alphabet still used in some Eastern liturgies, and preached the Gospel in a

more easily understood manner.

**February 22 – Ash Wednesday.** The first day of the Season of Lent. Ashes from the burnt palms of the previous Passion Sunday are blessed and placed on the forehead as a sign of penance.

**February 22 – St. Peter's Chair.** Marking St. Peter's establishment of the Holy See, on this festival we thank God for his Church and pray for its holy preservation.



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