

Theologika Digest

Living with God in Everyday Life

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Light for the World



The Light of Christ Shining Through the Nations

Catholics & Cultures is a new program developed by the Rev. Michael C. McFarland, S.J. Center for Religion, Ethics and Culture of the College of the Holy Cross. Its goal is to encourage comparative study of Catholic life as it is being lived around the world today.

In addition to comparative studies of Catholic culture, this site aims to provide resources for teaching about the richness and cultural uniqueness of Catholic life in our world. How do ordinary Catholics live their faith through their daily lives? How is a Catholic life different in Ireland, or Indonesia, or Brazil, or China, or India? What local customs, foods, and activities are enjoyed by Catholics in cultures around the world?

We often think that Catholicism as we experience it in our own community is the way it is everywhere and from all times. Any Catholic who has married another Catholic from a different cultural community, however, will have noticed that sometimes it (*See Culture, p 2*)



Sant'Egidio Communities

The Community of Sant'Egidio is an international movement counting over 60,000 individuals on five continents who gather for common prayer and offer

friendship and support for and with the poor in the cities where they live. The movement began in Rome in 1968 at the Church of Sant'Egidio and has expanded from there. No one is considered too poor or marginalized to be a member of the community. All join together in work and prayer to bring the light of hope into the world.

Daily prayer is at the heart of life in a Community of Sant'Egidio. Gathering together in the evening, the Word is proclaimed and members of the community place the cares and concerns of the people of their local, regional, national, and international communities before the Lord. Each day's prayer also includes a theme, beginning with the celebration of the Resurrection on Sunday and continuing through the week.

Icons are used in all communities, as a reminder of the unity of Eastern and Western churches and leading all more deeply into the mysteries of God's presence and activity today. (*See Sant'Egidio, p. 3*)

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Mensaje del Santo Padre Francisco para la Cuaresma

El Santo Padre Francisco, en su mensaje para la Cuaresma en 2015 dice que la Cuaresma es un tiempo de renovación, un «tiempo de gracia». Nos recuerda que Dios nos amó primero y nunca se pone indiferente frente a lo que nos está pasando. Sin embargo, nuestro corazón se cae en la indiferencia fácilmente, especialmente cuando lo que pasa en el mundo no nos afecta directamente.

Describiendo el problema de la globalización de la indiferencia, el Santo Padre nos llama a una renovación interior para que no nos cayéremos en la indiferencia ni nos cerráremos adentro de nosotros mismos. Nos invita a meditar acerca de tres pasajes bíblicos:

1. «*Si un miembro sufre, todos sufren con él*» (1 Co 12,26) – La Iglesia
2. «*¿Dónde está tu hermano?*» (Gn 4,9) – Las parroquias y las comunidades
3. «*Fortalezcan sus corazones*» (St 5,8) – La persona creyente

(Visítenos en *Theologika Digest* para el texto entero.)



ASK THEOLOGIKA

NOT SO COMMON KNOWLEDGE

Dear Theologika,

How long is Lent? I've heard that it's 40 days, but when I counted the days on a Lenten activities calendar there were 46. What's that all about?

Numbers Matter

Dear Numbers,

The season of Lent is 40 days. However, the number of calendar days from start (Ash Wednesday) to finish (Holy Saturday) is not 40 days. Sundays, the day on which we celebrate the Resurrection, do not count as days of Lent. Because it takes just over 6 weeks to get 40 days if we don't include Sundays, the six Sundays during Lent make up those extra 6 days you found.

Since we make such a big deal about getting 40 days for our spiritual preparation for Easter, it's reasonable to wonder what difference it would make if we had only 39 days. Why is 40 the important number?

After his baptism, Jesus went out into the desert for 40 days and

nights. While he was there he fasted, so he was hungry by the end of those days. He met Satan, the deceiver/tempter, who tried to convince him to take things into his own hands, working miracles for his own benefit. Jesus, despite his hunger, turned the tempter away. Matthew and Mark tell us that angels came to comfort Jesus following this time of temptation.

Long before Jesus went into the desert, a man named Noah heard God's voice calling with instructions to build a great boat, an ark, and fill it with all kinds of living creatures. Noah did as he was told and all was ready when the rain started. It lasted for forty days and nights, covering the world with a great flood.

When at last the waters went down, God placed his bow in the sky as a sign of his promise never again to destroy Earth and its creatures by water.

Centuries later, Moses led God's people out of slavery in Egypt. They traveled through the desert, heading towards the promised land. But it turned out to be a forty year journey because the people complained and broke the Law and Moses hit the rock at Meribah twice when God said to strike it once to get water.

With Jesus we go into a desert ourselves for 40 days. We deny ourselves some pleasures and comforts. We choose to do good things we might not otherwise do. We hope to become more loving, more compassionate, more open to see God's hand in all of creation, more ready to serve God's most vulnerable ones. We won't yet be perfect, but we will grow in love.

Blessings be yours,



Pope Francis' Lenten Message – 2015

Pope Francis, in his 2015 Lenten message, reminds us that Lent is a time of renewal, a "time of grace." He reminds us that God loved us first and is never indifferent to what happens to us. However, we too easily become indifferent to what is happening in the world when we are not directly affected.

Speaking of the "globalization of indifference," the Holy Father calls us to an interior renewal that keeps us from becoming indifferent or withdrawn into ourselves. He asks us to reflect on three biblical texts:

1. "If one member suffers, all suffer together" (1Cor 12:26) — The Church
2. "Where is your brother?" (Gen 4:9) — Parishes and Communities
3. "Make your hearts firm!" (James 5:8) — Individual Christians

A link to the entire text is available at <http://Digest.Theologika.net>

(Culture, Cont. from p. 1) seems as if the two are divided rather than united by the bonds of a common religion. As in marriage, learning to enjoy the differences and enter into the experience of the divine from another direction or perspective helps a world-wide community of faith grow. Check out this new site!

Theologika Digest is published monthly on-line at <http://digest.theologika.net> and in a downloadable print edition.

Theologika.net offers a library of authoritative resources, a blog collection of reflections on religious experience, and Theologika Digest, a collection of articles and reviews of materials from across the Christian world.

Theologika.net is not an official Catholic publication. Nevertheless, the content and views we present are meant to be compatible with official Church teaching.

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A Good Homily Sheds Light



One of the biggest changes that Vatican II made in the liturgy was replacing the sermon with the homily. Often

the words are used interchangeably, but they refer to different activities.

A **sermon** in the Tridentine or Pre-Vatican II liturgy was a time for teaching and announcements. It was a presentation of some element of faith that may have tied in with the theme of the Sunday.

The **homily** is a more conversational approach to this pivotal part of the Mass, bridging the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist. Our response to the scripture and the homily should fill us with praise and thanksgiving for what God is doing in our lives. This leads us to enter into the mystery of praise and thanksgiving that is the Eucharist.

Over the last 30 years there has been more emphasis on preaching. Most recently, Pope Francis has focused on the importance of the homily in his apostolic exhortation **The Joy of the Gospel**. The Pope has made it clear that good preaching is critically important to the life of the

the church. He writes, “the homily cannot be a form of entertainment like those presented by the media, yet it does need to give life and meaning to the celebration. It is a distinctive genre, since it is preaching situated within the framework of a liturgical celebration” (n. 138).

The homilist listens to the needs and concerns of the assembly and discerns God’s message, a role similar to that of the prophets and the Ultimate Prophet, Christ. A detail about the homilist’s life may be shared if it is relevant to the message, but the homily is not about the homilist. Preparing a homily takes many hours, not just a quick glance at the text. Good preaching comes out of a broader lifestyle of prayer, reflection, and reading the signs of the times.

As Cardinal Agostino Vallini, vicar of Rome, explains it, “We want our words to set people’s hearts on fire” and the faithful “to be enlightened and encouraged to live a new life and never be forced to suffer through our homilies.”

Shed light and set hearts on fire — the two-fold challenge of good preaching!

(Sant’Egidio – Cont. from p. 1)

A statement from the community’s website clearly expresses the place of prayer: “Nothing is possible without prayer, all is possible with prayer and faith. ... Prayer overcomes the helplessness of men. It goes beyond what is believed impossible and allows God to intervene in this world with his infinite power.”

Pope Francis supports Sant’Egidio: “I wish that you revive faith in the Lord and witness, with renewed enthusiasm, the Gospel tension towards the peripheries and towards the last.”

From the Celebration of Light Into Lent

Lent always seems to come too fast. It sometimes feels like maybe we should just postpone it for a few more weeks. But then I think a bit more and decide that maybe 2000 years of tradition have something important to tell me/us today.

February begins with the celebration of Candlemas on February 2, a day marking the time the prophet Simeon recognized Jesus as the Promised One and foretold that he would be a light to all the nations.

In the weeks leading up to Lent we listen to the Gospel accounts of the ministry of Jesus and see him discovering the special relationship he has with God as Father and the mission for which he has been sent.

Jesus had three public years of ministry in which to grow into the man who would stand before the religious and political leaders of his country and testify to the truth of who he was/is. During that time he preached and healed many of those who were brought to him. He also retreated regularly into the hills or off onto the Sea of Galilee to pray. That time away with his Father was what made it possible for him ultimately to face and accept his death and the apparent failure of his mission.

We are called to live in the light of the Resurrection, but we are also called to live as Jesus did, caring for the most vulnerable among us. It is through prayer, fasting, and other activities of Lent that we grow in strength to follow the Lord. When Easter arrives, we rejoice with the newly baptized as we once again rise with the Lord in our daily lives.

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#Muslims4Lent - Image excerpt from independent.co.uk

Light

By Dr. Susan Mahan



Light is fascinating and beautiful to us. It is a physical and energetic reality so important to humans

Scriptural images of light are varied. We hear that God's presence, enlightenment and strength shine in our darkness and call us out of darkness. Jesus himself tells us not to hide our light but to be the light of the world.

God is our light. Our lives can be in darkness when we let ourselves be in agitation from bad habits or denial and/or give in to negative thoughts or fear. However, if we practice openness to seeing and hearing God speaking in our hearts, we can see and hear a desire in us to be illuminated and strengthened. We feel the fog lift and begin to live in light. It is our choice to say yes to this unearned gift. Just say "Yes!"

that we can become very ill if we lack it for a long time. We feel safe in light.

Our need for light causes it to take on symbolic meanings for us. We speak of light as mental illumination or insight. The word itself can mean to understand. It can also be used to describe being guided, as St. John of the Cross describes his own journey in spiritual darkness, guided only by "the light burning in my heart."

Biblical 40s and More

A	B	O	W	S	D	F	G	E	N	O	A	H	W	Q
R	J	I	O	R	D	A	Y	S	E	H	J	L	K	A
A	C	Z	X	M	Y	B	N	L	H	O	G	D	F	R
I	D	E	S	E	R	T	V	C	X	L	E	F	L	K
N	P	I	Y	O	R	T	Z	U	N	Y	M	M	D	E
E	R	M	E	R	I	B	A	H	Z	S	O	H	F	G
K	F	V	C	X	Z	E	W	T	Y	A	S	Q	U	L
J	A	E	Y	E	A	R	S	M	T	T	E	D	A	E
A	S	P	O	I	U	T	U	E	T	U	S	R	N	N
N	T	M	E	E	A	S	T	E	R	R	E	D	G	T
R	L	I	U	Y	R	T	Y	N	V	D	W	S	E	E
T	F	O	R	T	Y	L	K	O	I	A	C	V	L	D
E	J	K	H	K	D	T	W	V	N	Y	K	B	S	C
W	Z	A	S	H	W	E	D	N	E	S	D	A	Y	V

There are forty days of prayer during this season: _____

Jesus rose on _____

Jesus went into the _____ to pray and _____ for _____ days. Mark says _____ comforted Jesus.

The first day of Lent is _____ and the last is _____
_____ took animals on his _____ when the _____ fell for forty _____ and nights. Then God put a _____ in the sky.

_____ hit the rock twice at _____.

The Israelites spent forty _____ in the desert.

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#Muslims4Lent – Interfaith Solidarity



In a movement begun by Bassel Riche, Muslims around the world are joining

Christians in celebrating Lent by giving up something they would otherwise enjoy. Riche's inspiration for this campaign came from the experience of having non-Muslim students join with Muslims in fasting for Ramadan at The University of Houston.

Riche notes that prayer and fasting have been shared activities by Christian and Muslim communities in the past. This new campaign, with its #Muslims4Lent tweets, has been picked up and shared by Muslims in countries around the world.



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Praying with Pope Francis

General Intention: That prisoners, especially the young, may be able to rebuild lives of dignity.

Evangelization: That married people who are separated may find welcome and support in the Christian community.

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