



## Infant of Jesus Prague Religious Education

Patricia Kahl, Director Jeannie DiLuia, Assistant

### Teach children to be cheerful penitents

Invite children to go for a swim or a bike ride, and you'll hear squeals of delight. Ask them to accompany you to Confession and you may hear groans instead. In fact, the Sacrament of Reconciliation is more refreshing than a swim and more strengthening than a bike ride. It is our gift from Jesus to help us experience his grace and make things right with God. Try these tips to brighten the family trip to the confessional:

**Establish the background.** Explain that Jesus created this Sacrament (Matthew 16:19) not to blame us or "catch" us breaking the rules, but because he loves us and knew we needed help to stay holy.

**Work out the jitters.** It's normal to be

anxious about admitting wrong and taking responsibility for our actions. Rehearse ahead of time so that it will feel familiar when your child is faced with the real thing. Remind her that she can ask the priest for help.

**Build the expectation.** Regular Confession will strengthen the entire family.

Pick a set day and time – once a month, for example – so that no one is surprised

when it comes around. Mark it on the calendar and schedule around it.

**Celebrate.** Then go for a swim or a bike ride to celebrate the entire family coming back into friendship with God.



### Thoughtful Moments

#### St. Dominic Savio

Born to a peasant family in Riva, Italy, St. Dominic became a student at St. John Bosco's Oratory. Even from a young age, he was roundly recognized for his holiness.

Dominic also had mystical experiences in prayer that he called his "distractions." He made a resolution to receive Confession and Communion as often as possible and encouraged his peers to do so. He died from a lung infection when he was about 15.



#### Share the load

Jesus said, "Take my yoke upon you" (Matthew 11:29). In Jesus' day, a farmer used a yoke to link two farm animals together to plow a field more effectively. Likewise, when we are wearied by family burdens, we can "link up" with Jesus. He promises to be with us always. If we stay connected to him, he will bring us through any trial.

"Shame not a repentant sinner; remember, we all are guilty" (Sirach 8:5).



### Why Do Catholics Do That?

#### Why do Catholics fast before Communion?

In the Bible, people fasted before coming into God's presence or doing a special job for him. In addition, the Church recognizes that prayer involves the spirit and the body. By fasting, we prepare our bodies to enter God's presence in



the Mass, as well as preparing our souls.

In fasting, we experience a physical hunger, which expresses our spiritual hunger for God. Finally, fasting shows respect for Jesus in the Eucharist; it's a concrete way to give him top priority.

## Help children unwrap the gift of Lent

The Catholic practice of giving something up for Lent – abstaining from a favorite food or activity – develops self-control, serves as penance for sin, and can lead to a greater appreciation of our blessings. Even young children can benefit from a Lenten sacrifice but choosing one that's too hard can turn Lent into a chore. Try these ideas to help choose a rewarding sacrifice:

**Give up something valuable.** This can be a favorite dessert, game, toy or activity.  
**Make it reasonable.** The sacrifice should be

something specific and age appropriate so that she will be able to see it through.

**Add back.** An alternative to giving something up is to add instead: more prayer, an extra chore, a daily devotion such as the Rosary.

**Give up luxuries.** Consider encouraging your youngster to pick something that may not be good for him anyway. For example, sweets, soft drinks, or television watching during the week, make healthy choices for Lenten abstinence. He may even decide to do without it when Lent is over.



### Scripture LESSON

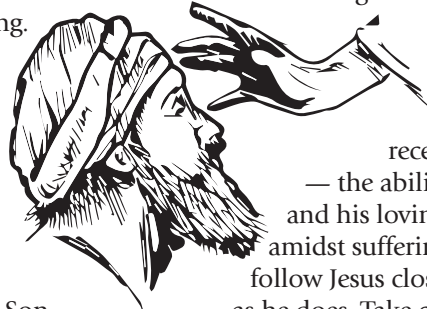
#### John 9:1-41, See as Jesus sees

In Jesus' day, it was believed that suffering was a punishment for sin. So, when Jesus encountered a blind beggar, his disciples asked for whose sins the man was suffering. Jesus explained the man's suffering was not for punishment but for God's purpose. His subsequent cure was twofold: Jesus gave the man physical sight which enabled him to believe in Jesus as God's Son.

The faith of the blind man attracted others to Christ. Some of the Pharisees were convinced that Jesus was from God. Others condemned him as a

sinner for curing the man on the Sabbath. These Pharisees were so focused on following the Law, they lost sight of God and his priorities.

*What can a parent do?* In baptism, we receive the gift of faith — the ability to "see" God and his loving plan, even amidst suffering. When we follow Jesus closely, we learn to see as he does. Take children to Mass at least weekly and Confession at least monthly and make prayer part of daily life. That will help to sharpen children's spiritual "vision."



### Feasts & Celebrations

**March 15 – Pope St. Zachary (752).** Born in Calabria, Italy, St. Zachary was pope at a time of civil unrest in Italy. A skilled diplomat, he successfully negotiated peace for Italy on several occasions. He was integral to St. Boniface's German mission and was also a generous patron of restoring churches. He is also known for freeing slaves sold by Venetian merchants.

**March 17 – St. Patrick of Ireland (461).** Born in Scotland, St. Patrick was the son of a Roman citizen, Calpornius. He was kidnapped by pirates at the age of sixteen and brought to Ireland as a

slave. He escaped but later returned to become the bishop of Ireland and is credited for having established the Church there.

**March 25 – The Annunciation of the Lord (1st century).** The angel Gabriel visited the Blessed Virgin Mary with the extraordinary news of her role as the mother of God. Even at her young age, she had complete confidence in God's grace and trusted in his wisdom.



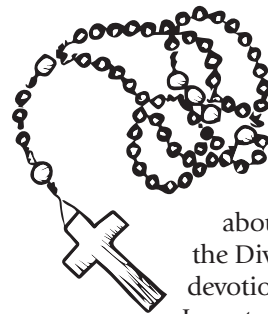
### Parent TALK

This year I wanted to shake up our practice of Lent. Normally, we made our usual sacrifices of candy, TV, and video games, and those are all good sacrifices to offer, but I wanted to find a way to make more time for prayer. The

problem is that with young children, it's hard to get through an entire Rosary. Then I learned about the Chaplet of the Divine Mercy. This devotion was revealed by Jesus to St. Faustina, a

simple Polish nun. The Chaplet is prayed on regular rosary beads and takes less time to pray than a Rosary. Even my young children enjoy saying the short, easy-to-remember prayers.

We say the Chaplet together at bedtime. What a great reminder of Jesus' great sacrifice and God's unending mercy! It has become one of our favorite bedtime rituals. Most importantly, it helps us to place our focus on Jesus during Lent.



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