



Pastor's Pen



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Associate Pastor

OASIS IN THE LENTEN DESERT

This week, we'll pass the halfway mark of our Lenten journey through the penitential desert of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. As we make our way through the desert, the Lord gives us a little oasis, so that we don't grow weary. I'm not talking about the college basketball tournament, though it certainly brings a lot of joy and excitement to Fr. Wilson and me! The oasis comes by way of two solemnities, or high holy days, that break up the humdrum of our penitential practices – the Solemnity of St. Joseph (last week – March 19) and the Solemnity of the Annunciation (this week – March 25).

These feasts of the Church are almost always celebrated during the season of Lent, and they are a welcome change of pace. Just when I think I may not have the strength and willpower to keep my Lenten promises, I crash into this oasis, which offers a glimpse of Easter glory. On a solemnity, the Mass is offered with greater celebration, including the reemergence of the Gloria; we are also permitted to relax our Lenten sacrifices and fasts in the spirit of celebrating the deep mysteries that the day signifies. In these particular solemnities of St. Joseph and the Annunciation of Jesus' birth by the angel Gabriel to Mary, we are welcomed by the parents of Jesus into the home of the Holy Family in Nazareth. There, we can take comfort and rest in the love that they share and extend to us. The Annunciation is celebrated exactly nine months before Christmas, to mark the privileged time in which our Lord grew in the womb of the Virgin Mary.

As you prepare to celebrate the solemnity of the Annunciation with your family on Monday, here are my top recommendations to help you squeeze all that you can out of the feast!

- 1) Even though it's not a holy day of obligation, try to attend Mass – we have our normal 7:30 am Mass, but other parishes in the Twin Cities have evening Masses on Monday. During the recitation of the creed, we genuflect at the words “and by the Holy Spirit, was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man,” in order to remember the Incarnation of God, which is commemorated in the day's feast.
- 2) Pray the 1st Joyful Mystery of the rosary, the Annunciation, with your family, and read the story from Luke 1:26-38.
- 3) Fix a celebratory meal at home or go out to a restaurant with your family. As I stated above, things that you gave up for Lent can be enjoyed in moderation during the celebration; dessert is **HIGHLY** encouraged. Maybe you could invite a guest or another family to join the celebration!
- 4) The feast day is about the Holy Family and the Word becoming flesh in the womb of the Virgin Mary, so spend time with your family by playing a game or enjoying some other activity together. Place all of your cellphones in a basket on top of the refrigerator, so that you can enjoy one another without other distractions.

Remember that Lent is a marathon, not a sprint, but even marathons have water stations and pit stops to help the runners finish strong. Having been replenished by the Lord in Monday's oasis, may the Lord continue to sustain you in your bodily and spiritual preparations for the solemn celebration of Jesus' resurrection at Easter!