

CATHOLIC CALENDAR.

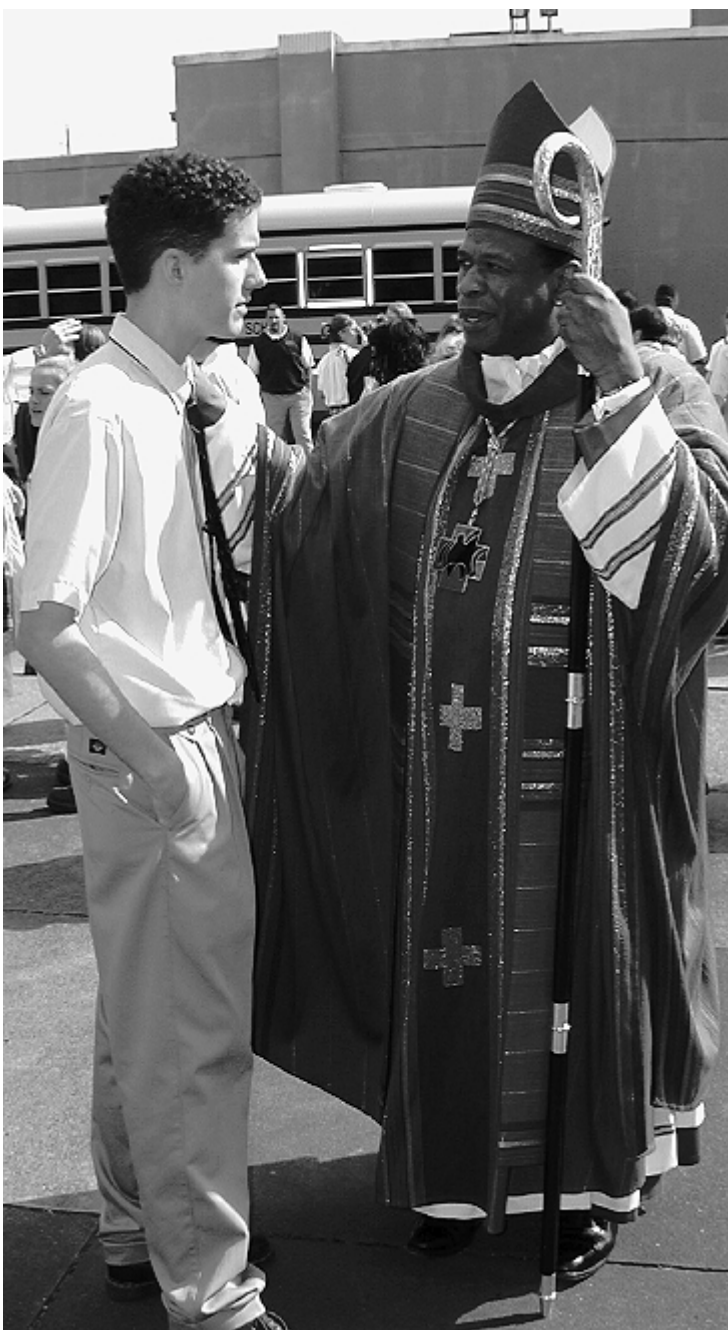
A page devoted to local Catholic interests

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The Most Reverend Edward K. Braxton, Bishop of Lake Charles, talks to St. Louis Catholic High School senior John H. Veron following the Catholic School Week Mass celebrated on Jan. 30 in the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception.

Catholic Women's Conference slated Saturday, March 2

LAKE CHARLES - The second Catholic Women's Conference, "Women's Saying Yes to God Through the Word", will be held on Saturday, March 2 from 8 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. at St. Louis Catholic High School.

During the Jubilee, Pope John Paul II requested that a day be set aside to honor women for their role and their contribution to the Church and to society. Then Bishop Jude Speyrer's response was to establish a conference for Catholic women in the Diocese of Lake Charles to be held every two years. Over 500 women attended the first conference in 2000.

Dorothy Hulburt, keynote speaker, currently serves as Director of Adult and Family Ministries at St. Therese Parish in San Diego, CA. "Echoes of the Past With a Song for the Future" is the theme with which this inspiring, motivational speaker operates.

She has worked for over 20 years in pastoral, catechetical and liturgical ministries. In addition, she is a frequent presenter at parish, diocesan and national levels. A convert in her early teens, she brings to her ministry the gift and ability to share her journey and love of the Lord in very human terms. Mrs. Hulburt has co-authored a guide to parish evangelization, and another book is in the works.

Sixteen one-hour workshops will be offered in addition to two keynote presentations. Women may select one morning and one afternoon workshop from a variety of subjects from the perspective of "Through the Word."

Workshops and presenters will be as follows: Morning Workshops - "Peculiar Treasures", Dorothy Hulburt; "Bible Basics 101", Juanita

Poland; "Finding Strength, Courage and Guidance Through the Word", Pat Fox; "Wholeness Through the Word", Lynn Fuselier.

Also, "Strong Women of the Word", Sharon Gaspard; "A Survivor Finds Hope Through the Word", Kathy Shuff; "Who You Are Is How You Pray", Sr. Catherine Leroux, and "Raising Children With the Word", Carol Giles.

Afternoon Workshops - "Abiding in Grace", Dorothy Hulburt; "Proclaiming the Word With Power Through Word and Action", Barbara Richard; "Trusting God in Difficult Times Through the Word", Lucy Goodly; "Dealing With Anxieties & Worries", Sr. Diane Depwe; "Coping and Living in a Dysfunctional Family, Dr. Brenda Roberts; "Eucharist", Denise Donahoe; "12-Steps Program With the Bible", Doris Bellard and "Story Telling: Women of the Old Testament", Rita Levings.

Bishop Edward K. Braxton will celebrate Mass at 4:30 p.m. to conclude the day. Priests will be available during the day for confessions.

An on-site bookstore and *Crossroads on the Road* will offer a wide variety of religious articles and books for purchase during lunch and breaks.

Registration fee is \$35, through Feb. 22, and includes lunch. After Feb. 22, registration is \$50 and lunch cannot be guaranteed.

Women who do not receive a registration form in the mail should contact their church parish. Forms are also available at Angels Awards, Crossroads Bookstore, The Center for Jesus and The Bishop Harold Perry Building of the Diocese of Lake Charles.

Rite of Election will be Feb. 17

LAKE CHARLES - The Rite of Election will be celebrated the First Sunday of Lent, Feb. 17 at 2 p.m. at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, according to the Most Rev. Edward K. Braxton, Bishop of Lake Charles.

Participants throughout the diocese have been in a period of Catechumenate, as a

Catechumen or Candidate, and "have undergone a conversion of mind and action."

The celebration of the Rite of Election is the beginning of the final period of intense preparation for the Sacraments of Initiation and the Rite of Reception into the Catholic Church to be celebrated at the Easter Vigil.

Up to Jerusalem: A Pastoral Letter for Lent

Dear People of God, Are you ready to go up to Jerusalem? Are you ready to go up to Jerusalem with Jesus of Nazareth and participate actively in the commemoration of His final meal with the apostles, His crucifixion, death and resurrection? Are you ready for Lent? In our secular culture it is easy to be more enthusiastic about the lively celebration of Mardi Gras than the sober prayerful celebration of Lent.

Lake Charles, like the rest of Louisiana has a grand tradition of celebrating Mardi Gras with parades, parties, decorations and festive meals. Perhaps the only place in the world which surpasses Louisiana in the exuberant celebration of Mardi Gras is the mind-boggling spectacle of carnival in Brazil, especially in Rio de Janeiro. When my appointment as second bishop of Lake Charles was announced by the Vatican on December 12, 2000, the first decision that I had to make was the selection of a date for the solemn ceremonies of installation. My first choice was Monday February 26th. This allowed enough time for planning and it would not conflict with February 22nd, the feast of the Chair of Peter and a date on which Pope John Paul II was probably going to create new members of the College of Cardinals. I wanted to be free to go to the consistory in Rome and I wanted my brother bishops who were cardinals to be able to be with us in Lake Charles for my installation, which would be impossible if it conflicted with the consistory.

However, the committee that was assisting me in planning the installation made one thing perfectly clear. The installation COULD NOT be on Monday February 26th because the next day was Mardi Gras! All of the hotels were already booked, all possible venues for installation receptions were taken and most of the people would be involved in Mardi Gras festivities. It became clear that if the installation were held the day before Mardi Gras, no one would be there but me and the cardinals. So it was held on February 22nd, the day of the consistory and everyone was there except the cardinals!

Many years ago, I witnessed the celebration of Mardi Gras in New Orleans and I have long been aware of the rich Louisiana cultural traditions associated with Mardi Gras. Now that I am serving as a bishop in this part of the country, I am sure that I will learn much more about that culture and experience its vibrant energy first hand. Of course as a priest and as a bishop with pastoral responsibility for the Catholic faith community in southwest Louisiana, my primary concern is not about Mardi Gras but about Ash Wednesday, Lent, Holy Week and our genuinely spiritual preparation for the celebration of the Christian mysteries by which we are reborn.

This year Mardi Gras, Ash Wednesday and Lent are early. Ash Wednesday is February 13th, only a few days away. Catholics fill churches around the world on Ash Wednesday to receive the ashes made from the burnt palms of the previous Palm Sunday and to hear the sobering words, "Remember man that you are dust and unto dust you shall return!" They return in throngs for the beautiful celebration of Easter Sunday.

Many Catholics of a certain age remember when Lent was focused on "giving up" something during these forty days. People often spoke about giving up chocolate candy, cake, alcohol, cigarettes, television, movies and other recreations. It sometimes seemed that people were "giving up" things that they secretly thought they were enjoying to excess. To this

was added the uniquely Catholic practice of abstaining from meat on Fridays. Since Sundays did not "count", you could go back to sweets and everything else on the weekend. After the historic Second Vatican Council presided over by Pope John XXIII and Pope Paul VI from 1962 to 1964, the Church did not abandon the custom of "giving up" something for Lent. However, the Church radically refocused our attention on the penitential, liturgical, spiritual and communal meaning of Lent. The Church particularly reminded us that during Lent we are called to pray for and journey with those members of our family, parish, diocese and the whole Church who are preparing for Baptism, Eucharist, and Confirmation at the Easter Vigil on Holy Saturday.

Mardi Gras ("Fat Tuesday") takes its name from the practice of medieval monks who "fattened" themselves up the night before Ash Wednesday with a filling meal before they entered upon the rigorous Lenten season of only one meal a day and these meals often consisted of only bread, cheese and eggs and sometimes only bread and water. The monks embraced this regimen for a variety of reasons. They wanted to mortify their bodies as an act of sorrow for the sins they had committed and to associate the pain of their hunger with the pain of Jesus Christ on the cross who died for sinners. They also wanted to experience physical hunger in order to induce spiritual hunger for the spiritual nourishment of the Body and Blood of Christ in the mystery of the Eucharist.

The monks believed that by being very disciplined in what they ate they would be able to focus better on the meaning of the scriptures which they read throughout the day and enter more fully into the prayer of contem-

plation. They experimented with times and postures for prayer. Some found that they prayed better in the early morning. Others found the evenings more conducive. Sitting, standing, kneeling, and lying prostrate were among the postures that intensified their prayer. The word "lent" comes from an old English word that means the lengthening of the day, referring to the lighter days of spring, affording more time for prayer. In today's world many people go to expensive spas, take up aromatherapy, hypnosis and various relaxation techniques in order to unwind and find peace in their "soul-space". While these activities may provide the temporary benefit of psychological relaxation they may yield little spiritual benefit if God, prayer and the service of others are absent.

Lent always embraces parts of the months of February and March, a time during which many psychotherapists say a large number of Americans experience acute depression. This great liturgical season is not given to us in order to isolate ourselves in a purple cloak of depression and anxiety. Because its ultimate focus is on the hoped for participation of every Christian in the new life that comes from the life, teachings, death, and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth, Lent is essentially a season of quiet joy and spiritual rebirth in the Christian community.

The great celebrations of Mardi Gras would not be such a success if many people did not put a great deal of energy, effort and money into them. How much spiritual energy and effort are we as Catholics willing to put into the days between Ash Wednesday, February 13th and the Sacred Triduum (Holy Thursday, Good Friday and the Easter Vigil - March 28th, 29th, 30th)?

Perhaps one of the following suggestions will be

helpful to you.

- Find out who the candidates for the Easter Sacraments (Baptism, Eucharist, Confirmation) are in your parish. Write down their names (get their pictures, if possible) and pray for them by name each day. Go out of your way to meet them and encourage them on their journey of faith.

- Pick a day during the week and go to mass and communion, praying for an end to war and conflict in our world (or your own intention)

- If you "give up" something for Lent, ask yourself if it is something you should give up for life (e.g. cancer causing cigarettes, inordinate consumption of alcohol, abuse of food).

- Celebrate Lent with your family by meditating on the Stations of the Cross together, giving up a meal once a week and using the money to help someone in need.

- Prayerfully read the four gospel accounts of the Passion, death and resurrection of Jesus, using a good Catholic commentary. Notice the similarities and differences in the four accounts. (In the gospel of John, for example, the washing of the feet replaces the institution of the Eucharist!) Discuss these profound texts with someone to whom you feel spiritually close.

- Do you know any of the young people who are going to be confirmed between Easter and Pentecost? Ask your pastor to suggest something you can do to assist them in their spiritual pilgrimage. Have you been asked to be a sponsor? What are you doing to prepare yourself for this great responsibility?

- Set aside ten to fifteen minutes a day during Lent for solitude to be with God alone at whatever time or in whatever posture that is good for you. Remain quiet; do not tell God things, LISTEN!

- Make the commitment now to participate in the sacred triduum (Holy Thursday, Good Friday, Easter Vigil) in your parish. These days are the center of our faith and they are more important than even the Christmas midnight Mass.

- Make the time for a real examination of your conscience. Go to the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Confess your sins and pick one or two things that you do or do not do that separate you from God, the Church, or members of your family and pray to the Holy Spirit to help you experience conversion and change.

- Ask yourself this question: If I knew that this was going to be my last Lent on this earth, what would I do differently? Then do it!

Mardi Gras is a great celebration in Lake Charles. For many it may be the enjoyment of a "Fat Tuesday" that is not followed by an involvement in Ash Wednesday or Lent at all. As your Bishop, I hope and pray that this will not be the case for you. As members of the Christian family of faith, let us commit ourselves to journeying together with the Lord Jesus Himself up to Jerusalem, to the Last Supper, the Crucifixion and the life-giving sin-shattering hope of the resurrection!

Let us pray for one another.

Faithfully yours in Christ,

+ Edward K. Braxton
The Most Reverend Edward K. Braxton
Bishop of Lake Charles

Lenten Regulations 2002

Every Catholic, even children and older adults, should participate in some way in the spiritual disciplines and penitential practices of Lent in order to go up to Jerusalem with Jesus. These are the regulations for the Church in United States.

- Ash Wednesday and Good Friday are days of fast and abstinence. This means that we do not eat meat and we have only one full meal. Concerning the Good Friday fast, the Second Vatican Council teaches: "Let the Easter fast be kept sacred. Let it be celebrated everywhere on Good Friday and, where possible, prolonged throughout Holy Saturday, so that the joys of the Sunday of the Resurrection may be attained with uplifted and clear mind."

- The other Fridays of the season of Lent are also days of abstinence from meat. The obligation to abstain from meat binds Catholics 14 years of age and older. The obligation to fast, limiting oneself to one full meal and two lighter meals in the course of the day, binds Catholics from the age of 18 to 59. Those who are younger or older may freely embrace these disciplines. But Lenten disciplines should never endanger your health.

- The Fridays of the year outside of Lent are also days of penance. Abstaining from meat is the traditional way of observing these days of penance. However, each person is free to replace the traditional abstinence from meat with some other practice of voluntary self-denial or personal penance. It is obvious that abstaining from meat is meaningless for vegetarians, who must choose some other form of abstinence. It is equally obvious that replacing meat with a gourmet seafood meal is not in keeping with the spirit of Lent. Abstaining from meat may be replaced on Fridays during the year with abstaining from some other food. It may also be replaced with time spent reading and studying the Scriptures, special prayers, such as the rosary or visits to the Blessed Sacrament, acts of thoughtfulness and charity to those in need, or acts of personal witness to one's faith, such as teaching a religion class or speaking out on the sinfulness of abortion, euthanasia, racism, and other social evils.

- While the season of Lent is the primary period of Catholic penitential practices, these regulations are not intended to limit the occasions for Christian penance. The practice of spiritual discipline is always appropriate during periods of special need for the individual and the larger community. Parishes, for example, may undertake such disciplines as a part of their communal prayer for vocations or the eradication of a problem in the community.

The Catholic faithful should be reminded of the teaching of Pope Paul VI concerning the seriousness of being faithful to Lenten disciplines. He said that the obligation to follow these disciplines in solidarity with the Church is a serious one. However, Catholics should not become scrupulous in this regard. Failure to observe individual days of penance is not considered a serious matter. However, the faithful should look for ways to do more rather than less. Fast and abstinence on the days prescribed, and works of religion and charity on the Fridays outside Lent, should be considered a minimal response to the call of Jesus to go up to Jerusalem with Him in order that we might experience true Christian conversion in our lives.

(This page paid for by the Diocese of Lake Charles.)