



## Church of the Ascension

ascensionsaratoga.org | 408-725-3939  
Masses: (Sat) 5p; (Sun) 7a, 9a, 11a, 5p  
(Mon-Fri) 8a; (Sat) 9a  
Confessions: (Sat) 4p – 4:45p

February 22, 2026

Written by  
THE  
FAITHFUL  
DISCIPLE

## First Sunday of Lent

Gen 2:7-9; 3:1-7 | Rom 5:12-19 | Mt 4:1-11

### **GROW AS A DISCIPLE** | PRAY, STUDY, ENGAGE, SERVE

Although we're at the very beginning of Lent, today's first reading from Genesis prepares us for words we will hear on the night of the Easter Vigil: "O truly necessary sin of Adam, destroyed completely by the Death of Christ! O happy fault that earned so great, so glorious a Redeemer!" (Exsultet) *O truly necessary sin?! O happy fault?!* What could these words actually *mean*? I think the Exsultet is drawing us to see that sin is not the end of the story. In the mysterious working of grace, being in a state of needing God's forgiveness (sin) opens us up to the possibility of experiencing and receiving his endless love and mercy. As we take on practices of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving this Lent, may we not grow discouraged when we inevitably fall short, but may we recognize that our very weakness presents us with an opportunity to rejoice in his merciful love.

### **GO EVANGELIZE**

#### PRAYER, INVITATION, WITNESS, ACCOMPANIMENT

At the heart of evangelization is announcing the good news that our sin doesn't have the last word. St. Paul puts it this way: While death came through Adam's sin, "the gift is not like the transgression. For if by the transgression of the one, the many died, how much more did the grace of God and the gracious gift of the one man Jesus Christ overflow for the many." While sin certainly wreaks havoc by bringing suffering and death into our world, the conviction of the Church is that the restoration God brings about through the death and resurrection of Jesus elevates humanity to a state far better than what we lost in the fall. What might it look like to witness to this great hope we have in Jesus in our own lives? How can we offer encouragement to those who feel they have fallen too far from grace that God's mercy is far more powerful than any transgression they may have committed?

### **REFLECT**

Throughout the Gospels, we hear story after story of sinners ending up closer to God than those who think themselves to be perfectly obedient (The Prodigal Son [Lk 15:11-32]; the Pharisee and the Tax Collector [Lk 18:9-14]). As you contemplate which Lenten practices to adopt in these next few weeks, keep in mind that holiness isn't found in perfect adherence to these practices, but by humbling yourself to recognize the God who loves you even when you fall.

## Abstinence in Option-Laden Culture

On Fridays during Lent the Church practices abstinence, normally defined as not eating meat. In an option-laden culture like ours, a day without bacon or burgers is hardly a sacrifice. Older Catholics recall a time pre-1966 when every Friday of the year was meat-free. Some monastic communities abstain from meat altogether. Twenty-first century Christians may ask: Is such food-avoidance really spiritually useful? The answer is yes. In a society awash in permissiveness, learning to say no to self is among the best ways to shape the moral life. Dedicate today's "no" to tomorrow's moral "yes."

-Takefiveforfaith.com

## Meaningful Abstinence

Meaningful Lenten abstinence involves intentionally choosing to forgo comforts, not just meat on Fridays, but also habits like social media, luxury foods, or alcohol, to create space for prayer and focus on Christ's sacrifice. Abstinence's purpose is to achieve self-discipline, extend charity, and unite with those who suffer. Prayer, which draws us closer to God, should also open our hearts those in need.

## Food Insecurity in Santa Clara County

Food insecurity affects approximately 1 in 6 people in Santa Clara County, with high costs of living, particularly rent, forcing families to prioritize bills over food.

- Second Harvest of Silicon Valley

## Funerals at Church of the Ascension

Feb 27, Friday @ 11:00am

**Celestine Miller +** survived by her husband John.

Feb 28, Saturday @ 11:00am

**John James +** survived by his wife Julia.

May they rest in peace.

## Special Collection Feb 22

**Black & Indian Mission Collection:** for the evangelization of the US Black and Indian peoples.

## WEEKLY OFFERING - Feb. 15

-Total: **\$4,633** (\$2,616 + online: \$2,017. Goal: \$6,800.

-YTD Sunday: **\$221,496**. Budget: \$224,400.

Thank you for your generosity.

Consider an IRA to Charity Contribution: individuals aged 70½ or older can transfer to a church up to \$108,000 annually without increasing taxable income or requiring itemized deductions.

## MASS INTENTIONS

Feb 22	Sun	07 am	Agatha Pao +
		11 am	Lihua Wu +
		05 pm	Maria Leano (L)
Feb 27	Fri	08 am	Gary Auclair +
Feb 28	Sat	09 am	Rogelio P. Vicencio +

## Stations of the Cross

The Stations of the Cross began with medieval European pilgrims who, unable to journey to the Holy Land, wanted to recreate the *Via Dolorosa* (Way of Sorrows) in their own homes. Mainly developed by the Franciscans between the 14th and 16th centuries, this practice became established as 14 stations in the 1700s, thanks to St. Leonard of Port Maurice.

Walk in the footsteps of Jesus thru the **Stations of the Cross every Friday during Lent after the 8am Mass.**

## Lent Pray40

**In 2025, nearly 2 million people joined Pray40, leading to Hallow reaching #1 overall in the App Store.**

Journey with **Jonathan Roumie**, who portrays Jesus in *The Chosen*, with daily meditations.

Join **Mark Wahlberg** and **Chris Pratt**, as they lead us through fasting challenges rooted in Scripture.

Pray alongside **Sr. Miriam James Heidland**, beloved on Hallow for her prayer sessions.

Listen to Sunday homilies from **Fr. Mike Schmitz**, host of the #1 Christian podcast Bible in a Year.

"Hallow has been transformative not only for me but for so many others. There's something for EVERYONE – meditations, prayers, music, the saints – making it impossibly easy to pray more!" - Jonathan Roumie



## Wahlberg & Roumie on Talk Shows

On Ash Wednesday, Mark Wahlberg and Jonathan Roumie appeared on *Fox & Friends* and *The View* talk shows to discuss the meaning of faith, relationship with God and others, and to promote the Catholic meditation and prayer app Hallow.

Speaking about his faith, Wahlberg said, "I got into a lot of trouble when I was younger. There were pivotal times in my life where people came to me and expressed the importance of faith to keep me on the right track..."

Jonathan spoke of life as temporary and the need of focusing on spiritual growth, serving God, and remembering one's purpose.