In the midst of winter, with cold weather and darker days, it’s difficult to get too excited about the beginning of Lent! However, the upcoming six weeks offer a path toward the light – both the beginning of Spring and the spiritual light of the Resurrection and its meaning in our lives.

Since the early days of the Church, Lent has been regarded as a time of penance and also a time of preparation for those who wish to enter the Church. Yet, “it’s not meant to be a dark time, a depressing time,” observed Very Reverend Michael Ibach, judicial vicar for the Diocese of Yakima.

Rather, it’s a time to stop and think, ‘I want to make my life a better thing.’ At Baptism, we’re given a lighted candle. In Lent, we consider, ‘How is that light burning in my life?’

The 40 days of Lent, beginning this year on March 6, Ash Wednesday, and concluding on Easter Sunday, are modeled after the 40 days Jesus spent wandering in the desert, Father Ibach said. With the ashes applied to our foreheads on the first day of Lent, we are given a “wake-up call,” he noted. “God created us from nothing. We are now the chosen people. How are we trying to respond? Lent gives us that opportunity.”

We can be grateful that, through the centuries, the customs of Lent have changed! In the early Church, for example, it was customary for those who were guilty of serious sin to make a public confession before a bishop and the Church community on Ash Wednesday, Father Ibach explained. These “penitents” would also wear purple and undergo a time of “penance, fasting and prayer for mortal sins.”

Through the years, the emphasis on preparation for those interested in joining the Church became somewhat overshadowed by the focus on penance for sins, Father Ibach noted. It took the Second Vatican Council, in 1962-65, to bring back the original, twofold intent of the Lenten season.

“Vatican II restored the dimension of preparing to join the Church and for (all of us) to look at ourselves, too,” he said.

Whether we try to say additional prayers, give up something we enjoy, or do more to help others during this season, it can be a very positive, uplifting process that can result in eternal rewards. In the Diocese of Yakima, we have the annual Novena of Grace in honor of St. Francis Xavier (see page 4), plus Stations of the Cross, penance services and other parish events to offer guidance.

On the fourth Sunday of Lent, known as Laetare Sunday, you will notice that the priest wears rose-colored vestments (if the parish has a set). It’s a sign of hope in this season of preparation, to indicate, “Keep going. Don’t give up,” Father Ibach said. “It’s to say, ‘Look at what we’ve been able to accomplish, trying to make our lives more in conformity with Christ.’”

Finally, on the “High Holy Days” of the Church year – the “Triduum” which begins the evening of Holy Thursday and extends through Good Friday to Holy Saturday and Easter Sunday – we are building toward the celebration of the most important event in the history of Christianity: the Resurrection of our Lord and Savior.

“(E)ffectively, he was the first person to be buried in the grave of the Resurrection,” Father Ibach said.

On Holy Saturday, the new Paschal candle is lit in church, “symbolic of new life, new fire,” he added. Through Lent, we, too, may add a new dimension of light, of true joy to our lives! So, why not put down that candy bar and give it a try?

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Ireland’s St. Patrick: A Proud Legacy That Lives On Today

His influence still lives on today, in the devoted ministry of priests such as Father William Byron, Father Seamus Kerr, Father John Murtagh, Father John O’Shea, and many others across the nation. On March 17, as we celebrate the feast day of St. Patrick, it’s interesting to recall the remarkable story of this patron saint of Ireland.

Born in the latter part of the fourth century, perhaps in Scotland or Wales, accounts of the life of St. Patrick agree that he was kidnapped by pirates in his mid-teens and taken to what is now Ireland, where he worked for numerous years as a shepherd.

“During this period, he became increasingly religious. He considered his kidnapping and imprisonment as a punishment for his lack of faith and spent a lot of time in prayer,” contends the Irish Genealogy Toolkit website.

Finally, Patrick escaped. “According to his writing, a voice – which he believed to be God’s – spoke to him in a dream, telling him it was time to leave Ireland,” recounts the History.com website. While back in Britain, “Patrick reported that he experienced a second revelation – an angel in a dream tells him to return to Ireland as a missionary. Soon after, Patrick began religious
A Message from Bishop Tyson

Dear Friends:

I had the privilege of celebrating the annual Mass for Life January 27 at St. Paul Cathedral in Yakima. It was a wonderful opportunity to not only uplift the signature initiative of the Catholic Church across Washington State — PREPARES — but to thank the many partners who uplift the gift of life from the first moment of conception.

The homily, included in this issue of the Central Washington Catholic, was written before the egregious legislation passed recently in the state of New York allowing for late-term abortions right up to the time of birth.

In a crisp op-ed in the Wall Street Journal, New York Cardinal Timothy Dolan likened the degradation of the unborn to the infamous 1857 Dred Scott U.S. Supreme Court decision stating that Scott — and other African Americans — were not human persons and therefore had no rights. Cardinal Dolan also noted the “repugnance” of New York Governor Mario Cuomo’s throwing a party to celebrate the signing of the law, and having the World Trade Center in Manhattan lit in pink lights.

In the aftermath of the Cardinal’s article, Governor Cuomo wrote a competing op-ed in the New York Times accusing the Cardinal of allowing the Church to be aligned to the “religious right.”

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In the aftermath of the Cardinal’s article, Governor Cuomo wrote a competing op-ed in the New York Times accusing the Cardinal of allowing the Church to be aligned to the “religious right.”

Cardinal Dolan shot back in his blog:

“This is something new from the governor.”

Cardinal Dolan went on to note, “He did not consider me part of the religious right when seeking my help with the minimum wage increase, prison reform, protection of migrant workers, a welcome of immigrants and refugees, and an advocacy for college programs for the state’s inmate population, which we were happy to partner with him on, because they were our causes too.”

Cardinal Dolan went on to quote former Democratic Governor Robert P. Casey Sr. of Pennsylvania, who often stated that abortion was not about “right versus left” but “right versus wrong.” Governor Casey also noted that, “I didn’t get my pro-life belief from my religion class but from my biology class and the U.S. Constitution classes.”

The Cardinal’s approach has been to condemn Governor Cuomo’s unjust and immoral words and decisions while not taking any action that would allow the governor to portray himself as a martyr. He is the governor’s pastor, and he knows his sheep. I encourage us all to support Cardinal Dolan with our prayers.

We know that rebuilding a culture of life throughout our country will be a long, slow journey. All the more reason, then, to again thank the many people who uplift the gift of life through Catholic Charities and PREPARES, which walks the journey of life with women and their children from the first moment of conception to the child’s fifth birthday. All the more reason to affirm the many partner organizations that uplift the dignity of the unborn and their families — documented and undocumented — in their journey of life.

With every best wish and blessing,

Yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Joseph J. Tyson
Bishop of Yakima

Mass for Life: Jubilee of Mercy

(Note: the homily has been abridged slightly for space reasons. The full text is available online at www.yakimadiocese.net)

Peace be with you! Welcome to our Annual Mass for Life. Our scriptures today uplift God’s intention for life and life in abundance. The Gospel from St. Luke recalls the beginning of Jesus’ public ministry in the synagogue of his home town in Nazareth where he cites Isaiah 61, 1-2:

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord.”

Given the emphasis of Pope Francis on the virtue of mercy, we should note that the phrase “a year acceptable to the Lord” is the scriptural thread from the Old Testament leading to every single spiritual and corporal work of mercy uplifted by the Church.

Indeed, Jesus draws from the tradition that aligns the “seventh” year as a “jubilee year” to the “seventh day” as a day of rest or as a day of favor — a day “acceptable to the Lord.” Jesus ends his quote from Isaiah 61 partway through verse 2. His final phrase is the “Jubilee Year of Mercy” phrase, “to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord.” But that is only part of the verse. Jesus omits a second phrase, “... and a day of vengeance by our God.”

No wonder those in the synagogue have their eyes “fixed on him” — in the words of St. Luke — because they may well have been waiting for him to finish the phrase. “Where’s the vengeance?” But what does Jesus do? St. Luke tells us he rolls up the scroll and sits down. He’s finished. No vengeance. Only mercy.

Does this mean that Jesus rejects Isaiah 61 and that phrase “day of vengeance”? No. But Jesus knew his own kind well enough to know that they had assimilated an understanding of vengeance that was mere revenge. Indeed, we read in St. Luke that the townsfolk of Jesus were so enraged that they led Jesus out of the synagogue and onto the brow of the hill where they threatened to “...hurl him down headlong.”

So just what is God’s vengeance if it is not revenge? God’s vengeance is totally opposite human vengeance because God’s vengeance is a burning passion to set things right: to free the captives, to forgive debts, to restore and redeem those brought low. Indeed, God’s vengeance is mercy and this is why the only thing Jesus needed to declare in the synagogue was the year of favor — to live what today we would call the corporal and spiritual works of mercy.

What might this look like today? We need go no farther than our own PREPARES ministry — a unique initiative of the Washington state bishops in concert with our Catholic...
Charities agencies across the state. We have touched more than 9,000 people across Washington State since we launched the program in 2014. Here in the Diocese of Yakima, since our beginning we have touched nearly 5,200 lives.

Sometimes this has taken the form of a welcome bag of basic baby necessities from a PREPARES volunteer. But it can also mean developing a deep relationship with a family companion – an experienced mom who walks the journey with a new mom, providing support and encouragement as well as connecting the new mom with needed family services from our Catholic Charities agencies as well as our partners.

“Partners” is a key word because PREPARES would not be able to embody those corporal and spiritual works of mercy were it not for our many community partners. I am so grateful to the Knights of Columbus who uplift the gift of life in so many ways. Our 17,000-member Knights of Columbus here in Washington state has been a special partner for PREPARES from its inception. I’m grateful for the pregnancy resource centers all across Central Washington with whom we partner to support woman, their children – born and unborn – as well as their families. I’m grateful for the many organizations and their volunteers who give of their time, talent, and treasure to uphold the sanctity of human life.

Taken together, my closing message is quite simple: Thank you! Thank you for the many ways you work on behalf of women and their children, born and unborn. Thank you for your witness to the gift of life. Thank you for being an instrument of God’s mercy. Thank you for bringing “glad tidings to the poor… liberty to captives… sight to the blind and letting the oppressed go free…” Thank you for proclaiming this Jubilee of Mercy and this “Year of Favor” acceptable to the Lord. Peace be with you!

St. Patrick: A Proud Legacy That Lives On Today

training, a course of study that lasted more than 15 years. After his ordination as a priest, he was sent to Ireland with a dual mission: to minister to Christians already living in Ireland and to begin to convert the Irish.”

Patrick had developed a great love of the Irish people during his time of captivity, added Very Reverend Michael Ibach, judicial vicar for the Diocese of Yakima. “He had such a deep influence on the life of the Irish people … He brought the Faith back to Ireland, was the first bishop there, preached and established monasteries and churches.”

At a time when there was “a lot of dark, superstitious Druid religion,” St. Patrick “brought forgiveness, the mercy of God … he brought the Good News,” Father Ibach explained. “He gave the people hope that would sustain them through rather brutal British rule.”

Historical accounts agree that there may be just a wee bit of blarney in legends such as Patrick driving snakes out of Ireland. In any case, March 17 is recognized as the date of Patrick’s death, in the mid-400s A.D. He is buried outside of Down Cathedral, in the north of Ireland, on the site of a Benedictine monastery, according to the Irish Tourism website.

St. Patrick left us a legacy which is relevant today, Father Ibach suggests. “His missionary endeavors are something we should try to do … We can continue doing that,” he said. “Our world is turning anti-Christian. We need to speak up, to live the Faith.”
**NEWS from Around the Diocese**

### All Invited to Novena of Grace

The annual Novena of Grace, in honor of St. Francis Xavier, is scheduled for March 4-12 at St. Joseph Church, 212 North Fourth Street, in Yakima.

During this nine days of spiritual renewal, there will be a Novena talk and prayers during noon Mass weekdays and Saturday; at noon and 7 p.m., Wednesday, March 6 (Ash Wednesday); and at 8:30 a.m. and 5:30 p.m., Sunday, March 10. Confessions will be offered after all of these Masses, except on Sunday.

This year’s Novena will be directed by Father Gene Delmore, S.J., and Father Peter Henriot, S.J., who are both based in Tacoma.

### St. Patrick’s Day Dinner Planned

Celebrate St. Patrick’s Day and support the work of Catholic Charities by attending “An Evening of Hope” on Saturday, March 16, at the St. Joseph Church Kuykendall Hall in Wenatchee.

The proceeds from this year’s fundraiser will help low-income elders and adults with disabilities to continue to live independently, safely, and with dignity in their own homes. Through the program, volunteers help with minor home repairs, yard work, wheelchair ramps, transportation, light housekeeping, grocery shopping, and more. Catholic Charities assists the volunteers by providing training, encouragement, and support to use their skills and talents to help others.

“An Evening of Hope” will feature a catered dinner, music, wine, beer and a dessert dash. The event opens with a social hour at 5:30 p.m., followed by dinner at 6:30. Tickets are $50 each. For more information or to purchase tickets, call Julie Heilman at (800) 246-2962, ext. 1133.

### Rice Bowl Collection Helps Many

Join Catholics across the nation in responding to Christ’s call to love your neighbor by participating this Lent in Catholic Relief Services (CRS) Rice Bowl collection.

Catholic Relief Services is the official international humanitarian agency of the Catholic Church in the United States. The agency works to alleviate suffering and provides assistance to people in need in 110 countries. CRS’ relief and development work is accomplished through programs of emergency response and recovery, HIV and AIDS relief, health and social services, agriculture, water and sanitation, microfinance, and justice and peacebuilding.

This Lent, parishes and schools through the Diocese of Yakima are participating in the Rice Bowl collection. Funds collected in the rice bowls are distributed both around the world and in local communities to combat hunger and poverty – 75 percent of every donation goes to CRS’ humanitarian efforts around the world, while 25 percent is returned to the Diocese to support local efforts to alleviate poverty. Last year, 29 grants ranging from $750 to $1,000 were awarded to non-profit organizations in the Diocese. Rice Bowls and devotional materials are available at local parishes and schools. At the end of Lent, Rice Bowls may be returned to your parish or school office. For further information on CRS, visit [www.crs.org](http://www.crs.org) or call Leanne LaBissoniere, diocesan Rice Bowl coordinator, at (509) 367-5291.

### Winter Events Come to Life

Despite the cold temperatures and snowfall of the past weeks, people across the Diocese of Yakima turned out for special events in January and February.

**Yakima**

More than 250 people turned out January 19 for the annual March for Life and rally in Yakima. A variety of speakers, including Catholics and representatives of numerous other denominations, spoke to the crowd from the Chelan County Courthouse steps.

**Tri-Cities**

More than 250 people turned out January 19 for the annual March for Life and rally in Yakima. A variety of speakers, including Catholics and representatives of numerous other denominations, spoke to the crowd from the Chelan County Courthouse steps.

**Wenatchee**

In Yakima, volunteers assembled about 70 Valentine’s Day boxes for those in need, thanks to donations from area churches. The project was directed by Volunteer Services of Catholic Charities Serving Central Washington.