



MARCH 2026

ST. RAPHAEL COMMUNITY OF CATHOLIC MOMS

NEWSLETTER

What's News

Playgroup

Mondays are Better Together!
Catechesis of the Good Shepherd

February Meeting Notes

A Festive Night of Preparation!
Father Alex on Confession
Recipes for the Rest of Us
The 3 Pillars of Lent

March Meeting

Still a few seats left for our couple's night!
Please RSVP if you would like to join for
this special evening.

Congratulations. Vaughn Family!



Sara Vaughn and her husband welcomed baby Josie Joy on Saturday, February 28! They're home now, getting settled with proud big sister Chloe. A MealTrain has been set up to support them during this sweet (and busy!) transition – you can [click here](#) to sign up.

If you're receiving this through the grapevine, [visit our website](#) for more information. If you're a Catholic mom raising your kids in Naperville, we would be so happy to have you join us!

At Church

This Lent, St. Raphael is offering more opportunities for family-time at Church:

Family Holy Hour

Every Tuesday, 6-7 PM
Confession also available

Lenten Praise & Worship Evening

Tuesday, March 24th, 6-7pm
Pizza provided by KoC in 162 from 5-6pm
[Click to RSVP](#)

Inspire Meaningful Almsgiving



Special thanks to Christina Weidman and her two oldest, Gianna & Gavin!

Christina was inspired to create "Blessing Bags" to share with individuals asking for support at intersections. She thoughtfully gathered essentials—body wipes, toothbrushes, crackers, water, and more—then turned it into a family effort, setting up an assembly line with Gianna and Gavin to prepare over 50 bags!

Last week, the Weidmans generously brought bags to Playgroup to share, giving us the opportunity to learn about this meaningful, dignity-centered approach to almsgiving—and even stock our own glove compartments so we can respond with compassion when the moment arises.

Thank you, Weidmans!



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Playgroup

Mondays are better together!

If you're home with littles, come enjoy an hour of connection for moms and kids! We gather starting at 9:20 and finish around 10:20. It's a relaxed way to meet other families, share some conversation, and grow in community. Find us in Room 157 at the end of the hall - just follow the strollers!

March Dates

March 2nd, 9th, 16th, 23rd
regular meeting time & place

March 30th & April 6th
NO playgroup over Spring Break

Special Thanks

February 9th

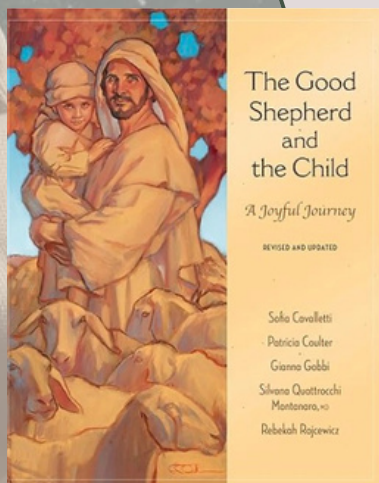
Father Alex came with his guitar and the moms and kiddos got to share in some special music time. Thank you, Father!

February 23rd

Sepha Skean, the director for St. Margaret Mary's Montessori-inspired Catechism program, (CGS,) came with some of her teaching materials in tow. Thank you for making time to visit, Sepha!

Catechesis of the Good Shepherd

Sepha provided a little sample of what lessons and activities look like in the Atrium. The kiddos were so engaged! She also recommended this book to any mamas who want to learn more about the program.





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February Meeting Night

Rachel Dickinson facilitated our February meeting night with lots of flair! Rachel themed the night “Feasting, Fasting & Forgiveness,” and provided a night of fellowship with some Mardi Gras merriment, sweetly tempered by Lenten anticipation. We had 33 moms join us and after feasting on King Cupcakes, we rotated in “small” groups to 3 stations: Feasting even more, on pescatarian dishes in the kitchen area; Reflecting on resolutions by the piano; and holding a Q&A with Father Alex about why and how to embrace the sacrament of confession.



Nick DiGiovanni from the Knights of Columbus also stopped in to present the KoC’s “Family of the Month,” recognition to Alex Ziegler. Cheers to you, Alex, and your beautiful family!



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February Meeting Night

Reconciliation Q&A with Father Alex

A few pearls from Father Alex's small group chats:

1. He has never thought less of someone for sins confessed. He has only loved the person more deeply.
2. If he were to share with anyone what a person confessed, it would suspend his designation as a priest.
3. There's no "right number" of sins to confess, no matter how often or infrequently you go to confession.
4. Use the beatitudes to guide your examination of conscience.

Questions for Father Alex?

Father Alex would be delighted to hear from you! If you ever want to follow up with him via email, or even request time in person, you are welcome to email him!

alorang@st-raphael.com

Options Abound for Local Confession Times

St. Raphael

Tuesdays, 6-7PM

Fridays, 3PM

Saturdays following 845am Mass

Sts. Peter & Paul

Mondays, 415pm-515pm

Thursdays, 11AM-12PM

Saturdays, 3PM-5PM

St. Margaret Mary

Thursdays, 6-7PM

Saturdays 330PM-430pm

Our Lady of Mercy

Tuesdays, 7PM-until all heard

Wednesdays, 1230PM - until all heard

Thursdays, 7AM - Until all heard



These questions are simply a starting point—to kindle reflection and gently guide our hearts toward a fruitful Lent. There are no right answers, no ideal length of answers, and no "correct" way to approach this page.

You're welcome to write a novel, jot down a few buzzwords as they come to you, circle a question and sit with it quietly, or even doodle along the margins while you let thoughts simmer.

Prayer

What is God's invitation to me right now?

How can I carve out more time for daily prayer?
Family prayer?

How can I be more open to the graces of the Lenten season?

Fasting

What is God asking me to let go of to make room for Him?

Is anything in my life out of balance?
What habit or sin in my life is getting in the way of my relationship with God?

Almsgiving

How can I be of more service to my family and community?

Do I give joyfully?

How can I use my time, talents, and treasure to serve others this Lent?

Big Picture

On Easter Sunday, how do I want to be different?

What practical, realistic steps can I take to make these changes?

What is one thing I can do to make this Lent more meaningful for my family?

What am I going to tell myself when self-denial gets hard?

Wherever you are in your faith right now—feeling grounded, curious, tired, hopeful, unsure, or somewhere in between—you are exactly where you need to be. This isn't about doing Lent perfectly or adding one more thing to your to-do list. It's about noticing what stirs your heart and meeting God there.

At our reflection station, Rachel had prepared this handout. The prompts helped us to prepare our hearts as we roll into Lent. Rachel also prepared a full page primer on the three pillars of Lent: Prayer, Fasting and Almsgiving, (page 8).



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Recipes For the Rest of Us

Big thanks to Megan Loomis, Katie Sadowski, Rachel Dickinson, and Meredith Wiers for providing samplings of some delicious vegetarian meal options. Additionally, Megan Loomis put together a little guide for grab n' go options from our Local Trader Joe's. Thank you, ladies!



Trader Joe's Lentil Bruschetta Appetizer

Ingredients

- 1 package steamed lentils (in refrigerated section)
- 1 container fresh bruschetta (refrigerated section)
- 1 container crumbled feta

Directions:

1. Rinse and drain lentils, mix with bruschetta.
2. Place one scoop upon carb platform of choice, (toasted baguette, GF crackers, naan)
3. Top with feta cheese & enjoy!



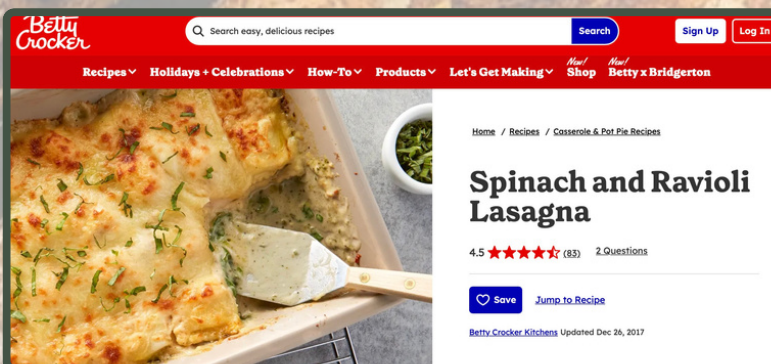
Simple Black Bean Tacos

nourish-and-fete.com



Cozy Autumn Wild Rice Soup

gimmesomeoven.com



Easy/Fast Meals from Trader Joe's:

Lenten Edition

Contributed by Megan Loomis

Classic Grilled Cheese

- French Brioche = best bread (see pic)
- butter both sides (Trav dad tip)
- pick all your favorite cheeses

****Pair with low sodium tomato soup**
(consider cheese breadsticks versus grilled cheese sandwich) (also consider tums if having the soup)



Shrimp Stir Fry

- precut veggies
- cook and add shrimp (my favorite are the Raw Argentine Red Shrimp wild caught) or tofu
- **ADD THE SAUCE!** This sauce is for everything. Dump the whole bottle as you sauté the veggies. Just do it!



Vegetable or Shrimp Gyoza with Fried Rice

- Dip Gyoza in the sweet chili sauce! (see above)
- Cook extra shrimp if desirable and add to fried rice or use regular brown rice
- Keep shrimp and rice separate if learning to like different textures/tastes





Make your own pizzas

- Plenty of veggie and cheese options
- TJ's pizza sauce
- Fun for family to roll out the dough (plain or herbed dough choices), pick out toppings
- Pizza crust (see pic) is thicker; consider finishing to cook on grill
- Babysitter night option: 4 mini cheese pizza/box in frozen section



Spinach Tortellini

- Not sure why my kidseat this because you can clearly see the green spinach, but they do! Add some parmesan cheese...done!



But back to the sweet chili sauce...other uses

- Add to fish or shrimp tacos, pick up slaw or SouthWest bagged salad, tortillas
- Add a splash atop a cracker + goat cheese or Boursin cheese
- Tilapia, brown rice, edamame, top with sweet chili sauce (or make a spicy mayo)

Prayer, Fasting, and Almsgiving

Prayer is simply conversation with God—speaking, listening, and being present. During Lent, prayer grounds everything else we do. As Pope Francis reminds us, “Lent is a privileged time for prayer.” In prayer, we grow in relationship with God, and that relationship slowly shapes our hearts: toward gratitude, trust, and love. Prayer gives us the strength for fasting and opens us to generosity toward others. It is the quiet foundation of our Lenten journey—and of our daily lives.

Scripture for reflection on prayer:

Zephaniah 3:17 • Joel 2:1–2 • John 16:33 • Philippians 3:10–11

Fasting and abstinence are ancient practices found throughout Scripture and the Church’s history. They are not about punishment or perfection, but about creating space—space to notice our dependence on God and our connection to others. Pope Francis explains it this way: “Fasting makes sense if it really chips away at our security and, as a consequence, benefits someone else.”

The Church invites us to fast and abstain in these ways:

- Catholics ages 18–59 are asked to fast on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday (one full meal, with two smaller meals that together do not equal a full meal).
- Catholics age 14 and older are asked to abstain from meat on Ash Wednesday and all Fridays of Lent.

In addition to these practices, you might consider fasting from something that quietly drain you—constant scrolling, excessive screen time, gossip. Or even fast from practices like comparing yourself or passing judgements. Fasting gently reminds us of our deeper hunger for God.

Scripture for reflection on fasting:

Joel 2:12–14 • Isaiah 58:6–7 • Matthew 6:16–18 • Mark 1:12–15

Almsgiving flows naturally from prayer and fasting. When we become more aware of God’s gifts in our own lives, our hearts turn outward. Almsgiving is a way of living our gratitude and recognizing our responsibility to one another as the Body of Christ. Acts of justice, mercy, and charity—small or large—are part of our baptismal call to follow Jesus with love.

Scripture for reflection on almsgiving:

Leviticus 19:9–10 • Proverbs 19:17 • Luke 19:1–10 • Romans 15:25–28

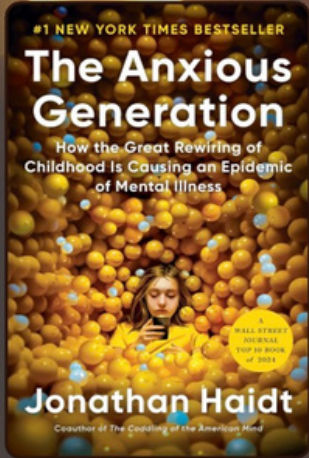
Together, prayer, fasting, and almsgiving gently lead us to the heart of Lent: a deeper conversion—a slow turning back toward God, and toward love.

COMMUNITY *of* CATHOLIC MOMS

Couples' Night & Discussion Panel

Join us for an uplifting and inspiring evening of connection as we build community within our school and parish through meaningful conversation.

Guided by insights from *The Anxious Generation* by Jonathan Haidt, knowledgeable educators from St. Raphael School and Naperville North will engage parents with practical perspectives on childhood development and raising children in the smartphone age.



PANELISTS

KRISTAN BACHNER
DEBBIE CURTIS
LAURI RIGGEN
DAN GALLAGHER
SEAN WILLIAMS

SEATING LIMITED
RSVP REQUIRED



7:15
MINGLING & DRINKS SERVED

7:45 - 8:45
SEATED FOR PANEL DISCUSSION

8:45 - 9:15
MINGLING & WRAP-UP

Upcoming Meeting Nights & Guest Speakers

March 10th - Panel Discussion & Couples' Night

April 14th - Father Alex Lorang

May 12th - Father Max Behna,
Pastor of St. Margaret Mary
Church