

Newsletter

Here you're among friends!



From the President's Desk

February has arrived, and with it comes that magical season when the stores fill up with heart-shaped candy, greeting cards multiply like rabbits, and every restaurant suddenly believes dim lighting will improve your love life. Yes, friends, it's Valentine's month.

In this month's Newsletter I've shared a couple of articles about St. Valentine, Lent and the history behind them, but let me add a personal observation. Every year around this time, I find myself standing in the card aisle, staring at a wall of red and pink, trying to decide whether my wife would prefer a sentimental message or one with a cartoon dog holding a rose. I usually pick the dog. It feels safer.

And then there's Lent, beginning soon, a season of reflection and renewal. I always admire the folks who give up chocolate or bread or something heroic. One year I tried giving up complaining. That lasted until I hit a pothole on Research Forest. But hey, it's the effort that counts.

What I love most about February is that it reminds us of the simple joys: friendship, kindness, shared meals, and the comfort of familiar faces. Senior Pals is full of those moments, the laughter, the stories, the gentle teasing, and the feeling that we're all in this together, even when the weather can't decide what season it wants to be.

So as we move through this short but spirited month, may your days be warm, your chocolates plentiful, and your potholes few. And may we continue to find hope, humor, and good company in each other.

Warmly, Art

St. Valentine: A story of Faithful Love

By Art Dominguez, SPN Editor

Come each February, the calendar hands us Valentine's Day wrapped in red paper and tied with a bow. Chocolates appear, cards exchange hands, and love, at least the Hallmark variety, takes center stage. But long before hearts and flowers entered the picture, Valentine's Day belonged to the Church, and its story was far richer, deeper, and far more courageous.

St. Valentine was not a poet or a matchmaker by

Lent: More Than Giving Something Up

A February reflection

By Art Dominguez, SPN editor

Every year about this time, Lent rolls around quietly, almost politely. No trumpets. No fireworks. Just ashes, a reminder, and that familiar question that seems to pop up everywhere: "So... what are you giving up this year?"

Chocolate usually takes the first hit. Coffee sometimes. Television, maybe. And while there's nothing wrong with any of that, the Catholic Church has always taught that Lent isn't really about chocolate, or coffee, or any other comfort we temporarily set aside. Lent is about the heart. Always has been.

From the earliest days of the Church, Lent has been observed as a forty-day season leading up to Easter. Those forty days echo the forty days Jesus spent fasting in the desert before beginning His public ministry (Catechism of the Catholic Church [CCC] 540). In the early centuries, Lent was serious business. It was the final stretch of preparation for those about to be baptized at Easter, and a season of honest reflection for everyone else. The Church used it as a time to remember who we are and who we're supposed to be (Second Vatican Council, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 109). The rules have eased over the years, but the purpose hasn't changed.

Fasting: Not a Punishment

The Church still asks us to fast on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday, and to abstain from meat on Fridays during Lent. These are the basics, the minimums, really (CCC 2043).

(See LENT on last page)

trade. He was a Christian priest (perhaps a Bishop) in Rome in the third century, living at a time when faith was dangerous and loyalty to Christ could cost a person everything. Christianity was still illegal, and believers worshiped quietly, often in fear. Valentine ministered to these early Christians, encouraging them, serving them, and, according to long-standing tradition, performing Christian marriages in secret. Marriage itself was an act of defiance.

(See VALENTINE on last page)

Upcoming Bus Trips in the Works

The Trip Committee is preparing several engaging outings for the coming months:

- **Astros Game Outing:** Based on member feedback, the game will be scheduled after the summer months to ensure strong participation once everyone is back from their travels.
- **Co-Cathedral of the Sacred Heart (Houston):** A guided look at one of Houston's most impressive architectural and spiritual landmarks.
- **Federal Reserve Bank Tour (Houston Branch):** A rare behind-the-scenes visit to learn how our nation's central banking system operates.
- **George H. W. Bush Presidential Library & Museum (College Station):** A rich, interactive walk through American history and the life of President Bush.
- **St. Mary's Catholic Church (College Station):** A peaceful stop at a historic and well-loved parish, paired with the Bush Library visit.

More details will follow as dates and logistics are finalized.

February Speaker

We're pleased to welcome Mr. James Holian to our February 14 meeting. He is the director of the brand-new Kevin Brady Community Center, which opened its doors just a few months ago. Mr. Holian will share insights about the center's mission, its programs, and the ways it hopes to serve residents across our community. This is a wonderful opportunity to learn about a major new resource in our area and to hear directly from the person guiding its early development.

Join us for an engaging and informative presentation as we celebrate both Valentine's Day and the arrival of a vibrant new community hub.

Senior Pals Theater Presents: THE ROBE

A sweeping tale of redemption in glorious Cinema-Scope. Step into ancient Rome and witness a story of faith, redemption, and cinematic grandeur!

Join us for a special screening of *The Robe* starring **Richard Burton, Victor Mature, & Jean Simmons**

When: Wednesday, February 18th

Time: 1:00 PM (Doors open at 12:30 PM)

Where: Inside the Conservatory at Alden Bridge
6203 Alden Bridge Drive, The Woodlands
Enjoy free popcorn, candy, and bottled water as we journey through one of Hollywood's most stirring biblical epics. Come early for good seats and good company. We'll see you there!

"Your every act should be done with love."

- 1 Corinthians 16:14



Set Sail on a Mediterranean Adventure!

May 2nd thru May 12, 2026

Join Senior Pals friends Linda Saucedo and Elaine Wilson for an unforgettable journey across the sparkling Mediterranean Sea! This 10-day voyage begins in Naples, Italy, and return to Civitavecchia (Rome), Italy aboard the elegant **Enchanted Princess**. Imagine strolling ancient streets, savoring authentic cuisine, and sharing the beauty of Europe with your fellow Senior Pals. It's all waiting for you! For details and booking, contact:

Debbi Davis - Debs Tours and Cruises
Phone: (214) 784-9685

Be sure to mention:

Group TN4/Deb & Linda's Europe Getaway.

Senior Pals Meeting Schedule 2025/2026

February 14, 2026

March 14, 2026

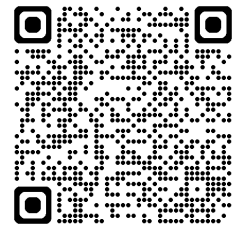
April 11, 2026

May 9, 2026

June 13, 2026

Meetings are from 10:00 am to 12:00 pm at Sheltz Hall. For more information you can read our newsletter at:

ap.church/seniorpals
or scan this QR code:



Senior Pals Officers 2025/2026

President	Art Dominguez
Vice-President	Cathy Landry
Vice-President Membership	Gladys Gordon
Treasurer	Linda Saucedo
Secretary	Carla Chambers
Trip Committee	Martha Britton
Ambassador	William Lessman
Program Chair	Joan Sabino
Raffle	Sharon Bowen
Newsletter	Art Dominguez
Hospitality	Open
Happy Hours & Luncheons	All Senior Pals Members
For more information, email us at: seniorpals@ap.church	



PALS PUZZLE

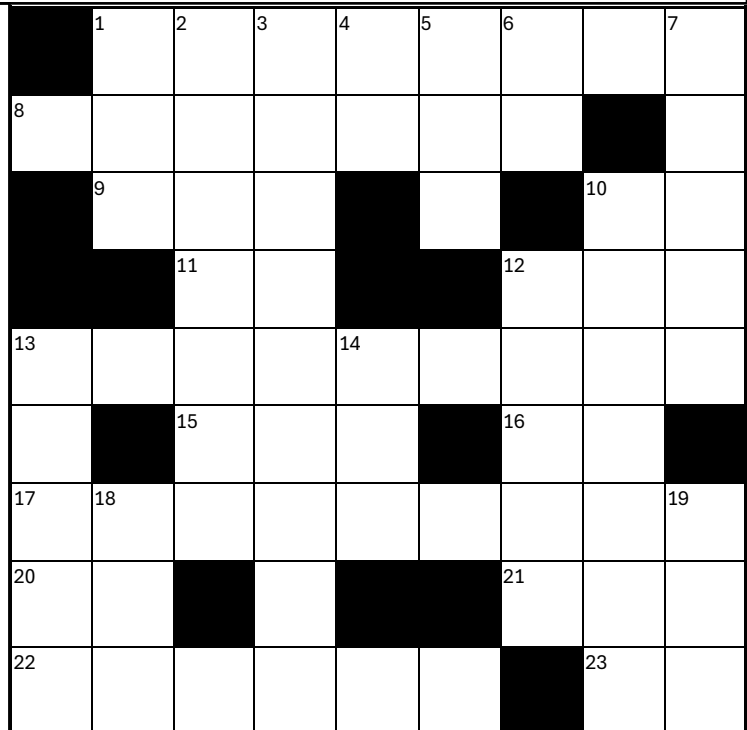


Across:

1. Gets attention
8. Outdoor movie theater
9. Hoosier St.
10. Cajun St.
11. Semper _
12. A charged atom
13. Was used to look up a number
15. Place to stop on a road trip
16. A football score (abb.)
17. Morse coded text
20. Logo copyright (abb)
21. Hemmingway's The Old Man and the _
22. In suspended animation
23. Bismark is its capital (abbr)

Down

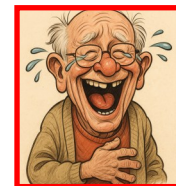
1. Lion in Hebrew
2. Food keeper?
3. 1960s convenience meals
4. Used to introduce the subject of a business or legal letter
5. To be sick
6. Famous tower in Canada
7. Slang for prison knife
10. Male cafeteria staff?
12. Little bits?
13. Actress Annie of Ghost Busters
14. Press 1 for _ or 2 for Esp.
18. Ambulance worker
19. Blue



Answers to crossword puzzle are found on the last page of this newsletter.



Happy Birthday!



Grandpa's February Jokes

Letty Kelley	02/01	Christi Brinkley	02/02
Carol Dennington	02/07	Abraham Lincoln	02/12
Jerry Wagener	02/11	Thomas Edison	02/11
Maricela LaCambra	02/16	Galileo Galilei	02/15
Nick Maldonado	02/28	John Travolta	02/18
		George Washington	02/22

Senior Pals February Lunch Outing

Our February lunch spot is **Red Robin** in Shenandoah, located at 19433 I-45 North frontage road, arranged by Carla Chambers. Thank you, Carla, for getting us set up.

Join us on **Wednesday, February 25th at 12:30 PM** for a relaxed afternoon of Gourmet Burgers and their famous bottomless fries. It's a great chance to enjoy good food and even better company.

We'd love to see you there for lunch, laughter, and a full basket of fries.

⇒ My doctor said I should start walking every day. So now I walk to the pantry, the fridge and back, twice.

⇒ I asked my wife if I was the only one she'd ever been with. She said, "Yes, all the others were nines and tens."

⇒ My wife asked me for something shiny for Valentines day, so I polished the car.

⇒ I asked the speaker if she needed a microphone. She said "No, I taught middle school."

⇒ The waiter asked me how I found my steak. I said "I just moved a tomato slice and there it was!"

LENT from page 1

Fasting isn't about suffering for suffering's sake. It's not a test of endurance and it's certainly not a diet plan. Fasting is meant to slow us down just enough to notice our dependence on God, and maybe notice others a little more clearly, especially those who don't get to choose when or whether they go without. As the Catechism puts it, fasting only has meaning when it reflects an interior turning of the heart (CCC 1434).

Yes, giving something up can be helpful. But if that's all Lent becomes, we've missed the point. The Church has always described Lent as resting on three pillars: prayer, fasting, and almsgiving (CCC 1434–1438). What does that mean? Let's do math. Lent isn't just about subtraction. It's also about addition. Adding a little more prayer, adding patience, adding generosity, and adding time for someone else. Almsgiving reminds us that Lent is never supposed to be about ourselves alone. Any sacrifice that doesn't eventually lead us outward, to kindness, mercy, or compassion is incomplete.

For those of us who have lived a few seasons of Lent already, this time of year carries a different kind of weight. Lent invites us to slow down, take stock, and let go of grudges, distractions, or habits that no longer serve us well.

The Church reminds us that spiritual growth doesn't retire when we do. If anything, it deepens. Lent prepares us not just for Easter morning, but for living more thoughtfully and more faithfully the rest of the year.

And if what we give up, or take on brings us a little closer to God and a little closer to one another, then Lent has done exactly what it was meant to do.

Sources: Catechism of the Catholic Church; Second Vatican Council (Sacrosanctum Concilium); United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (Lenten guidelines).

D	N		S	I	S	A	T	S
A	E	S			R		M	T
S	M	A	R	G	E	L	E	T
	D	T		N	N	I		O
K	O	O	B	E	N	O	H	P
N	O	I			I	F		
A	F		L		D	N	I	
H		N	I	E	V	I	R	D
S	T	C	A	R	T	T	A	

VALENTINE from page 1

The Roman emperor Claudius II, believed unmarried men made better soldiers and outlawed marriage for young men. Valentine disagreed, not politically, but spiritually. To him, marriage was not a convenience or a contract. It was a sacrament, a holy covenant reflecting God's faithful love. So he married couples anyway, quietly and reverently, knowing full well the risk he was taking.

Eventually, Valentine was discovered, arrested, and imprisoned. He refused to renounce his faith, and for that refusal he was executed around the year AD 269, becoming one of the many martyrs whose blood quietly watered the roots of the early Church. His death was not about romance. It was about conviction.

In AD 496, Pope Gelasius I officially placed Valentine's feast day on February 14. In doing so, the Church intentionally offered a Christian witness during a season once dominated by pagan fertility celebrations. Rather than excess and impulse, Valentine's story proclaimed something different. Love grounded in faith, commitment, and sacrifice.

Over the centuries, poets and storytellers softened the edges. Medieval writers began associating Valentine's Day with courtly love, birds pairing off in spring, and romantic devotion. Slowly, the martyr faded into the background, replaced by lace, ribbons, and sweet sentiments. None of that is wrong, but it is incomplete.

From a Catholic perspective, St. Valentine reminds us that love is more than affection. Real love requires courage. It requires faithfulness. It sometimes asks us to stand firm when the world pushes back. Valentine's legacy is not that he made people feel warm and fuzzy, but that he lived love all the way to the end.

Perhaps that is the deeper invitation of St. Valentine's witness. To love is not to demand a return, nor is it to love blindly without cost. Love, in its truest form, whether between spouses, within families, or among friends is an act of willing the good of another, freely given. Christ shows us that such love may be refused, and that refusal may even bring tears, yet love remains worth offering. In a world that often measures affection by what it gets back, St. Valentine reminds us that love is not a transaction, but a gift, one that asks to be cherished, nurtured, and protected, even when it requires courage to give it at all. With love, happy St. Valentines Day everyone!

Sources: The Catholic Encyclopedia, Butler's Lives of the Saints, Vatican historical records and the General Roman Calendar, materials from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, the Oxford Dictionary of Saints, and Sacred Scripture (Luke 19:41–42; Matthew 23:37).

“Be at war with your vices, at peace with your neighbors, and let every new year find you a better person.”

— Benjamin Franklin