

# Faithful sacrifice for Lent to honor Christ

BY BART JONES

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With the start of Lent on Wednesday, Roman Catholics and other Christians will engage in a centuries-old tradition for the next seven Fridays: abstaining from eating red meat and poultry.

The ritual goes back to the time of Jesus' crucifixion 2,000 years ago and is meant to commemorate his death on the cross, said the Rev. Patrick Flanagan, chair of the Department of Theology and Religious Studies at St. John's University.

As church attendance has declined in the past few decades, the ritual has been lost for some of the faithful, though church leaders like Flanagan see a resurgence.

"I do sense a great renewal," said Flanagan, who celebrates weekend Masses in Centerport and Rockville Centre.

"I find that more and more people are looking for structure," he said. "They're looking for benchmarks to understand how they might achieve some grace and how they might not fall into sin and how they might grow in their relationship with God."

Thousands of Long Islanders are expected in churches on Wednesday — Ash Wednesday, among the most heavily attended holy days of the year — to have ashes dabbed on their foreheads in the shape of a cross.

The ashes mark the start of the 40 days of Lent, a season of fasting, reflection and penance in preparation for Holy Week and Easter Sunday, this year April 9, when Christians commemorate the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The ashes come from burned palms used in celebrating Palm Sunday of the previous year.

Catholics from age 14 up are supposed to follow the meatless-Friday regulation, which has declined in popularity, said Rick Hinshaw, a former editor of the Long Island Catholic newspaper.

"I would think that a lot of people who are not too focused on following the obligations on a regular basis," including attending weekly Mass "probably would not pay too much atten-



Lent requires the faithful to give up meat on Fridays. Rick Hinshaw, of Lynbrook, is among those who remain devoted to the practice.

## WHAT TO KNOW

■ **Lent starts with Ash Wednesday.** The faithful are required to abstain from meat on Fridays during the 40-day holy season leading to Good Friday and Easter Sunday.

■ **While the practice has declined,** some church leaders hope it will enjoy a resurgence.

■ **Some Catholics go beyond** the meatless requirement, and make other sacrifices such as not watching TV or listening to music — or take positive action like volunteering at a soup kitchen.

tion to this," he said. "Certainly it's not observed as universally as it used to be."

Other Catholics, like Hinshaw, are deeply devoted to the practice — and hope more will join, especially as awareness increases of the environmental cost to the planet of eating meat.

Patricia Boylan, an active parishioner at St. Agnes parish in Rockville Centre, said she embraces the rule.

"Honestly I don't think it's a huge sacrifice," she said. "It's really symbolic of our reverence to Jesus Christ and him dying on the cross to absolve us of our sins for salvation."

During Lent, she whips up

dishes of vegetarian lasagna, eggplant, pizza, fish or other items.

Boylan said she makes other sacrifices, like eliminating things on Fridays such as TV shows and music, and as a result, creates a prayerful, peaceful environment in her home.

"It's a time of renewal and reflection, and I think that abstinence [from meat] is only part of that," she said.

David Bonagura, a Catholic schoolteacher who lives in Floral Park, said he takes the meat rule seriously, too. "It's a sacrifice that the church asks us to undertake in thanksgiving for the sacrifice that Christ undertook on our behalf," he said.

He sticks to pasta, fruits, vegetables and sometimes fish on Fridays. He has made other small sacrifices for Lent as well, cutting down the cups of tea he drinks each day from three to one. He also attends a weekly Stations of the Cross service at his parish, Our Lady of Victory.

It's all "just a reminder of the importance of faith and of the spiritual life," he said. "Life is not just about material things."

Hinshaw said he keeps to the meat abstinence rule not only on Fridays during Lent, but throughout the year. He also attends Mass daily during Lent, and prays the rosary more often.

Beyond making sacrifices, another approach during Lent is to do something positive for others, he said, such as volunteering in a soup kitchen or helping a neighbor.

# Biden:

## Pledges support for Ukraine in visit to Poland

The Associated Press

WARSAW, Poland — President Joe Biden on Tuesday warned of "hard and bitter days ahead" as Russia's invasion of Ukraine nears the one-year mark, but vowed that no matter what, the United States and allies "will not waver" in supporting the Ukrainians.

A day after his surprise visit to Kyiv, Biden used a strongly worded address in neighboring Poland to praise allies in Europe for stepping up over the past year and to send a clear message to Russian President Vladimir Putin that "NATO will not be divided, and we will not tire."

"One year ago, the world was bracing for the fall of Kyiv," Biden said before a crowd of thousands outside Warsaw's Royal Castle. "I can report: Kyiv stands strong. Kyiv stands proud. It stands

tall and, most important, it stands free."

With Russia and Ukraine each preparing spring offensives, Biden insisted there will be no backing down from what he's portrayed as a global struggle between democracy and autocracy — though polling suggests American support for ongoing military assistance appears to be softening.

"Democracies of the world will stand guard over freedom today, tomorrow and forever," Biden declared. The United States and allies will "have Ukraine's back."

Biden's speech came a day after his unannounced trip to Kyiv, where he met with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and walked the city streets as an air raid siren blared.

Last year, weeks after Russian forces began their attacks on Ukraine, Biden delivered a harsh condemnation of Putin from the gardens of the castle. Speaking Tuesday to a crowd that included Polish citizens and Ukrainian refugees — and millions more following in Ukraine, Russia and around the

# Putin increases

The Associated Press

Russian President Vladimir Putin suspended Moscow's participation in the last remaining nuclear arms control pact with the United States, announcing the move Tuesday in a bitter speech in which he made clear he would not change his strategy in the war in Ukraine.

Putin emphasized, however, that Russia isn't withdrawing from the pact yet, and hours after his address the Foreign Ministry said Moscow would respect the treaty's caps on nuclear weapons. It also said Russia would continue to exchange information about test launches of ballistic missiles per earlier agreements with the United States.

In his long-delayed state of the nation address, Putin cast his country — and Ukraine — as victims of Western double-

dealing and said it was Russia, not Ukraine, fighting for its very existence.

"We aren't fighting the Ukrainian people," Putin said ahead of the war's first anniversary Friday. "The Ukrainian people have become hostages of the Kyiv regime and its Western masters, which have effectively occupied the country."

The speech reiterated a litany of grievances he has frequently offered as justification for the widely condemned military campaign, while vowing no military letup.

Along with limits on the number of nuclear weapons, the 2010 New START envisages broad inspections of nuclear sites. Putin said Russia should stand ready to resume nuclear weapons tests if the United States does so, a move that would end a global ban on such tests in place since