Cum Petro

The Newsletter for

THE CONFRATERNITY OF ST. PETER

Post-Pentecost - September 2026

From the Chaplain

by Fr. James Fryar, FSSP

One of the joys of belonging to the Confraternity of St. Peter is sharing, according to our own vocation, in the spiritual life of the Priestly Fraternity of St. Peter. The priests of the FSSP have made the Traditional Mass the center of their lives.

As members of the Confraternity we should likewise order our lives around Holy Mass and not just let it be something that we have to do on Sundays. The drop of water mingling into the chalice at the offertory should represent us—our lives in their entirety being mingled with the sacrifice of Christ.

The Mass is the culmination of everything we believe and our entire Catholic life, coming together to give glory to God. The liturgy was never meant to stand alone. Lex orandi, lex credendi—our prayer ought to shape the way we live.

In this issue, Fr. Bizard explains the history and significance of the Ember Days. What is especially striking is that the prayers of the Ember Day Mass presume that the faithful are actually fasting. The liturgy and the discipline complement one another. The prayers deepen our understanding of the fast, while the fast helps us unite ourselves to the liturgy.

It is a beautiful thing that many Catholics who attend the Traditional Mass freely continue the disciplines that accompanied it. Not everyone, but many keep the traditional three-hour Eucharistic fast and abstain from meat every Friday of the year. They do so not because they believe themselves bound by laws no longer in force, but because the Mass is something to be lived, not merely preserved.

The more we allow the Mass to shape our lives, the more we discover that the Church's traditional disciplines are not burdens inherited from another age, but time-tested means of sanctification in a world that has largely forgotten the value of discipline, sacrifice, morals and ultimately God.

God bless you,

CUM PETRO

The Newsletter of the Confraternity of St. Peter

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The Confraternity of St. Peter

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The Rediscovery of Ember Days

Originally published on Claves.org.

by Abbé Hubert Bizard, FSSP

Ember Days are among the oldest traditions of the Roman liturgy, initially appearing three times through the liturgical year, since Lent itself was recognized as the fourth season of Ember Days.

According to Dom Guéranger, this practice can be traced "to a number of practices that the Church absorbed from the Synagogue: for the prophet Zachariah speaks of fasting on the fourth, fifth, seventh, and tenth months [of the year]. The introduction of this practice in the Church seems to go as far as the apostolic times."[1]

The Roots of Ember Days

In the Hebrew scrolls of Qumran, discovered near the Dead Sea in 1947 (hence the name "Dead Sea Scrolls"), which would have been contemporary to Christ's earthly life, the practice of special prayers for different times of the year is indicated already. This is likely the reason why Saint Leo the Great points at their apostolic origin. And though first Christians would generally refrain from imitating various modes of pagan religions, they could still retain the familiar rhythms of prayer after their conversion.

Indeed, the Early Church did have a practice of going on a kind of retreat thrice a year, during the fourth, seventh, and tenth months, for about a week, which in turn would be dedicated to fasting and prayer. These were integrated into the liturgy by Saint Calixtus, who was Pope from 217 to 222. Saint Leo the Great dedicated to these retreats about 20 sermons in the 7th century—he is also without a doubt the author of the collects and prefaces of Ember Days, found in the Leonine Sacramentary (French text at claves.org). He would invite Christians to engage in these solemn fasts by mortification of body and soul, calling them to pass their autumn Ember Day Saturday keeping vigil in the Saint Peter Basilica.[2] We should make a note that Wednesdays and Fridays were already traditionally fasting days; however, sometimes they would be extended into Saturdays throughout a practice resembling an Easter Vigil. This liturgy would similarly contain 6 to 12 readings, and it would finish so late in the night that taking part in such a vigil would fulfill a normal Sunday obligation, sharing the same Gospel reading. In other words, it was what we would call today a "Vigil Mass", though it lasted for several hours.

A Time of Fasting and Prayer

The weeks of fasting and prayer on Ember Days would be spaced out by about three months each, in the summer, autumn, and winter. Those were the only days of the liturgical year apart from Sundays and Lent that had their own Masses, being the formal periods of prayer and fasting in the Church. The need for these mortifications is brought to our attention by the liturgy: the reason is found in our own fragility, which in turn calls us to abstain from material things, to persevere in preserving ourselves from sin.

> *Praesta quaesumus Domine, sic nos ab epulis abstinere carnalibus : ut a vitiis irruentibus pariter jejunemus.*[3]

The Gospel of the Ember Day Saturday mentions the healing of a hemmoraging woman, afflicted for 18 years: "the image of our nature, that, deprived of the original uprightness and burdened by its own weight, is no longer capable to reach the Heaven by herself." [4]

A Seasonal Agricultural Celebration

In addition to penance, these days would be similarly marked by the theme of thanksgiving for wheat, wine, and oil harvests, with each crop being given attention in different seasons. There is an opinion that Ember Days originated from the harvest celebrations of Ancient Rome. It is quite possible, in fact, since, if Christians did refrain from imitating the modes of pagan religions, they would often Christianize them, as is the case with Rogations (French text at claves.org). So they might have kept these particular times of prayer that were already in existence for each season, subsequently Christianizing them. Romans had the habit of praying during these times; it was then the matter of not only keeping this good habit, but also of making it Christian, thus rendering the previous prayer better. This possibly pagan origin similarly parallels the Hebrew tradition declared by Prophet Zachariah (Zachariah 8 :19) of praying during the fourth, fifth, seventh, and tenth months, accompanied with specific spiritual exercises, connected to the time of the year since the time immemorial.

Day of Ordinations

Ember Days also have a particular connection with the ordinations which would take place on the Ember Day Saturdays, announced ordinarily on Wednesday to the Roman

population from the basilica Santa Maria Maggiore. On Friday, in the Basilica of the Holy Apostles, the candidates would be presented to the people in ord er that the public could attest to the readiness of each man to receive Holy Orders—as the bishop reminds in the traditional ceremony of ordination, opposition to the ordination of a particular candidate could have been expressed. On Saturday, regardless of the ordinations taking place or not, the Mass would be celebrated at the Saint Peter's Basilica. During this Mass, different orders would be conferred respectively during the ceremony, taking up much of the day into the night. The order would be the following: tonsure would be conferred after Kyrie, then would follow the minor orders, porter after the first reading, lector after the second reading, exorcist after the third one, acolyte after the fourth one, following then with the major orders, with subdeacons being ordained after the fifth reading, deacons after the epistle, and priestly ordinations happening before the last verse of the tract.

Ember Days Throughout the Year

Ember Days in September are the only ones that have retained their ancient structure: they would conclude the time of harvest, and this agricultural reference remains explicit throughout the liturgy. For Saint Leo, this time was the extension of the great fast of Yom Kippur among the Jews, as reminded by the first reading of the Saturday. As the Pope put it himself:

> "The economy of God's mercy, that Our Savior has put in place for the restauration of the human race, has been […] divinely ordained in such a way that the Gospel of grace, in lifting the veil of the law, has not abolished the practices. Thus we must apply these words of the Lord, according to which, He did not come to abolish the law, but to fulfill it, in such a way that we too must obey this rule, as much as we can with God's help; since we know that we must neglect nothing in the practices of the Old Testament, as long as by acting in such a way we dedicate ourselves carefully to acknowledge, on one hand, what is hidden under the veil and was meant to disappear, and on the other hand, what was established there to last." [5]

The Ember Days of Pentecost have also kept the references to the time of the year; however, there were notable prayers added in the end of the 6th century, which have rendered more explicit the connection with Pentecost. According to Saint Leo, this fast was meant to do reparation for the sins committed during the Pascal season, during which penance was suspended, thus allowing the faithful to benefit more from the graces of Pentecost.[6]

The Ember Days of Advent do not shy away from agricultural references, underscored once again by Saint Leo the Great,[7] notably with thanksgiving for the completion of the harvest season. But the texts are filled with allusions to the arrival of Christ, grounding us in preparation for Christmas, with all the readings taken from Isaiah and the Gospels recounting Christ's coming.

Ember Days of Lent are, on the other hand, completely immersed in their season: there is no reference to harvest or ordinations.

Ember Days in the New Liturgy

What remains of the Ember Days in the new liturgical calendar of the 1969 Missal? For many, this ancient tradition appears to have disappeared entirely. However, the main coordinator of the group of experts for the liturgy reform designated by Pope Paul VI previewed that the Ember Days "[are to be] celebrated during the times and the days to be established by episcopal conferences, in order that they may be in harmony with the seasons and thus corresponding veritably to the objectives for which they were instituted".[8] During the audience given by Paul VI to Fr. Annibale Bugnini on November 6, 1971, the Pope insisted that the Ember Days should be definitively prescribed by episcopal conferences, and that they would be designated as the days of prayer for religious vocations.[9]

References

1. DOM PROSPER GUÉRANGER, *L'année liturgique*, L'Avent, Ed. Oudin, Paris, 1900, p. 228
2. DOM E. FLICOTEAUX, *Le sens du Carême*, Ed. du Cerf, Paris, 1958, p. 129-130
3. The Collect of the Saturday of Autumn Ember Days: we beseech Thee, oh Lord, to bestow upon us the practice of abstinence from meat in such a way that we may similarly fast from the sins that afflict us. (NB: translator's rendition)
4. SAINT GREGORY THE GREAT, Saturday of the September Ember Days, the former third lessons at Matins.
5. SAINT LEO THE GREAT, Sermons, T. IV, « *coll. Sources chrétiennes*, n. 200, » Ed. du Cerf, Paris, 1973, p. 217-221.
6. SAINT LEO THE GREAT, Sermon 78,3
7. SAINT LEO THE GREAT, Sermon 13

8., 9. ANNIBALE BUGNINI, *La réforme de la liturgie* (1948-1975), Ed. Desclée de Brouwer, Paris, 2015, p. 346.

Further Reading: What Does Septuagesima Mean? (article in French on claves.org)

Fr. Hubert Bizard, FSSP
Fr. Bizard was ordained in 1998 and is currently serving as General Vicar of the FSSP in Fribourg, Switzerland.

Detraction: Part II

Christian Speech and the Great Power of the Tongue

by Fr. Joseph Marie Falciano, FSSP

Last time, we reflected on the gift of speech and the communion, kindness, and education that speech makes possible. Seeing its greatness helps us understand the harm to ourselves and others caused by its misuse. Now, focusing on falling short of this great faculty, let's better learn how to enjoy the gift of speech.

Because each person has a natural right to a good name, people consider their reputation more important than any of their material possessions. So, harming someone's reputation is more serious than stealing, even, their money or belongings. Sins of speech, then, can be very serious; they can easily involve "grave matter." Given that, let's review what makes a sin to be a "mortal" sin (sins by which we forfeit sanctifying grace).

As the *Catechism* teaches, there are three elements which, together, make up a mortal sin (CCC 1857):

- Grave matter: an objectively serious violation of God's law, or an act which is genuinely thought to be one: "**What** I'm doing is **seriously** bad."
- Full knowledge: a clear-headed awareness of the action's sinfulness, in some way—rather than some legitimate confusion about how wrong it is (or whether it's wrong, at all): "I **know** that this is wrong."
- Deliberate consent: free, self-aware choice of performing the action—rather than ignorance or mere thoughtlessness: "I'm **choosing** to do **this**."

It's important here to avoid both scrupulosity and carelessness. Applying these conditions requires straightforward honesty and common sense: Was this bad? Did I know, certainly, that it was bad? Did I choose it anyway? If, honestly, these three elements are present, immediately make a little act of contrition, seek confession

promptly so that we may receive holy communion again as soon as possible, and always remember that Jesus loves us and forgives our sins the moment that we repent.

Much of the time, these acts are "venial" sins: not intending serious harm, or kidding around, or blurting something out. That said, sins of the tongue can involve grave matter if intended to inflict serious harm on someone's good name. Even so, remember that grave matter alone does not make a mortal sin.

Our venial sins are remitted by repentance accompanied by acts like taking holy water, receiving the Eucharist, praying for God's forgiveness (such as in the Our Father or in the Psalms), and really any act of love for God. Remember what St. Paul taught us last time: "Whatever is true, honorable, just, pure, pleasing, commendable…any excellence, anything worthy of praise, think about these things" (Phil. 4:8). Our sins are not one of these things, and we shouldn't let worries about them predominate our thoughts. Further, we are only responsible for the level of knowledge we possess at the time of our decisions. Learning today does not make yesterday's sins retroactively worse. When we've already confessed things to the best of our ability and, at the time of the sin, had some decent reason to be ignorant that something was a grave sin, we should just move on. If we, with simplicity, judge that we knew what we were doing was wrong but lacked this articulation with which to confess it, simply bring up the sin at your next confession (and you should not avoid communion before then). All in all, there's no reason to become anxious.

Like theft, sins of speech ordinarily require restoring the good name we've torn down. If we've willingly damaged someone's good name, we should repair it as we are reasonably able. If it's physically impossible to do so (e.g., the offended party moves away beyond reach; you lose your ability to communicate due to sickness, etc.), or if the offended person forgives the debt expressly or implicitly, or if making things right would genuinely cause more harm than good (e.g., it'd renew an old forgotten feud), or it would require a disproportionate effort, or it would entail the loss of some greater good: such as someone's life, health, liberty, or one's own necessary reputation (e.g., getting fired from the job we need to provide for our children's nourishment), the obligation to do so ceases.

Jesus Himself says that a man who insults his brother is deserving of hell (Matt. 5:22). When we speak ill of our neighbor in their presence, with the intention of hurting their reputation (in a slight way: venial; in order to inflict serious disgrace: grave)—by, for example, making someone the target of a disrespectful joke, we must restore their reputation by apologizing. This apology, ideally, is public and in the presence of those there for the insult. In slight matters, lesser forms of apology (e.g., acts of kindness, etc.) suffice.

When we reveal a neighbor's true (but hidden) failings to others behind their backs, we restore the reputation by praising the person's other virtues or suggesting that the fault mentioned by us was an exception to their character, if we can say so truthfully. When we lie about a person's failings, we restore the good name by retracting the lie to those to whom we told it (if possible). Slander causes injury even if it is only by culpable negligence (e.g., we spread rumors without first checking the facts), so long as the bad consequences were foreseeable and resulted from the rumor.

These sins of the tongue are more serious when we specifically intend to destroy friendships (e.g., lying to divide a husband and wife) or encourage others to sin (e.g., telling impure jokes to normalize sinful behavior or reduce feelings of guilt). These are more serious because the motive is specifically to tear down communion (between men in the first case, between man & God in the second)—it's a more on-the-nose disordering of our power to speak. We make things right by reconciling the parties, restoring peace.

The seriousness of these sins also depends upon the persons concerned. Though the internet has normalized the criticism of both civil and church leaders, it is actually more serious to disrespect a public, important person than someone of equal status. This is because public persons have a greater right to honor and a good name due to their proximity to greater affairs. This does not mean that they are beyond criticism, but it does mean that we should recognize the importance of their position in society and act accordingly. Leaders may be honestly and respectfully criticized for the common good—not for gossip or self-importance.

These sins are most difficult to avoid when: we are upset, or we are in conversations where others are speaking poorly of another. In the first case, expressing our frustrations and concerns to unburden our hearts is a good thing. A friend's sympathy brings relief by shouldering the mental burden with us and providing the pleasure that we are loved. We should limit, however, the number of people with whom we do this. God, our closest friend, and someone we go to for advice are usually sufficient. We should keep things truthful and clear. Limiting the number of people to whom we tell the things afflicting us will also have the benefit of getting us to think about it less, which we often need to do to ground ourselves. In the second case, all we need to ask is, "Do I need to be in this situation?" Sometimes the answer

is no (e.g., in a circle of friends at a party)—in which case, we walk away. Sometimes, though, the answer is yes (e.g., in the workplace; in a situation where walking away would seriously ruin necessary relationships). In these cases, when we judge there to be some proportionately serious reason to be present to these conversations and foresee them, we must take spiritual means to fortify ourselves ahead of time:

> *"Whatever is true, honorable, just, pure, pleasing, commendable… any excellence, anything worthy of praise, think about these things" (Phil. 4:8).*

mental prayer, frequenting the sacraments, doing daily spiritual reading, making firm resolutions, fasting. In these cases, after taking means to avoid future sin, we should just desire the good aspect of the situation (e.g., peace in the workplace) and not the bad (e.g., a co-worker going on an uncalled-for tirade), nor the good coming through the bad (e.g., the only reason my co-worker likes me is because I listen to his complaints). We should also offer implicit (such as silence) or explicit resistance to what the person is saying as we judge ourselves to be able.

Let's say I struggle with these sins now. Whenever we are addicted to a sin, we are looking to experience pleasure and to avoid pain. There's a twofold remedy, then. The first step is to get a healthier pleasure. For those of us who are drawn to gossip or to scandalous news, literature provides interesting stories to discuss with friends and reflect on together (building up communion), without any risk to someone's good name. The second is to learn that not all pain is bad. If we are undergoing a difficult situation, we can become more like Jesus as He carried the Cross. In all sufferings, we cannot see the benefit in the midst of it, but when we approach the situation with great love, looking back, we will.

We have different ways of misusing our speech, all of which pervert and inflame our very good social nature and the gift of speech. By misusing our tongue, something made to unite us to God and one another, something made to share the greatest goods and ideas, becomes warped. They can be serious. They can be slight. Both cause us to live less by love. We rebuild what is broken when we restore a person's good name, in a variety of ways and according to our ability. Through good friendships, discretion, and good interests—like reading novels—we can return to the proper use of this great power given to us by God.

Detraction: Part I was published in the Easter 2026 issue of Cum Petro.

Rev. Joseph Marie Falciano, FSSP
Fr. Falciano was ordained to the priesthood on May 28, 2026 and is currently stationed at Holy Ghost Parish in Bethlehem, PA. He asks for your prayers.

INTENTIONS FROM THE PRIEST PRAYER CARD

Fr. James O'Reilly, FSSP is a Clerical Candidate for the Fraternity currently serving as one of the Parochial Vicars at Mater Dei in Irving, Texas. He is on the prayer card for Sept. 30th. He was ordained for the Diocese of Richmond in June 2018 and later discerned a calling to live out the Apostolic Aim of the FSSP. Fr. O'Reilly was released to the FSSP in 2023 and assigned to St. Vitus parish in Los Angeles. He has also supported Catholic artists as chaplain for the Thomistic Artists Guild based in LA. He asks that you pray for all FSSP candidates, incoming converts to the Catholic Faith, and for everyone to use their gifts and talents to honor God.

SEPTEMBER 2026

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
		1 Pope Leo XIV	2 Rev. Fr. Anthony Ike	3 Very Rev. John Berg, Sup. Gen.	4 Rev. Fr. Duarte Cabral Moncada	5 Deceased FSSP Members
6 Rev. Fr. Mark Fischer	7 Rev. Fr. Philip Wolfe	8 Fr. William Lawrence, Provincial Superior	9 Rev. Fr. Evaristus Eshiowu	10 Very Rev. Josef Bisig, Rector	11 †Rev. Fr. Nicholas Zolnerowicz	12 Rev. Fr. Anthony Rice
13 Rev. Fr. William Rock	14 Rev. Fr. Vincent Huber	15 Rev. Fr. Simon Zurita	16 Rev. Fr. Frank Furman	17 Rev. Fr. Nick Rettino-Parazelli	18 Rev. Fr. Ian Bozant	19 Rev. Fr. Gregory Eichman
20 Rev. Fr. Manuel de Pinho-Sousa	21 Rev. Fr. Zachary Barry	22 Rev. Fr. Toan Cao	23 Rev. Fr. John Brancich	24 Rev. Fr. Timothy van Zee	25 Rev. Fr. Joseph Orlowski	26 Rev. Fr. Jacques Breton
27 Rev. Fr. Christopher Blust	28 Rev. Fr. Mark Wojdelski	29 Rev. Fr. Joel Kiefer	30 Rev. Fr. James O'Reilly			

Prayer for Priests

to be said by members of the Confraternity of St. Peter

Following a decade of the rosary:

V. Remember, O Lord, Thy congregation.

R. Which Thou hast possessed from the beginning.

Let us pray.

O Lord Jesus, born to give testimony to the Truth, Thou who lovest unto the end those whom Thou hast chosen, kindly hear our prayers for our pastors. Thou who knowest all things, knowest that they love Thee and can do all things in Thee who strengthenest them. Sanctify them in Truth. Pour into them, we beseech Thee, the Spirit whom Thou didst give to Thy apostles, who would make them, in all things, like unto Thee. Receive the homage of love which they offer up to Thee, who hast graciously received the threefold confession of Peter.

And so that a pure oblation may everywhere be offered without ceasing unto the Most Holy Trinity, graciously enrich their number and keep them in Thy love, who art one with the Father and the Holy Ghost, to whom be glory and honour forever. Amen.

Obligations of the Members of the Confraternity

Members commit themselves to:

daily 1) pray one decade of the holy rosary for the sanctification of our priests and for our priestly vocations

2) recite the Prayer of the Confraternity

yearly 3) have the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass offered once for these intentions.

To Enroll Now: