Jesus Didn’t Teach Spelling

As the youngest students in elementary school learn how to write, they use big pencils that work well with little hands. Writing their names or short words, they concentrate on writing on the line. One kindergartner, Andy, wrote his name in a square with AD on top and YN directly underneath.

He knew how to spell his name, A-N-D-Y. He just had to start far enough from the paper’s edge to fit it on one line. Surely, the cooperative little guy would take the teaching to heart.

In the Book of Jeremiah, God promised that the days would come for a new covenant, when He would write His law upon people’s hearts. By the time Jesus came on the scene, Mosaic Law encompassed 600-plus tenets—not just the ten easy-to-remember Commandments. The laws covered civil matters, ceremonial rituals, and moral obligations. Pharisees, including Nicodemus, bristled at Jesus’ teachings, despite seeing the signs and wonders that the Lord worked. No one else taught the way Jesus did.

Little Andy got stars on his schoolwork, but everything still had his name in a square at the top. Huh. It presented a quandary. The teacher couldn’t say that she wouldn’t know it was Andy’s paper if he didn’t write his name all in a row. She could spot his pictures and worksheets right off the bat. Telling him to write his name the way everyone else did seemed like a lesson in conformity, not creativity. She wouldn’t teach like the Pharisees. Andy had written his name on her heart.

The Lord calls each of us by name with hope that we will welcome Him into our hearts. Through your Lenten offering and faith-filled prayer during the TV and online Mass, you will give glory to His name.

Fr. Mark
The Hill of Crosses

At his daughter’s sickbed, a Lithuanian farmer believed the message in a dream that God would reward his faith if he built a large, wooden cross and placed it on a certain hill. The daughter was healed. In another legend of how the Hill of Crosses came to be, a man promised to put a cross on the hill if God cured him.

Lithuania, a small country in northern Europe, seceded from the former USSR. In a symbol of faith and national unity, Crosses on the hill have often honored fallen soldiers.

Three times from 1961 to 1975, occupying forces destroyed the Hill of Crosses in an effort to quash rebellion and Catholic beliefs. Three times, the faithful built the Hill of Crosses up again.

In the Gospel for the Third Sunday of Lent, people asked Jesus for a sign of His authority to drive merchants out of the temple area and ransack the marketplace. The Lord responded that if they destroyed the temple, He would raise it up again in three days. People scoffed. No one imagined that He meant the temple of His body.

Scripture portrays the Lord struggling to carry His Cross. Simon of Cyrene got pressed into helping.

On the Hill of Crosses, small crucifixes and rosaries drape larger monuments. We can place our hopes, large or small, on our Savior. Through grace and the blessing of people who help us along the way, we never carry our crosses alone!

The Lord’s Cross offered short-lived hope for people who wanted Jesus out of the way. After the Resurrection, that same Cross became a sign of the way to live.

Among an estimated 100,000 or more crosses and other religious objects now on the Hill of Crosses, there stands a cross donated by Saint John Paul II. The inscription thanks the Lithuanian people for making their faith visible to the world.

Pilgrims continue to visit the Hill of Crosses. The testament to faith continues to grow—a reminder to make our faith visible, too.

During Lent, where do you hope to cross paths with Jesus?

St. Paul’s Letter to the Ephesians assures us that God creates people to do good works. The season of Lent provides a perfect time to do something good.

“Prayer and penance work wonders for us spiritually, but we can go a step further,” explained Fr. Mark Payne, chaplain for Heart of the Nation. “Take the example of giving up deserts for Lent. The sacrifice reminds us of Jesus’ time of prayer and hunger in the desert. That’s great. If we donate the money saved, that’s even greater!”

Please prayerfully consider all the good that your donation, monthly pledge, or even an increased pledge to Heart of the Nation will do. Your generosity can help feed the spiritually hungry.

Perfect Timing
As Lent continues, more questions and answers about Catholic observances during this holy season may offer reminders of what you learned many years ago and some new knowledge to boot.

1. What is *Laetare* Sunday?
   *Laetare* means “rejoice” in Latin. On the fourth Sunday of Lent, rose-colored vestments and flowers placed on the altar offer signs of encouragement in the middle of this penitential season.

2. Which Sacrament is most closely associated with Lent?
The Baptismal promises reject evil and express belief in the triune God, the Catholic Church, the communion of saints, forgiveness of sins, and resurrection to everlasting life. At the Easter Vigil, Catechumens are Baptized and Confirmed as new members of the Church, while others at the Vigil renew these promises.

3. On the Sundays of Lent, does anything different happen at Mass?
   During Lent, with its down-to-earth focus on penance during our earthly days, Catholics do not pray the angelic Gloria or “Alleluia” in Responsorial Psalms or before the Gospel.

4. What changes occur in Catholic churches on Holy Thursday?
   After Communion, consecrated hosts for the liturgy on Good Friday, viaticum if needed, and Eucharistic adoration are carried to a “place of repose.” The empty tabernacle in church is left open, with the tabernacle light (candle) extinguished. The altar is left bare.

5. What is the place of repose?
   In a separate chapel, or in church but not within the altar sanctuary, consecrated hosts are enclosed in a tabernacle. Unlike the bare altar, the location (place of repose) is suitably adorned with drapery, flowers, and lit candles. Although present for adoration, the Eucharist is not exposed.

6. Why does the priest skip consecration of the bread and wine on Good Friday?
   Liturgically, the Church regards the Easter Triduum as one day, although it lasts for three calendar days. The Mass on Holy Thursday does not conclude as usual because the liturgical celebration continues on Good Friday. No daily Mass takes place on Holy Saturday before the Easter Vigil.

7. How long does the liturgical Easter season last?
   The season’s 50 days begin on Easter Sunday and end on Pentecost. The liturgical season of Lent ends just before the Mass of the Lord’s supper on Holy Thursday (44 days). Penitential days of Lent extend through Holy Saturday (46 days, or 40 not counting Sundays).
With gratitude, Heart of the Nation welcomes new members to the Circle of the Heart monthly giving club. As a member, you will be included in prayers placed before the altar for every Sunday TV Mass. To join, please mark the box on your donation envelope, and indicate the amount of your pledge. (If you need to change or cancel your pledge, just call, e-mail, or send a note to Heart of the Nation.) Thank you!

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**Prayer on the Solemnity Of St. Joseph (March 19)**

St. Joseph and Mary, Please join in prayer That in the struggles I face, The Lord will bless me with Steadfast faithfulness, Unwavering hope, And saving grace. Amen.

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