

OUR LADY OF MERCY PARISH

Father Anthony Hewitt, JCL, Pastor

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Mass Schedule:

Saturday:	5:00 pm
Sunday:	9:00 & 10:30 am
Mon-Friday:	8:00 am
First Saturday Anointing:	After 5:00 pm vigil
Sacrament of Penance:	By appointment
Parish website address:	ourladyofmercy.church
Online Giving:	ourladyofmercy.church
Father Anthony email:	anthony.hewitt@olomcc.org
Office Hours, Monday – Friday:	8:00am-4:00 pm
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TWENTY-NINTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, OCTOBER 18, 2026

Gospel of Matthew Reflection

The Pharisees went off and plotted how they might entrap him in speech. They sent their disciples to him, with the Herodians, saying, “Teacher, we know that you are a truthful man and that you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. And you are not concerned with anyone’s opinion, for you do not regard a person’s status. Tell us, then, what is your opinion: Is it lawful to pay the census tax to Caesar or not?” Matthew 22:15–17

The Herodians were a political group who supported the rule of Herod Antipas and his dynasty. They favored collaboration with the Roman Empire and upheld the Herodian line as the legitimate rulers over Judea. For the sake of national stability, they promoted political compromise. The Pharisees, on the other hand, were a religious sect devoted to the Law of Moses and the strict observance of Jewish customs, though often corrupted by legalism. They viewed Gentile rule as a threat to the sanctity of God’s covenant and wielded great influence over the people due to their outward piety and perceived religious authority.

Given their stark political and theological differences, the alliance formed between the Pharisees and the Herodians in their plot against Jesus is both startling and revealing. Despite their longstanding enmity, they found common ground in their mutual hatred of Jesus. The Pharisees sought to undermine His credibility among the people, while the Herodians hoped to present Him as a threat to Roman authority. Together, they constructed a trap, hoping Jesus would either speak against the Law or against Caesar—either of which would serve their purposes.

Hatred, envy, jealousy, pride, and self-righteousness can forge what appears to be unity—even among rivals—but it is a unity rooted in darkness, a counterfeit communion built on shared agendas rather than truth. It is the kind of alliance in which Satan himself rejoices. Such false unity always unravels. Anything built on pride and sin cannot stand. Unity can only endure where truth, humility, and love prevail.

As we look around us, we see many such counterfeit alliances formed not by shared conviction in what is good and true, but by convenience in opposing what threatens personal influence or power. Individuals and groups unite to silence voices that speak uncomfortable truths. This is frequently seen in politics and culture but is also tragically found even within the Church. In every case, truth is twisted, motives are

disguised, and God's pure and holy will becomes the object of attack. When such unholy alliances take root within the Church, they do grave damage to our common mission to proclaim the Gospel in truth. True Christian unity is not grounded in shared ambitions or human agendas, but in the Person of Jesus Christ. It is expressed through charity, humility, and fidelity to God's will. It is not built on calculation or convenience but on the self-emptying love of Christ, who calls us to die to self and live for Him. Our only agenda must be that God be glorified and His children drawn into His glory and sanctification. As members of His Body, the Church, our unity must reflect the communion of the Most Holy Trinity, rooted in divine love, not in political expediency or pride.

Reflect today on the unity to which we are called. Do we form alliances based on personal ambition or on wholehearted worship of God? Reflect especially upon our involvement within the Church and consider whether, even unintentionally, we act more like a politician or lobbyist than a true disciple of Christ. Commit ourselves not to an agenda, but to Jesus. Worship Him, surrender our life to Him, and allow Him to unite us with other members of His Body, the Church. Such unity is the only unity that endures all things and bears lasting fruit. Amen.

Second Collection today is for World Mission Sunday

Respect Life Month

Pregnancy Solutions Annual Galas - November 3rd (Venice) and 5th (Punta Gorda)

A BIG thank you for your generous Lenten donations and prayers! The Baby Boutiques at Pregnancy Solutions received an abundance of gifts! Learn more about their support programs at the upcoming Galas: November 3 (Venice) and 5 (Punta Gorda) at 6 pm. Dinner is free; donations support parents facing unplanned pregnancies. We hope to have Our Lady of Mercy tables at the Galas—invite your friends! **Register by October 23.** To sign up or for information, contact Ainslye Gilligan (770-596-6266, ainslyelou@gmail.com) or Amy Maxson (920-216-0350, amysmaxson@yahoo.com). Thank you for your continued prayers!



DIOCESE of VENICE

ABORTION HEALING

COMPASSIONATE SUPPORT

IN SOUTHWEST FLORIDA

Confidential Support and Upcoming One-Day Retreat in October

If you know someone struggling because of abortion(s) in their past, please encourage them to make that call which can give them peace and relief!

Call or text in English or Espanol: 941.412.5860

project rachel
HOPE

Project Rachel One-Day Retreat - October 28. If you know someone struggling because of abortion in their past, this retreat on **October 28** can give peace and relief. For information, confidential and compassionate support contact Sylvia, Diocese of Venice, 941-412-5860.

Our Lady of Mercy Catholic Faith Appeal 2026

Parish assessment this year is \$144,000 (\$122,364.74 collected as of October 5) Envelopes are available at the front of the church. Please make checks payable to the *Catholic Faith Appeal* and in the memo write *Our Lady of Mercy Parish* so that we receive proper credit for your donation. Every dollar given to the CFA helps us reach our goal. May God continue to bless our generous parish. We are hopeful that 100% of our Parish community will respond to the 2026 Catholic Faith Appeal to successfully meet and perhaps exceed our goal. Please prayerfully consider giving to the Annual Catholic Faith Appeal 2026, with a pledge or one-time gift.