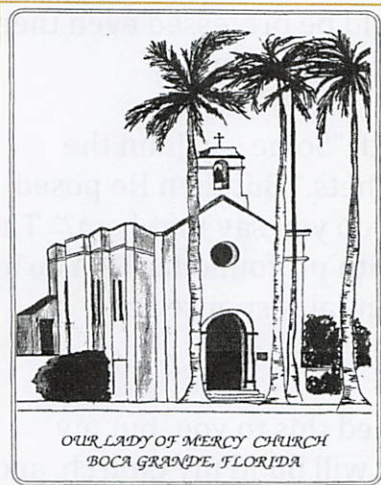




OUR LADY OF MERCY PARISH

Father Anthony Hewitt, JCL, Pastor

Mailing Address: P.O. Box 181, Boca Grande, Florida 33921

(941) 964 - 2254

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

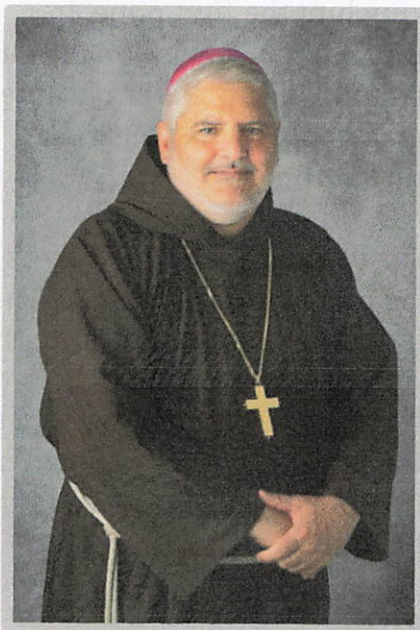
Office Hours, Monday – Friday:

8:00am-4:00 pm

Business Manager Erin Sifrit:

erin.sifrit@olomcc.org

TWENTY FIRST SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, AUGUST 23, 2026



Thursday, August 27, 2026

Emilio E. Biosca, O.F.M. Cap.

**Bishop of the Diocese of Venice in Florida
will celebrate the 10 am Mass.**



August 27, 2026, there will be no 8:00 am Mass.

Following the celebration of the Holy Mass we will have a reception in the Parish Life Center. All are invited to attend and to meet and greet our new bishop. There is a book at the entrance of the church where you are invited to write a welcome message to our new bishop. This book will be presented to him at the end of the reception.

Gospel of Matthew Reflection

The symbolism associated with Caesarea Philippi is central to today's Gospel. Located north of Jesus' home base in Capernaum, it was a predominantly pagan city known for its shrines to false gods. One of the most prominent was Pan, after whom the region was named Panias (later Banias). Pan, a Greek god, was honored at a shrine near a large cave and spring considered the entrance to Hades. Pan was the god of nature, shepherds, flocks, wild places, fertility, and rustic music, and was often depicted as half man, half goat, with horns and hooves. He played the pan flute and was associated with lust, chaos, and sudden fear—from which we got the word panic.

Additionally, the city was the site of a temple dedicated to the late emperor, Caesar Augustus, who was worshiped as a god throughout the Roman Empire. It was into this spiritually dark pagan setting that Jesus led His disciples—on what may have been a two-day journey—for what culminated in a single, monumental question.

Jesus took the Twelve away from the comfort of their familiar fishing village and Jewish neighbors for a reason. He wanted them to answer His question not during the familiar and safe, but in a

place marked by spiritual confusion and idolatry. Why? So that faith could be professed even there, and divine grace could confront the darkness that permeated the region.



At first, He asked who the people said He was. They answered, "Some say John the Baptist, others Elijah, still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." But then He posed the question that reached the heart of His mission: "But who do you say that I am?" This was a moment of divine testing—one which Simon passed with profound faith: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus' extraordinary and consequential response has enduring significance to this day. He declared:

"Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah. For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my heavenly Father. And so I say to you, you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys to the kingdom of heaven. Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Matthew 16:17-19).

With these sacred words, Jesus founded His Church upon Peter, making him the first pope. In biblical tradition, a change of name signifies a new mission and identity. Simon, son of Jonah, was now to be called Peter—Petros in Greek and Cephas in Aramaic—meaning "rock." Peter became the solid foundation upon which Christ's Church would be built. No pagan power, false god, or earthly ruler would ever overcome what Christ established with divine authority.

Reflect today on the significance of papacy. Even now, in the successor of Saint Peter, the words of Simon continue to echo throughout the world: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." This is the pope's first and most important duty—to bear witness to Christ, the Son of God. Despite the personal weaknesses of some popes and the saintliness of others, it is Jesus who established Peter and his successors as the visible foundation of the Church. Pray for the Holy Father and trust in the timeless witness of every pope since that first moment in Caesarea Philippi—a witness upheld not by human strength, but by Christ's own promise. To profess faith in the papacy is to profess faith in the One who instituted it and endowed it with His divine authority. Amen.

Our Lady of Mercy Catholic Faith Appeal 2026

Parish assessment this year is \$144,000 (\$118,650.00 collected as of August 17) 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.



Safe Environment Training (SET) - As part of the Safe Environment Program, the Diocese of Venice Requires that all employees and those volunteers who work with children and/or vulnerable adults be fingerprinted and complete online training in SET prior to beginning employment or volunteering. Please visit the Diocese of Venice website. To report any abuse against minors to the Florida Department of Children and Families please call 800-962-2873. Further, if Diocesan personnel or volunteers are involved, notify the Diocesan Victims Assistance Coordinator, Senton, at 941-416-6114.