



# 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-Fri	8:00 am
First Saturday Anointing	After 5:00 pm vigil
Sacrament of Penance	Call the parish office
Parish website address:	<a href="http://ourladyofmercy.church">ourladyofmercy.church</a>
Online Giving:	<a href="http://ourladyofmercy.church">ourladyofmercy.church</a>
Father Anthony email:	<a href="mailto:anthony.hewitt@olomcc.org">anthony.hewitt@olomcc.org</a>

**FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT**

**DECEMBER 22, 2024**

Due to the damage from Hurricanes Helene and Milton to the church  
**Daily and Weekend Mass** will continue to be celebrated in the **Parish Life Center (PLC)**.

Monday-Friday 8:00 am  
Saturday 5:00 pm vigil  
Sunday 9:00 and 10:30 am

## Christmas Season Mass Schedule

Parish Life Center Only

**Tuesday, December 24**

5:00 pm and 8:00 pm

**Wednesday, December 25**

9:00 am and 10:30 am

**Wednesday, January 1, 2025**

9:00 am

## Christmas Message 2024

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

The Prophet Isaiah proclaims, in the first reading from the Midnight Mass of Christmas, 'The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; upon those who dwelt in the land of gloom a light has shone. You have brought them abundant joy and great rejoicing.' and as we hear from St. John's Gospel for Christmas Day, the baby in the manger is none other than the Divine Word born in human flesh, the 'true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world'.

Many of us have experienced a traumatic event and winds and waters of darkness have come and gone. It may have

been a severe health issue, or the hurricanes and their effect, or a death in the family. Perhaps it is anxieties stemming from financial insecurity, or sudden loss of work, or the exhausting demands of caring for a vulnerable loved one. Others may have experienced the end of a relationship, of a family, a broken promise, or an abuse of trust. Our resilience has been tested, others pushed towards poor choices or exhaustion; some may be reaching their breaking point. Now though, we will celebrate, truthfully and joyfully, how into this darkness of sin and its consequences a light has come, 'a light that the darkness could not overpower'. The light among us brings hope.

This beautiful baby boy has been the ever-present light in our lives. The four Gospels: Mathew, Mark, Luke, and John, give us the answers that we need to any question that we have. It will not be a complete answer, as knowledge of everything is not possible while we are here on earth, but the prologue to the Gospel of



John helps us immensely. This child is the 'only Son of the Father full of grace and truth' and 'from His fullness we have, all of us, received'.

The Father's Son, true God from true God, in whom there can be no shadow of falsehood, there is nothing fake or phony. Born of Mary, this child shows us the meaning of being human, both as he lies utterly vulnerable and dependent in the manger, and as he grows up into a mature adult. Here is someone fully alive to love in the practice of the virtues, with the courage that it takes to live in the truth and to speak it. Here is the one utterly unafraid to see the creation as the Father's gift, to accept and return the Father's love for Him and us in the power of the Holy Spirit, to worship the Father in the love He shows His neighbors, friendly or not. This is the example of true charity, justice, mercy, and compassion.

The same Holy Spirit at the creation of the world and all life, the same Holy Spirit that gives us the Church at Pentecost, received in baptism and confirmation. Given fully through the gift of Himself in the Holy Eucharist, is the same Holy Spirit that created the life that is Jesus in the womb and was born, the Word made flesh. The Incarnation.

If we accept His cross, we shall share His resurrection from death to eternal life. 'If any one thirst, let him come to me and drink. He who believes in me, as the scripture has said, out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water' (Jn 7:37-38). However dark it gets, and at times it gets so dark, there is so much to celebrate when we follow the light of Christ ever burning bright just up ahead. Run to the light. Leave the darkness behind. Embrace Jesus. Let Him embrace you.

Have a blessed and merry Christmas!

*Father Anthony*

### **Christmas Giving Tags**

Please return Christmas gifts by December 23rd. Thank you for all the toys, backpacks, gift cards, and other items that you have so generously donated. Many children, parents, and grandparents will have a big smile on their faces on Christmas Day!

**Congratulations Father Anthony:** Father Anthony celebrated his 25th ordination anniversary on October 22, 2024. Due to the hurricane damage, a parish celebration has been postponed until the spring. Watch the bulletin for plans to celebrate in the Parish Life Center once the church repair is complete. A gift of a golf cart for Father Anthony is in the works from the parish community. If you would like to contribute to the ordination gift for father, please contact Angela Steffan, [aksteffan@gmail.com](mailto:aksteffan@gmail.com) or 941-855-1277.

**Anniversary Masses in 2025** - Two Anniversary Masses will be offered in 2025, for married couples celebrating milestone anniversaries (25, 30, 35, 40 years, etc.). On February 1, 2025, an Anniversary Mass will be celebrated at St. Leo the Great Parish in Bonita Springs at 11:00 a.m., and on March 8, 2025, at St. Thomas More Parish in Sarasota, also at 11:00 a.m. Both events will include Mass celebrated by Bishop Frank J. Dewane, followed by a reception, and the availability of a photo with Bishop Dewane. Couples must register through their Parish; registration information is forthcoming and will be mailed to Parishes directly.

**Safe Environment Training** - 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 Safe Environment prior to beginning employment or volunteering. Please visit the Diocese of Venice website for further information. 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, also notify the diocesan Victims Assistance Coordinator, Susan Benton, at 941-416-6114.