



# **OUR LADY OF MERCY PARISH**

Father Anthony Hewitt, JCL Pastor

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(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>

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**SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT**

**DECEMBER 8, 2024**

Due to Hurricanes Helene and Milton damage 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

## **Second Collection today for the Retirement Fund for Religious**

A gift to the parish community is the Advent 2024 book **"Emerge Into Great Joy"** by S. James Meyer.  
One copy per family please.

## **Upcoming Mass Schedule**

Feast of the Immaculate Conception, Holy Day of Obligation  
**Monday, December 9<sup>th</sup>, 2024**  
9:00 am Mass

## **Christmas Giving Stars**

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

In my 25 years of being a priest, at the parishes I have served, with the help of some volunteers, Christmas gift Tags were prepared for the local community. This remarkable opportunity to give gifts to children in the Lee County area has been very successful. Thousands of toys, gift cards, and clothing have been distributed to children who otherwise would have no gifts to call their own on Christmas Day, the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In the vestibule of the parish hall in a basket, you will find Christmas star tags with the age and gender of the child. If you are able, please purchase any age-appropriate toy, clothing, or gift card (Wal-Mart, Target) and bring the gift unwrapped with the tag attached back to the parish hall so that they may be collected and distributed before the Christmas Season begins. All tags and gifts can be returned up to **December 23<sup>rd</sup>**.

Through our generosity as a loving and merciful parish we will be able to bring smiles and laughter to children, parents and grandparents on Christmas Day. They will remember the love of Jesus Christ for the rest of their lives because of what we do for them this season. God bless us all.



## Christmas Season Mass Schedule

Parish Life Center Only

**Tuesday, December 24<sup>th</sup>, 2024**

5:00 pm and 8:00 pm

**Wednesday, December 25<sup>th</sup>, 2024**

9:00 am and 10:30 am

**Wednesday, January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2025**

9:00 am

*"Every valley shall be filled and every mountain and hill shall be made low. The winding roads shall be made straight, and the rough ways made smooth, and all flesh shall see the salvation of God." Luke  
3:5-6*

These, the words of the prophet Isaiah, were spoken about the mission of Saint John the Baptist. John was to "Prepare the way of the Lord" and to "make straight his paths." In prophesying this, Isaiah goes on to give this very descriptive image of John's ministry. It would be one that levels mountains and valleys, straightens every winding road, and smooths out the rough terrain. In other words, John came to remove every obstacle to God, making it easy to encounter the Messiah.

How does John complete this mission? By calling the people of that time to the dry and empty desert where all the false allurements cease to exist. This is done by detachment from the many sins and temptations they faced. Their repentance was an act by which the people humbled themselves before God, admitted their sins and acknowledged their need for a Savior. This humble admission, coupled with the commitment to change their ways, prepared heart after heart for the grace and mercy that came through Christ the Lord.

Today, there are countless obstacles to grace that so many people encounter. Some have been drawn into the satisfactions of earthly riches and material comforts and find little need for God. Others have very little that this world can offer but are consumed with a desire for money and the passing comforts it promises. And still others are drawn into many other forms of sins and false satisfactions. But there are some who are like a dry and deserted desert, just waiting to soak up the gentle rain of God's grace. These are those who have sought to detach themselves from the false promises of this world and remain "empty" and "dry" to be prepared for the abundance of grace when it comes. These holy souls have heeded the call to repentance and have humbly acknowledged their need for the Savior.

Reflect, today, upon whether your soul is like that dry and barren desert, detached from all the false and passing satisfactions of this world, and prepared to soak up the mercy and grace of God alone. Repentance brings forth detachment, and detachment prepares the soul for God. When one is truly detached and free from the many obstacles to God, then the road from God to your soul will be straight and easily traveled. Reflect upon your soul today and where you see unhealthy attachments. Repent with all your heart so that you are among those most fully ready for an abundance of the grace and mercy of God. Amen.