

# 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-Fri**

8:00 am

**First Saturday Anointing**

After 5:00 pm vigil

**Sacrament of Penance**

By appointment

**Parish website address:**

[ourladyofmercy.church](http://ourladyofmercy.church)

**Online Giving:**

[ourladyofmercy.church](http://ourladyofmercy.church)

**Father Anthony email:**

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## FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT FEBRUARY 22, 2026

### Fridays of Lent

3:00 – 4:00 pm Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament

4:00pm Stations of the Cross



### Gospel of Matthew Reflection

*At that time Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. He fasted for forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was hungry. The tempter approached and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command that these stones become loaves of bread." Matthew 4:1-3*

In His great humility and compassion for us, Jesus, the Incarnate Son of God, allowed Himself to endure something that we sinful human beings encounter every day—temptation. God's glorious plan from the beginning included the creation of both humans and pure spirits—angels—to form one glorious Kingdom of God. Original Sin, the fall of the angels, and our struggle against temptation were not part of God's original intention, but they became realities due to the misuse of free will, both by angels and by humans. Free will was necessary for both angels and humans to love God freely, which led to a third of the angels and many humans turning away from Him.

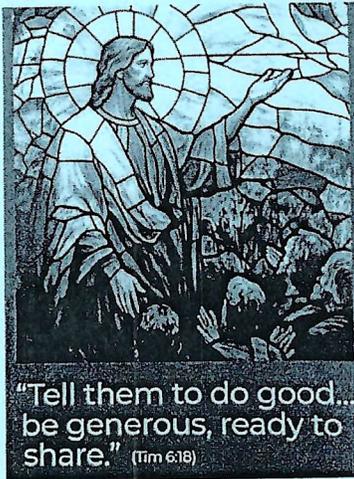
Theologians such as Saint Thomas Aquinas and Saint Augustine offer profound insights into God's original plan for His Kingdom. In that plan, angels were believed to have been tasked with assisting humans in their journey toward perfection through enlightenment and contemplation. Some choirs of angels were tasked with the governance of the cosmos, guiding the physical world in harmony with God's will. Tragically, the fall of a third of the angels, along with the sin of our first parents, Adam and Eve, has resulted in a world filled with struggle and sin. The fallen angels—now demons—use their natural gifts to deceive, confuse, and tempt. Those who were once responsible for guiding the cosmos now seek to sow chaos, contributing to the existence of natural disasters, disease, and death. While Catholic angelology is speculative, based on a limited amount of biblical revelation, it is important to recognize the role of angels and demons as we enter this sacred season of Lent.

Today's Gospel focuses on the activity of the most powerful fallen angel—Satan, originally named Lucifer, meaning "Light-Bearer." Tradition holds that he was among the highest of the angels, possibly a Seraphim. According to Saint Thomas Aquinas, Lucifer's fall resulted from pride: He desired to be a god unto himself, to create and govern according to his own will, refusing to serve God. This cosmic reality, of which both Jesus and Satan were fully aware, sets the stage for and adds profound significance to their encounter in the desert.

In this dramatic confrontation, Jesus, by allowing Himself to be tempted, begins the ultimate defeat of Satan, a victory that will culminate in Jesus' Passion, Death, and Resurrection. This is the only recorded instance in which Jesus permits Satan to tempt Him directly. While Satan remained active throughout Jesus' ministry, seeking to disrupt His mission, this moment in the desert addresses temptation specifically. By rejecting each temptation, Jesus not only demonstrates how to overcome the devil but also empowers humanity with the grace needed to resist temptation through His triumph on the Cross.

As we enter the first full week of Lent, reflect today on the temptations you face in your own life. Though Satan is powerful and highly intelligent, he is no match for the grace of God. By uniting ourselves to Christ, we are strengthened to resist all that Satan, and his demons throw at us. Victory over temptation is not achieved by our own strength but through Christ's grace, which He freely offers to all who turn to Him. Amen.

## Our Lady of Mercy Catholic Faith Appeal 2026



Parish assessment this year is \$144,000. 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. Fr. Anthony

### Catholic Faith Appeal (CFA) Prayer

*O Lord, Giver of Life and Source of Freedom.*

*We know that all we have is received from your hand.*

*Gracious and loving God, you call us to be stewards of your Abundance, the caretakers of all you have entrusted to us.*

*Help us always to use your gifts wisely and teach us to share them generously with those in need. Send the Holy Spirit to work through us, bringing your message to those we serve. May our faithful stewardship be a witness to the love of Jesus Christ in our lives. We pray with grateful hearts in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen*

We are hopeful that 100% of our Parish community will respond to the 2026 Catholic Faith Appeal. With the support of our Parish community, we hope 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.



SCAN TO GIVE

Your support for the Catholic Faith Appeal positively impacts young men discerning the priesthood by allowing the Vocations Office to continue its mission to provide guidance and resources for prospective seminarians to discern and respond to the call to serve Christ and His Church through a priestly ministry.

How to use a QR Code to Donate:

1. Open your smartphone camera and hover over the QR Code.
2. Click the pop up on your smartphone to open the giving webpage.

**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, Susan Benton, at 941-416-6114.