



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

By appointment

Parish website address:

ourladyofmercy.church

Online Giving:

ourladyofmercy.church

Father Anthony email:

anthony.hewitt@olomcc.org

THE BAPTISM OF THE LORD JANUARY 11, 2026

Gospel of Matthew Reflection

Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him. John tried to prevent him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and yet you are coming to me?" Jesus said to him in reply, "Allow it now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he allowed him. Matthew 3:13-15



John the Baptist was the last of the Old Testament prophets, entrusted with the mission to immediately prepare the way for the Messiah. Today's feast marks a pivotal transition from the Old Law to the New. Prior to Jesus' baptism, John's mission was in full motion. With Jesus' baptism, the mission of the Old Testament prophets is fulfilled, and the New Law of grace begins.

Why did Jesus enter the waters of baptism? He was sinless and had no need of repentance. Yet, in His divine wisdom, Jesus chose to be baptized to sanctify the waters, opening the gateway of grace for all who would follow. By entering the waters of baptism, Jesus set a precedent. Every Christian who enters the waters of baptism meets our Lord there, sharing in His life of grace.

Most of us were baptized as infants and have no memory of the event. Others came to baptism later in life, fully aware of the grace they were receiving. Regardless of when it occurred, baptism's effects are profound and enduring. That singular moment of sanctification forever changed us, and its transformative power remains active within us. Jesus meets us under the waters. When baptism is performed it powerfully symbolizes the reality of this encounter. We enter the waters of repentance, as John offered, but we emerge united with Christ. Just as the Father's voice declared at Jesus' baptism, "You are my beloved Son...," so too does the Father continually speak to us after our baptism, affirming our identity as His beloved children. The Holy Spirit descends upon us, and we are offered every gift of the Spirit, provided our hearts remain open.

Baptism occurs only once in our lives and imprints on our souls an "indelible spiritual mark (character)" (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church* #1272 and 1274). This mark configures us to Christ and signifies our permanent belonging to Him and His Church. It cannot be lost or removed, even by mortal sin. However, while this character endures forever, the state of sanctifying grace within our souls can be lost through mortal sin. In such cases, the grace of baptism is restored through the Sacrament of Reconciliation in which our souls are once again cleansed and brought

back into full communion with God. Marked as members of Christ's Body, we are continually disposed to receive sanctifying grace through the other sacraments, if we remain in a state of grace. Baptism enables us to participate fully in the life of grace that flows from Christ. Reflect today on our own baptism. We are forever marked as a child of God. We encountered our Lord under the waters of baptism, were cleansed of all sin, and were filled with sanctifying grace. Though sin diminishes or even extinguishes that grace when it is mortal, the Sacrament of Reconciliation restores it, and the Eucharist and other sacraments increase it. Always return to our baptismal grace, seeking to live out our identity as God's son or daughter, as this sacred mark intends. Amen.

Thank you to all who wished me a Happy Birthday. Your generosity, kindness, and prayers are very much appreciated. God bless, Father Anthony

Second Collection next Weekend January 17 and 18 for the Church in Latin America

January 9, 2026

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Since 1965, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops has helped the Church in Latin America and the Caribbean through an annual collection. The donations received in this collection support pastoral programs throughout Latin America and the Caribbean.

Special priority is given to evangelization, marriage support, and catechetical programs, as well as mission related activities that promote human life and the dignity of all. By contributing to this collection, you aid ministries that train catechists in remote rural areas and build up pastoral programs that address the needs of refugees and victims of natural disasters in that part of the world.

In the Parishes throughout the Diocese of Venice, the Collection for the Church in Latin America will take place the weekend of January 17 & 18, 2026. Please be generous toward this collection and take this opportunity to share your faith with our sisters and brothers in Latin America and the Caribbean. Your generosity truly makes a difference.

I take this opportunity to extend to each of you my blessings in this New Year. Thank you and may God bless you and your family.

Sincerely yours in Christ, + Frank J. Dewane, Bishop of the Diocese of Venice in Florida

A Steward's Way

Women and men who seek to live as stewards learn that "all things work for good for those who love God" (Rom 8:28). After Jesus, we look to Mary as an ideal steward. As the Mother of Christ, she lived her ministry in a spirit of fidelity and service; she responded generously to the call. We must ask ourselves: Do we also wish to be disciples of Jesus Christ and Christian stewards of our world and our Church? Central to our human and Christian vocations, as well as to the unique vocation each one of us receives from God, is that we be good stewards of the gifts we possess. God gives us this divine-human workshop, this world and Church of ours. The Spirit shows us the way. Stewardship is a part of that journey.

<https://www.usccb.org/committees/evangelization-catechesis/stewardship>

Thank you all for your time, talent, and treasure!

