

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

THIRD SUNDAY OF ORDINARY TIME JANUARY 25, 2026

Gospel of Matthew Reflection

When Jesus heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew to Galilee... From that time on, Jesus began to preach and say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

Matthew 4:12, 17

When John the Baptist was arrested, his followers were likely overcome with fear and grief. The man they revered as a prophet, who fearlessly proclaimed the coming of the Messiah and called for repentance through baptism, had been imprisoned. John was arrested by Herod Antipas, the son of Herod the Great, infamous for ordering the massacre of infants in Bethlehem. Like his father, Herod Antipas was ambitious and morally corrupt. As tetrarch of Galilee and Perea under Roman authority, Herod's political survival depended on maintaining Roman favor. He often used religion to secure legitimacy among the Jewish people, though his actions routinely violated Jewish law.



Though nominally Jewish, the Herodian dynasty was of Idumean descent, tracing its lineage to Esau rather than Jacob. The Idumeans were forcibly converted to Judaism between 135–104 BC. While this history granted the Herods a claim to Jewish identity, their foreign lineage and collaboration with Rome made them unpopular with many Jews. Herod Antipas, like his father, prioritized political cunning and personal ambition over genuine adherence to Jewish law.

When John the Baptist emerged on the scene, he proclaimed his message with fearless conviction. His central call was one of repentance and baptism for the forgiveness of sins, urging the people to prepare for the coming of the Messiah. Yet John did not shy away from addressing the moral and spiritual corruption of his time. He famously denounced the Pharisees and Sadducees as a "brood of vipers," rebuking their hypocrisy and lack of genuine repentance. John also boldly condemned Herod Antipas for violating Jewish law by divorcing his wife and marrying Herodias, the wife of his half-brother, Philip. This marriage not only violated Mosaic Law but also reflected Herod's ambitions to consolidate power and status. John's fearless denunciation of sin, even among the powerful, ultimately led to his arrest and eventual martyrdom.

This historical context surrounding John's arrest is crucial because it helps us understand God's providence—how He permits certain evils to occur to bring about a greater good. Jesus

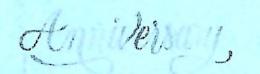
Himself later affirmed John's greatness, saying, "Among those born of women there has been none greater than John the Baptist" (Matthew 11:11). If the Son of God declared John's greatness shortly after John's arrest, why didn't God miraculously free him from persecution? The answer lies in John's mission. He had fulfilled his primary role: preparing the way for the Lord, the "Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). Once John's mission was complete, God permitted him to seal his testimony with his own blood, offering his life as a martyr for the Lord and for the Truth that sets all people free.

Reflect today on John's arrest and consider how we might have reacted if we had been one of his disciples. From an earthly perspective, martyrdom is difficult to comprehend or accept, especially in our own lives or in the lives of those we love. Though John's arrest and subsequent martyrdom likely brought fear and grief to his disciples, shaking their sense of security, from an eternal perspective, John's martyrdom was his greatest act of witness. It fulfilled his mission by pointing his disciples—and all of us—toward the true Prophet and Messiah, Jesus Christ. John is forever glorified in Heaven, and in the end, that is all that truly matters. As we honor John's unwavering faith, seek to embrace God's permissive will in your own life. Even in the face of suffering or evil, trust that God, in His providence, can bring about a greater good if we surrender ourselves fully to Him. Amen.



Mardi Gras Parish Family Potluck Dinner February 17, 2026

RSVP today for the Parish Mardi Gras potluck dinner on February 17th at 5:30-7:00pm in the Parish Life Center. Plan to bring your favorite dish and enjoy the fellowship and fun. Last name is A-J plan to bring an appetizer or salad, last name is K-Z plan to bring an entrée or dessert. Iced Tea, water, and paper products will be provided (BYOB if additional drinks are desired). Reserve a seat today by emailing Anne Scoronski at askoronski@mac.com. Please indicate "OLM Mardi Gras RSVP" in the subject line. In the body of the email please indicate the names of the attendees in your party and the item you plan to bring for the potluck. If you would like to volunteer to help with the event, please indicate it in the email and a committee member will call you back.



Milestone Wedding Anniversary Masses - An invitation is extended to all couples celebrating a milestone wedding anniversary (25, 30, 35, 40, 45, 50 or more years) to join Bishop Frank J. Dewane for an Anniversary Mass in your honor. The Diocese of Venice hosts two Anniversary Masses each year (one in the northern part of the Diocese and the second in the southern part) to accommodate all. The first Mass in 2026 is at 11:00 a.m., **Saturday, Feb. 14**, at St. Leo the Great Parish, 28290 Beaumont Road, Bonita Springs. The second Mass is at 11:00 a.m., **Saturday, March 14**, at St. Thomas More Parish, 2506 Gulf Gate Drive, Sarasota. A luncheon will follow the Mass. Photos with Bishop Dewane will also be provided for each couple. To register for an Anniversary Mass, please contact your local Parish office no later than one week before the Mass you wish to attend. For additional information contact Jim Gontis, 941-484-4754.

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.

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