



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-Friday:

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:

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Office Hours, Monday – Friday:

8:00am-4:00 pm

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THIRTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME JUNE 28, 2026

Saturday Vigil Mass Time Change

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

On Saturday July 11, 2026, our Vigil Mass will be celebrated at 7:00 pm due to the Episcopal Ordination of Bishop Elect Emilio Biosca Aguero, OFM Cap. The ordination will take place at 2:00 pm that day at St. John XXIII Parish in Fort Myers. This is an extraordinary event in the life of our diocese and a true blessing for us all. By moving the Saturday Vigil Mass from 5:00 pm to 7:00 pm this allows me to attend the ordination to concelebrate with my brother priests in giving thanks to God for the gift of the Eucharist. Thank you for understanding and please continue to pray for good and holy men to say yes to the sacred priesthood of Jesus Christ. God bless. Photo: <https://dioceseofvenice.org/bishop-elect/>



Father Anthony

Gospel of Matthew Reflection

Jesus said to his apostles: "Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever does not take up his cross and follow after me is not worthy of me." Matthew 10:37-38

When a scribe approached Jesus and asked Him which of the commandments was the greatest, He replied: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these" (Mark 12:30-31).

Today's Gospel offers a similar teaching: We must love God above all else—even more than father, mother, son, or daughter. By contrasting love for God with love for family, Jesus is not diminishing familial affection; rather, He is revealing that the only way to truly love others is by loving God first.

Saint Thomas Aquinas teaches: "God must be loved above all things and before all others out of charity, for He is loved as the source of happiness, whereas our neighbor is loved as one who shares in that happiness along with us" (Summa Theologiae II-II, Q.26, A.2). In other words, God must be loved first because He is the ultimate cause and source of beatitude—the only true happiness. Though we are called to love our

families and our neighbors, Christian charity dictates that we love them in relation to God—as fellow recipients of divine happiness.

One reason this Gospel is challenging is that our natural affections, though good, must be transformed by divine charity. It is natural to love our parents and children—God designed us with these affections. Even animals instinctively care for their offspring. But Jesus calls us to something higher: a love that is perfected by divine charity, transcending mere emotional attachment or duty. His teaching does not negate natural love; rather, it purifies, elevates, and directs it toward the highest good—God Himself.

When Jesus speaks of loving “father or mother” or “son or daughter” more than Him, He is addressing the inner conflict we sometimes experience in our emotions. When natural affection is not transformed by spiritual charity, the love we offer another can do more harm than good. Disordered affection replaces the ultimate good—God—with the lesser good of emotional attachment and human consolation. The real danger arises when our loved one’s stray from God’s will, and we, out of misguided affection, affirm them in their error, thereby confirming them in a state lacking true beatitude.

The foundation of true love is this: God alone is the source of perfect happiness, for us and for our loved ones. Our belief in God transforms the way we love others. No longer do we merely seek their earthly comfort or emotional well-being; rather, we direct them to the eternal Good—God Himself—who alone fulfills every longing. When we love God first, all our relationships are purified. Instead of loving others with human affection alone, we love them with the very love of God, seeking their ultimate good: eternal life in Him. This purified love does not exclude human affection; rather, it elevates and directs it, ensuring that our love is not merely sentimental but truly transformative through divine charity.

Reflect today on those closest to us—those whom God calls us to love with the highest form of love. Are our affections rightly ordered, or do they sometimes compete with the charity God desires to instill in us? If so, turn our heart to God. Seek to love Him above all else. Let Him become the object of our deepest love and desire. When God is first, His love will transform us from within, enabling us to love others not just with natural affection, but with the very love of Christ, leading them to the eternal joy of union with Him. Amen

Second Collection today is for Peter’s Pence.



Our Lady of Mercy Catholic Faith Appeal 2026

Parish assessment this year is \$144,000 (\$91,200.00 collected as of June 22) 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. We are hopeful that 100% of our Parish community will respond to the 2026 Catholic Faith Appeal 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.

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, Senton, at 941-416-6114. Thank you all for your time, talent, and treasure.