



# 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
Monday – Friday	8:00 am
Tuesday Adoration	Suspended for the Summer
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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24<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

SEPTEMBER 15, 2024

**He summoned the crowd with his disciples and said to them, “Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and that of the gospel will save it.” Mark 8:34–35**

Practically speaking, how do we follow Jesus and save our souls? Is it enough to profess that we believe in Jesus? If we were to arrive at the conclusion that Jesus is God and the Savior of the World, would we then be saved? Certainly not. Even the demons believe this truth. Jesus is quite clear that salvation requires action on our part. We must deny ourselves, take up our crosses, and follow Him. Furthermore, the road to salvation requires that we lose ourselves for the sake of Christ and the Gospel. What exactly does this mean, practically speaking?

To answer this question, let’s first consider the way that many people live. We tend to desire that which is the easiest in life, the most enjoyable, the greatest, and the most consoling. We often seek out those things that make us feel good and the path of least resistance. For example, if you could choose to fast on bread and water or feast on the most delicious foods, which would you choose? If you could choose between a vacation in the most exotic and luxurious location or a week of very difficult work, which would you choose? If you could choose to drive a brand new, high-end car or a very old beater, which one would you prefer? Most people would quickly pick the nice food, luxurious vacation and fancy new car.

In his spiritual classic, the *Ascent to Mount Carmel*, Saint John of the Cross outlines a very different path. He gives a series of spiritual maxims to use for prayer and meditation to help purify your soul of every unhealthy attachment so that you can become more fully attached to God and His holy will. St. John says, “Strive always to prefer, not that which is easiest, but that which is most difficult; Not that which is most attractive, but that which is most unpleasant; Not that which gives most pleasure, but rather that which gives least...” These spiritual maxims, when read in their entirety, challenge us to the core of our being. They quickly reveal to those who are honest that they often prefer the easiest, most pleasant and best that this world has to offer. But what is best for your eternal soul?

Jesus' teaching, that we must deny ourselves, take up our cross, and follow Him, is the road map to saving your eternal soul and to discovering a spiritual fulfillment that far surpasses anything this world or our flesh have to offer. But in order to understand this road map and then to follow it, we often need to make a "spiritual U-turn" so to speak. This U-turn begins with us choosing the Cross on every level of our being and concludes with God stripping away all selfish desires and replacing them with a desire for sacrificial love.

If you were to carefully examine your thoughts throughout the day, you might find that you think about yourself a lot. "I like this, don't want to do that, am angry about this, and am trying to avoid that..." Very often, our thoughts begin with "I" and end with "me." Denying yourself, taking up your cross, and losing your life means that you no longer think about yourself. It means that the eyes of your soul have turned away from yourself and focus exclusively upon the will of God and the love of others. But this will never be possible until we are freed of the numerous selfish desires that often direct most of our action's day in and day out.



## SAINT PAUL STREET EVANGELIZATION

### **Bulletin Announcement – Catholic Street Evangelization Training Workshop**

**Saturday, September 28 – Resurrection Parish, Fort Myers**

Want to know what authentic, non-confrontational, joyful evangelization looks and sounds like? Then make sure to attend our upcoming workshop with **St. Paul Street Evangelization Vice-President, Adam Janke**, on **Saturday, September 28, 9:00am – 3:30pm, Church of the Resurrection Parish, Fort Myers. Bishop Frank J. Dewane will celebrate Mass at 8:00 am in the Parish Chapel. There will also be an optional "Live Lab" experience from 4:00 – 5:00pm, giving participants the chance to put into practice what they have just learned.**

**Saint Paul Street Evangelization (SPSE)** is a non-profit, grassroots organization that has mobilized thousands of ordinary Catholics to get out there on the streets to be instruments of God in the salvation of souls. Our one-day Basic Evangelization Training with SPSE is open to all adult parishioners from any Catholic parish. Registration is \$25 and includes light breakfast, lunch, and all training materials.

You can register online at <http://stpaulse.com/venice>. For additional information, please contact Jim Gontis at [gontis@dioceseofvenice.org](mailto:gontis@dioceseofvenice.org).

**Low-Gluten Hosts Available Please see Fr. Anthony at least ten minutes prior to Mass to request a low-gluten host.**

**Our Church is equipped with a Hearing Loop Assistive Listening System. Please switch your hearing aid or cochlear implant to "T" (telephone).**