

OUR LADY OF MERCY PARISH

Boca Grande, Florida

Father Anthony Hewitt, Pastor

Mailing Address:

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Mass Schedule:

Daily (except Saturday)	8:00 A.M.
Saturday Vigil	5:00 P.M.
Sunday	9:00 & 10:30 A.M.
Confessions: Saturday	By Appointment
Web address:	ourladyofmercy.church
OnlineGiving:	https://ourladyofmercy.church

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

DECEMBER 17, 2023

TUESDAY ADORATION

Dear People of God,

Holy Hour is every Tuesday at 10:00 am. We will start with Exposition of the Blessed Eucharist, then silent adoration, and ending with Benediction at 11:00 am. This is a beautiful opportunity to spend time before our Lord and to offer prayers for our needs. It is my hope that we pray for vocations to the priesthood and the religious life during this time with Jesus, as well as the renewal of Church in the Eucharist the world over. May this time before Jesus bring us grace and healing. Prayers of Adoration may be found on the table in back of church.

Father Anthony

THE CHRISTMAS EVE AND CHRISTMAS DAY SCHEDULE OF MASSES

Sunday December 24	Fourth Sunday of Advent Mass at 9:00 and 10:30 am*
Sunday December 24	Christmas Eve Vigil Mass at 5:00 pm
Sunday December 24	Christmas Midnight Mass at 8:00 pm
Monday December 25	Christmas Day Mass at 9:00 and 10:30 am

*Note that the December 24th morning Masses are for the Fourth Sunday of Advent.

O ANTIPHONS OF ADVENT

The "O Antiphons" are prayed for 7 days in preparation for Christmas: December 17–23. For those familiar with the Liturgy of the Hours, these are the antiphons used with the *Magnificat* each day. They are based on Isaiah's prophecies and reveal the different titles given to the Messiah.

O Sapientia (O Wisdom) [Isaiah 11:2–3; 28:29](#)
 O Adonai (O Lord) [Isaiah 11:4–5; 33:22](#)
 O Radix Jesse (O Root of Jesse) [Isaiah 1:1; 11:10](#)
 O Clavis David (O Key of David) [Isaiah 9:6; 22:22](#)
 O Oriens (O Rising Sun) [Isaiah 9:1](#)
 O Rex Gentium (O King of the Nations) [Isaiah 9:5; 2:4](#)
 O Emmanuel (God with us) [Isaiah 7:14](#)

Since each antiphon is short, it is helpful to spend time reading it each day, pondering it, and praying it meditatively throughout the day as a way to make immediate spiritual preparation for Christmas.

December 17

O Wisdom of our God Most High,
guiding creation with power and love:
come to teach us the path of knowledge!

December 18

O Leader of the House of Israel,
giver of the Law to Moses on Sinai:
come to rescue us with your mighty power!

December 19

O Root of Jesse's stem,
sign of God's love for all his people:
come to save us without delay!

December 20

O Key of David,
opening the gates of God's eternal Kingdom:
come and free the prisoners of darkness!

December 21

O Radiant Dawn,
splendor of eternal light, sun of justice:
come and shine on those who dwell in darkness and in the
shadow of death.

December 22

O King of all nations and keystone of the Church:
come and save man, whom you formed from the dust!

December 23

O Emmanuel, our King, and Giver of Law:
come to save us, Lord our God!

OUR ANNUAL SHOE BOX

As is our custom each year, we have placed a shoe box on the table in the rear of the church for donations for Christmas gifts to the children of the migrant families of St. Paul's Parish of Arcadia. Please make checks out to: Catholic Charities of DeSoto County. Do not make check out to Our Lady of Mercy. Thank you for your generous support.

FOOD PANTRY

As you purchase items for your Christmas dinner, please remember the food pantry at St. Francis of Assisi Parish in Grove City. They are always in need of non-perishable (and unopened) food items. Please place donated items in the plastic bin under the table inside the church. To give you some helpful hints, they are in need of canned vegetables, mac and cheese, toothbrushes, and toothpaste. Thank you for your support.

PRAYER FOR PEACE

Lord of all, in this time of strife and suffering, we come before you with heavy hearts, seeking your divine intervention. We lift up to you the victims of the Holy Land conflict, asking for your mercy and healing touch.

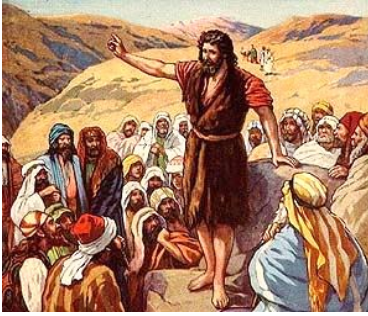
Prince of Peace, grant solace to those who are in pain, strength to those who are weary and hope to those who are in despair. Let your guiding light shine upon all, that they may find a path to reconciliation and understanding.

Mary, Mother of Mercy, wrap your mantle of love around those who are suffering, and intercede for them before your Son. May your gentle compassion be a source of comfort and consolation. We implore you, O God, to inspire leaders and all involved to seek avenues of peace and dialogue. Soften hearts that are hardened by hatred and division and instill in them a desire for unity and harmony.

St. Francis of Assisi, patron of peace, pray for us. Help us to be instruments of your peace in this troubled world. In the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, we pray. Amen.

OFFICE OF FAMILY LIFE / JESUS AND THE EUCHARIST VIDEO SERIES

Jesus and the Eucharist is a seven-part video series in partnership with the Augustine Institute, the USCCB, and the National Eucharistic Congress. Learn more about the Jesus and the Eucharist Series and access the first video in English and Spanish (and many other video and audio resources) on the USCCB Learn Platform with the National Eucharistic Revival, web address: eucharisticrevival.org/jesus-and-the-eucharist?



John the Baptist - Our greatest need was for a Savior

There was confusion in the expectation as to who the Messiah would be and what his mission might be. You see that reflected in today's Gospel, when a Jewish delegation questions John the Baptist, who was in prison, about his identity, suspicious that he might be the promised Messiah. They ask him, "**Who are you?**" John answers, "**I am not the Christ**" – that is, the Messiah. Then, "**Are you Elijah?**" There was a belief that Elijah would return to announce the coming of the Messiah.

John had many similarities to Elijah. John responds, "**I am not Elijah.**" The delegation presses him further, "**Are you the Prophet?**" Moses, in Exodus (18:15) speaks of the Lord as "*raising up a prophet like me.*" So, the Jewish delegation was attempting to find out if John was that "*Prophet*" foretold by Moses. John responds, "**I am not the Prophet.**"

So, then, they press him, "**Who are you?**"

His response states his mission, quoting the prophet Isaiah: "**I am the voice of one crying out in the desert, 'make straight the way of the Lord.'**" Though John was Jesus' advance man, he had doubts as to who the Messiah was. From prison, he sends his disciples to Jesus to ask him, "**Are you the one who is to come, or, do we look for someone else?**" Jesus, citing Isaiah, responds: "*Go back and tell John what you have seen and heard: 'The blind see, the lame walk, the deaf hear, dead men are raised to life and the poor have the good news preached to them'*" (Lk 7: 18-22).



Today's 1st reading (**Is 61: 1-2; 10-11**) identifies the identity and mission of the Messiah, which Jesus cites in Luke's Gospel (**Luke 4: 16 – 21**), concluding, "*Today, this Scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing*" (**Luke 4: 21**). Jesus' response to John: he is the promised Messiah.

Jesus, the Messiah, the Savior, chosen by God to bring salvation to all people, is the source of the joy we celebrate on **Gaudete Sunday**; expressed by the prophet Isaiah: "**I rejoiced heartily in the Lord, in my God is the joy of my soul; for he has clothed me with a robe of salvation...**" (Is 61: 10); reiterated as an admonition by St. Paul to Christians, to "**Rejoice always**" (1 Thes 5: 16), in today's 2nd reading. Here is how **Max Lucado** sums up today's message in a pithy statement:

*"If our greatest need had been information,
God would have sent an educator.
If our greatest need had been technology,
God would have sent us a scientist.
If our greatest need had been for pleasure,
God would have sent an entertainer.
If our greatest need had been money,
God would have sent us an economist.
But since our greatest need was forgiveness,
God sent us a Savior!"*