



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

FEAST OF THE HOLY FAMILY

DECEMBER 31, 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

2024 HOLY DAYS OF OBLIGATION SCHEDULE OF MASSES

Monday January 1, 2024 - Mary, the Mother of God Solemnity. This is **NOT** a holy day of obligation. The morning Mass will be at 9:00 am. Have a blessed and safe New Year.

Looking ahead for 2024 these are the Holy Days of Obligation for Catholics

All Sundays are obligatory for the faithful to participate in the Mass.

Thursday, August 15, 2024 – **Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary**

Friday, November 1, 2024 – **All Saints' Day**

Monday, December 9, 2024 – **The Immaculate Conception of The Blessed Virgin Mary**

Wednesday, December 25, 2024 – **Christmas**

A LETTER FROM OUR PASTOR

Dear parishioners,

Monday January 1, we celebrate the Solemnity of Mary, the mother of God. Jesus Christ is the perfect son and Mary is his mother. And like any mother we can expect Mary to have a big influence on her son. So today when we celebrate the Solemnity of Mary the mother of God, the Church affords us a good opportunity to think about that relationship and to give thanks to God for it. But here it gets a little more complicated because Christ is not just only human as we are, but he is divine also, for he is God: Christ is both human and divine. And that makes a difference in the way Mary influences her baby boy.

Being human and divine does not make Christ any less human than we are, it does not make Christ any less Mary's son, and it does not make Mary any less Christ's mother.

Being human is about being a person who possesses human nature; Christ is a person who possesses human nature therefore Christ is human. Similarly, part of being a mother is about giving birth to a person who is human, Mary gave birth to a person who is human, therefore Mary is a mother. What distinguishes Christ from us is that from eternity Christ existed as a divine person, while we do not. However, in time, through the Incarnation, Christ became human: so, Christ was a divine person who was human. But a divine person who is human, is a person who is human and as such a full and true human being, one who had a mother and was a son to her.

How does Christ's divinity and humanity make a difference in the way Mary influences her son? Well, when a mother tries to influence her son, it is quite likely that the son does not know how things will work out. Perhaps he does not even care how things will work out. And regardless of whether he cares or not, it is quite likely he can be persuaded to act one way or another. But that does not work in Christ's case. Christ, as we know, is human and divine. Christ is God and as such he cannot lack any knowledge and must know how things will work out.

God does not just possess full knowledge of how things will work out, God also governs creation providentially and there are no gaps in that providence. So, we cannot say that God does not care how some things will turn out or is open to persuasion or any other such thing that we can think about. And thus, it is for God, so it is also for Christ. But if that's the case, what role is left for Mary to influence her son? In his providence God does bring some things about through our intercession. It's not that he leaves a gap in his providence for us to have our chance so to speak. Rather we come to desire what God wants, we ask for it and God brings it about. For most of us what God brings about through our intercession is quite small because we do not play a crucial role in salvation history. Mary on the other hand does play a crucial role in salvation history and consequently God in his providence does bring about many things through Mary's intercession.

In this New Year of 2024, pray to Mother Mary for her intercession. Pray the Hail Mary. Pray the Rosary. Pray every day. A mother knows best what her children need, and God gave us His Mother. Happy and Blessed New Year.

Father Anthony

SOLEMNITY OF MARY, MOTHER OF GOD

January 1—Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God—The Octave Day of the Nativity of the Lord
Holy Day of Obligation

(Obligatory in USA: unless it falls on Saturday or Monday)

Liturgical Color: White

Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give him the throne of David his father, and he will rule over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end. ~Luke 1:31–33

Only a mother could begin to understand the great mystery and beauty of motherhood. But only one mother could begin to understand the unfathomable beauty of being the mother of the Son of God. After the birth of Jesus, the shepherds came to adore her Child and recounted how a multitude of heavenly hosts appeared to them, revealing that Mary's Child was the Messiah.

As Mary heard those words, she pondered them, reflected upon them, and kept them in her heart. This was but the first time we are told of Mary's pondering heart after the birth of her Son, but we can be certain that she pondered Him over and over, entering ever more deeply into the mystery of her motherhood of the Son of God.

As the Mother of God, Mary's prayerful pondering was beyond our comprehension. The bond she shared with her divine Son far surpassed a mere human bond. Jesus was not only her Son, He was also her Savior. Therefore, she adored Him as a mother loves her child, but also as a servant worships her God. The relationship between this unique mother and Son is infinitely awe-inspiring.

Our Blessed Mother is given the unique title of "Mother of God" first and foremost to express our faith in the divinity of Jesus. Jesus was both human and divine, but in Him these two natures were perfectly united. Therefore, one cannot say that Mary was only the mother of the humanity of Jesus, she was the mother of the Person. And that one Person was, at the same time, God, and man.

Recall that once Jesus began His public ministry and was teaching, there was a woman in the crowd who cried out, "Blessed is the womb that carried you and the breasts at which you nursed." Jesus corrected her by saying, "Rather, blessed are those who hear the word of God and observe it" ([Luke 11:27](#)). At first read, one could conclude that Jesus was downplaying the role of His own mother, but He was actually doing the opposite. Jesus was actually highlighting the most unifying aspect of His relationship with His mother. Mary was not His mother only in a biological sense. She was not blessed only because she bore Him in her womb. Rather, her deepest union with her divine Son came from her spiritual union with His will and that of the Father in Heaven. She said, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word" ([Luke 1:38](#)). She heard the word of God and observed it perfectly. She did that at the Annunciation, she continued to do so as she raised her Child, and she did it most perfectly as she stood before the Cross, offering her dying Son to the Father for the salvation of the world. Mary's motherhood was one that encompassed her whole being. It was one that united her to her Son in ways we will never fully comprehend.

Mary is the Mother of God and, therefore, is the mother of all of God's children, including you. Honor and love your heavenly mother today and rejoice as you reflect upon this glorious queen and holy mother. As we celebrate this greatest saint in the history of the world, ponder the ponderer. Ponder her.

NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS

Dear people of Christ,

Some suggestions for New Year's resolutions, the Catholic version:

Most people make resolutions for the new year, change in appearance, change in behavior, change in attitude, change in view, etc. But, sometimes in the excitement to become brand new in the new year we forget about the spiritual ways we can improve our life. Here are some suggestions but are by no means a taxative list. Praying that we all have a blessed and prayer filled new year.

Spend time in Adoration before the Blessed Sacrament and end with Benediction.

We now have adoration every Tuesday at 10:00 am. It is a blessing to have this opportunity to pray before the real presence of Jesus Christ.

Make more time for Spiritual Reading.

The brilliant St. Athanasius once said, "You will not see anyone who is striving after his advancement who is not given to spiritual reading. And as to him who neglects it, the fact will soon be observed in his [lack of] progress."

One or two hours a week set aside for spiritual reading is a god way to stay in the Catholic zone.

The classics written by Catholic saints known for their practical spiritual wisdom—such as Teresa of Avila, Francis de Sales, Therese of Lisieux, and John of the Cross to name a few.

There are also audio books available for many classic Catholic titles. Let someone read to you, it is soothing.

The four gospels and the letters of St. Peter and St. Paul are also excellent choices for reading, being as they are the inspired Word of God and even though they are nearly 2000 years old, they are still very relevant today.

The time we spend feeding our soul is time well spent. Plus, has anyone noticed the increased number of answers that are Catholic, and scripture focused that have appeared on the Jeopardy! Tv game show this past year?

Share our Catholic faith with others.

With so many people far away from God today (and more and more people noticing it), the culture is ripe for evangelism. There is a real hunger for God and his Truth.

Modern Catholics aren't usually great about sharing their faith with others, but this is something that can change with practice. We don't have to be obnoxious or overbearing about our faith—just focus on doing simple things, such as being joyful in our walk with Christ and inviting people to come to Mass with us.

Another good idea is to buy some sacramentals in bulk, get them blessed, and hand them out to people.

If someone we know is going through a difficult time and we give them a Miraculous Medal or have Mass intention celebrated for them, that prayer card can change their life and bring them closer to God.

Go an extra day to Mass during the week.

Mass is not only the source and summit of our faith—it is also the source and summit of our very life. This new year, think of ways you can arrange your schedule and activities so that you can make it to Mass either an extra day each week, or a few extra days a month. If you have trouble with this due to a packed schedule, pray and ask Our Lord to help you find the time.

Pray the Rosary.

No Catholic list of New Year's resolutions would be complete without a daily rosary added in. If you already pray the Rosary daily, that is fantastic. Your resolution can then be to spread devotion to the Rosary in 2024.

There are many ways we can do this. We can purchase inexpensive rosaries in bulk, get them blessed, and hand them out as the opportunity arises.

We can also invite others to pray the Rosary with you, teach others how to pray it, or encourage those who don't pray it daily to do so. Tell them about Our Lady's promises to those who pray the Rosary. Maybe they do not know that the Rosary is a spiritual weapon that will help them fight all their personal battles.

Pick a new Saint to really get to know and pray to every day for guidance and intercession on our behalf.

Why not take on the tradition of choosing a different Catholic saint as a special patron each year?

There are so many of them with unique graces to bestow.

Choose a patron saint whose virtues you would like to emulate in the New Year, and entrust the year to their special intercession. Ask this saint to be your guide for 2024.

Pray and then pray some more.

From sunrise to sunset, pray. Pray in the car. Pray in the golf cart. Pray on the golf course. Pray before we watch that movie. Pray that we don't watch that movie. Pray for those who do not pray. Pray that we always thirst for pray. Pray for priests. Pray for religious sisters and brothers. Pray for our Pope. Pray for our bishop. Pray for our Church. Pray for the world and all those who inhabit it. Just Pray.

May God continue to bless us all in the New Year.

Father Anthony Hewitt

ANNUAL SEMINARY COLLECTION

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

The Diocese of Venice is blessed with Priests who have followed the call of Christ. As young men respond positively to the Holy Spirit and discern a call to the priesthood, your assistance is needed to support the educational and formational dimensions of the future priests in the Diocese of Venice.

The formation of our seminarians includes the costs of tuition, room and board, books, transportation, health care, and pastoral training. Funding from the Collection also helps in the recruitment of potential seminarians. Both your spiritual and financial support is of great assistance to these young men in their discernment. By your generosity you walk the journey of faith with many future priests and ensure that the sacraments will continue to nourish the faithful for generations to come.

Parishes in the Diocese of Venice will conduct this Annual Seminary Collection the weekend of **January 6 & 7, 2024**. Thank you for all that you have done and continue to do to support priestly formation in the Diocese of Venice. Your gift provides vital financial support for the future of the Church in Southwest Florida.

I take this opportunity to extend to each of you the assurances of my prayers for the New Year. Have a Blessed and Healthy New Year!

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

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY MASS

All couples celebrating 25, 30, 35, 40, 45, 50, or more than 50 years of marriage are invited by Bishop Frank J. Dewane to an Anniversary Mass in their honor. The Anniversary Masses will be celebrated in two locations: 11 a.m., Saturday, February 3 at St. Leo the Great Parish, 28290 Beaumont Road, Bonita Springs, and 11:00 a.m., Saturday, February 24 at Epiphany Cathedral, 350 Tampa Avenue West, Venice. Please contact the parish office for reservations no later than one week before the event you choose to attend.

SHOES FOR KIDS

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.

2024 RELIGIOUS CALENDARS

Please pick up your religious calendar for the New Year from the table in the back of church. One per family, please.