



OUR LADY OF MERCY PARISH

Boca Grande, Florida

Father Anthony Hewitt, Pastor

Mailing Address:

P.O. Box 181, Boca Grande, Florida 33921

(941) 964 - 2254

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

FIFTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

FEBRUARY 4, 2024

2024 LENTEN SCHEDULE

February 14 **Ash Wednesday**-Mass at 8:00 am and 5:00 pm

Fridays during Lent-Stations of the Cross at 4:00 pm

Tuesdays during Lent at 10:00 am-Holy Hour of adoration and benediction of the Blessed Sacrament.

ANOINTING OF THE SICK AFTER THE SATURDAY VIGIL MASS

Beginning on February 3, the First Saturday of month, and every First Saturday to follow, the anointing of the sick will be administered after the 5:00 pm Vigil Mass. The holy oil is for those who are not feeling well or those who might be going for surgery. Take this opportunity to receive this special sacrament when you can.

FOOD PANTRY

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 Tuna, canned fruit, and 1 lb. bags of rice. Thank you for your continuous support.

CFA PREPARATION SUNDAY

Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Jb 7:1-4, 6-7

1 Cor 9:16-19, 22-23 Mk 1:29-39

As we gather today to reflect on the Gospel, we witness a scene where Jesus enters the house of Simon and Andrew. Simon's mother-in-law is lying sick with a fever, and immediately, Jesus takes her by the hand, lifts her up, and the fever leaves her. It's a powerful moment of healing, compassion, and the transformative touch of the divine.

This passage is a profound example of Jesus' care for the individual and His ability to bring healing to those in need. This theme resonates deeply with the mission of the Catholic Faith Appeal. The call to support our faith community is a call to extend the healing touch of Christ to those who may be spiritually, emotionally, or materially unwell.

Just as Jesus reached out to Simon's mother-in-law with love and compassion, we are called to extend our hands to those around us, especially those who are in need. Our contributions to the Catholic Faith Appeal are not merely financial transactions; they are expressions of our commitment to continue the healing ministry of Christ in our world today.

Simon's mother-in-law, upon being healed, immediately began to serve. Her response is a model of discipleship—a willingness to use the gifts and blessings received for the service of others. Our contributions to the Catholic Faith Appeal empower the Church to serve, reaching out to those on the margins, providing spiritual nourishment, and fostering a community where everyone is valued and cared for.

May our hearts be open to the call of compassion and may our contributions to the Catholic Faith Appeal be a tangible expression of our commitment to walk in the footsteps of Christ, bringing healing and hope to a world in need.

CFA in action throughout the Diocese of Venice in Florida: **Religious sisters** working within the Diocese of Venice have dedicated their lives to serving God and others through prayer, ministry, and various works of charity. They often serve as teachers, administrators, and directors of Religious Education. The sisters bring their spiritual commitment, virtues, and training to Catholic education, nurturing the intellectual, moral, and spiritual formation of youth. Often, they are assigned to locations where they can serve the most in need. Your gift to the 2024 CFA supports the sisters' efforts.

FEBRUARY 8: SAINT JOSEPHINE BAKHITA, VIRGIN—OPTIONAL MEMORIAL

1869–1947

Patron Saint of Sudan and human-trafficking survivors
Canonized October 1, 2000 by Saint Pope John Paul II
Liturgical Color: White (Purple if Lenten Weekday)

Quote:

If I was to meet those slave-traders that abducted me and those who tortured me, I'd kneel down to them to kiss their hands, because, if it had not have been for them, I would not have become a Christian and religious woman. ~Saint Josephine Bakhita

In 1869, a daughter was born into a loving and well-respected family in western Sudan, in a village of the Daju tribe. Until the age of six, she and her three brothers and three sisters lived a happy and carefree life. That would all change around the year 1875 when one sister was abducted by Arab slave traders. Two years later, she also became their victim. When her captor asked her name, she couldn't remember so she didn't respond. She might have forgotten her given name due to the trauma she faced. Her captor sarcastically gave her the name "Bakhita," which means "fortunate," claiming that he would bring her good luck.

After her captivity, Bakhita was forced to travel hundreds of miles on foot to the city of El-Obeid. On her journey, she was bought and sold more than once, and over the next several years she was bought and sold several more times.

During Bakhita's captivity, she was forced to convert to Islam and was continually abused. She was beaten most days, one time so severely that she could barely move for more than a month, and she often was bound firmly with chains to prevent her escape. On her deathbed, she would still have painful memories of those chains. One of the worst tortures she endured was the customary scarring of her breasts, belly, and arm with a sharp razor. Once the wound was inflicted, salt was then ground into it, causing permanent scarring and identifying the person as property.

Around the age of thirteen, the city in which she lived, El-Obeid, was threatened by revolutionaries. Bakhita's owner, a Turkish general, decided to sell his slaves and return to his homeland. Bakhita was sold to an Italian Vice Consul working in the city of Khartoum, named Callisto Legnani. For the next two years, Callisto treated Bakhita well, despite her being his slave. As a result, when the revolutionaries began to make advancements on the city and Callisto made plans to escape to save his life, Bakhita begged him to take her with him, preferring his kindness over a new owner. He did so and, with the help of a friend named Augusto Michieli, they safely arrived in Italy. Upon their arrival, Callisto gifted Bakhita to Augusto and his wife Maria.

In the Michielis' home, Bakhita continued to be treated well, working as a nanny for their newborn daughter. Three years later, the Michieli family decided to move back to Sudan for business reasons and sold their property in Italy. During the transition, they entrusted Bakhita and their young daughter to the care of the Canossian Sisters in Venice. It was with those loving sisters that Bakhita was introduced to Jesus Christ, her true Master, and began her formation in the Catholic faith.

Within the Catholic faith, Bakhita began to discover the God Whom she had sensed in her heart from childhood. Through the sisters' teaching and virtuous witness, Bakhita began to understand Who this great God is and to love Him all the more. When the Michielis returned to take their daughter and Bakhita to Sudan, Bakhita refused to go with them. After days of trying to convince her, the Canossian Sisters involved the civil authorities, and in 1889, an Italian court ruled in Bakhita's favor, declaring her free. She stayed with the sisters and on January 9, 1890, she was baptized, confirmed, and given her First Holy Communion by the Archbishop of Venice (later, Pope Pius X). She was given the baptismal name Josephine Margaret Fortunata, "Fortunata" being the Latin translation of the Arabic name "Bakhita." Thus, at the age of twenty-one, this fortunate young girl was flooded with God's grace, and her formerly abused body and soul began a transformation. Josephine stayed with the sisters, entered their novitiate in 1893, and made her vows in 1896, becoming Sister Josephine Margaret Fortunata.

In 1902, Sister Josephine was assigned to the convent in Schio in northern Italy where she spent the rest of her life. In that convent, she was given the responsibilities of welcoming guests as the doorkeeper and worked as a cook and sacristan. She became well known and well loved by the locals for her beautiful and warm smile, kindness, and calm demeanor. Many of the people affectionately referred to her as the "black mother." She evangelized through her virtues and evident love of God and did not shy away from sharing her story, including her merciful heart that forgave her abusers. She served the people of God and grew in holiness in that convent for forty-two years.

At the end of her life, Sister Josephine suffered again, this time from illness. On her deathbed, she relived the horrors of her captivity but now confronted those horrors with God's grace. Her last words were cries of love for our Blessed Mother. After her death, her effect upon the people of God was evident as she lay in state for three days while countless faithful came to express their love for her. Shortly after her death, cries for her canonization stirred among the faithful. Twelve years later, her cause for canonization was opened, and she was canonized by Pope John Paul II during the great jubilee year of 2000 in Saint Peter's Square. Three years after her canonization, Pope John Paul II made an official visit to Khartoum, Sudan, honoring her on her home soil.

Saint Josephine was more than fortunate; she was greatly blessed by God. Later in life she not only forgave her captors, she also expressed her gratitude to them because God used their cruelty to lead her into the Catholic faith and consecrated life. Her witness reveals that God is all-powerful. He is able to take the worst and bring from it the best. He is able to transform tragedy into grace, abuse into mercy, hatred into love.

Ponder any way that you have been mistreated in life. If you find yourself angry or bitter, turn to this great saint and let her witness inspire you. In the end, she never lost hope. That hope led her from the cruelty of earthly masters to a holy slavery in the service of the divine King. If you find yourself bound by earthly masters, sins, or abuses, turn to the One Who promises complete liberation. Jesus must become our Master, and Saint Josephine shows us the way.

UPCOMING EVENTS – SAVE-THE-DATE:

- February 9th – Mardi Gras – Jambalaya – Parish Life Center
- March 1st - Fish Fry – Parish Life Center
- March 4th - Boca Grande Preschool – Beach Ball – Gasparilla Inn Beach Club
- March 14th - St Patrick's Day -Corned Beef – Parish Life Center
- April 12th – Barbecue – Parish Life Center

Parish Dinners - Four parish dinners are planned for this spring in the OLM Parish Life Center. All parishioners are invited. Dinners will be from 5 to 7 PM and will be catered by JT Turner and the cost will be \$45/person. Seating is limited to 120 per event and tickets will be available in advance ONLY. For the upcoming Mardi Gras Dinner, tickets will be sold after all the masses or at the rectory on Tuesday and Thursday. (Cash or check). BYOB, water and soda will be provided. Volunteers needed for night of the event and to provide cookies/bars. Please contact Angela Steffan 941-855-1277 or aksteffan@gmail.com to volunteer.

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?

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 Mass will be celebrated at 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. Our telephone number is 941-964-2254.

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.