



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

FOURTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

JANUARY 28, 2024

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. Our telephone number is 941-964-2254.

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.

FRIDAY FEBRUARY 2 - FEAST OF THE PRESENTATION OF THE LORD

Mary and Joseph were faithful Jews who obeyed the Law of Moses. Jewish Law prescribed that two ritual acts needed to take place for a firstborn son. First, the mother of a newborn son was ritually unclean for seven days, and then she was to “spend thirty-three more days in a state of blood purity” (Leviticus 12). During these forty days she was not to “touch anything sacred nor enter the sanctuary till the days of her purification are fulfilled.” For this reason, today’s feast has at times been called the “Purification of Mary.” Second, the father of the firstborn son was to “redeem” the child by making an offering to the priest of five shekels so that the priest would then present the child to the Lord (see [Numbers 18:16](#)). Recall that the firstborn male of all the Egyptians, animals, and children, was killed during the tenth plague, but the firstborn males of the Israelites were spared. Thus, this offering made for the firstborn son in the Temple was a way of ritually redeeming him in commemoration of protection during that plague. Since Jesus was presented in the Temple for this redemption, today’s feast is now referred to as the “Presentation in the Temple.”

“Candlemass” is also a traditional name given to today’s feast because as early as the fifth century, the custom of celebrating this feast with lighted candles had developed. The lit candles symbolized Simeon’s prophecy that Jesus would be “a light for revelation to the Gentiles.” Lastly, this Feast has been referred to as the “Feast of the Holy Encounter” because God, in the Person of Jesus, encountered Simeon and Anna in the Temple.

Today’s feast is celebrated in our Church forty days after Christmas, marking the day that Mary and Joseph would have brought Jesus into the Temple. Though Mary was pure and free from sin from the moment of her conception, and though the Son of God did not need to be redeemed, Mary and Joseph fulfilled these ritual obligations.

At the heart of this celebration is the encounter of Simeon and Anna with the Christ Child in the Temple. It is in that holy encounter that Jesus’ divinity is manifested by a human prophet for the first time. At His birth, the angels proclaimed His divinity to the shepherds, but in the Temple, Simeon was the first to understand and proclaim Jesus as the Savior of the World. He also prophesied that this salvation would be accomplished by a sword of sorrow that would pierce the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Anna, a prophetess, also came forward and “gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were awaiting the redemption of Jerusalem” ([Luke 2:38](#)). Thus, these ritual acts were also a moment in which Jesus’ divine mission was made manifest to the world.

As we celebrate Mary’s ritual purification and Jesus’ ritual redemption, we should see them as acts in which we are called to participate. First, each of us is unworthy of entering the true Temple of the Lord in Heaven. Yet we are invited to enter that Temple in union with Mary, our Blessed Mother. It was her consent to the will of God that opened the door of God’s grace to us all, enabling us to spiritually become Jesus’ “mother” by allowing Him to be born in our hearts by grace. With her, we are now able to appear before God, purified and holy in His sight.

We must also see Saint Joseph redeeming us as he presented Jesus in the Temple. In offering Christ Jesus to the priest to offer Him to the Father, Saint Joseph also presents all who strive to live in union with Jesus. The hope is that, like Simeon and Anna, others will see God alive within us and experience the Savior of the World through us.

Ponder, today, your soul being the new temple of the Lord, and acknowledge your need to be purified and offered to the Father in Heaven. As Christ continues to enter into the temple of your soul, pray that He will shine forth for others to see so that, like Simeon and Anna, they will encounter our Lord within you.

ANNOUNCEMENT SUNDAY FOR THE 2024 CATHOLIC FAITH APPEAL(CFA)

Dt 18:15-20

1 Cor 7:32-35 Mk 1:21-28

In today's Gospel, we encounter a powerful and transformative moment in the early ministry of Jesus. It is a story of astonishment and the undeniable presence of the divine.

The scene is set in the synagogue, a place of worship and community. Jesus enters, and immediately, the people are astonished by his teaching. Unlike the scribes of the time, Jesus speaks with a unique authority—one that comes from a deep connection with the divine source of wisdom.

As we reflect on this passage, it invites us to consider the nature of authority in our own lives. In a world filled with various voices and influences, whose authority do we recognize and follow? Are we attuned to the voice of Jesus, whose teachings are rooted in love, compassion, and justice? Whether our authority is at home, work, or elsewhere, Jesus wants us to use it to serve others and not for the purpose to enrich ourselves.

Today, I invite you to consider the authority of Jesus in the context of the Catholic Faith Appeal. The call to generosity, to contribute to the well-being of our community, resonates deeply with the teachings of Christ. Just as Jesus spoke with a unique authority that captivated the hearts of those in the synagogue, we are called to respond with a generosity that reflects the spirit of Christ in our midst. The CFA is an opportunity to share our resources, not merely as a financial transaction but as an expression of our commitment to the values Jesus taught—compassion, love, and care for one another.

In the Gospel, we see Jesus confronting an unclean spirit, a force that sought to bind and harm. Today, the CFA is a chance for us to confront, in a different way, the unclean spirits in our community—poverty, lack of resources, and unmet needs. Through our collective generosity, we have the power to cast out these forces and bring about positive change.

Just as the people in the synagogue were amazed at the authority of Jesus, let us be amazed at the potential we have as a community to make a difference through our contributions. Every act of generosity is an act of faith, trusting that our combined efforts can create a better, more compassionate community for all.

May our hearts be open, and may our generosity be a testament to the authority of Jesus in our lives. As we contribute to the CFA, let us do so with the knowledge that our collective efforts have the power to bring about positive change and bear witness to the transformative love of Christ.

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 (**REVISED DATE**)
- 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 masses on January 27th and 28th 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?

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.