



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://dioceseofvenice.org/ways-to-give/parish-donations-online/>

TWENTY-SIXTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

OCTOBER 1, 2023

NOTE FROM OUR PASTOR

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. Attached below are the prayers you might want to pray at the Holy Hour.

Father Anthony

OCTOBER 4: SAINT FRANCIS OF ASSISI—MEMORIAL

1182–1226

Patron Saint of animals, ecologists, families, lacemakers, merchants, needleworkers, peace, and zoos

Invoked against dying alone and fire

Canonized by Pope Gregory IX on July 16, 1228

Hear, my lords, my sons, and my brothers, and with your ears receive my words. Incline the ear of your heart and obey the voice of the Son of God. Keep His commandments with all your heart and fulfill His counsels with a perfect mind. Praise Him for He is good and extol Him in your works, for therefore He has sent you through all the world that by word and deed you may bear witness to His voice, and you may make known to all that there is no other Almighty besides Him. Persevere under discipline and obedience and with a good and firm purpose fulfill what you have promised Him. The Lord God offers Himself to you as to His sons. ~Excerpt from a letter to his friars, by Saint Francis

Saint Francis of Assisi is perhaps the most known and loved saint within the Catholic Church. Though many flock to him because of his portrayal as one who loved animals and nature, he became one of the greatest saints in history for one simple reason: he was a true servant of the Most High God.

Francis of Assisi was most likely born in the year 1181 in the small town of Assisi, Italy, about 100 miles north of Rome. He was born into the merchant class, his father being a seller of fine silk. As a youth, Francis was known to be quite lively, often the center of attention among friends. As a teenager, he enjoyed parties and singing and was quite worldly.

His father wanted Francis to join him in the family business, which Francis did with disinterest. He was far more interested in his friends and in having a good time than he was in work. This caused tensions at home on a regular basis.

As a young adult, Francis had dreams of doing great things. However, the “great things” he dreamt of had much more to do with obtaining worldly honors than with honoring God. One of his chief desires was to become a great knight. His family also desired he become a knight so that their societal status would be elevated.

Around the year 1202, Francis’s dream of becoming a great knight began to move forward. He was fitted with fine armor, a sword, and a horse and sent into battle against the neighboring town of Perugia. Success in that battle would prepare him to one day become a Crusader in the pope’s army, hopefully earning him the dignity of a knight. But the battle of Perugia was short and ended in Francis’ capture and imprisonment. As Francis waited a year for his father to pay the ransom for his release, he suffered greatly with the other men who were imprisoned.

After his release, Francis spent months with a serious illness. Both his imprisonment and illness affected him greatly, and he began to reevaluate his life. Despite that, in 1205 he set off for another battle in the army of the Count of Brienne, once again well-fitted with a horse, sword, and armor. Before he arrived, however, Francis had a vision that would change his life. In that vision, Francis heard a voice say to him, “Who can do more for you? The master or the servant? The rich man or poor man?” Francis quickly answered, “The rich master!” The voice then asked, “Then why do you leave the Lord for the servant and the God of infinite riches for the poor mortal?” This vision was enough for Francis to turn around and return to Assisi in search of God’s will.

Over the next year, Francis and his father regularly were at odds. Francis began to pray and seek God’s will for his life, while his father continued to insist that Francis become a knight or work in the family business. During that year, Francis grew in his love for the poor and even served the lepers at a nearby hospital. While praying one day in the dilapidated Church of San Damiano, Francis heard a voice from Heaven say to him, “Go, repair my house which, as you see, is falling completely to ruin.” With that, he began to physically repair that church, live in solitude, and pray continually.

The family conflict between Francis and his father came to a head in 1206 when Francis was twenty-five years old. He and his father formally parted ways in the presence of the Bishop of Assisi when Francis renounced his inheritance, choosing only God as his Father. Over the next three years, Francis began to live his new life of poverty, prayer, and service of God.

At first, most of the townspeople thought Francis was out of his mind and they ridiculed him. But as time passed, Francis began to attract some followers. He and his followers spent much time praying, listening to the voice of God, serving the poor and lepers, and working with their hands to repair abandoned churches.

By the year 1209, Francis and his followers numbered twelve. They decided to write a new Rule for their common life and made a pilgrimage to Rome to get papal approval for their Rule. Once the pope verbally approved their Rule, Francis and his companions returned to Assisi and took up residence in a small church called the Portiuncula. From there, Brother Francis and his Friars Minor began their life of prayer and missionary preaching. Now, instead of rebuilding physical churches, they began to rebuild God’s Church, the spiritual Body of Christ.

Over the next ten years, the Order of Friars Minor grew from only twelve to about five thousand. They took up residence across Europe and began to have a powerful effect upon many people. Francis continued to preach and was also the instrument of countless miracles. In 1223, the pope approved the final and definitive Rule of the Friars Minor in writing, and Francis entered into the final years of his life.

In 1224, while on a forty-day retreat, Francis was gifted with the stigmata, the visible wounds of Christ in his hands, feet, and side. Those final two years were also marked with much suffering from various illnesses and the loss of his sight.

On October 4, 1226, after being unable to find a cure for his many illnesses, Saint Francis died surrounded by his brothers in Assisi at the Portiuncula where his life as a Friar Minor began. Just two years later, Pope Gregory IX canonized him as a saint, and his legacy continued to grow.

Saint Francis was unquestionably one of the greatest saints to ever live. The way he accomplished this greatness is worth studying and imitating. Though it is hard to imagine ourselves ever reaching the heights of sanctity that Saint Francis achieved, know that it is possible for us all. Saint Francis embraced the will of God with a radical abandonment and ongoing zeal. This resulted in his becoming one with Christ and doing great things for God and His Church in a very short period of time.

BLESSING OF THE ANIMALS

On Wednesday October 4 at 8:30 am we will have the blessing of the animals. If you have a beloved member of your family who is a pet, then bring them to the parish grounds and I will bless them with holy water of the Feast Day of St. Francis of Assisi.

TOGETHER IN HOLINESS MARRIAGE CONFERENCE

Married and engaged couples are invited to the third annual *Together in Holiness* marriage conference on **October 21, 2023, from 9:00 am - 4:00 pm at St. John XXIII Catholic Church in Fort Myers**. This one-day conference will help you strengthen your relationship with your spouse and discover God's plan for your family. Registration: \$64/couple and \$5/child for on-site childcare. An Early Bird discount is available through August 28 as well as scholarships upon request. This conference is presented by the St. John Paul II Foundation and the Diocese of Venice.

For more info, visit togetherinholiness.org or email ellen@forlifeandfamily.org.

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 take advantage of those BOGO (buy one get one free) items at the local grocery stores. 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 fruit, pork and beans, vegetables.

RESPECT LIFE MONTH NOVENA

To participate in a national Respect Life Month Novena from **October 13-21**, sign up at www.respectlife.org to receive an email with daily prayers for the protection of human life, from conception to natural death. It will feature a different pro-life prayer intention accompanied by a short reflection and suggested actions to help build a culture of life.

Every Tuesday at 10:00 am come spend an hour with Our Lord Jesus Christ with Exposition of the Holy Eucharist, Adoration, and Benediction.

Prayer to Jesus in the Holy Eucharist

My Lord Jesus Christ, Your Eucharistic presence teaches me how to love as you have loved me. In your great love for me you continue to give yourself, body, blood, soul, and divinity in this sacrament of your love. As I pray here in your Eucharistic presence, enkindle in me the fire of your gospel. Nourish me with your love and compassion, so that I may be your living presence to all I meet. Amen.

Prayer of Adoration

I adore you Jesus, true God, and true man, present in the holy Eucharist, kneeling before you and united in spirit with all the faithful on earth and all the saints in heaven. In gratitude for so great a blessing, I love you with all my heart, for you are worthy of all praise and adoration. Lord Jesus Christ, may I never offend you with my lack of love. May your Eucharistic presence refresh me in body and soul. Mary, Mother of the Eucharistic Lord, pray for me and obtain for me a greater love for Jesus. Amen.

Going Forth

Lord Jesus Christ, I have spent this time of adoration and prayer in your Eucharistic presence. Fill my life with love, joy, peace, and kindness. Transform me by the power of the Holy Spirit into a living image of your compassionate presence. May I go forth from this hour of adoration and prayer to be your hands, feet, and heart to all those I meet. Risen Jesus, may I be surrounded by the radiance of your love. Amen.