



FOR MERCY'S SAKE

the quarterly newsletter of Our Lady of Mercy Church

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HIGHLIGHTS OF OUR LITURGIES AND EVENTS

ASH WEDNESDAY

Wednesday, February 17
8:30 a.m. & 7:00 p.m.
Mass with Distribution of Ashes

LENTE PASTUS

Wednesdays of Lent
February 24, March 3, 10, 17
6:15 p.m. - Mass
7:00 p.m. - Presentation

STATIONS OF THE CROSS

Fridays of Lent - 7:00 p.m.
In person and Livestream

LENTE PENANCE CELEBRATION
Wednesday, March 24 - 7:00 p.m.

Lent comes providentially to
reawaken us, to shake us
from our lethargy.

~Pope Francis~



A PRAYER FOR A LENTEN SPIRIT

Be with me this Lent, Jesus,
and deepen my spirit.

Let my every sacrifice be underscored with
gratitude and humility.

By giving something up,
may I discover anew all I have
taken for granted.

In each small effort,
may I recognize my need for your
strength and grace.

As I empty myself through fasting,
make me mindful of those for whom
scarcity is an everyday reality.

As I abstain from negativity,
self-righteousness, and arrogance,
replenish me with kindness,
understanding and good humor.

Be with me this Lent, Jesus, and turn
my spirit towards you.

Amen.

February 2021

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LENTEN PRACTICES 2021



The season of Lent begins this year on Ash Wednesday, February 17, 2021 and concludes when the Paschal Triduum of the Passion, Death, and Resurrection of the Lord begins at the start of the evening Mass of the Lord's Supper on Holy Thursday evening, April 1, 2021.

The following practices and regulations are promulgated and binding for all Latin Rite Catholics in the Diocese of Erie for Lent and the Paschal Triduum, 2021.

1. Traditional Lenten practices of PRAYER, FASTING, and ALMSGIVING and other forms of self-denial are recommended most warmly by the Church. Daily Mass is particularly encouraged.
2. ASH WEDNESDAY, ALL FRIDAYS IN LENT, and GOOD FRIDAY are days of abstinence from meat for those 14 years of age and older. Because the Solemnity of St. Joseph (March 19) falls on a Friday of Lent, and solemnities are never days of penance, the faithful are not obliged to abstain from meat on that day.
3. ASH WEDNESDAY AND GOOD FRIDAY are also days of **fasting** for those ages 18 to 58 inclusive. *On these days, those bound by the law of fasting may take one full meal. Two smaller meals, sufficient to maintain strength according to one's needs, are also permitted. Eating between meals is not permitted, but liquids including milk and fruit juices are allowed. When health or work is seriously affected, the law does not oblige.*

HOLY THURSDAY: LITURGY OF THE LORD'S SUPPER
Thursday, April 1 — 7:00 p.m.

GOOD FRIDAY: LITURGY OF THE LORD'S PASSION
Friday, April 2 — 3:00 p.m.
Outdoor Stations will be at 1:00 p.m.

BLESSING OF EASTER FOOD
Saturday, April 3 — 11:30 a.m.

THE GREAT EASTER VIGIL
Saturday, April 3 — 9:00 p.m.

EASTER SUNDAY MASSES
Sunday, April 4 — 8:30 a.m. & 11:00 a.m.



Lenten Pastus Series

The holy season of Lent calls each of us to renewal. During these 40 days, we are challenged to deepen our understanding of the faith, strengthen our commitment to the work of the Gospel and grow in our love of God by increasing our life of prayer. COVID restrictions may alter our approach to things, but it cannot stop the work of the Spirit. This year's Wednesday Lenten Pastus series will offer the option of attending in person or viewing it online.

February 17 7:00 PM—Ash Wednesday Mass

Let us begin this holy season of preparation and conversion joined together around the Eucharistic table and the Word of God.

Pastus Events

All events begin with Mass at 6:15 followed by a speaker at 7:00 p.m.

February 24—Fr. Shane Mathew: When the Popes lived in France: The Avignon Papacy and the Bishop of Rome

For nearly 70 years, the Bishop of Rome lived in Avignon, located in modern-day France. Together we will explore why the Papacy moved to Avignon, how the Pope found his way back to Rome, and what this controversy can teach us about the Pope and the Church today.

Father Shane Mathew is a teaching instructor of theology at Gannon University and sacramental assistant at Our Lady of Peace and St. Jude parishes in Erie.

March 3—Fr. Jim Piszker St. John Henry Newman: A Saint for Our Times

A look at a person who converted to the Catholic faith, rose to the level of cardinal and left a lasting impression on the entire spectrum of Catholic thought and theology leading to his being named a saint of the Roman Catholic Church. What does his elevation to sainthood and his persona have to say to us in the 21st century?

Fr. Jim Piszker is a priest of the Diocese of Erie and is currently chaplain, director of Campus Ministry and instructor in Catholic Studies at Mercyhurst University in Erie.

March 10—Thomas Braeger Finding God in Adversity

We all know that God never leaves us. But we have all experienced situations in which we found it difficult to perceive God's presence. Often it is in times of greatest adversity that it can be hardest to find God. Yet, for some, life's adversity is the time when faith grows stronger and God's presence is very real.

Thomas Braeger is a graduate of Gannon University and is currently the ecommerce director for Lake Erie Systems. He has served on the religious education board at Our Lady of Mercy and is now part of the technology team. He is a parishioner at St. Mark's and Mount Calvary where he manages their email platform and is a member of the Knight of Columbus. In his spare time he runs the popular food and recipe site ethnicspoon.com with his two children.

Pastus Events

All events begin with Mass at 6:15 followed by a speaker at 7:00 p.m.

March 17—Dr. Robert von Thaden, Jr.
Fighting about Jesus: Truly God & Truly Human, But How?

Early Christians spent centuries arguing about what it meant to call Jesus the Christ. These arguments were contentious and sometimes turned violent. What was Jesus's relationship to God? What was his relationship to humanity? Because the texts of what became the New Testament are maddeningly inconsistent regarding such questions, it took Christians centuries to hammer out answers—with lots of dissensions, excommunications, and schisms along the way—that a majority could grudgingly accept. Understanding how Church teachings about Jesus took shape over time allows us to reflect on the deep questions raised by the incarnation—questions we might too easily skip over if we just assume current doctrine is “how it always was”.

Dr. Robert von Thaden, Jr. is Professor and Chair of Religious Studies at Mercyhurst University whose teaching and scholarship focus on biblical (and other sacred) texts and the history of Christianity. This semester he is teaching “Desert Mothers & Fathers,” “Christianity,” and “Apocalypse to Zombie” while researching for a commentary on Paul’s Letter to the Galatians with the working title of Exploring Galatians: Jewish God, Pagan Bodies.

March 24 7:00 PM—Parish Penance Service



Friday May 28, 2021 7:00 p.m.
Our Lady of Peace

Please join us as we celebrate the
Ordination to the
Permanent Diaconate
Of Paul Barko and Dave Jacquel

Please pray for these men as they
complete their studies in
preparation for their future
ministry.

HOPE—Restoring the Heart

The last year may have raised more questions than answers, produced depression, anxiety or fear. Perhaps



even caused us to question our faith. If you would like to chat with others to help process some of these feelings one on one or in a group, please contact Donna Clark. Text or call 814-303-9282 for more information about the sessions, usually held the first Tuesday at noon and the third Thursday in the evening (Zoom available - check our website the day of the meeting) or Call Donna Clark in the parish office 899-5342.

I have all this time now...Why can't I pray?

A Reflection By Donna Clark

At least, that is the way it seems . . . with not a lot of other things happening I should be able to spend more time in prayer, right? Yet it feels like I am praying less.

There is something uncomfortable about being alone with myself. My mind fills with an endless stream of thoughts - dreams, limitations, past events, and unknown futures. My theory is that if I can step through the whirlwind of thoughts, I will discover the unconditional love in which God created us. Julian of Norwich wrote: "We can never know God until we first know clearly our own soul." If I can push through the discomfort, the fear and the anxiety of knowing myself, I can exist in the unconditional love of God. But the stream of thoughts usually brings me back to a place of not liking myself. Help . . .

Years ago, I read a book called Make Space, Make Symbols by Keith Clark, Capuchin. There is a reflection on the scripture passage of Jesus calming the storm with a simple rebuke: "Quiet! Be Still!" (Mark 4:35, Mt 8:18, 23 or Lk 8:22). This wonderful metaphor for the storm in our minds can help us find our soul. From afar, it appears that others have an easier time quieting their stormy minds and listening for God, as monks and nuns do, for instance. They must have an edge - right? After spending four months in a cloistered monastery in my 20's, I discovered that we are all "in the same boat." Thomas Keating reminds us that "When it comes to prayer, we are all beginners."

So, back to the storm in our mind. Does God appear unconcerned that we are drowning in the storm? Must I work hard to clear my mind, empty it of thoughts and distractions and be still so God will come and tell me His will? The funny thing is: God is already present in both the calm and the storm; therefore it holds that prayer is possible in both the calm and the storm.

Some practical Suggestions:

- Be gentle and compassionate to yourself - your storm experience is universal.
- When fears of an unknown future crowd in, remind yourself that all is well. The

future does not exist in this moment.

- When plagued by embarrassing thoughts, words, or actions from your past, ask if an apology is needed and decide to act. (The plaguing thoughts stop.)
- When obsessing about someone else's past words or actions, remind yourself that your worth is not determined by what others say or do. You are worthy simply because you are a child of God.
- If your mind makes lists of things that need to be done, write them down and free yourself of trying to remember them. Eventually the mental list making stops.
- When restless, go to a favorite spot in your mind - sitting in an Adirondack chair next to a stream in a State Park. Hear the stream and the birds; see the sunlight filter through the trees.
- Finally, simply Breathe. Breathe in God's love and exhale all fear, anxiety and doubt.

The Spirit helps us in our weakness (Romans 8: 14-16 and 26-28). Trust the Spirit to support you within the storm, to teach you how to still the torrent of thoughts. Practice inviting the Spirit; stillness will become easier. Pay attention to thoughts that come after short moments of stillness. Can we distinguish from the storm the voice of God bearing intuitions and insights for self-love, future actions, or simple thoughts of peace? PS: the book, Make Space, Make Symbols by Keith Clark, Capuchin, is worth reading.



Vaccine for Lent?

When a contagious virus comes around sickening many, people are understandably anxious to get the vaccine in order to stay healthy. But what happens when your spiritual life is 'sick?' Perhaps you are angry or bored or sad or troubled, maybe you struggle to keep your chin up in public or you simply feel distant from God. Small Christian Communities can provide a shot in the arm as members read the Sunday Gospel, share their faith struggles and support one another in prayer. Even though the pandemic has made in-person meetings difficult, God's grace strengthens the bonds between members and our communities have found ways to continue to stay connected. So, get a spiritual vaccine this Lent and join a Small Christian Community! Interested? Call the parish office at 899-5342 or Dave at 602-4622.



Prayer for a Minister of Music & Liturgy

(please pray daily)

Ever-constant God,
You remain eternal and unchanged
while the earth spins us each day toward
a new sunrise and a new reality.

Help us as we search for a minister
of music and liturgy.

Strengthen us to live for a time
within the haze of uncertainty
assured that you are present with us
and already acting to provide for our needs.

Open our hearts and minds
to recognize and welcome
into our midst a new guide
to engage our spiritual imagination,
touch our hearts and form us
ever more deeply in the spirit of the liturgy.
We ask this through Christ, our Lord,
Amen.



Our Lady of Mercy

... Pray for us.



Catholic Services Appeal 2021



The theme of this year's Catholic Services Appeal is: "Forward Together." As you know, the Catholic Services Appeal is the annual fundraising campaign of the Diocese of Erie to support the work of the church, especially in the midst of this pandemic.

As an individual parish, we are called to help our diocese to serve the faithful throughout Northwest Pennsylvania. Through your support of the CSA, the Diocese of Erie can support parishes, evangelize, educate, serve, proclaim the Word, celebrate the sacraments and give hope to thousands. Your support of the CSA makes this important work possible allowing us, as the Diocese, to meet the needs of our brothers and sisters in the 13 counties of Northwest PA. Our Catholic Services Appeal Assessment for 2021 is \$68,405.00.

In our Parish, we rely on the funds collected above this amount to work on repairs on our roofs, heating units, boilers, furnaces, parking lot, and gas wells, along with building issues that show up everyday.

Please be assured that funding from the annual CSA is strictly designated for spending on the ministries and services coordinated through diocesan offices. No funds donated to the CSA have been or will be used to defray expenses related to the sexual abuse scandal.

Commitment Sunday is February 14. Due to the pandemic, we will contact you through the mail, and ask you to return your form to the parish office.

I encourage you to support the Catholic Services Appeal. Because of you, we will move forward together, doing the work of Christ.

Thank you,

Fr. Ritchie

SCRIP News

There is a new SCRIP Coordinator! We welcome Pat Marshall who has volunteered to take over the position when Peggy Jacquiel decided to retire from the Coordinator position after many years.

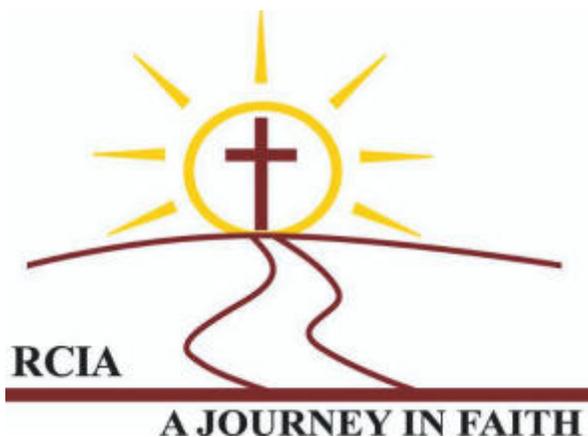
*****NEW TO SCRIP*****

We have **STAN'S GARDEN CENTER** gift cards in stock! Spring is around the corner, and you can give the \$25 gift cards as a gift for your favorite gardener, or buy them for yourself to buy your seed-starter and garden supplies. 15% of your Stan's gift card purchase benefits Our Lady of Mercy!

There are many occasions during the year when you could give a gift card: birthdays, anniversaries, graduations, weddings, bridal or baby showers. For these special events, consider purchasing your gift cards from Our Lady of Mercy's SCRIP program. There are a number of cards in stock at church. If the card you want is not in stock, you can order your cards by filling out a paper form or order on-line. SCRIP now accepts credit card payments for on-line purchases only.

Don't forget to buy your gas and grocery cards! In-stock cards are available after each Mass and during parish office hours (Mon - Fri: 9-3). Our Lady of Mercy benefits from each card sold and the money!

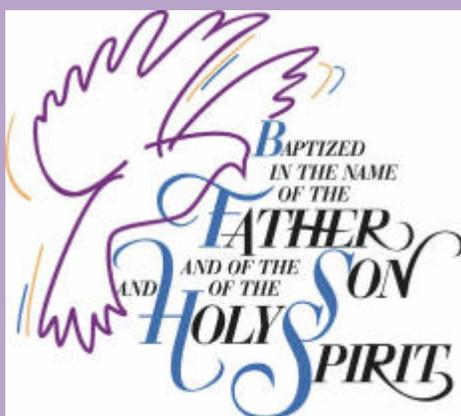
Call Pat Marshall (814) 440-4890 or e-mail patmarshall1955@outlook.com for more information. **AND THANK YOU PEGGY JACQUEL FOR YOUR YEARS OF SERVICE!**



RCIA Invitation

The Rite of Christian Initiation (RCIA) is a journey of faith designed for those adults seeking baptism or full communion in the Catholic Community. This journey which takes 1 to 3 years, invites participants into a deep relationship with Jesus Christ through prayer, study, ritual, and community. Anyone who would like to learn more about this transforming journey of faith can call the Office of Lifelong Faith Formation 899-6132 or speak with any member of the parish community.

Because this journey follows a road for which there is no GPS system, all questions, doubts and detours are welcome as blessings. God's ways never fail to surprise.



BAPTISMAL PREPARATION SESSION

Before parents can schedule the baptism of their children, they must attend a preparation session.

These sessions are held semi-annually. The next Baptismal Prep Session for parents at Our Lady of Mercy will be held

Sunday, March 21 at noon. Participants are asked to register by calling the parish office at 899-5342. Expectant parents are welcome to attend this class before the child is born. Another session will not be scheduled until the fall of 2021.