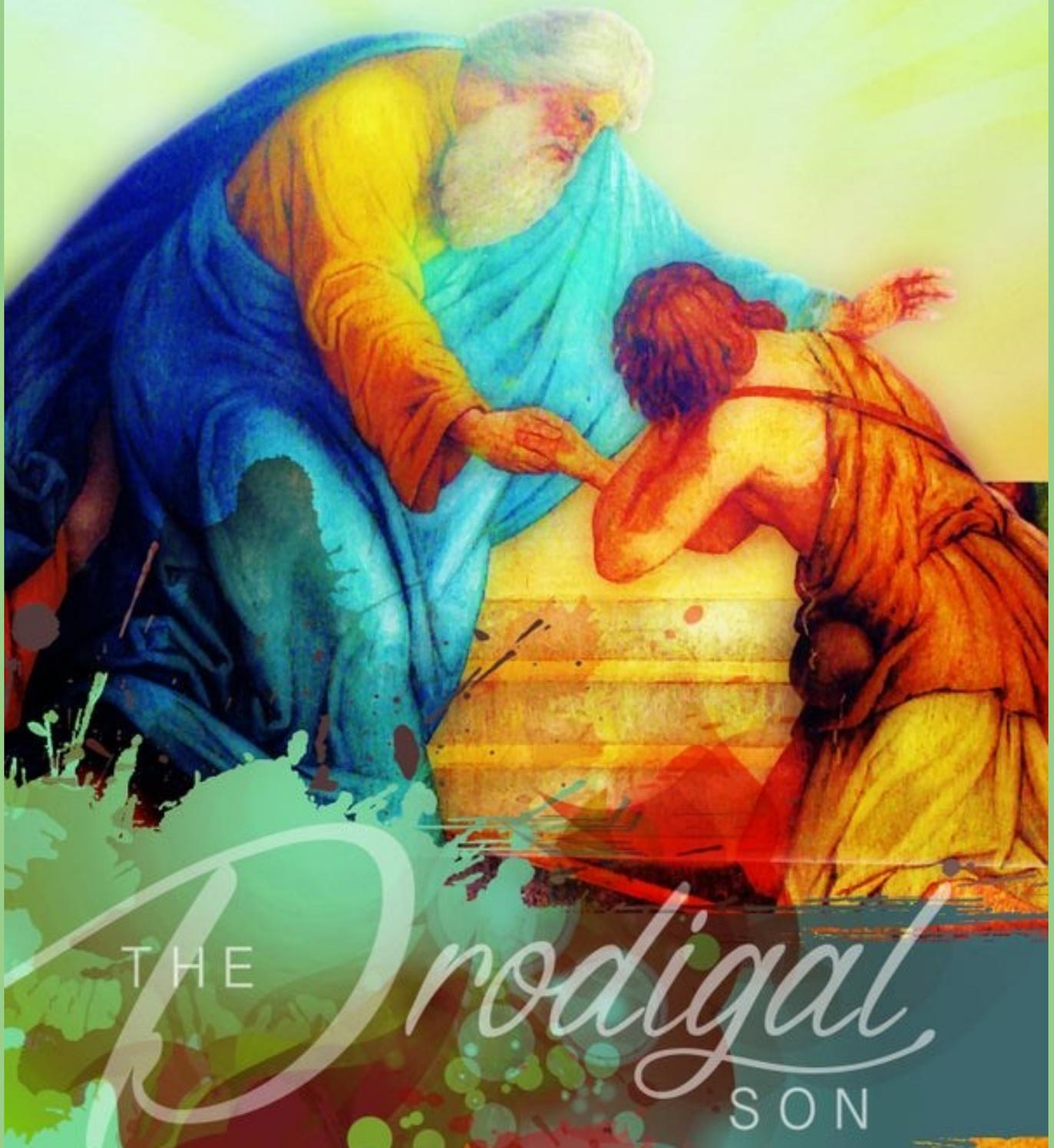


FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT



St. Elizabeth of Hungary/St. Mark

5700 Bear Creek Boulevard, Bear Creek, Pennsylvania 18602

FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT | March 15, 2026

St. Elizabeth Church (E)
5700 Bear Creek Blvd
Bear Creek, PA 18602

St. Mark Church (M)
1052 Bear Lake Rd
Thornhurst, PA 18424

Mission Statement

Humbly guided by the Holy Spirit, our mission is to help people:

~ Through prayer and worship, discover God's desire to be in a relationship with us ~ Discover and develop the gifts and talents God has bestowed on each person ~ Share our faith in Jesus Christ through a welcoming community, beautiful liturgy and ongoing faith formation ~ Be of service to one another, to the communities in which we live and especially to those in need. ~

SERVED BY

Rev. Rawel Toppo
Administrator
rawelt81@gmail.com

Rev. Anthony M. Urban
Pastor Emeritus

Rev. William J. Karle
Pastor Emeritus

PARISH WEBSITE

Churchofstelizabethstmark.org

FIND US ON FACEBOOK



The Roman Catholic Community
of St Elizabeth of Hungary and
St. Mark



WORSHIP SCHEDULE

Monday-Wednesday, Friday 9:00AM
(E)

First Fridays — Adoration after Mass—
12Noon (E)

Weekend Masses

Saturday 4:00PM (M)

Saturday 6:00PM (E)

Sunday 8:30AM (M)

Sunday 10:30AM (E)

SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION

St. Mark's Church—1/2 hr before all
Masses

St. Elizabeth's Church —1/2 hr before
all Masses

~ or anytime by appointment ~

OFFICE STAFF

Amanda Proch
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outlook.com

Mer Rish
Office Secretary
Director of Music & Liturgy
stelimar@ptd.net

OFFICE HOURS / PHONE

Tuesday & Wednesday
9AM—3PM

Phone.....570-472-3061

Fax.....570-472-3503

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Emily Bell
Renee Sipple

Directors of Religious Education
saintelizabethccd@gmail.com

DAILY TV MASS

WARMING FAITHFUL HEARTS

Cathedral of St Peter in Scranton, available on
CTV: Catholic Television of the
Diocese of Scranton.

Weekdays 12:10p.m., 3:30p.m. and 7:00p.m.

Weekends, Saturday Vigil Mass 5:30 p.m. and
rebroadcast on Sunday morning at 10:00a.m.

STEWARDSHIP

Mar 8, 2026

Weekly	\$2111.00
Online	<u>\$768.00</u>
	\$2879.00
Diocesan	<u>-\$10.00</u>
TOTAL	\$2869.00

Thank you for your continued generosity.

Budget is set at \$5000

Eucharistic Celebration

Saturday, March 14, 2026 — Sunday, March 22, 2026

Sat, MAR 14

- 4:00pm (M) Joseph Polakowski & Betty Schimmelbusch
Family
- 6:00pm (E) William Kozerski
Tom & Sue Kozerski

Sun, MAR 15

- 8:30am (M) Charles Galabinski
Ruth Connoly & Vicky Castagna
- 10:30am (E) Gary Walker
Mary Dec

Mon, MAR 16

- 9:00am (E) Paul Wedlock
The Swartz Family

Tues, Mar 17

- 9:00am (E) Joe Moran
Debbie Trubela Mitchell

Wed, MAR 18

- 9:00am (E) Robert David Ruta
Jim & Peg Pizzuti

Thurs, MAR 19

- 9:00am (E) **NO MASS**

Fri, MAR 20

- 9:00am (E) David Soda
Theodore & Diane Haas
- 6:00pm (M) **Stations of the Cross**

Sat, MAR 21

- 4:00pm (M) Joseph Reiss
Barbara Reiss
- 6:00pm (E) Rose Kindred
Dr. Gary & Benedetta Lawrence

Sun, MAR 22

- 8:30am (M) Louis B. Catina
His Family
- 10:30am (E) Margaret Grella
Stan & Jean Swaintek



This week we pray for our sick, elderly and homebound parishioners and friends, especially...



*Noreen Catani Amico,
Ginny Corcoran, Richard Emmert, Lea Furlong,
Kevin Gardner, James Geremia,
Bernard Hendrzak, Erin Himes, Jake Johnson,
Joseph Kachurak, Patrick Kildea,
Michael Lilienthal, Mollie Litchman,
Amber Moyer, Carolyn Palencar, Donald Scharf,
Mary Soos, Byran Stanton, Verna Stavish, Scott
Tiger, John Tucker, Rev. Anthony Urban,
Hank Walker, Loretta Washick, Michelle Welebob*

Please notify office when names should be removed. 570-472-3061



ST. JOSEPH NOVENA

The Annual Novena to St. Joseph continues this week at the Oblates of St. Joseph Seminary Chapel, Route 315, Laflin, concluding on the Feast of St. Joseph, Thursday, March 19th. Masses are held daily at 12 Noon and 7:00 p.m. Preachers for this year's Novena are invited permanent deacons of our diocese. Masses are preceded with confessions and praying of the rosary, concluding with novena devotions. The Feast of St. Joseph will be celebrated this **Thursday, March 19th**, with a special Solemn Mass at 12 Noon. Principal celebrant and homilist will be Bishop Joseph C. Bambera. Additional Feast Day Masses will also be celebrated on that day at 8:00 a.m. & 7:00 p.m. All Noon Masses will be broadcast live on Catholic Radio 104.5 FM. For more information, call (570) 654-7542 or email: osjseminary@comcast.net.



Station of the Cross

Friday 3/20/2026

6:00PM

St. Mark

Father Rawel's
Corner



"LEARNING TO SEE WITH
GOD'S EYES"

In the middle of Lent, the church rejoices. Laetare **Sunday** is not about rejoicing because everything is resolved, but an occasion to rejoice because light has already entered our darkness.

The anointing of David reminds us that God's gaze is not like ours. God looks quiet deeply into the heart. David is chosen king because of his receptivity. Lent, then, is about receptivity and allowing God to see us as we truly are and to reshape us from within.

St. Paul deepens this call by telling us that Christian life is not cosmetic change; it is transformation. To live as "Children of Light" is to let truth, goodness and compassion shape our daily choices even when they remain unnoticed.

In the Gospel, the Man born blind is a mirror held before us. Then man gradually comes to see not only with his eye but with faith, while the religiously certain grow increasingly blind. The irony is painful and hopeful at once: blindness is healed not by knowledge or status, but by humility and trust.

Laetare **Sunday** invites us to pause and to rejoice because Christ is already at work in us. Even our wounds, confusion, and unfinished conversations can become places where God's light breaks through. To see with God's eyes is to discover that grace often begins where we least expect it and that is reason enough to rejoice.

May God of Light, heal our blindness and guide us. So that we may see with your eyes, walk in your light and rejoice in your grace. AMEN

HAVE A BLESSED LENTEN SEASON!



*The Sanctuary Candle at St. Elizabeth's is
burning this week in memory of William Kozerski
by Tom and Sue Kozerski.*



Applications for the 2026 Joe Zabra Knights of Columbus Scholarship are now available. The scholarship is open to graduating High School Seniors that are in good standing in the St. Elizabeth/ St. Mark Parish. Deadline to submit applications is May 3, 2026. Recipient(s) will be notified soon after, and the scholarship(s) will be presented in June. Please contact Glenn Cronauer, Grand Knight, at 570-417-8511 if you would like an application.

LORD, SHOW ME WHO
NEEDS MY HELP TODAY,
AND HOW I CAN BEST
HELP THEM.

AMEN.



A parishioner at Our Mother of Perpetual Help parish in Ephrata, PA is asking for prayers and the help of a truly generous individual. Jody is in need of a living donor kidney transplant. Due to a genetic condition, both her kidneys are failing. If you would like to learn more about the disease or the donation process, please contact her at:

kidneyforjody@gmail.com



All My Offering envelopes

MUST BE PICKED UP by MARCH 22nd.

If you do not pick them up by then, we will assume you no longer need envelopes and your name will be removed from the envelope list. Thank you.

St Elizabeth's way is very excited to announce that we have been accepted and will now be part of the "CEO" Commission on Economic Opportunity ongoing fight against food insecurity.

St Elizabeth's Way will be operating an open food pantry every 2nd and 4th Saturday out of the Father Urban Center from 1:00 to 3:00pm

This will be open to ANY who can benefit from this! No restrictions only that you live in Luzerne County. Please help get the word out to those who may benefit from this.

For more information please call 570-445-4352



St. Elizabeth / St. Mark Parish

5700 Bear Creek Blvd, Bear Creek Village, PA 18702



Corned Beef/Ham & Cabbage Dinner

Sunday 15-Mar-2026 2-4 PM

Eat In / Take Out - \$18

Call **570-851-0213** or e-mail stelizabethbells@outlook.com, please include your name, phone number and the number of people that will be attending



St. Elizabeth/St. Mark Parish

5700 Bear Creek Blvd, Bear Creek Village, PA 18702

Soup Supper

Monday 5 - 7pm

Feb 23, Mar 2, 9, 16, 23, 30

Eat In - \$12 All you can Eat Soup & Salad, Dessert
Take Out - \$12 Pint of Soup, Salad, Roll, Dessert
(\$6 per extra Pint of Soup)



HAVE A HAPPY SPRING

This is the day the
Lord has made;
We will rejoice and
be glad in it.

PSALM 118:24 NKJV



Worship & Meditation

Readings for the week of March 15, 2026

Sunday:

1 Sm 16:1b, 6-7, 10-13a/Ps 23:1-3a, 3b-4, 5, 6/Eph 5:8-14/Jn 9:1-41 or 9:1, 6-9, 13-17, 34-38

Monday:

Is 65:17-21/Ps 30:2 and 4, 5-6, 11-12a and 13b/Jn 4:43-54

Tuesday:

Ez 47:1-9, 12/Ps 46:2-3, 5-6, 8-9/Jn 5:1-16

Wednesday:

Is 49:8-15/Ps 145:8-9, 13cd-14, 17-18/
Jn 5:17-30

Thursday:

2 Sm 7:4-5a, 12-14a, 16/Ps 89:2-3, 4-5, 27 and 29/Rom 4:13, 16-18, 22/Mt 1:16, 18-21, 24a or Lk 2:41-51a

Friday:

Wis 2:1a, 12-22/Ps 34:17-18, 19-20, 21 and 23/Jn 7:1-2, 10, 25-30

Saturday:

Jer 11:18-20/Ps 7:2-3, 9bc-10, 11-12/
Jn 7:40-53

Next Sunday:

Ez 37:12-14/Ps 130:1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 7-8/
Rom 8:8-11/Jn 11:1-45 or 11:3-7, 17, 20-27, 33b-45



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Gospel Meditation

Encourage Deeper Understanding of Scripture

If you are like me, it's easy to fixate on our shadows: failures, guilt, shame. Especially when we suffer, it is easy to want to blame ourselves or others. In this week's Gospel, Jesus' disciples ask about the blind man, "**Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents?**" (**John 9:2**) They, like us, focus on blame. But Jesus sees the entire situation differently: "**Neither he nor his parents sinned; it is so that the works of God might be made visible through him.**" He does not deny sin, but he sees deeper — through the light of mercy, not the lens of judgment. The scene hinges on Jesus' strange claim: "**I am the light of the world**" (**John 9:5**). He sees things differently than everyone. They see shadows and light. He is the light.

Thought experiment: imagine you are the sun looking at everything on the earth. What do you see? Everything. What do you *not* see? Shadows. Everything is illuminated. If you see it, it is illuminated. For the light, nothing is dark.

Because he is the light, Jesus sees us in the glow of his redemptive love. Even our sin becomes a place where his glory can shine. The man's healing is not just about sight — it is about seeing as Christ sees. Lent is not a season of staring into darkness. It is a time to step into the light — to let Christ's gaze reframe how we see ourselves and one another.

Lenten challenge: Spend 10 quiet minutes this week asking Jesus to show you how he sees you. Not through shame or fear, but through the light of his mercy.

— *Father John Muir*

Weekly Prayer

Sunday's Readings

First Reading:

Then Samuel, with the horn of oil in hand,
anointed David in the presence of his brothers;
and from that day on, the spirit of the LORD rushed upon David.
(1 Sm 16:13)

Psalm:

The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want. (Ps 23)

Second Reading:

"Awake, O sleeper,
and arise from the dead,
and Christ will give you light." (Eph 5:14)

Gospel:

He spat on the ground
and made clay with the saliva,
and smeared the clay on his eyes, and said to him,
"Go wash in the Pool of Siloam" — which means Sent — .
So he went and washed, and came back able to see. (Jn 9:6-7)

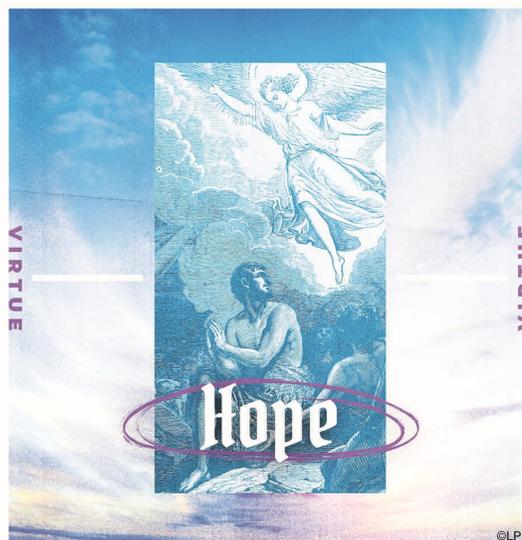
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Live The Liturgy Inspiration of the Week

The Pharisees refused to see what was in front of them. Their blindness was stronger than that of the man born without sight, because it was a blindness they chose for themselves. So what will it be for us? Do we choose blindness, or do we choose sight?

Observances for the week of March 15, 2026

- Sunday:** 4th Sunday of Lent
Tuesday: St. Patrick, Bishop; St. Patrick's Day
Wednesday: St. Cyril of Jerusalem, Bishop and Doctor of the Church
Thursday: St. Joseph, Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary
Next Sunday: 5th Sunday of Lent



Virtues, Explained!

Christian hope "is the theological virtue by which we desire the kingdom of heaven and eternal life as our happiness" (CCC 1817), even as we recognize that our own strength and merit can never achieve this. Hope, simply, is remembering that God keeps His promises.

Blessing to See

Bless us, Lord, to see as You see.
Remind us that heartbeats and hopes can outshine outward show.
That quiet witness can overcome violence and darkness.
That Your Light can break like the dawn.
Amen.

(PRACTICING) CATHOLIC

Mini Reflection: I wonder what it was that made the blind man feel he could trust Jesus. Was it something in his voice? In his touch? We'll never know. But we do know this: the blind man's sight wasn't restored until he made a decision. A decision to be sent.

Sent

I don't know about you. But if I was a blind person sitting by the side of the road, minding my own business, and a stranger came along and rubbed spit-mud in my eye, I'm just salty enough that I would ignore his words out of spite.

Even though he was, admittedly, super-nice about the whole thing.

Obviously I would wash the mud out, because ... spit. But I wouldn't go to the Pool of Siloam. I would go to a pool on the *whole other side of town*, just to be contrary. I would make frustrated, grossed-out noises while I splashed water on my eyes: "Ugh! I can't believe this! People are the worst!" I would feel satisfied that I wasn't tricked or conned or taken advantage of.

And I would stay blind the rest of my life.

When Jesus performs a miracle in the Gospel, we sometimes think of it like a fireworks show. Something people point at — "Ooh! Aah!" — and move on from. But a miracle of Jesus is not a party trick. It is a commissioning.

And each of us, in our own way, has the choice of accepting it or not.

Nowhere in the Gospel story does it say that Jesus promised the man sight if he washed in the pool. I wonder what it was that made the blind man feel he could trust Jesus. Was it something in his voice? Was it something in his touch? Was it the humanity with which he spoke of the blind man to his disciples — a gentleness missing from most other interactions of his life?

We'll never know. But we do know this: the blind man's sight wasn't restored until he made a decision. A decision to be sent.

— Colleen Jurkiewicz Dorman

Why do we do that? Catholic Life Explained

Question:

The Bible talks a lot about "testifying" or "giving testimony" to our faith. That makes me think of a courtroom. What does testifying to faith look like in everyday life?

Answer:

The courtroom image isn't too far off for some Christians. The Church has often been persecuted, and it was especially intense in the early days of the Church, when Acts and the various epistles were being written. For persecuted Christians, it did mean attesting publicly to their faith in Jesus Christ, sometimes before harsh judges. To testify is to bear witness, and this is something we are all called to do.

The call of Jesus is, first and foremost, a call to conversion of life. It is a repentance from sin, a casting off of old ways of seeing and moving in the world. The Christian life is one of transformation, becoming more and more like our God of love. In one sense, to testify to faith should happen naturally as we live like Jesus did. Our lives should bear witness in the respect we accord to others and the uncompromising dignity we honor in them. We bear witness in our gratitude, in our joy, in our hope in God's power and grace. This is where we start! Sometimes others might inquire, as St. Peter puts it, as to "a reason for your hope." Now you're on the stand! It's time to offer, "with gentleness and reverence," the Good News of the Gospel (c.f. 1 Peter 3:15-16).

They brought the one who was once blind to the Pharisees. Now Jesus had made clay and opened his eyes on a sabbath. So then the Pharisees also asked him how he was able to see. He said to them, "He put clay on my eyes, and I washed, and now I can see." - Jn 9:13-15

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Questions of the Week

Invite Parishioners to Reflect and Respond to Scripture

First Reading:

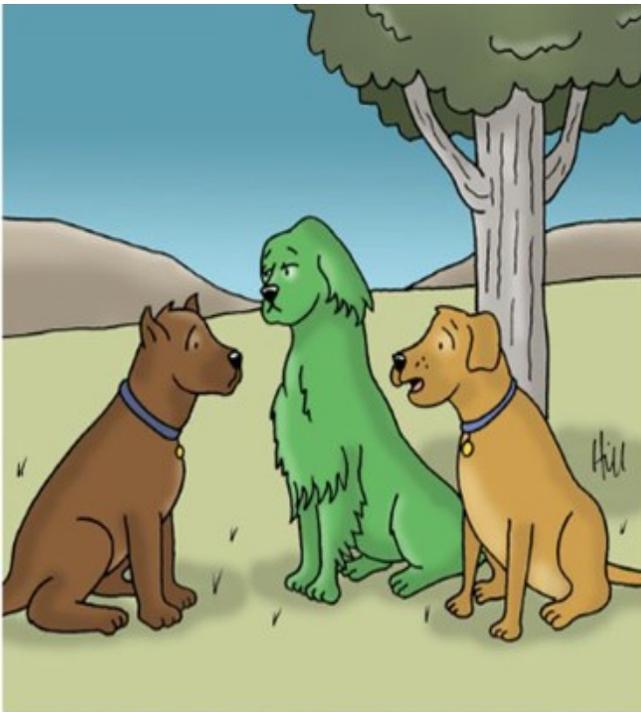
Samuel does not expect the Lord to anoint the young David as Israel's next king. When have you been surprised by God doing something unexpected in your life?

Second Reading:

Paul expects the believers in Ephesus to live as children of light and learn what is pleasing to the Lord. What could you do this week that is pleasing to the Lord?

Gospel:

Jesus' healing of the blind man causes confusion and even anger to those who do not see him as the Christ. Have you seen or felt God's presence in this season of Lent?



"IS SHE SICK? NO, QUEENIE'S OWNER PAINTS HER GREEN EVERY ST. PATRICK'S DAY ... SHE IS AN IRISH SETTER!"



"What do you think of wearing a green collar for St. Patrick's Day?"

Gifts of Jerusalem



Jessica Musleh represents Holy Land Artifacts. Her family works directly with Christian artisans in Bethlehem and Jerusalem, supporting families who rely on traditional olive wood craftsmanship as their primary source of income.

Due to ongoing conflict and a severe decline in tourism, many Christian families in the Holy Land are facing extreme economic hardship. Tourism has historically been the main source of income for these communities, and with its collapse, many Christians have been forced to leave the region. The sale of handcrafted olive wood items, including crosses, nativity scenes, and other religious artifacts, play a vital role in preserving the Christian presence in the Holy Land and sustaining these families.

Her local group travels to a different parish each weekend to share these authentic olive wood carvings and to raise awareness of the struggles faced by Christians in the Holy Land.

We are honored to welcome Jessica Musleh and her Holy Land Artifacts to our parish the weekend of

March 14th and 15th.

Items will be displayed at both St. Elizabeth and St. Mark's churches.

Purchasing olive wood from the Holy Land allows one to own a meaningful piece of sacred history while supporting Christian families in Bethlehem and Jerusalem.

Holy Land Artifacts

There will be a display of handmade olive wood religious articles available for purchase after all Masses on the weekend of March 14 & 15 at the parish. Items will include Nativity sets, crucifixes, rosaries, statues, and many other devotional pieces.

Holy Land Artifacts represents more than 100 Christian families in Jerusalem and Bethlehem who rely on the sale of traditional olive wood carvings as their primary source of income. With tourism at historic lows, these faithful families are experiencing significant hardship.

We warmly invite you to stop by to view the display and learn more about these beautiful, prayerfully handcrafted items. By purchasing one of these pieces, you are supporting Christian families in Jerusalem and helping to preserve the Christian presence in the land where our faith was born.

Thank you for your generous support.

Jessica Musleh

724-777-5022



St. Patrick — Feast Day March 17th



Though he was never canonized by the Catholic church, tradition holds that Patrick was the patron saint of Ireland. On March 17 each year, the anniversary of his death, Catholic churches, the Church of Ireland, and Eastern Orthodox churches celebrate this day as a major feast day. Parishioners attend mass and abstain from excess work on such a day.

Patrick was born in Roman Britain (likely Scotland), not in Ireland, to wealthy parents around 385 AD. When he was 16, he was taken captive by marauders who were looting his family's estate. His captors took him with them to Ireland and enslaved him, forcing him to tend cattle on a mountain in what is now Northern Ireland.

After six years in Ireland, Patrick had a dream in which he was told to return to his birthplace. He escaped back to his home country by begging passage on a boat headed east, and then trekked back to his family home. He believed that God was calling him to the priesthood so he studied for ordination as a Catholic priest for the next 15 years. He had another dream in which an angel said he needed to go back to Ireland, so he went back to the land of his captivity to follow God's call to spread the gospel.

Though St. Patrick was not the first to introduce Christianity to Ireland, his mission was to minister to the Christians already living in Ireland, and to witness to unbelievers. The latter proved to be a significant challenge for Patrick—as well as for Palladius, a bishop sent by the pope in Rome to evangelize Ireland.

Before the arrival of these two men, the Irish people's spiritual life was rooted in Celtic polytheism. They worshiped many gods, celebrated through rituals and seasonal festivals. In its 150 kingdoms, chieftains called on spiritual leaders known as Druids to serve as priests and intermediaries between the gods and the people. The religion placed a strong emphasis on nature worship and belief in spirits from other realms.

Patrick drew upon his knowledge of Irish culture—much of it learned during his six years in slavery—to adapt the Christian message in a way that resonated with the people. For example, because the sun was a powerful symbol in their belief system, he combined the image of the Christian cross with a circle representing the sun, creating what is now known as the Celtic Cross. There is also a tradition that says that St. Patrick explained the Trinity through the use of a shamrock, a groundcover plant that thrives in Ireland's climate. He didn't compromise the message of the gospel—he just learned how to get through to the people.

St. Patrick is credited with spurring the growth of Christianity that continued for more than a millennium in Ireland. St. Patrick established numerous churches and trained countless clergy and monks before he died in 461.

Using all his skills as a storyteller and dealmaker, Patrick cleverly adapted many of the old Irish ways to spread his Christian message to this last outpost of pagan Europe. His powers of persuasion were key to converting chieftains and kings and to quelling intrigue and conflict amidst poets and Druids. After his passing, Irish monasticism grew quickly— as monasteries were built for training, art and missionary work. Monks would spend their lives carefully preserving important texts, while developing a unique style of Christian art. We are likely familiar with the best example— Irish Book of Kells—which is an illustrated book of the four Gospels as well as some other writings. Monks then became missionaries in subsequent centuries, spreading the good news of Jesus Christ to foreign lands.

There are three symbols that are often attributed to St. Patrick that can be associated with what we find in Scripture:

- Shamrock—this would be a three-leaf clover variety, since a four-leaf kind is associated with “luck” (something that we will not see in the Bible). But the story goes that St. Patrick, speaking to nature worshipers, picked up a shamrock and explained the “three-in-one” nature of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
- Bishop's crook—there were many shepherds in Ireland who could understand the value of a crook in their work with sheep. St. Patrick carried a crook with him. This would allow for object lessons surrounding all of the mentions of the Good Shepherd in the Bible, such as Psalm 23 and parables such as the lost sheep. His crook was actually called a Bishop's “crozier” and was a symbol of authority, and his responsibility to teach and care for his “flock.”
- Celtic Cross—as mentioned earlier, St. Patrick designed a cross superimposed on a circle that was supposed to symbolize the sun. This was a symbol used to explain our need for salvation and how Jesus' sacrifice on a wooden cross accomplished that for us, leading us to a life of worship.

What Is St. Patrick's Breastplate Prayer?

Also known as "The Lorica of St. Patrick," the "Breastplate Prayer" is a prayer to act as spiritual defense against our enemy. According to tradition and legend, Patrick composed and recited this prayer while traveling to speak with the Irish King Loegaire, who resisted the gospel and Patrick's work. Some stories say Patrick and his companions prayed, and God supernaturally made them appear as a herd of deer to avoid capture.

The prayer reads as follows:

*"I arise today through a mighty strength, the invocation of the Trinity,
through belief in the threeness, through confession of the oneness of the Creator of creation.*

*I arise today through the strength of Christ with his baptism,
through the strength of his crucifixion with his burial,
through the strength of his resurrection with his ascension,
through the strength of his descent for the judgment of doom.*

*I arise today through the strength of the love of cherubim
in obedience of angels, in the service of the archangels,
in hope of resurrection to meet with reward,
in prayers of patriarchs, in predictions of prophets,
in preaching of apostles, in faiths of confessors,
in innocence of holy virgins, in deeds of righteous men.*

*I arise today, through the strength of heaven:
light of sun, brilliance of moon, splendor of fire,
speed of lightning, swiftness of wind, depth of sea,
stability of earth, firmness of rock.*

*I arise today, through God's strength to pilot me:
God's might to uphold me, God's wisdom to guide me,
God's eye to look before me, God's ear to hear me,
God's word to speak for me, God's hand to guard me,
God's way to lie before me, God's shield to protect me,*

*God's host to secure me:
against snares of demons, against temptations of vices,
against inclinations of nature, against everyone who
shall wish me ill, afar and anear, alone and in multitude.*

*I summon today all these powers between me and these evils:
against every cruel and merciless power that may oppose my body and my soul,*

*against incantations of false prophets,
against black laws of heathenry,
against false laws of heretics, against craft of idolatry,
against spells of witches and smiths and wizards,
against every knowledge that endangers man's body and soul.*

*Christ to protect me today
against poison, against burning,
against drowning, against wounding,
so that there may come abundance of reward.*

*Christ with me, Christ before me, Christ behind me, Christ in me,
Christ beneath me, Christ above me,
Christ on my right, Christ on my left,
Christ in breadth, Christ in length, Christ in height,
Christ in the heart of every man who thinks of me,*

*Christ in the mouth of every man who speaks of me,
Christ in every eye that sees me,
Christ in every ear that hears me.*

*I arise today through a mighty strength, the invocation of the Trinity,
through belief in the threeness, through confession of the oneness of the Creator of creation.
Salvation is of the Lord. Salvation is of the Lord. Salvation is of Christ.*

May your salvation, Oh Lord, be ever with us."



St. Joseph—Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Feast Day—March 19th

Even though he never spoke a word in the Bible, St. Joseph led a remarkable life, and his legacy lives on to this day.

While the Church traditionally recognizes the parents of the Blessed Virgin Mary as Sts. Joachim and Anne, little is ever mentioned about the parents of St. Joseph, the foster father of Jesus.

Why is that? As with Sts. Joachim and Anne, very few details have been passed down to us about the parents of St. Joseph. At the same time, we do know with certainty the father of St. Joseph, though it can be confusing at first.

In the Gospel of Matthew, St. Joseph is listed as the son of “Jacob” (Matthew 1:16). However, in the Gospel of Luke, his father is listed as “Heli” (Luke 3:23). Did Matthew and Luke have different information?

According to their family genealogy, Joseph’s grandfather Matthan (mentioned in Matthew) married a woman named Estha, who bore him a son named Jacob. After Matthan died, Estha married his relative Melchi (mentioned in Luke) and bore him a son named Heli (marrying relatives was common among Jews at this time). Jacob and Heli were thus half-brothers. Heli died childless, so Jacob married his widow and fathered Joseph, who was biologically the son of Jacob but legally the son of Heli (Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History 1:6:7).

Adoption was common in Jewish culture and it directly affected the genealogical line. So while a person may be born into one specific lineage, if they were later adopted, they would also take on the new lineage. Additionally, as Akin explains, “Adoption could take place posthumously.” This would mean that “If a man died childless, it was the duty of his brother to marry the widow and father a son on behalf of his brother. This son then would be posthumously ‘adopted’ by the dead man and reckoned as his son in the family genealogy.

It’s then widely believed that Jacob was Joseph’s primary father and the one who raised him up to be a “just man.”

In regards to Joseph’s mother, hardly any evidence exists, even in the most remote traditions. One visionary from the 18th century, named Mother Cecilia Baij, claims his mother was “Rachel.” There is some possibility this could be true, as Rachel was a common name, but it also appears to link Joseph to the first “Joseph” in the Old Testament, whose parents were Jacob (Israel) and Rachel.

Whoever the parents of Joseph were, they raised a virtuous man who would be instrumental in salvation history and a worthy foster father of Jesus Christ.

We don’t hear much about St. Joseph in the Bible. He is simply described as the “husband of Mary,” a “carpenter,” and a “just man” in the Gospel accounts. Neither his age nor his death is ever mentioned in Scripture.

However, various traditions help shed some light on the question, and offer possible scenarios to consider.

Old Man Joseph Tradition

A very common tradition in the Orthodox Church is that Joseph was an old man but youthful in vigor when he married the Virgin Mary. Before taking Mary into his home, Joseph’s previous wife (with whom he had had several children) died. This has led some to claim that these children were the “brothers” of Jesus that are mentioned in the Gospels.

At length, by increasing years, the old man arrived at a very advanced age. He did not, however, labor under any bodily weakness, nor had his sight failed, nor had any tooth perished from his mouth. In mind also, for the whole time of his life, he never wandered; but like a boy he always in his business displayed youthful vigor, and his limbs remained unimpaired, and free from all pain. His life, then, in all, amounted to one hundred and eleven years, his old age being prolonged to the utmost limit.

Teenager Joseph

On the other hand many biblical scholars and historians believe Joseph was a young man, possibly even a teenager. The *International Marian Research Institute* states, “We believe that Mary and Joseph were both in their teens when Jesus was born, around sixteen and eighteen respectively. This was the norm for Jewish newlyweds at that time.”

Venerable Fulton Sheen shares a similar sentiment in *The World’s First Love*, “Joseph was probably a young man, strong, virile, athletic, handsome, chaste, and disciplined, the kind of man one sees ... working at a carpenter’s bench ... He was not in the evening of life, but in its morning, bubbling over with energy, strength, and controlled passion.”



This theory takes into account the long journeys that the Holy Family took around Jesus' birth. The first from Nazareth to Bethlehem and the second when they fled into Egypt. It is hard to imagine an elderly Joseph taking care of Mary and Jesus as they go into a foreign country.

Whatever the truth is, Joseph was a "just man" who did all he could to protect and provide for Mary and Jesus. He looked upon them with a tender heart and loved them both with a deep and abiding love.

What did St. Joseph actually do as a carpenter? Often certain biblical phrases don't get translated very well.

The word used in this passage is not always as clear-cut and specific. The original Greek passage describes Joseph as a "tekton," which had various meanings in the ancient world. According to one scholar, "Etymologically, the Greek term tektōn can be traced back to meaning to cut or fashion with an axe, but it also refers to weaving, building, fabricating and joining and have shown that tektones work with all kinds of materials and tools."

These men were highly skilled laborers who were adept at doing all kinds of work. A tekton was the person each village depended on to set their foundations right, or to build a properly functioning door. In other words, Joseph and his son, Jesus, were the go-to guys when you wanted to build a house for a growing family."

One way to describe Joseph is that he may have been the "handyman" of the neighborhood who helped everyone with their projects, big or small. Another word to describe him would be "craftsman."

This interpretation sheds more light on the work of St. Joseph and his foster-son Jesus. It pictures the two going around the village and getting asked by everyone to come over and fix their house. This also may explain why everyone in Nazareth knew Jesus as the "carpenter's son." Joseph and Jesus would be a frequent sight throughout the town, helping everyone with their projects.

In the end, while it may be true that Joseph was a carpenter as we normally think, it is also very likely that he could have been the "handyman" who was as skilled with wood as he was with stone or any other material.

The city of Nazareth, located in Israel's upper Galilee region, is an important destination for pilgrimages to the Holy Land. The most important church in Nazareth is without a doubt the Basilica of the Annunciation. The modern church – the largest in the Middle East – sits atop four previous ruined churches, all built over a grotto believed to be the home of Mary's parents. It is the site where she was visited by the angel Gabriel and given her fiat.

A short distance away is another church of importance to the Christian pilgrim: St Joseph's Church. According to an ancient tradition, it is believed this church was built over the house and workshop of St. Joseph. This would have been the home of Mary and Joseph following their marriage. The church also goes by the names Church of Nutrition and the Church of Joseph's Carpentry.

Today's modern Church of St. Joseph was also built over earlier ruined churches – a decorated 5th-century Byzantine church and a later Crusader-era church.

Though obviously of lesser import than the site where the "Word became flesh" (see John 1:14), the place where the Holy Family lived together for 30 years, and Jesus grew to adulthood is significant. In fact, the Byzantine church built over St. Joseph's home was larger than the one nearby built over the grotto of the Annunciation.

After the Arabic occupation in the 13th century, the Crusader church of St. Joseph was left in ruins for centuries. In 1754, the Franciscans purchased the site and rebuilt a chapel in honor of St. Joseph.

In the 1880s, nuns of the Sisters of Nazareth convent rediscovered the ancient 1st-century house beneath their convent. Led by the superior of the convent, Mère Giraud, the project was initiated and directed by the nuns themselves. The Franciscan friars then rebuilt the present church in 1914 on what remained of the Crusader Church.

Later, in 1936, a Jesuit priest named Henri Senès, who had a background in architecture, visited the site beneath the nuns' convent and detailed the structures. His work went was largely unknown beyond the local Franciscans.

However, in 2006, the nuns granted access to the site to archaeologists led by Professor Ken Dark. He spent 14 years studying the site, including Senès's drawings and notes. The archaeologists discovered items from a 1st-century house, including broken cooking pots, a spindle for spinning thread, and limestone vessels. These artifacts suggested a family lived there.

Dark believes the site to be the home of St. Joseph and, consequentially, the childhood home of Jesus. Today, a stairway descends from the church to a crypt where caves can be seen through a grille in the floor.

A few more steps descend to an ancient pool or basin with a black-and-white mosaic floor. This is believed to have been a pre-Constantinian Christian baptistery, perhaps used as early as the 1st century. The mosaic depicts what appears to be a ladder, perhaps symbolizing the spiritual elevation of new converts to Christianity. This indicates that Christians gathered here in biblical times long before the first official churches were built.

There are further steps still, which appear to be older; they reach a narrow passage that eventually opens up into a room. In this room are caves that have been carved into the limestone to be used for storage of grain and as water cisterns.

While it is impossible to know that this was St. Joseph's house and the site where Jesus grew up, the ancient traditions combined with archaeological evidence make it a strong possibility.

St. Joseph, pray for us.

