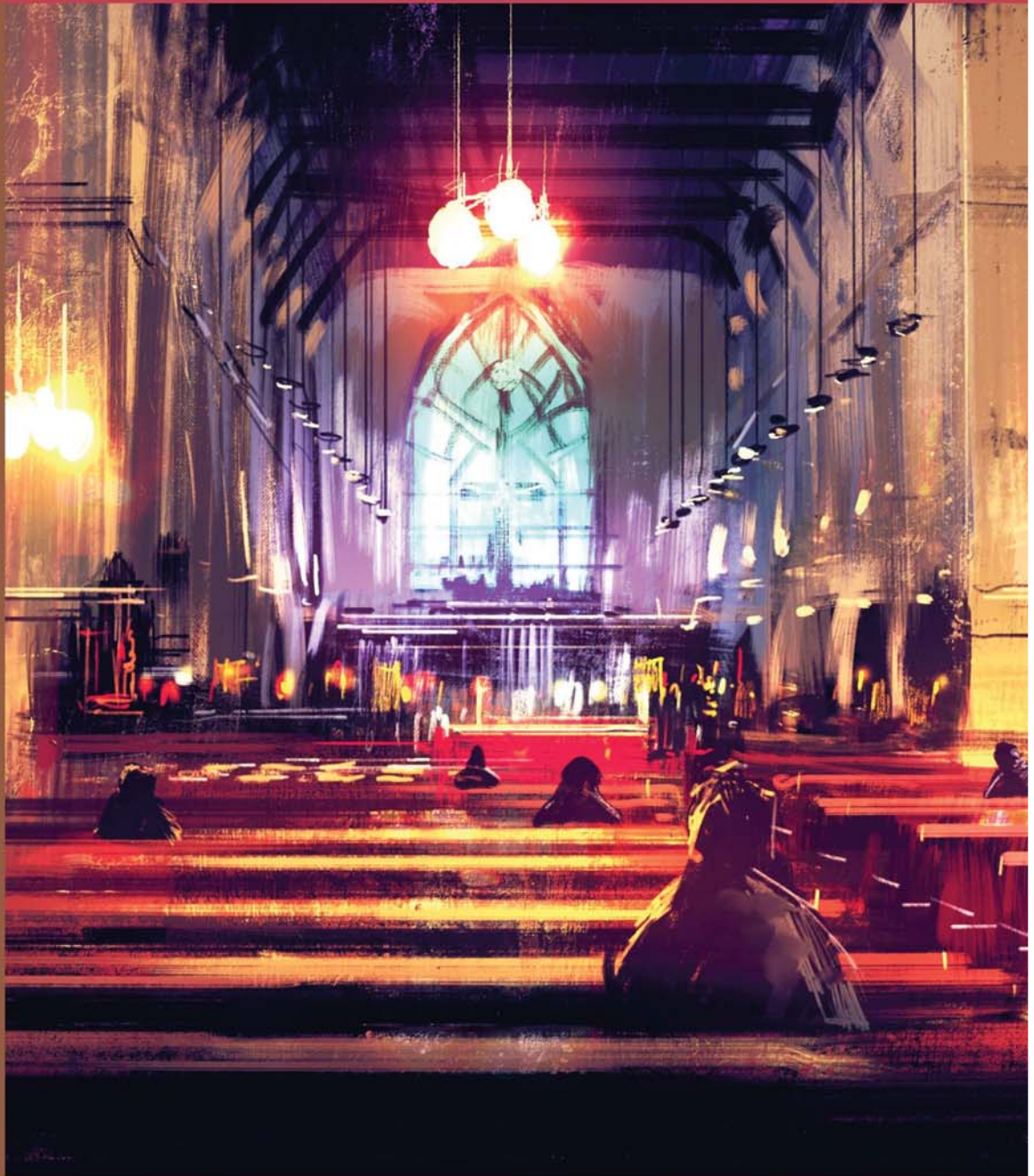


# February 19, 2023

## 7<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time



Do you not know that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? 1 Corinthians 3:16

# PARISH SCHEDULE & DIRECTORY

## RECTORY OFFICE

**Monday—Friday 10:00 am—2:00 pm**

**ADDRESS:** 1 Pineswamp Road  
Ipswich, MA 01938

**TELEPHONE:** 978-356-3944

**FAX:** 978-356-9592

## WEEKEND MASS

**Saturday 4:00 p.m.**

**Sunday 9:00 a.m. & 11:00 a.m.**

## WEEKDAY MASSES

**Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday and  
Saturday 9:00 a.m.**

*There is no daily Mass on Wednesday*

## GUIDE FOR IN-PERSON WORSHIP

The requirement for Masks has been lifted. However, for those who are not vaccinated or are more comfortable wearing a mask, please continue to. We also ask those who attend to social distance from those not in your household when possible.

If for any reason these directives and guidelines need to be increased by the CDC, we will update and post them to our website [www.ipswichcatholics.org](http://www.ipswichcatholics.org).

Thank you for your understanding and cooperation.

## SACRAMENTS

### RECONCILIATION

SATURDAYS 3:00—3:45 PM or by appointment.  
Please wear a mask when in the confessional.

### BAPTISM

If you are planning a baptism in the future, please call the rectory to make arrangements 978-356-3944.

### MARRIAGE

If you are an engaged couple, please call Fr. Tom directly at least 6 months prior to the intended date.

### RCIA & FAITH FORMATION

Questions regarding current, upcoming programs and/or sacramental programs available at our parish, please contact rectory at 978-356-3944.

## STAY UP TO DATE THROUGH EMAIL

When important information is sent to registered parishioners, it is conveyed through email. Please let us know when your email has changed. Thank you.

## CONTACT INFORMATION

**PASTOR:** Rev. Thomas E. Keyes

**PRIEST IN RESIDENCE:** Rev. John G. Kiley

**OFFICE MANAGER:** Joanne DiNatale

978-356-3944 rectory@ipswichcatholics.org

**RELIGIOUS EDUCATION COORDINATORS:**  
**978-356-3944 EXT. 28**

**Elementary:** Gabriela Twaalfhoven  
gtwaalfhoven@ipswichcatholics.org

**Middle and High School:** Elisa St. Clair  
elisastclair@ipswichcatholics.org

**MUSIC MINISTER:** John Maher  
978-500-6789 johnmaheripswich@gmail.com

**MAINTENANCE:** Branden Soroka

**FINANCE COUNCIL CHAIR:** Michael Nelligan

## PARISH MINISTRY CONTACTS

### CATHOLIC WOMEN'S CLUB

Bonni Berkowitz, President | 617-549-2744  
berky000@gmail.com

### MUSIC MINISTRIES

John Maher | 978-500-6789  
johnmaheripswich@gmail.com

### SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL

James McCarthy, President | 978-992-6151

### KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS

James Foley | 978-360-2799

*For more information, contact the parish office.*

*Consider sharing your gifts and talents.*

## NEW TO OUR PARISH?

If you are new to Our Lady of Hope, please introduce yourself to Fr. Tom following Mass. To formally register with our parish, contact the rectory office at 978-356-3944.



Let the Priest know if you would like to use a hearing assist box before Mass. If you have any questions, please call the rectory at 978-356-3944.

Thank You

## MASS INTENTIONS

### Saturday, February 18

4:00pm—Weekend Mass

### Sunday, February 19

9:00am—Weekend Mass

11:00am—Jo Fay, Julie, Jaxon & Scarlett Smith

### Monday, February 20

9:00 am—Weekday Mass



### Tuesday, February 21

9:00 a.m.—Weekday Mass

### Ash Wednesday, February 22

9:00 am, 3:00 pm & 7:00 pm



### Thursday, February 23

9:00 a.m.—Weekday Mass

### Friday, February 24

9:00 a.m.—Weekday Mass

### Saturday, February 25

9:00 am—Weekday Mass

4:00pm—Weekend Mass

### Sunday, February 26

9:00am—Weekend Mass

11:00am—Louise Best

## ONLINE GIVING

We offer this convenience to our parishioners and visitors. Online giving is an easy and secure way to make contributions to support our parish. You may contribute using direct withdrawals (ACH) or credit cards. Visa, MasterCard and American Express are all accepted.

To contribute using online giving, simply visit our website: [ipswichcatholics.org](http://ipswichcatholics.org) and follow the instructions. For assistance, call the rectory.

## Remember God's will in yours...

When you leave a bequest to the Church in your will or estate plan, you express your commitment to the future of your parish. You also return some of the blessings God gave to your life and leave an eternal message of what is important to you. Please consider including Our Lady of Hope Parish when preparing your will.

For more information contact Fr. Tom Keyes or call the rectory office at 978-356-3944 or email: [rectory@ipswichcatholics.org](mailto:rectory@ipswichcatholics.org)



## PRAYER REQUESTS

### WE ASK PARISHIONERS TO PRAY...

† For all those who are sick, especially Cathryn Lally, Denise Polli, Gerrie O'Brien, Melissa Faino Palelli, Mikey Grover, Kyrsten Weber, Arline Thornell, Irene Stackpole, Connie Donovan, Connie, Christine & John Vallis, Maria Masse, Ed Manning, Patricia Foley, J. P. Quinn and Virginia Morin and all those infected with the Covid-19 virus.

† For the children attending our Faith Formation classes.

† For those who work on front line with Covid-19 virus

† For those who work and live in war-torn countries, especially in the Ukraine

† For William Macullar and all the deceased members of our parish

† For the safety and good health of all missionaries

† For all who serve our country in the Armed Forces

† For peace in our world, especially Ukraine.

† For the unborn children

† For all those affected by natural disasters

### PLEASE NOTE:

*In order to keep our prayer list current, names will remain on the list for four weeks. Please resubmit by contacting the rectory office. Names should be submitted by the individual or immediate family member.*



## DONATION FOR FEBRUARY 12, 2023

**OFFERTORY: \$4,349.00**

**THANK YOU TO ALL WHO GENEROUSLY SUPPORT OUR PARISH.**

### COLLECTIONS: FUEL COLLECTION

The Fuel collection is a great help in funding the anticipated cost of the parish heat and utilities this winter. Thank you to all who have generously donated to this important fund \$15,745.00. The collection continue to be taken up during the month of February. Donations can be mailed, put on rectory porch or dropped in the weekend collection baskets. Again, thank you in advance for your continued generosity to this important collection that supports Our Lady of Hope Parish.

### FEBRUARY 22—CATHOLIC CHARITIES ASH WEDNESDAY COLLECTION

#### February 25-26—

#### SUPPORT OF CHURCH AROUND THE WORLD

This second collection will support the Church in those underdeveloped areas of the world. Catholic Relief Services (CRS), the Church in Africa and in Central and Eastern Europe and three important national Catholic missions: the Military Archdiocese, Home Missions and the Black and Indian Missions. For more information visit: [www.usccb.org](http://www.usccb.org)



## SPECIAL COLLECTION FOR TURKEY & SYRIA

The images coming out of Turkey and Syria following the February 6, 7.8 magnitude earthquake, are showing the world that the people there are experiencing immense suffering, destruction, and death. There are reports that the death toll has surpassed 11,000 and continues to rise.

Catholic Relief Services reports that "across affected areas in both countries, apartment buildings and schools have been leveled. For Syrians, the damage took place in areas already devastated by years of war. In Turkey, the airports and the high roads of Anatolia are closed, and most hospitals are unusable. Schools have been closed across the country."

Recognizing the growing need for assistance, Cardinal Seán has asked that a special collection be taken this weekend of **February 18/19, 2023**, in all parishes in the Archdiocese of Boston.

Funds raised will help to provide safe shelter, and access to food, clean water, and hygiene supplies. The USCCB has requested that we encourage the faithful to generously support the efforts of Catholic Relief Services and the Catholic Near East Welfare Association who are working to provide emergency humanitarian relief.

To process this collection, please to address their checks to the parish, with "Turkey/Syria Earthquake Relief" in the memo.

## OUR LADY OF HOPE MEN'S GROUP

Our Lady of Hope Men's Group invites you to come join us Saturday mornings from 7:00 - 9:00 in the church hall, for light refreshments and Christian fellowship in an easy-going, informal atmosphere.

## PARISH ROSARY GROUP

Praying the Rosary for those affected by abortion

Please join us every Tuesday at 7 PM in the upper Church for reciting the Rachel Rosary, intercessory prayer for victims of post-abortion syndrome. Rachel Rosary is a positive and appropriate means of praying for those affected by abortion. All are welcome to attend each week or as you are able.

## VOCATIONS

Interested in learning how you can lend your talents to encouraging those men called to be holy priests? Want to explore vocational discernment, life, and the life of seminarians and? Come see the new vocations website at [www.vocationsboston.org](http://www.vocationsboston.org) feel free to contact the Vocation Office by phone at 617-746-5949.

## MOBILE APPS FROM EWTN!

Download the EWTN mobile app for FREE and carry Catholic programming with you! Enjoy live streams of many of our popular TV and radio shows, prayers and devotionals, as well as the latest Catholic news. Also available is the EWTN Bible App featuring the brilliantly recorded "Truth & Life" dramatized audio New Testament! Visit [www.ewtnapps.com](http://www.ewtnapps.com) for more information and to download

## ST. VINCENT DE PAUL

On your behalf, the Our Lady of Hope Parish Saint Vincent de Paul Society continues to serve the poor, disadvantaged, and all experiencing challenges brought on by health or economic conditions. Since the beginning of the year, we have provided rental assistance to a family dealing with serious health issues that have dramatically impacted their income. We've also offered ongoing food assistance to many households struggling with the higher cost of food. With your Poor Boxes donations and prayers, we will continue to present the face of Jesus to those in need.



Please keep SVDP in mind if you hear of someone locally in need to whom we may be of assistance. We can also bring Vincentian Spirituality into the homes of the sick or homebound, who may benefit from our Christian companionship through our visits.

Contact us at 978-992-6151.

## PROTECTING GOD'S CHILDREN

All volunteers who minister in the Archdiocese must attend the Protecting God's Children training and complete the Code of Conduct form. In addition, every year all current volunteers and new volunteers must complete a CORI Form. Our Lady of Hope has begun the process for CORI completion for all volunteers and forms are available at the exit of the hall. Contact the rectory office to verify your ID (driver's license or passport) once completed. There have been downsides to the Pandemic, but an upside has been online training sessions for the Protecting God's Children (Virtus) program. Which might be more convenient to those with busy schedules.

If you will be volunteering and have not yet attended a training, the Child Advocacy office is now providing 'live' weekly PGC trainings on Zoom through Virtus throughout the summer. Just go to the usual [Virtus.org](http://Virtus.org), the 'Live Training' tab and Pre-register for an [upcoming live training session](#) – and you will find the schedule for adults to complete their PGC requirement with the Archdiocese of Boston via Zoom (Braintree).

You will also see other Live sessions being offered in person throughout the diocese, so if you prefer; you can attend in person at others listed too. If you register for a training, please let us know once completed and forward a copy of your completion certificate to the rectory office.

## Why Ashes? *By Fr. Larry Rice*

For centuries, Catholic Christians have marked the beginning of the season of Lent by receiving ash on their foreheads on Ash Wednesday. This tradition has its roots in the Old Testament, where wearing ashes was a common sign of repentance for sins, and a sign of one's humility before God. Since Lent is a season of penitential renewal through prayer, fasting, and almsgiving, it's appropriate that this ancient sign marks the beginning of the season.

The ashes themselves are usually made by burning the palm fronds from the previous year's Palm Sunday. This symbolically connects the beginning of Lent with its end, connecting our change of heart with Christ's passion, death, and resurrection.

Ashes are usually distributed as part of the Mass on Ash Wednesday, of-



ten after the homily. As people approach the priest or other minister, he presses the ashes to their foreheads, and speaks one of two phrases: "Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return,"

or "Repent and believe in the Gospel."

In many places, Ash Wednesday services are among the most popular of the whole year—a day that's not even a Holy Day of Obligation. Cynics have suggested that this is because people "get" something, as they do on Palm Sunday. But there's nothing particularly appealing about getting smudged with ashes. Perhaps, the appeal is the expression through a physical sign of a desire for interior conversion.

The Gospel for Ash Wednesday is a reminder that the real purpose of the season of Lent isn't to make public demonstrations of piety—even the wearing of ashes—but to seek conversion of heart.

Fr. Larry Rice is the former vocations director for the Paulist Fathers. Copyright © 2018, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Washington, DC. All rights reserved. Used with permission. Images: CNS photo/Gregory A. Shemitz

# LENTEN FASTING & ABSTINENCE



### Fasting

Ash Wednesday  
Good Friday

Ages 18-59

### Abstinence

Every Friday  
during Lent

Ages 14+

### How do we fast?

When fasting, a person is permitted to eat one full meal, as well as two smaller meals that together are not equal to a full meal.

### Am I excused from fasting and abstinence?

Those that are excused from fast and abstinence outside the age limits include the physically or mentally ill including individuals suffering from chronic illnesses such as diabetes. Also excluded are pregnant or nursing women.

For more information on fasting and abstinence, visit [usccb.org](http://usccb.org).



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## STATIONS OF THE CROSS



**9:30 am following the daily Mass on the  
Fridays of Lent beginning on Feb. 24  
and continuing March 3, 10, 17, 24 & 31**

Learn authentic, traditional Catholic  
meditation & contemplation  
in 8 weekly sessions

## LECTIO DIVINA COURSE

AT OUR LADY OF HOPE CHURCH  
IN THE PARISH HALL

**Tuesdays  
during Lent  
6-8 pm**

**Starting  
February 21**

To learn more &  
register, scan the code



([www.facebook.com/groups/LDOLH/](https://www.facebook.com/groups/LDOLH/))

**Each weekly session will consist of**

- A **lesson** rooted in Tradition featuring the Saints and spiritual masters of the Catholic faith.
- **Small group practice** of the lesson.
- **Exercises** to practice at home.



Led by  
**Craig St. Clair, MA**  
Catechist-at-large

## Journey to Easter with Exodus Lent

**EXODUS**

40 days to grow closer to God  
and become a better man.

The Men's Group at Our Lady of Hope is inviting all men in the parish to participate in Exodus Lent, a program of prayer, fasting, and fellowship.

We meet each week at 7:15 am on Saturdays. Come join us on this spiritual journey toward Easter!

Use your smartphone's camera to click on the QR code above for more information.

Freedom begins  
Ash Wednesday

[Exodus90.com](http://Exodus90.com)





## LENTEN MISSION AT OUR LADY OF HOPE PARISH with Sr. Briega McKenna, O.S.C. and Fr. Pablo Escriva De Romani

**Monday, March 27, 2023**  
**Theme: Reconciliation**  
**Morning Mass & mission talk**  
**Evening mission talk and service of Reconciliation**  
**(no Mass)**

**Tuesday, March 28, 2023**  
**Theme: Prayer and the Power of the Holy Spirit**  
**Morning Mass and mission talk**  
**Evening Mass and mission talk**

**Wednesday, March 29, 2023**  
**Theme: The Power of the Cross**  
**Morning Mass and mission talk**  
**Evening Mass and mission talk**

**Thursday, March 30, 2023**  
**Theme: The Eucharist: "The Source and Summit of our Faith"**  
**Morning Mass and mission talk**  
**Evening Mass, mission talk, and Eucharistic Healing Service\***



**SISTER BRIEGA MCKENNA, O.S.C.** was born in Ireland and entered the Sisters of St. Clare at the age of fifteen. Following her final vows and after suffering for more than three years with rheumatoid arthritis, she was transferred to her community in Tampa, Florida, hoping that the Florida sunshine would relieve her suffering. At the age of twenty-four, she was miraculously and instantaneously healed during the celebration of the Eucharist and some time later received, in prayer, the gift of healing for which she has become so widely known. In 1974, again during prayer, she was given a deep spiritual insight into the mystery of the call to priesthood. Since then, bishops and priests in many parts of the world have invited her to speak and minister at their retreats and conferences. Sr. Briega ministered to priests in collaboration with Fr. Kevin Scallon, CM for over forty-two years until his death in June 2018. She now continues with this ministry working with Fr. Pablo Escriva de Romani. Her books "Miracles Do Happen" and "The Power of the Sacraments" have been translated into many languages throughout the world.

**FR PABLO ESCRIVA DE ROMANI** was born in Spain and ordained in Madrid 2009. He studied Theology in the Faculty of San Damaso in Madrid, Spain. He worked predominantly with the youth in the parish of St. Teresa of Jesus in Madrid for several years. After that period, he went to Ukraine as a missionary, working with Bishop Jan Sobilo in the Shrine of Merciful God the Father, giving retreats and helping people from the war zone, pro-life missions with doctors, and spiritual exercises for priests. Fr. Pablo has been ministering at retreats as a missionary in different countries, including France, Mexico, Italy, Poland, Belarus, Switzerland, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Ethiopia, Dominican Republic, USA, Belgium, Lebanon, Holy Land, Guatemala, Chile, Portugal, Puerto Rico, Ukraine, and Costa Rica. He is now working as a diocesan missionary from Madrid in Costa Rica, residing with Bishop Javier Roman in the Diocese of Limon and helping in the indigenous zone, working with youth and giving spiritual exercises to priests. He is now beginning to restore a retreat house to receive priests willing to have a missionary experience and renew their priesthood. Additionally, Fr. Pablo has joined Sr. Briega in ministering to priests and at parish missions.

### WORLDWIDE MARRIAGE ENCOUNTER

Lent begins this week. Psalm 51: "Create a clean heart in me, O God, and a steadfast spirit renew within me." Renew and transform your relationship. How? Apply for a Worldwide Marriage Encounter Experience:

Mar 10-12, 2023 in Upton, MA  
 Jun 23-25, 2023 in Huntington, NY

Worldwide Marriage Encounter sponsors a variety of in-person and virtual marriage experiences, some on weekends and some on seven weekdays. Couples explore their relationship with each other, God, and the Church. Registration is limited; there is a \$100 application fee. For more information or to apply, call Joe & Ginny Vatele at 978-870-5646 or <https://www.mema.org/>.

### SCRIPTURE READINGS 2023

<b>7<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY ORDINARY TIME</b> Feb 19	Lv 19:1-2, 17-18/Ps 103:1-2, 3-4, 8, 10, 12-13/ 1 Cor 3:16-23/Mt 5:38-48
<b>MONDAY</b> Feb 20	Sir 1:1-10/Ps 93:1ab, 1cd-2, 5/Mk 9:14-29
<b>TUESDAY</b> Feb 21	<i>Saint Peter Damian, Bishop and Doctor of the Church</i> Sir 2:1-11/Ps 37:3-4, 18-19, 27-28, 39-40/Mk 9:30-37
<b>ASH WEDNESDAY</b> Feb 22	<i>Ash Wednesday</i> Jl 2:12-18/Ps 51:3-4, 5-6ab, 12-13, 14+17/ 2 Cor 5:20-6:2/Mt 6:1-6, 16-18
<b>THURSDAY</b> Feb 23	<i>Saint Polycarp, Bishop and Martyr</i> Dt 30:15-20/Ps 1:1-2, 3, 4 and 6/Lk 9:22-25
<b>FRIDAY</b> Feb 24	Is 58:1-9a/Ps 51:3-4, 5-6ab, 18-19/Mt 9:14-15
<b>SATURDAY</b> Feb 25	Is 58:9b-14/Ps 86:1-2, 3-4, 5-6/Lk 5:27-32
<b>1<sup>ST</sup> SUNDAY OF LENT</b> Feb 26	Gn 2:7-9; 3:1-7/Ps 51:3-4, 5-6, 12-13, 17/Rom 5:12-19 or 5:12, 17-19/Mt 4:1-11

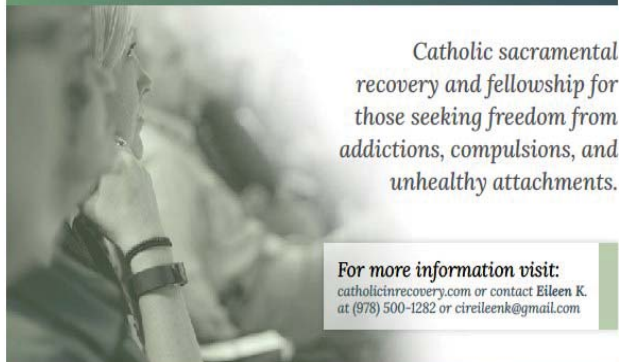
## Join **Catholic in Recovery** at **Our Lady of Hope Parish**

1 Pineswamp Road, Ipswich, MA | PARISH HALL

New day!

# 2<sup>ND</sup> & 4<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAYS

## @ 6:30 p.m.



Catholic sacramental  
recovery and fellowship for  
those seeking freedom from  
addictions, compulsions, and  
unhealthy attachments.

For more information visit:  
[catholicinrecovery.com](http://catholicinrecovery.com) or contact Eileen K.  
at (978) 500-1282 or [cireileenk@gmail.com](mailto:cireileenk@gmail.com)



Faith | Freedom | Fellowship

### Summer of 2023:

Fr. John will be leading a pilgrimage to Ireland with **206 Tours** in the summer of 2023 from July 30 to August 8. We will visit **Dublin · Wicklow · Glendalough · Tipperary · Rock Of Cashel · Kerry · Dingle Peninsula · Shannon · Cliffs Of Moher · Corcomroe Abbey · Galway · Corrib Lake · Clonmacnoise · Knock.**

For more info:  
[www.pilgrimages.com/frkiley](http://www.pilgrimages.com/frkiley)

### WINTER STORM CANCELLATIONS

When there is inclement weather, there is concern for the safety of parishioners to our parish and our ability to clear the parking lot and walkways to make them safe and free of snow/ice. When conditions are extreme and local authorities are warning of travel we will also follow this same decision and cancel celebrating daily Mass and possibly weekend Masses. We will post this on our website, cancellations on Channel 7 (NBC), Channel 56(CW) and by logging onto [www.whdh.com](http://www.whdh.com).

### 2022 CONTRIBUTION STATEMENTS

Please let us know if you would like a 2022 statement of the contributions you made in OLOH envelopes, contact the Rectory office at 978-356-3944. For those who have been making contributions through Online Giving, you are able to print a statement yourself when logged into your account. The Parish is also able to issue contribution statements for donations that include those made through Online Giving. If you are not currently receiving envelopes and would like to, let us know.

### IPSWICH KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS



The Knights of Columbus is the world's largest Catholic fraternal service organization. It was founded by the Venerable Father Michael J. McGivney in New Haven, Connecticut, in 1882, and named in honor of the navigator Christopher Columbus. Originally serving as a mutual benefit society to low-income immigrant Catholics, it developed into a fraternal service organization dedicated to providing charitable services, promoting Catholic education, and actively defending Catholicism in various nations.

The Knights of Columbus is not just a fraternity in name. It is a brotherhood of Catholic men who each play a part in improving the world around them, one community at a time. They stand together in faith, dedicated to upholding the principles they cherish - Charity, Unity, and Fraternity - while lending their support and strength to parish, home, and fellow Knights. From charity for worldwide causes, to helping closer to home with volunteer activities, to a top-rated insurance program that protects those closest to you, the Knights make the most of its brotherhood. All men in the parish - young or old - are welcome and should consider joining the Knights of Columbus.

We'd love to have you! For more information on joining the Knights, please contact Jim Foley Grand Knight of Ipswich Council 498 at: [Jamesfoley2233@gmail.com](mailto:Jamesfoley2233@gmail.com).

### CURSILLO

**An opportunity to deepen your faith |  
The Boston Cursillo Movement |  
[www.bostoncursillo.org](http://www.bostoncursillo.org)**

The Cursillo is a "little course in Christianity" that begins on a Thursday evening and concludes Sunday afternoon. Each Cursillo is an encounter with Christ in a small community of the Church, in order that Christ's love and grace can be brought to every aspect of life. Fr Bill Murphy and Mary Ann McLaughlin will be the Spiritual Directors of upcoming weekends.

The Boston Cursillo Weekends will be held at The Notre Dame Spirituality Center 30 Jeffrey's Neck Rd, Ipswich MA 01938. For more information call: Chris Graf 617-332-5548

**The dates for the Cursillo Weekends are:**

**Women's Weekend ~ February 9 – 12, 2023  
Men's Weekend ~ March 23 -26, 2023**





## Fact of Faith

### PENITENTIAL PRACTICES FOR LENT

Raise Up. Sacrifice. Offer.

**O**ne important way to grow in the Lord is to observe the penitential practices that strengthen us for resisting temptation, allow us to express our sorrow for the sins we have committed, and help to repair the tear caused by our sinning.

Penitential practices take many forms: apologizing to an injured party, healing divisions within our families, fasting during the Lenten season, or graciously accepting the menial tasks of life. The purpose of penance is not to diminish life but to enrich it.

Jesus, in Matthew's Gospel, calls us to pray, to fast, and to give alms: "when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites," "when you fast, do not look gloomy," "when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right is doing" (Mt 6:5, 16, 3, respectively). As a Church, we ponder and pray over this call every Ash Wednesday. In a most profound way, the three spiritual exercises identified by Jesus are directed toward the nurturing of relationships.

**Prayer**, that process of listening to and responding to God's daily call, sustains and nurtures our relationship with our triune God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Without prayer, personal and communal, this relationship is diminished, sometimes to the point of complete silence on our part. Every day the Spirit of Jesus invites us to enter into that serious conversion that leads to blessed communion.

**Fasting**, a very special form of penance, and Jesus' second call, has been a consistent part of our Catholic tradition. Fasting assists us in getting our own house in order. All of us have to deal with areas of servitude, whether in regard to smoking or alcohol consumption, misused sexuality, uncontrolled gambling, psychological hang-ups, spiritual obsessions, use of stimulants, immoderate use of the Internet, excessive amounts of television watching, or preoccupations with other forms of entertainment. By fasting and self-denial, by

living lives of moderation, we have more energy to devote to God's purposes and a better self-esteem that helps us to be more concerned with the well-being of others.

The third call of the Lord is to **give alms**. Jesus was always concerned about those who were poor and in need. He was impressed by the widow who, though having so little, shared her resources with others: "I tell you truly, this poor widow put in more than all the rest; for those others have all made offerings from their surplus wealth, but she, from her poverty, has offered her whole livelihood" (Lk 21:3-4). To be a disciple of Christ means to live a life of charity. To be a disciple of Jesus is to live a life of stewardship, generously giving of our time, talent, and treasure.

At the heart of all penance is the call to conversion. Jesus' imperative "Repent, and believe in the gospel" (Mk 1:15) makes explicit this connection between authentic discipleship and penitential discipline. Discipleship, our following of Jesus, embraces discipline, a firm commitment to do whatever is demanded in furthering God's kingdom. Viewed in this way, the virtue of penance is not optional, just as weeding a garden is not optional for a responsible caretaker. The gardener is concerned with a bountiful harvest; the disciple is concerned about greater conformity to the person of Jesus.

If we are serious about embracing the penitential discipline that is rooted in the call to discipleship, then we will identify specific times and places for prayer, penance, and works of charity. Growth in spiritual maturity demands a certain level of specificity, for it shows that we take seriously God's call to discipline and are willing to hold ourselves accountable. In our Catholic tradition we specify certain days and seasons for special works of penance: Fridays, on which we commemorate the death of the Lord, and Lent, our forty days of preparation for the Easter mysteries.



Catholic  
Current

This article is an excerpt from Penitential Practices for Today's Catholics (USCCB, Washington, DC, 2001), 1-5. Copyright © 2001, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Washington, DC. All rights reserved.



# Try It, You'll Like It!

## A CONFESSION ABOUT CONFESSION

*We can take a look into our spiritual mirror, and if we don't like what we see, we have the chance to change it, all while accepting God's gift of forgiveness.*

*Confession is always an affirmation of faith and not just a proclamation of sinfulness.*

Bless me, reader, for I have sinned: I am not the best role model when it comes to confession.

Of course, I know how important it is. I know that there is great peace in the forgiveness offered by God, that it strengthens our relationship with him and it reminds us of our duty to live our lives in a more Christ-like way.

Like exercise, confession – or the sacrament of reconciliation, as we now call it – always makes me feel better after I go – separated from my sinful habits and inspired to adhere more closely to my spiritual path.

But convincing my children of its myriad benefits is one of the wonderful challenges of parenting, akin to making sure they've got enough spiritual veggies on their plate of faith.

Me: "Try it, you'll like it!"

Them: "Uh, huh," as they hide their peas under the mound of mashed potatoes.

Like plenty of adults I know, my children have no problem coming up with reasons why they don't need to make a list of their less-than-stellar moments and, worse, tell someone about it.

"I haven't done anything wrong," spits out my younger daughter at my suggestion of a Saturday afternoon family trip to the confessional. (This, of course, comes right after a

morning fight with her younger brother.)

I deftly point out that while we aren't a family of murderers, it would behoove all of us to take a moment and think of the times we were less than kind to each other, when we perhaps spoke too hastily or took pleasure in another person's misfortune.

We can confess those sinful moments and receive God's forgiveness, I say. I try to explain it in different ways: It's like wiping down the dry erase board – chalkboards are so 20th century – and making a fresh start.

I say to the kids: "Try it, you'll like it!"

Kid No. 2 says: "We've got (insert random sports activity, birthday party, semiannual family ritual) coming up."

Sure, in a family of five, there is always something going on in our lives. I joke that we don't have excuses, we have exceptions – reasons why we are somehow above the rules. Except, that's not the case.

Sometimes, the day-to-day struggles are precisely why we need to make the time for a trip to the confessional. Those moments spent in the pew clicking off our list of sins – the gossip, the profanity, the desiring of what belongs to someone else – may be the reality check we need to bring us back on course.

We can take a look into our spiritual mirror, and if we don't like what we see, we have the chance to change it, all while accepting God's gift of forgiveness.

Me: "Try it, you'll like it!"

"You've been saying we need to go, and then we don't," my older one says to me.

Zing – the shot to the heart. She's right. Oh, I talk a good game about confession, but in the end, I make all the same excuses they do. I can't tell you how many times I've walked into church on a Sunday morning and chastised myself for missing the Saturday confession window. And then I slide into the pew, the thought discarded like a wadded-up tissue.

So what am I teaching my kids?

During Lent, I took the time to teach them that confession is something we do – as a family. It doesn't matter if our sins are big or small, if we are busy or lazy. I realized the one I'm convincing is myself, that it's time for me to look into the mirror and decide if this is the reflection of God I want the world to see. Only then can I hope my children will follow my example.

"Try it, you'll like it!"

*Kelly Bothum, a mother of three, is a freelance writer.*



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