

THIRD SORROWFUL MYSTERY



THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT

The Crowning with Thorns

THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT

March 8, 2026



WELCOME TO HOLY FAMILY CATHOLIC CHURCH

Served by the Mercedarian Friars USA (www.orderofmercy.org)



PARISH OFFICE, 588 W. Gay Street, Columbus, OH 43215

OpenMonday – Thursday: 8:00 am – 3:00 pm

Main No.....614-221-4323 Fax No: 614-221-9818

Web:.....www.holyfamilycolumbus.org

Email.....office@holyfamilycolumbus.org

Facebook.....Holy Family Catholic Church

Flocknote.....holyfamilycolumbus@flocknote.com

PERSONNEL STAFF

Father Michael J. Donovan, O. de M...Pastor

Father Daniel Bowen, O. de M.....Vocation Director

Brother Kevin Cush, O. de M.....Seminarian

Brian Krull Business Manager

Secretary.....Mary Gamble

Maintenance.....Tim Kearns

Music Director / Organist.....Shawn Kenney

OCIA (RCIA) Coordinator.....Linda Hamilton

Religious Education.....Sr. Bozena Tyborowska LSIC

PARISH ORGANIZATIONS

Altar Servers – *Br. Kevin Cush, O. de M., Director*

Confraternity of Christian Mothers – *Rita Martinez, President*

Diocesan Center for the Guard of Honor
of the Sacred Heart of Jesus – *Rebecca Rector, Zelatrix*

Eucharistic Adoration – *Sarah Hill, Coordinator*

Holy Family Young Adults – *Bear Bates, Coordinator*

Hospitality – *Kathy McKinniss & Linda Hamilton, Coordinators*

Knights of Columbus – *Br. Kevin Cush, O. de M., Grand Knight*

Liturgical Ministry – *Linda Hamilton, Coordinator*

Mercedarian Lay Third Order – *Fr. Michael J. Donovan, O. de M.,
Spiritual Director*

Respect Life – *Aurelio & Rosalinda Morales, Coordinators*

Sodality of the Blessed Virgin Mary – *Sr. Bozena Tyborowska, Dir.*

SOUP KITCHEN – (backyard of Parish Center building)

Donations...Monday – Friday

8:00am – 12noon, preferred (back of building)

12noon – 3:00pm, optional (please call in advance)

Main No.....614-221-4323

Web.....www.hfsk.org

Email.....Dennis Shope, Director

soupkitchen@holyfamilycolumbus.org

maintenance@holyfamilycolumbus.org

BAPTISM

Call the Parish office to schedule a Baptism. Children over the age of 6 will require some special instruction.

MARRIAGE

Please call the Parish Office at least six months before the wedding. Diocesan Pre-Cana and Natural Family Planning classes are required and six meetings with the priest.

THE SACRAMENT OF THE SICK

Call the Parish Office during general office hours. Otherwise, call Parish Office and select "Sacramental Emergency" option.

RECEPTION OF THE HOLY EUCHARIST

Those who desire Holy Communion at home should call the Parish Office.

MASS SCHEDULE

Weekdays: 12:15pm

Saturday: 9:00 a.m.

Sunday: 9:00 a.m. 11:00 a.m. 5:00 p.m. & 8:00 p.m.

Convent of St. Birgitta – 40 N. Grubb St., Columbus

Weekly: 7:00 a.m. Mon., Tues., Thurs. Friday

4:00 p.m. Wednesday

(Each day is open to the public)

THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION

Weekdays: 11:30 a.m. – 12 Noon

Sunday: 8:30 a.m. 10:30 a.m. 4:30 p.m. 7:30 p.m.

EUCCHARISTIC ADORATION SCHEDULE

Holy Family Church

Weekly: 1:00 p.m. Thursday – 12 Noon Friday

First Friday Adoration in Reparation to the

Sacred Heart – 8:00 p.m. – 8:45 a.m. First Saturday

Please contact **Sarah Hill at 740-418-0517** or thehills1936@gmail.com if you have interest in being scheduled weekly or monthly in either location

Convent of St. Birgitta (CSB)

40 N. Grubb St., Columbus

Weekly: 9:00 a.m. – 9:00 p.m. Tuesday

8:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. Mass Wednesday

4:30 p.m. – 9:00 p.m. following 4pm Mass

9:00 a.m. – 9:00 p.m. Friday

MOST HOLY ROSARY

Weekdays: 11:30 am (Tuesday is Respect Life Rosary)

Chaplet of Divine Mercy follows Rosary

Saturday: 8:30 a.m. before 9:00 a.m. Marian Mass

8:15 a.m. before 9:00 a.m. First Saturday Mass

Sunday: 8:30 a.m. 10:30 a.m. & 4:30 p.m. (before Mass)

Please contact the Parish Office if you wish to be scheduled to lead before 9am Saturday or 9am; 5pm Sunday Mass.

REGULAR DEVOTIONS



Each Tuesday following the 12:15 p.m. Mass there are Devotions to **St. Anthony of Padua**.



Each Saturday Novena Prayers to **Our Lady of Mercy** following 9:00 a.m. Mass.



On First Wednesday of each month a 7:00 p.m. Mass is offered in honor of **Good Saint Joseph**.



On First Friday of each month following the 12:15 & 7:00 p.m. Masses there is **Act of Consecration of the Human Race to the Sacred Heart of Jesus**.

THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT

March 8, 2026

MASS INTENTIONS MARCH 8– 15, 2026

Sun Mar 8 **THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT**

- 9:00 AM * Dr. Joseph Maretto
by The Gabriel and Johnson Families
- 11:00 AM Deceased Members of Holy Family Alumni
- 5:00 PM * People of the Parish
- 8:00 PM Mary Gamble, by Kristi Ziegler

Mon Mar 9 **Saint Frances of Rome, Religious**

- 7:00 AM **CSB**—Repose of the Soul of Mary Karabinos
by Mickey Wilgus
- 12:15 PM All Souls, by The Nguyen Family

Tues Mar 10

- 7:00 AM **CSB**—Repose of the Soul of Leslie Anderson
- 12:15 PM Tim and Adele Davis, by ARD

Wed Mar 11

- 12:15 PM The Fulton—Renouf Families, by ARD
- 4:00 PM **CSB**—Joseph, Lauren and Jack Conklin
and All Living Family Members
by Eric & Christy Conklin

Thurs Mar 12

- 7:00 AM **CSB**—Sebastian Gotcher, by The Foley Family
- 12:15 PM Repose of the Soul
of Lorraine Florence Patterson
by Jennie Gallastegui

Fri Mar 13

- 7:00 AM **CSB**—Repose of the Soul of Mary Howison
and Wilma Ziegler, by Kristi Ziegler
- 12:15 PM Bridget and Rocky Bowman
by Chloe Bowman

Sat Mar 14

- 9:00 AM Father Vince Nguyen
by Sr. Miriam Joseph, SSCJ
Sr. Monica Marie, SSCJ

Sun Mar 15 **FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT**

- 9:00 AM * Repose of the Soul of David Kaspari
by Jennie Gallastegui
- 11:00 AM * Jody White, by Avery Hays
- 5:00 PM * Repose of the Soul of Mary Karabinos
by Carmen Levingston
- 8:00 PM People of the Parish

* *Incense will be used at this Mass*

LENTEN STATIONS OF THE CROSS

Every Friday during the holy season of Lent you are invited to come to Church at 7:00pm for praying Stations of the Cross.

Easter Flower Donations & list of names In Honor of or In Memory of are coming in! This can also be done online. More information to come! Questions, contact the Parish Office.

PRAYERS FOR THOSE WHO SERVE OUR COUNTRY

- Airman William Harding Marable, US Air Force
- Airman Lucas JY Tortora, US Air Force
- Col. Timothy W. Grady, US Air National Guard
- Specialist E4 Logan Christ, US Army Active Duty
- 1st Lt. John M. Kennedy, US Army Active Duty
- 1st Lt. Michael V. Dickerson US Army National Guard
- 2nd Lt. Nicholas C. Kennedy US Army National Guard
- SPC Brian A. Marsh, US Army National Guard
- SPC Trinity P. Roach, US Army National Guard
- SPC Zach Sowers, US Army National Guard
- Active Duty Trey Warner, US Army National Guard
- Lt. Col. Stephen Hueckel, US Army Reserve
- SGT Liam A. Smith, US Army Reserve
- BM2 Joseph Flynn, US Coast Guard
- Capt. Michael "Mich" Rector, US Marine Corps.
- LCpl. Brendan Thomas, US Marine Corps.
- Lt. Michael Bellavia, US Navy
- Lt. Rockford Bowman, US Navy
- SCPO Zachery Cook, US Navy
- Lt. Andrea Rae Kaltenbach, US Navy
- Active Duty Dan Severance, US Navy

LECTOR SCHEDULE



- | | |
|-----------------|---------------------------|
| March 8 | 9:00 am Brandan Litman |
| | 11:00 am Brett Ballantyne |
| | 5:00 pm Tom Martello |
| March 15 | 9:00 am Susan Lau |
| | 11:00 am Kendy Troiano |
| | 5:00 pm Brian Bishop |

SERMON ON THE AMOUNT

Giving for February 23—March 1, 2026

<i>Offertory</i>	
<i>Collection</i>	\$ 3,809
<i>On-Line</i>	3,769
<i>Mail</i>	+ 420
<i>Total</i>	\$ 7,998
<i>Less: Assessment (10%)</i>	- 800
<i>Net</i>	\$ 7,198
<i>Soup Kitchen</i>	\$ 4,940
<i>Total Capital Campaign Donations</i>	\$398,433
<i>The Appeal Pledges</i>	\$92,690
<i>The Appeal Goal</i>	\$82,347

God Reward your Generosity

Please set aside some time on March 25th for our Station Day. Scheduled adorers are needed.

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The Land of St. Patrick July 28 – August 7, 2026 A Pilgrimage



Spiritual Director:
Fr. Michael Donovan

Informational Meetings: At Holy Family Parish Center after the 9:00 and 11:00 Mass this Sunday (3/1/26) and at 6:00 p.m. next Tuesday (3/3/26)

Contact Information:
cteam@206tours.com
6206tours.ca

For Additional Details or to Book Now Visit:
www.206tours.com/cvdlca



HOLY FAMILY KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS #13428

We continue to collect aluminum cans for the Seminarians. All proceeds will go to these young men of Christ. Please drop the cans off at the entrance of the Church and/or Parish Center.

Upcoming Events

Sunday, March 15, 2026—Knights of Columbus Exemplification after 11am Mass.

Friday, March 20, 2026—Holy Family Fish Fry 5—7:00pm. Holy Family Knights of Columbus will be selling tickets. All proceeds will go to the Church Capital Campaign.

If you are interested in becoming a Knight of Columbus, please contact **Jack Gookin at (614) 309-2519.**



CONFRATERNITY OF CHRISTIAN MOTHERS
& LADIES GUILD

Serving the Women of Holy Family Since 1887

Almighty and everlasting God, You have given the human race Jesus Christ our Savior as a model of humility. He fulfilled Your Will by becoming Man and giving His life on the Cross. Help us to bear witness to You by following His example of suffering and make us worthy to share in His Resurrection. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, Your Son. Amen

Just a reminder that there are **Blessed Sorrowful Mother Candles** in the undercroft for those interested. Free-will offerings accepted. All funds will go directly to the parish.

Our next Mass is **March 15th at 11:00 AM.** St. Gerard blessing to follow. Please join us.

Our March meeting will be held at **St. Paul's Catholic Church, 313 N. State Street, Westerville, OH 43081 Saturday, March 21st starting with 8:15 AM Mass.**

Father Tuscan will be in town. Great opportunity to meet fellow Christian Mothers at St. Paul's and hear from Father Tuscan.

Spring Flower Sale will start March 21st as well. Watch for the order form.

Anyone interested in joining our Confraternity, please send us information to **holyfamilyccm@yahoo.com.**

Wishing all a wonderful Lent.

Holy Family Confraternity of Christian Mothers Officers

Rita Martinez, President / Louise Popich, Vice President
Anita Van Order, Treasurer / Kendy Troiano, Secretary
Father Michael J. Donovan, O. de M. Director

Ireland Pilgrimage—Holy Family 2026 Major Stops

- Belfast
- Down Patrick (Down Cathedral, St. Patrick's Grave and Cathedral)
- Galway (St. Ciaran)
- Knock (Our Lady of Knock Shrine)
- Kylemore Abbey (Benedictine nuns)
- Croagh Patrick (Holy Mountain)
- Limerick (Cliff's of Moher & Blarney Castle)
- Cork (Little Nellie Organ & St. Finbar's Chapel/Shrine)
- Dublin (St. Brigid)
- Glenalough (St. Kevin)

HIS INCREDIBLE SENIORS EXERCISE PROGRAM

Our upcoming class is scheduled **1:30—2:30pm Tuesday, March 10** in the Parish Center. The next class is **Wednesday, March 11 from 1:30—1:45pm** leaving enough time for our early St. Patrick Potluck. We will be collecting items for our **St. Joseph Table on Tuesday March 17 and Wednesday March 18.** This year's request for donated items is **"Personal Hygiene."** God Bless you.

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40 DAYS OF ADORATION SCHEDULE

Contact the Parish Office if you can spare some precious time with JESUS.

March 8

St. Francis de Sales—Newark
40 Granville St, Newark 43055

March 9

Buckeye Catholic
74 W. Lane Ave, Columbus 43201

March 10

St. Andrew Parish
1899 McCoy Rd, Columbus 43220

March 11

St. John Neumann
9633 E. 9633 OH-37, Sunbury 43074

March 12

Basilica of St. Mary the Assumption
506 4th St, Marietta, 45750

March 13

St. Mary—Delaware
82 E. William St, Delaware 43015

March 14

Divine Mercy—Wellston
229 S. New York Ave, Wellston 45692

March 15

St. Matthew the Apostle
807 Havens Corner Rd, Gahanna 43230

March 16

St. Peter
6899 Smoky Row Rd, Columbus 43235

St. Joan of Arc

10700 Liberty Road S, Powell, 43065

March 17

Church of the Resurrection
6300 E. Dublin Granvl Rd New Albany

MARCH 25TH IS HOLY FAMILY STATION DAY 9AM—9PM!

Please contact Parish Office to schedule.

Time

11:00 am Mass — 10:00 pm

7:45 am Mass — 5:30 pm

Use QR code for parking.
Validation code inside the building.

9:30 am — 9:30 pm

7:00 am — 7:00 pm

11am Mass

7:00 AM Mass — 7:00 PM

8:15 am Mass — 7:00 pm

Stations follows

9:00 am Mass at Ss. Peter

and Paul — 5:00 pm

7:00 pm Benediction

6:00 am — 8:00 pm

Enter through door next to
St. Matthew statue.
No elevator service.

9:00 am — 9:00 pm

5:30 pm Mass

9:00 am — 9:00 pm

5:00 am — 6:00 pm

Chapel | Church (look for signs)

7:00 pm Mass

Adoration follows Mass
until 10:00 pm.



Lenten Invitation to All Families with Children

Lent is a sacred season of prayer, sacrifice, and deeper reflection on the great love Jesus has shown us. During this holy time, I warmly invite all families with children to join our parish family each Friday evening at 7:00 PM for the Stations of the Cross.

Through the Stations, we walk spiritually with Our Lord on His journey to Calvary. This beautiful devotion helps our children grow in gratitude and love for Jesus as they reflect on His Passion.

Each Friday, the children will walk reverently from station to station with our priest, holding a small cross in their hands. They may bring their own cross or use one we provide. This simple gesture allows them to participate in a visible and prayerful way.

I strongly encourage every family to make this Lenten devotion part of your weekly routine. Your presence is a powerful witness of faith to your children. They are not too young to learn the meaning of sacrifice. The earlier they are introduced to this holy tradition, the more deeply they will understand Christ's love.

Please remind your child that this is not meant to be entertaining, but a small sacrifice offered with love for Jesus.

May this Lenten season draw your family closer to His Sacred Heart.

In Christ's service,

Sr. Bozena



HOLY FAMILY RESPECT LIFE MINISTRY

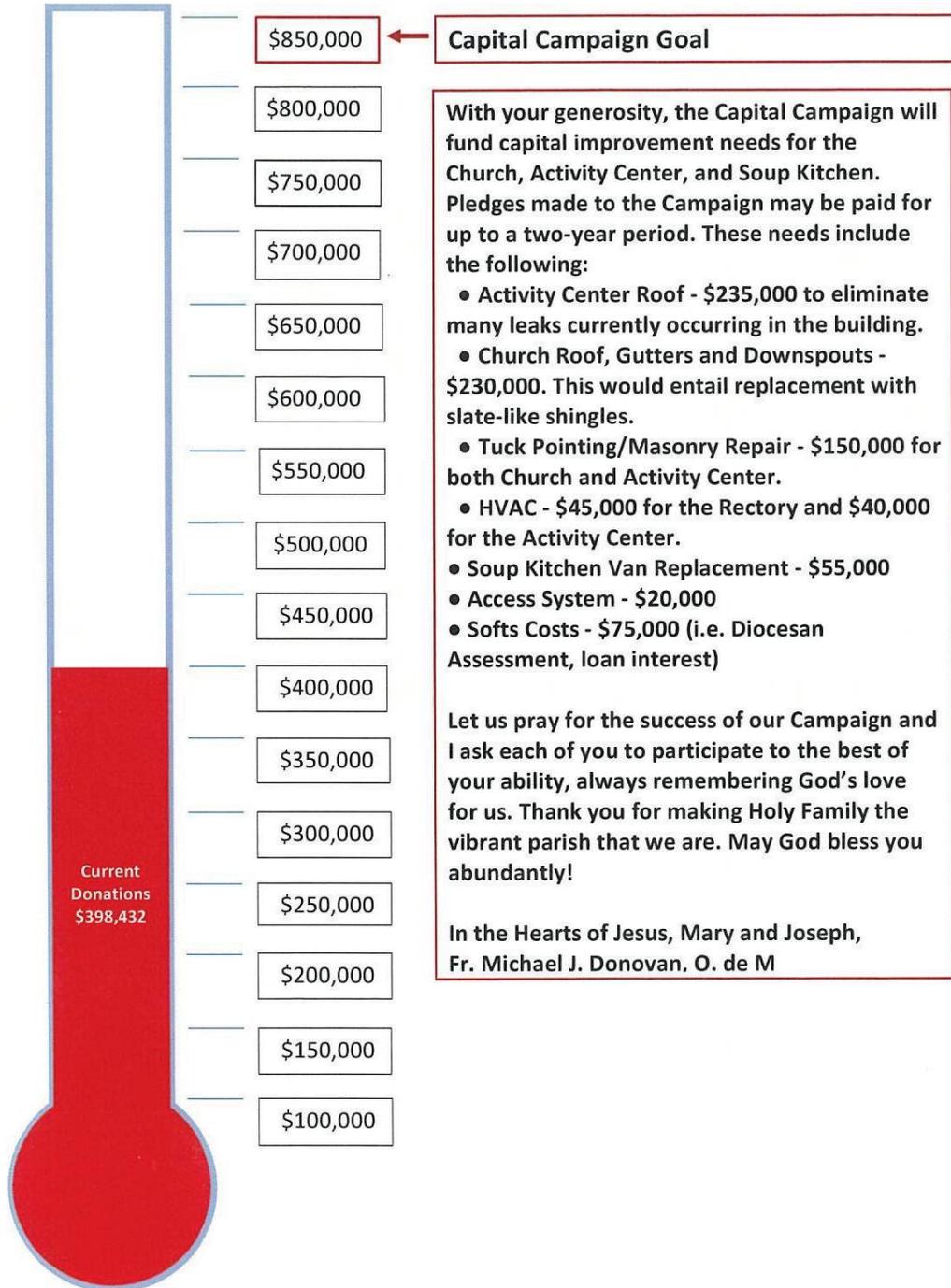
Our upcoming meeting is **March 9 at 7pm** in the Parish Center. Our Rosary for Life meets every Tuesday at 8:45am to 10:45am in front of Planned Parenthood Surgical Clinic. There is an opportunity to carpool by meeting in the Holy Family parking lot by 8:15.

If you are not able to go to the clinic, you can join us to pray the Rosary For Life every Tuesday, before Mass at 11:25am.

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Holy Family Capital Campaign



3/1/2026

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MONTH OF SAINT JOSEPH

The month of March is dedicated to St. Joseph. We don't know much about Him except what is mentioned in the Gospels. Joseph was the husband of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the foster-father of Jesus. Holy Scripture proclaims him as a "just man," and the Church has turned to Joseph for his protection. Pope Leo XIII in his encyclical *Quamquam Pluries* (On the Devotion to St. Joseph) in 1889 explains why we place so much trust in this saint:

"Thus in giving Joseph the Blessed Virgin as spouse, God appointed him to be not only her life's companion, the witness of her maidenhood, the protector of her honor, but also, by virtue of the conjugal tie, a participator in her sublime dignity. And Joseph shines among all mankind by the most august dignity, since by divine will, he was the guardian of the Son of God and reputed as His father among men. Hence, it came about that the Word of God was humbly subject to Joseph, that He obeyed him, and that He rendered to him all those offices that children are bound to render to their parents. From this two-fold dignity flowed the obligation which nature lays upon the head of families, so that Joseph became the guardian, the administrator, and the legal defender of the divine house whose chief he was. And during the whole course of his life he fulfilled those charges and those duties. ...It is, then, natural and worthy that as the Blessed Joseph ministered to all the needs of the family at Nazareth and girt it about with his protection, he should now cover with the cloak of his heavenly patronage and defend the Church of Jesus Christ."

One hundred years later, John Paul II echoes his predecessor in his 1989 Apostolic Exhortation *Redemptoris Custos* (Guardian of the Redeemer), hoping "that all may grow in devotion to the Patron of the Universal Church and in love for the Savior whom he served in such an exemplary manner ... In this way the whole Christian people not only will turn to St. Joseph with greater fervor and invoke his patronage with trust, but also will always keep before their eyes his humble, mature way of serving and of "taking part" in the plan of salvation." St. Joseph is invoked as patron for many causes. He is the patron of the Universal Church. He is the patron of the dying because Jesus and Mary were at his death-bed. He is also the patron of fathers, of carpenters, and of social justice. Many religious orders and communities are placed under his patronage.

The Church encourages us to be devoted to Joseph because he was a model in the heroic practice of all the virtues. The example of virtuous living that he gave in the exact fulfillment of the duties of his state of life is worthy of our reflection. Read the gospel and you will see his faith, hope and charity practiced under trying circumstances. He was prudent in caring for his wife and the child; he showed great leadership in protecting them and assisting them. He was religious in every sense, with that delicacy and sincerity of conscience that is proper to the saints of God. He was just in his dealings with God and man. He was conspicuous for his fortitude and courage. He was truly outstanding in the practice of virginal chastity. More: he protected and defended Mary's virtue in the time of courtship and all during their life together. They had made a promise of chastity, and because they were resolved to live it for God they were blessed above all others. While Mary inspired him to practice this virtue perfectly, he, as a real man, understood the profound meaning of her inspiration and how it came from a heart that was steeped in the love of God. Time and again the Church has made it clear that Joseph is not a saint for only a certain number of souls, but that he can help *all* men.

In numerous popular traditions; the custom of reserving Wednesdays for devotion to St. Joseph has generated several pious exercises including that of the Seven Wednesdays; in the pious aspirations made by the faithful; in prayers such as that of Pope Leo XIII, *Ad te, Beate Joseph*, which is daily recited by the faithful; in the Litany of St. Joseph, approved by St. Pope Pius X; and in the recitation of the Chaplet of St. Joseph, recollecting the Seven Agonies and Seven Joys of St. Joseph.

That the solemnity of St. Joseph falls in Lent, when the Church concentrates her attention on preparation for Baptism and the memorial of the Lord's Passion, inevitably gives rise to an attempt to harmonize the Liturgy and popular piety. Hence, the traditional practices of a "Month of St. Joseph" should be synchronized with the liturgical Year. Indeed, the liturgical renewal movement attempted to instill among the faithful a realization of the importance of the meaning of Lent. Where the necessary adaptations can be made to the various expressions of popular piety, devotion to St. Joseph should naturally be encouraged among the faithful who should be constantly reminded of the "singular example which, surpassing all states of life, should be recommended to the entire Christian Community, whatever their condition or rank."

- by *Catholic Culture*

Lectio Divina

SCRIPTURE READING + MEDITATION + PRAYER + CONTEMPLATION

“What page, what passage of the inspired books of the Old and New Testaments is not the truest of guides for human life?” ~Saint Benedict, from the *Rule of Saint Benedict* (73:3)

The month of March is dedicated to Saint Joseph

“God sees you in secret. Know that He sees into your very depths, infinitely further than you do yourself. Make a simple, lively act of faith in His presence. Christian soul, place yourself entirely under His gaze. He is very near. ... O Light that enlightens the world! O Life that gives life to all the living! O Truth that feeds us all! O Good that satisfies all! O Love that binds us together! I praise You, my heavenly Father, Who sees me in secret.”

~EXCERPTED FROM *MEDITATIONS FOR LENT* BY BISHOP JACQUES-BENIGNE BOSSUET

Monday, March 9 ~ Third Week in the Season of Lent
Optional Memorial: Saint Frances of Rome

Holy Gospel: Luke 4:24-30 Jesus said to the people in the synagogue at Nazareth: “Amen, I say to you, no prophet is accepted in his own native place. Indeed, I tell you, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah when the sky was closed for three and a half years and a severe famine spread over the entire land. It was to none of these that Elijah was sent, but only to a widow in Zarephath in the land of Sidon. Again, there were many lepers in Israel during the time of Elisha the prophet; yet not one of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian.” When the people in the synagogue heard this, they were all filled with fury. They rose up, drove him out of the town, and led him to the brow of the hill on which their town had been built, to hurl him down headlong. But he passed through the midst of them and went away.

Meditation: When Jesus went to his hometown and spoke in the synagogue, his statement that no prophet or servant of God can receive honor among his own people was rather startling to those in attendance. He then angered them when he complimented the gentiles who seemed to have shown more faith in God than the “chosen ones” of Israel. They regarded gentiles as “fuel for the fires of hell.” Jesus’ praise for “outsiders” caused them offence because they were blind sighted to God’s mercy and plan of redemption for all nations. The word of warning and judgment spoken by Jesus was met with hostility by his own people. They forcibly threw him out of the city and would have done him harm had he not stopped them. The Lord offers us freedom and pardon and the grace to walk in his way of righteousness. His discipline is for our good that we may share his holiness (Hebrews 12:10). Food for thought: “Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge, but whoever hates reproof is stupid” (Proverbs 12:1).

Prayer: May your unfailing compassion, O Lord, cleanse and protect your Church, and since without you she cannot stand secure, may she be always governed by your grace. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Contemplation: What limits God’s grace and power in our lives to undergo change and transformation of mind and heart? Our indifference and lack of faith for starters! The prophets confronted God’s people with their indifference and unbelief. God’s grace and mercy is offered freely to those who seek it with sincerity, repentance, and faith. When Naaman, a non-Jew went to Jerusalem to seek a cure, the prophet Elisha instructed him to bathe in the river. In faith he obeyed and was healed. Jesus did not hesitate to confront his own people with their indifference and unbelief. Have you looked at where your faith life is? Are you indifferent? Are you lukewarm about your faith, and how you live out your faith? If so, it’s time to set your faith on fire. But you need first to rid yourself of those things which hold you back – whatever they may be. Pray that you will rid yourself of these barriers. Then free from those things which hold us back, may our faith lives flourish and bear much fruit.

Tuesday, March 10 ~ Third Week in the Season of Lent

Holy Gospel: Matthew 18:21-35 Peter approached Jesus and asked him, “Lord, if my brother sins against me, how often must I forgive him? As many as seven times?” Jesus answered, “I say to you, not



seven times but seventy-seven times. That is why the Kingdom of heaven may be likened to a king who decided to settle accounts with his servants. When he began the accounting, a debtor was brought before him who owed him a huge amount. Since he had no way of paying it back, his master ordered him to be sold, along with his wife, his children, and all his property, in payment of the debt. At that, the servant fell down, did him homage, and said, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay you back in full.' Moved with compassion the master of that servant let him go and forgave him the loan. When that servant had left, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a much smaller amount. He seized him and started to choke him, demanding, 'Pay back what you owe.' Falling to his knees, his fellow servant begged him, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay you back.' But he refused. Instead, he had him put in prison until he paid back the debt. Now when his fellow servants saw what had happened, they were deeply disturbed, and went to their master and reported the whole affair. His master summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you your entire debt because you begged me to. Should you not have had pity on your fellow servant, as I had pity on you?' Then in anger his master handed him over to the torturers until he should pay back the whole debt. So will my heavenly Father do to you, unless each of you forgives your brother from your heart."

Meditation: Who wouldn't be grateful to have someone release them from their debts? But can we really expect mercy and pardon when we owe someone a great deal? The prophet Amos speaks of God forgiving transgression three times, but warns that God may not revoke punishment for the fourth (see Amos 1:3-13; 2:1-6). When Peter posed the question of forgiveness, he characteristically offered an answer he thought Jesus would be pleased with. Why not forgive seven times! How unthinkable for Jesus to counter with the proposition that one must forgive seventy times that. Jesus made it clear that there is no reckonable limit to forgiveness. And he drove the lesson home with a parable about two very different kinds of debts. The first man owed an enormous sum of money – millions in our currency. In Jesus' time this amount was greater than the total revenue of a province – more than it would cost to ransom a king! The man who was forgiven such an incredible debt could not, however bring himself to forgive his neighbor a very small debt which was about one-hundred-thousandth of his own debt. The contrast could not have been greater!

Prayer: May your grace not forsake us, O Lord, we pray, but make us dedicated to your holy service and at all times obtain for us your help. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Contemplation: There is no way we could repay God the debt we owed him because of our sins and offenses. Only his mercy and pardon could free us from such a debt. Despite how we may feel at times toward people in our lives, there is no offense our neighbor can do to us that can compare with our debt to God! If God has forgiven each of us our debt, we, too must forgive others the debt they owe us. Through Jesus' sacrifice on the cross – which atoned for our sins – each one of us have been forgiven a debt beyond all reckoning. It cost God his very own Son, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, to ransom us with the price of his blood. Jesus paid the price for us and won for us pardon for our sins and freedom from slavery to our unruly desires and sinful habits. God in his mercy offers us the grace and help of his Holy Spirit so we can love as he loves, pardon as he pardons, and treat others with the same mercy and kindness which he has shown to us. God has made his peace with us. Have you made your peace with God? Have you reconciled yourself with God? Especially during Lent we are called to reconcile ourselves with God and with one another. A healthy trip to the confessional to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation is a first and important start. Have you been to confession lately? If not, why not?

Wednesday, March 11 ~ Third Week in the Season of Lent

Holy Gospel: Matthew 5:17-19 Jesus said to his disciples: "Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets. I have come not to abolish but to fulfill. Amen, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or the smallest part of a letter will pass from the law, until all things have taken place. Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do so will be called least in the Kingdom of heaven. But whoever obeys and teaches these commandments will be called greatest in the Kingdom of heaven."

Meditation: Notice how Jesus consistently taught reverence for God's law – reverence for God himself, for the Lord's Day, reverence or respect for parents, respect for life, for property, for another person's good name, respect for oneself and for one's neighbor lest wrong or hurtful desires master us. Reverence and respect for God's commandments teach us the way of love – love of God and love of neighbor. What is impossible to men and women is possible to God and those who put their faith and trust in God. Through the gift of the Holy Spirit the Lord transforms us and makes us like himself. We are a new creation in Christ (ref. 2 Cor. 5:17) because "God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy

Spirit which has been given to us" (Romans 5:5). God gives us the grace to love as he loves, to forgive as he forgives, to think as he thinks, and to act as he acts. The Lord loves justice and goodness and he hates every form of wickedness and sin. He wants to set us free from our unruly desires and sinful habits, so that we can choose to live each day in the peace, joy, and righteousness of his Holy Spirit (ref. Romans 14: 17). To renounce sin is to turn away from what is harmful and destructive for our minds and hearts, and our very lives. As his followers we must love and respect his commandments and hate every form of sin. Do you love and revere the commands of the Lord?

Prayer: Grant, we pray, O Lord, that, schooled through Lenten observance and nourished by your word, through holy restraint we may be devoted to you with all our heart and be ever united in prayer. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Contemplation: How do you look upon the laws of God? Negatively? Positively? Pick-and-choose when it suits you (the old "cafeteria Catholic" approach)? Jesus' attitude towards the law of God can be summed up in the great prayer of Psalm 119: "Oh, how I love your law! It is my meditation all the day." For the people of Israel the "law" could refer to the Ten Commandments or to the five Books of Moses, called the Pentateuch, which explain the commandments and ordinances of God for his people. The "law" also referred to the whole teaching or way of life which God gave to his people. The Jews in Jesus' time also used it as a description of the oral or scribal law. Needless to say, the scribes added many more things to the law than God intended. That is why Jesus often condemned the scribal law. It placed burdens on people which God had not intended. Jesus, however, made it very clear that the essence of God's law – his commandments and his way of life – must be fulfilled. So, once again, how do you view God's law? How do you put God's law into action and practice in your daily life?

Thursday, March 12 ~ Third Week in the Season of Lent

Holy Gospel: Luke 11:14-23 Jesus was driving out a demon that was mute, and when the demon had gone out, the mute man spoke and the crowds were amazed. Some of them said, "By the power of Beelzebul, the prince of demons, he drives out demons." Others, to test him, asked him for a sign from heaven. But he knew their thoughts and said to them, "Every kingdom divided against itself will be laid waste and house will fall against house. And if Satan is divided against himself, how will his kingdom stand? For you say that it is by Beelzebul that I drive out demons. If I, then, drive out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your own people drive them out? Therefore they will be your judges. But if it is by the finger of God that I drive out demons, then the Kingdom of God has come upon you. When a strong man fully armed guards his palace, his possessions are safe. But when one stronger than he attacks and overcomes him, he takes away the armor on which he relied and distributes the spoils. Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters."

Meditation: Jesus himself encountered personal opposition and battled with Satan when he was put to the test in the wilderness just before his public ministry. He overcame the evil one through his obedience to the will of his Father. Some of the Jewish leaders reacted vehemently to Jesus' healings and exorcisms and they opposed him with malicious slander. How could he get the power and authority to release individuals from Satan's power? They assumed that he had to be in league with Satan. They attributed his power to Satan rather than to God. Jesus answers their charge with two arguments. There were many exorcists in Palestine in Jesus' time. So Jesus retorted by saying that they also incriminate their own kin who cast out demons. If they condemn Jesus they also condemn themselves. In his second argument he asserts that no kingdom divided against itself cannot survive for long. We have witnessed enough civil wars in our own time to prove the destructive force at work here for the annihilation of whole peoples and their land. If Satan lends his power against his own forces then he is finished. How can a strong person be defeated except by someone who is stronger? Jesus asserted his power and authority to cast out demons as a clear demonstration of the reign of God. Jesus' reference to the finger of God points back to Moses' confrontation with Pharaoh and his magicians who represented Satan and the kingdom of darkness (see Exodus 8:19).

Prayer: We implore your majesty most humbly, O Lord, that, as the feast of our salvation draws ever closer, so we may press forward all the more eagerly towards the worthy celebration of the Paschal Mystery. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Contemplation: We live in a world of compromise – people searching for some type of middle ground in an attempt to satisfy everyone. This approach is fine for ordering a pizza – one wants pepperoni, another wants mushroom, so you split and get half pepperoni and half mushroom. But what about our faith? What



is the price of compromise when it comes to our faith? There are some aspects of our life that we just cannot afford to compromise on – *especially* our faith life: the laws of God, the teachings of Christ, and the teachings of the one, holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. Remember, the teachings of the Church have their foundation in the laws of God and the teachings of Jesus Christ and are applied to every day contemporary situations. Jesus makes it clear that there are no neutral parties. We are either for Jesus or we are against him – we are for the kingdom of God or against it. Once we start going down the road of compromise, we turn against God and Jesus, because we begin to place our will above and before the will of God (sound familiar – Adam and Eve?). There are two kingdoms in opposition to one another – the kingdom of God and the kingdom of darkness under the rule of Satan. If we disobey God’s word – if we compromise God’s word – then we open the door to the power of sin and Satan in our lives. If you want to live in freedom from sin and Satan, then your house – your life and all you possess – must be occupied by Jesus where he is enthroned as Lord and Savior. Is the Lord Jesus the Master of your home, heart, mind, and will?

Friday, March 13 ~ Third Week in the Season of Lent

Holy Gospel: Mark 12:28-34 One of the scribes came to Jesus and asked him, “Which is the first of all the commandments?” Jesus replied, “The first is this: *Hear, O Israel! / The Lord our God is Lord alone! / You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, / with all your soul, / with all your mind, / and with all your strength.* The second is this: *You shall love your neighbor as yourself.* There is no other commandment greater than these.” The scribe said to him, “Well said, teacher. You are right in saying, *He is One and there is no other than he. And to love him with all your heart, / with all your understanding, / with all your strength. / And to love your neighbor as yourself* is worth more than all burnt offerings and sacrifices.” And when Jesus saw that he answered with understanding, he said to him, “You are not far from the Kingdom of God.” And no one dared to ask him any more questions.

Meditation: The Pharisees prided themselves in the knowledge of the law and their ritual requirements. They made it a life-time practice to study the six hundred and thirteen precepts of the Old Testament along with the numerous rabbinic commentaries. They tested Jesus to see if he correctly understood the law as they did. Jesus startled them with his profound simplicity and mastery of the law of God and its purpose. What does God require of us? Simply that we love as he loves! God is love and everything he does flows from his love for us. God loved us first and our love for him is a response to his exceeding grace and kindness towards us. The love of God comes first and the love of neighbor is firmly grounded in the love of God. The more we know of God’s love and truth the more we love what he loves and reject what is hateful and contrary to his will. What, then, makes our love for God and his commands grow in us? Faith in God and hope in his promises strengthens us in the love of God. They are essential for a good relationship with God, for being united with him. The more we know of God the more we love him and the more we love him the greater we believe and hope in his promises. The Lord, through the gift of the Holy Spirit, gives us a new freedom to love as he loves.

Prayer: Pour your grace into our hearts, we pray, O Lord, that we may be constantly drawn away from unruly desires and obey by your own gift the heavenly teaching you give us. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Contemplation: In light of today’s gospel, the following prayer of Saint Anselm is worth contemplating today: “We love you, O our God; and we desire to love you more and more. Grant to us that we may love you as much as we desire, and as much as we ought. O dearest friend, who has so loved and saved us, the thought of whom is so sweet and always growing sweeter, come with Christ and dwell in our hearts; that you keep a watch over our lips, our steps, our deeds, and we shall not need to be anxious either for our souls or our bodies. Give us love, sweetest of all gifts, which knows no enemy. Give us in our hearts pure love, born of your love to us, that we may love others as you love us. O most loving Father of Jesus Christ, from whom flows all love, let our hearts, frozen in sin, cold to you and cold to others, be warmed by this divine fire. So help and bless us in your Son.”

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