

Mass Intentions ~ Feb 24 - Mar 1, 2020

Monday @ 7:30 am — Communion Service
Tuesday @ 7:30 am — Communion Service
*Ash Wednesday Masses @ 7:30 am & 6:00 pm
Thursday @ 7:30 am — Margaret McAleese (RIP)
Friday @ 7:30 am — People of the Parish

Saturday @ 5:30 pm — Thomas O'Brien (RIP)
Sunday @ 8:00 am — Maria Tummillo (RIP)
Sunday @ 10:30 am — Heather Hester (RIP)

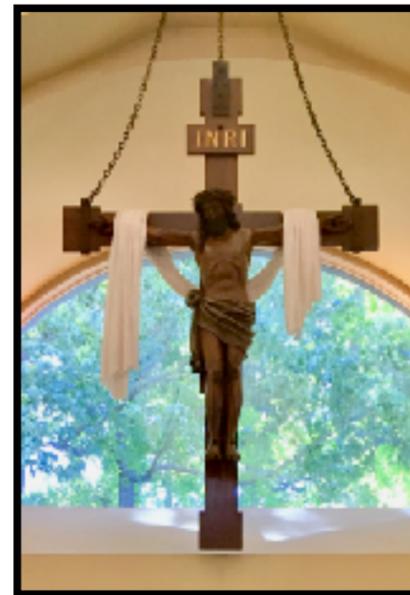
New Prayer Requests

Special Intentions
Rodney Hipp
DeMon McClinton
Liz LaFontaine
Christine Weikum
Jean Whitaker, friend of Tammy Schmitt

Repose of the Soul
James Raylon Mathew, brother of John Mathew

Sacrament of Reconciliation: Saturday @ 4:30-5:00 pm (or by appointment — call the Church office)
Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament this week: Monday — Friday, 8 am — 12 pm

Altar Flowers this week are placed in memory of Marsha Martin-White, donated by Sheila & Carly Marie Harkins.



**February 23, 2020
Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time**



ANNOUNCEMENTS ~ EVENTS ~ INFORMATION

February 24th — Women's Guild Morning Group will celebrate Mardi Gras in the Family Life Center lounge. All women are invited to join us at 11 am and bring a dish to share if you wish. We will have social time and a meeting.
— **Deadline to register for the Women's Weekend Retreat** All women of the Parish are invited. Retreat dates are March 27-29. Please contact Renee Carpenter 601-214-9457 for details and registration information.

February 25th — St. Dominic Ministry Sign up today to provide lunch items for families of ICU patients.

February 26th is Ash Wednesday — We will offer two Masses that day, at 7:30 am & 6:00 pm with a meal.
Let the Big Deal cook for you! The Youth will be serving a meatless meal in the Family Life Center after 6 pm Mass. Donations will be accepted to help fund trips throughout the year.

March 6th — First Friday Healing Mass & Brunch beginning at 10:00 am. All are welcome!
— **Stations of the Cross** at 6:00 pm, followed by a fish dinner in the Family Life Center. Donations accepted.

March 7th — Armed Forces Support Ministry Rosary at 4:45 pm in the Chapel. Join us to pray for our troops & our nation!

March 8th — Baptism Preparation Class @ 9:15 am in Room 110 of the Family Life Center All parents wishing to have a child baptized within the next few months will need to attend this class. Call the Church office to register.

Catholic Service Appeal Update — As a Catholic community we are all joined together by our faith. Each year we are asked by Bishop Kopacz to support the Catholic Service Appeal. It is our opportunity to reach out to those in need and support the diocesan ministries. To date, our Parish has raised \$19,449.00.

Catholic Relief Services project — Join more than 14,000 Catholic communities across the United States in a life-changing Lenten journey with CRS Rice Bowl. Pick up your family's CRS Rice Bowl from the information table. During the 40 days of Lent, reflect on the challenge of global hunger and how it affects our human family. Pray for the hungry and give generously.

Offertory Collection for February 15/16:
Regular collection \$19,299.00

2020 Contribution Envelopes still not in — Please write your envelope number on the memo line of your checks. Thank you.

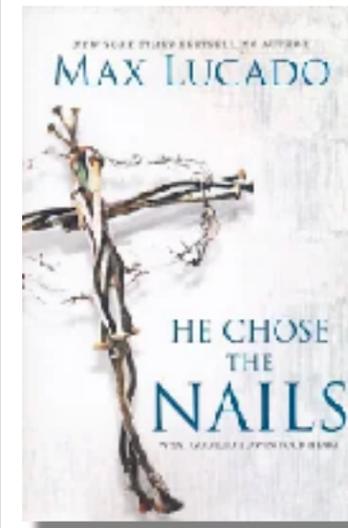
Good News! We are making plans to create a new Parish Directory this Fall! Stay tuned for details...



CONTACT THE CHURCH OFFICE

PH: 601-992-9547 5971 Hwy 25 Flowood MS 39232

Office Hrs: Tues - Fri, 8:00 am to 4:00 pm www.saintpaulcatholicchurch.com



We are not meant to journey alone.

Jesus did not journey alone. He gathered His small group — the disciples, and sent them out in small groups.

He gathered with friends and family, in large groups and small groups. He taught us, by example, to be involved in relationships with fellow travelers. He sat with others, shared meals, listened, asked questions, and touched them.

Jesus brought love, healing, and compassion to the people. They met in large groups at the temple, and they met in small groups in homes. Both were important encounters — gathering with the masses, and focusing on the few.

We are called to be like Jesus. We want to follow Him. "For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son."

He chose to be one of us. He chose the nails and wore the crown of thorns. God did this for us. He loves us. Join us in exploring Lucado's book on this very gift!

Small Groups make us intentional in gathering to learn and discuss and grow our faith. We step outside our busy routines and are refreshed by the weekly gatherings. We reach out beyond ourselves, and we are blessed by the companions in sharing our struggles, joys, sorrows, questions, doubts, and more.

Ed Prybylski shares his experience, "Our Small Group has bakers, bankers, financial planners, teachers, news producers...we even have a Baptist! But, the one thing we all have in common is a desire to learn and to grow in our love of faith and in Jesus Christ." They didn't all know each other before joining the group. "The key is we become friends and we support each other in our journey," Ed said.

In Small Groups, we explore, grow, share, challenge, express—without judgement. If you are not in a Small Group, give it a try for Lent!!!

- ◆ About 350 people are currently active in a Small Group. Ask someone what they like about theirs?
- ◆ Join a Small Group — We can connect you with an existing Group.
- ◆ Form a Small Group — Gather friends and meet in someone's home.

Registration is open on our website. Contact Sarah at fellowship@spaulcc.org or 601-292-6089

Continuing our Reflection on the Gospel of Matthew

This week, our Gospel continues with Jesus teaching His disciples a new way to look at the old laws. His words this week are even more difficult to absorb. Jesus stretches His disciples, and us, out of our set parameters and divisions. His words strike a chord, upset our comfort zone. Avoid retaliation! Treat our enemies with love?

Jesus said,

“You have heard that it was said, *An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.* But I say to you, offer no resistance to one who is evil....turn the other cheek....hand over your cloak....go for two miles....do not turn your back on one who wants to borrow.” (MT 5:38-42)

The Mosaic civil law of "an eye for an eye" is a reference to Exodus 21:24. That law wasn't meant to be a tool for vengeance. The law was intended to limit retribution, to be sure that punishments didn't exceed the crime.

Jesus said,

“You have heard that it was said, *You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.* But I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you.” (MT 5:43-44)

This direction to “love your neighbor” refers to one of the great commandments of the Mosaic law — **“Take no revenge and cherish no grudge against your own people. You shall love your neighbor as yourself. I am the LORD.” (Lev 19:18)**

The trouble was that some held a restrictive definition of neighbor. They considered only their fellow Israelites to be their neighbors. Jesus brings them deeper into the definition of neighbor to include Gentiles, and even their Roman persecutors.

Many of us struggle with these teachings. How could God possibly expect us to be kind and loving to those who mistreat us, those who take advantage of others, and those who act in hateful ways? On one level, we can acknowledge that God made those people and He loves them. But, it is another thing to take it to that deeper level of me loving them. *Does He really call me to love them?*

Our minds and hearts cannot fully grasp some of this challenging Scripture. It is counterintuitive. It's counter cultural. We are told we have to fend for ourselves. We don't have to associate with those people. We might be able to pray for them, but how can we possibly love them?

Our love isn't big enough. But, His love is! God loves each of us first, and that makes us feel wonderful and empowered. When we act in His image by loving the other first, might they feel wonderful and empowered, also? Might our gesture of love soften their hearts? We can choose to love instead of mirroring that which is not love. We can choose to acknowledge the enemy within. We must choose to not be their enemy. When we choose to love like Jesus, we are living in His love.

This Sunday's Gospel concludes with Jesus calling us to holiness.

Jesus said,

“So be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect.”

The word “perfect” means conforming to the divine ideal, following the whole of the law in light of a deeper understanding of covenant with God. We are called to imitate God's perfect love, mercy, and compassion. He loves all people equally, friend and foe, and He treats them with equal love, mercy, and compassion. As disciples of Jesus, we are called to perfect holiness in Him. That is why He says to love our enemies. They are precisely the ones who are most in need of our love. We can only achieve this call to be perfect through the power of the Holy Spirit.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- **Do I treat my enemy with love?**
- **Am I willing to turn my back on retaliation and choose reconciliation?**
- **Who do I consider my neighbor?**
- **Do I treat all people with equal love, mercy, and compassion?**
- **Am I open and willing to the experience of true conversion this Lent?**

**Reading the Bible is not like reading a novel or a history book.
Begin with a prayer asking the Holy Spirit to open your heart and mind to the Word of God.
Conclude your reading time with a prayer. May His Word bear fruit in your life.**

Read ahead through Matthew, chapter 6 in preparation for Ash Wednesday Mass. The text in verses 1-18 gives us guidance for the Lenten journey. Jesus teaches us humility, and the way to a deep connection with Him through prayer, fasting and almsgiving. We follow Jesus' example and accompany His passion, death, and resurrection. The Sunday Gospels will feature various Scripture from Matthew and John throughout Lent, into the Sacred Triduum to the great Easter Event. In the weeks following Easter Sunday, the Gospels are taken from Matthew, Luke, and John.

Let us do ourselves, our parish family, and our community a favor this Lent. Let's really dig in deep and be changed by the Season. Discipleship is not a solo act. It is more than receiving ashes and following rules. It is more than giving up sweets and not eating meat on Fridays. Discover what it can truly be! We can be moved and changed and blessed by it, no matter our age, season, or circumstances in life.

Our Holy Father Pope Francis said, “Let us not allow this season of grace to pass in vain! Let us ask God to help us set out on a path of true conversion.” Amen!