

Mass Intentions ~ March 2-8, 2020

Monday @ 7:30 am — Nolen Hughes (RIP)
Tuesday @ 7:30 am — Kathleen Ziemanski (RIP)
Wednesday @ 7:30 am — Jeshua Espinoza (RIP)
Thursday @ 7:30 am — Margaret McAleese (RIP)
*Friday @ 10:00 am — Healing Mass

Saturday @ 5:30 pm — Edward Prybylski (RIP)
Sunday @ 8:00 am — People of the Parish
Sunday @ 10:30 am — Richard Benton Jr. (RIP)

New Prayer Requests

Special Intentions

Hugh Easley

Charlene McMinn, sister of Melinda Cannon
Joe Allen, brother-in-law of Bill Fowler
Carmen Jabour, sister-in-law of Philip Jabour

See full prayer list on our website and prayer board.
Contact the church office to add names and
to request Mass intentions.

Sacrament of Reconciliation: Saturday @ 4:30-5:00 pm (or by appointment — call the Church office)

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament this week: Monday — Thursday, 8 am-12 pm; Friday, 8-10 am

ANNOUNCEMENTS ~ EVENTS ~ INFORMATION

March 2nd — The prison ministry MARC (Mississippi Association for Returning Citizens) is meeting at 6:30 pm. Join us on the first Monday of every month at 6:30 pm if you are interested in this Ministry

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.
Be sure to take a selfie in front of our new backdrop in the gym! Give us a shout out on your social media!

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 — Countless lives are touched by every contribution to the Catholic Service Appeal. **Our Parish has raised \$23,747, and our goal is \$66,189.** We ask that God grant us a renewed sense of responsibility for the work of our parish, diocese and the church throughout the world.

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.

40 Days for Life — February 26-April 5 We pray for an end to abortion. We pray for all who have suffered with an abortion, and for all who are considering abortion. May they find hope, help, and healing.

Interested in Ministry? Check out the Ministries details on our website, and the contact information to get involved!



Pope Francis reminds believers that fasting is one of the tasks of Lent, and said that even “if you cannot commit to a total fast, the kind that makes you feel hunger in your bones, you can still fast humbly and consistently.” Isaiah, he said, highlights so many inconsistencies in the practice of virtue, like “carrying out your own pursuits, driving all your laborers, and yes, your fast ends in quarreling and fighting.” He also warned against the temptation of “showing off” by fasting — “by making a fuss of it and letting people know that we are practicing Catholics and we do penance, so that people think ‘what a good person.’ This is a trick,” he said. “It’s pretending to be virtuous.” Fasting,” he said, “also involves lowering oneself by reflecting on one’s sins and asking forgiveness from the Lord.” Pope Francis exhorts Christians to “do penance, to feel a little hunger, to pray more during Lent, and to ask themselves how they behave towards the other.”

Offertory Collection for February 22/23:

Regular collection \$15,150.00

Mississippi Catholic second collection \$20.00

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



March 1, 2020 First Sunday of Lent

ST PAUL CATHOLIC CHURCH PH: 601-992-9547 www.saintpaulcatholicchurch.com



Nail it to the Cross & leave it with Him

To enhance our Lenten Book Study, *He Chose the Nails*, we have set up a cross in the church and one in the Family Life Center. All are invited to write down your bad moments, mad moments, anxious moments on a card and nail it to one of the crosses. We Give them to God. He knows we can't live with them. He gave His Son to carry them for us. We surrender these things to Him and offer this Lent to grow closer to God, and be more perfect Love like Jesus.

“May we not let this time of grace pass in vain, in the foolish illusion that we can control the times and means of our conversion to Him.” — Pope Francis in his 2020 Lenten address.

Lent offers us 40 days to focus on Christ, grow closer to Him, and be changed by the encounter with Him. During the Season of Lent, we traditionally do this through Prayer, Fasting, and Almsgiving. Here are some suggestions:

PRAYER — In his Lenten address this year, Pope Francis recalled that prayer is “more than a duty,” but that it is “an expression of our need to respond to God’s love which always precedes and sustains us.” How can we enhance our prayer life?

- Attend Mass during the week.
- Make a Holy Hour of Adoration in our Chapel.
- Read the Bible every day; reflect on the upcoming Sunday Gospel during the week.
- Schedule 5-10 minutes each day to sit in silence and stillness with God.
- Pray a daily Rosary.

FASTING — Eliminate some indulgence and replace it with some goodness.

- Fast from gossip, and speak in kindness.
- Fast from anger, and strive for reconciliation.
- Fast from self-pity, and help someone else.
- Fast from negativity, and focus on the positives in your life.
- Fast from holding a grudge, and reconnect in love.

ALMSGIVING — Make the world a better place. Give as a sacrifice, not just from your surplus.

“Charitable giving makes us more human, whereas hoarding risks making us less human, imprisoned by our own selfishness.” — Pope Francis

- Forego eating out, and donate what you would have spent to a food bank or to the CRS Rice Bowl.
- Refrain from buying new clothing, and donate some that you already own.
- Visit a sick friend or shut-in. Give them your time.
- Volunteer for a local charity instead of going out for entertainment. Help a neighbor with a project.
- Serve in a Ministry at Church.

Continuing our Reflection on the Gospel of Matthew

This Sunday's Gospel is rich in symbolism and bringing forth the Truth that Jesus is the fulfillment of the Old Testament. Matthew continues to bring this message and therefore included much description and detail of the Temptation of Jesus. (**Matt 4:1-11**)

The whole encounter parallels the people of Israel. Chapter 4 begins with Jesus being led by the Spirit into the desert where He remained for 40 days and 40 nights. This is reminiscent of the 40 years the Israelites spent in the desert. Now, Jesus will succeed where the people of God had failed. He is obedient to the promptings of the Spirit, even though it meant He would encounter the devil. All of Jesus' answers to the devil's temptations are found in **Deuteronomy, Chapters 6-8**.

The tempter's first words to Jesus call into question His authority. "If you are the Son of God..." Throughout His ministry, people questioned and challenged Jesus on this. They expected Him to wield His power and authority over everything! When He didn't, they wanted Him to prove Himself! Jesus had fasted for 40 days, and the devil knows He must be hungry. So, the first temptation is with food. Just as the Israelites were given the gift of manna in the desert, Jesus could have turned the stones into bread. But, He doesn't act for His own benefit. He serves God. He lives by God's word, not food. **Jesus said, "It is written: 'One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes forth from the mouth of God.' "** (Deut 8:3; Matt 4:4)

Next, the tempter quotes Scripture from Psalm 91. He challenges Jesus to throw Himself off the parapet of the Temple, saying God will command His angels to save and protect you. Jesus replies, **"Again it is written, 'You shall not put the Lord, your God, to the test.'"** (Deut 6:16; Matt 4:7) He could have easily jumped and remain unharmed. But, He felt no need to prove Himself. His mission was to be fully human and show us how to live and resist such acts of pride.

The final temptation offers Jesus all the kingdoms of the world, but at the cost of bowing in worship to the devil. While on their long journey through the desert, the Israelites gave in and worshipped a false image of God. Jesus resists and remains faithful to God. He rebukes Satan, proclaiming, **"The Lord, your God, shall you worship and him alone shall you serve."** (Deut 6:13, 10:20; Matt 4:10) True power and wealth are found in worshipping God, not in material things.

The Gospel ends with this final statement, **"Then the devil left him and, behold, angels came and ministered to him."** Jesus trusted God. He wasn't spared hardship, but God was always with Him. It is the same for all of us. God doesn't spare us hardship, but He is always with us. Jesus teaches us by His obedience, His openness to the Spirit, and His perfect love of God. May we be more like Him!

----- A Personal Testimony -----

This last line Jesus speaks in today's Gospel really struck me. What does everyday worship look like for the average person? Many would describe worship as the time we spend in church and the time we spend in prayer. What does everyday service to God look like for the average person? For those with a vocation of Holy Orders, the answer seems obvious. But, Scripture doesn't reserve everyday worship and serving God for only priests, preachers, and Religious brothers and sisters. The Word is for us, too!

Over this past year, I have been the witness and beneficiary of good people doing just that — recognizing their gifts as Blessing and using them, not only to make a living and provide for their family, but also to humbly serve God. Some beautiful examples of everyday worship and service to God have been revealed to me in a tangible and deeply personal way. To me, this testimony is a manifestation of this Sunday's Gospel and God's true presence with us, here and now. Satan tried to tempt Jesus to keep things and do things for His own benefit. We all have that same temptation — keep your stuff, don't give away too much, you might need it yourself one day! That makes great sense until you are the one in need. I have see others truly sacrifice their own time, money, and talent to help me. There offerings were with no benefit to themselves. They didn't do it because they are good. They did it because God is good, and they worship and serve Him by helping others.

During the course of the past year, I have had a run of unfortunate circumstances which I was not equipped to resolve on my own. Many things have broken down in my home, and when hearing about my troubles friends in the Parish immediately came to my rescue. They gave me furniture, they did major and minor repairs, and offered professional advice and guidance — all without asking for or accepting anything in return.

My son's car quit running, and friends offered use of their spare car with no time limit or mileage restrictions. My Small Group, friends, and coworkers have been very compassionate and supportive as I navigate the myriad of struggles I have been enduring. It's amazing that at this time of my life, with a long list of obstacles, disappointments, and problems, I feel so incredibly Blessed! I intentionally remember in my daily prayers each person who has helped me.

All of these friends stepped up to use their gifts and came to my rescue. God gave them skills. Their time and hard work are deserving of compensation. But, they humbly and quietly offered their services to me, free of compensation, because they know and love my family. They worship with me and see me as their sister in Christ. I have just been so thankful and so humbled by the outpouring of love. Then, the most extraordinary thing happened. A complete stranger showed that same level of compassion and love to me! Let me share with you this amazing example of discipleship and humble obedience to the Lord's call in one's life.

In 2018, we were gifted a car at a rock bottom price from our fellow parishioner, Lalande Harkins, before she became ill and passed away. God bless her, she could no longer drive due to her age and health, and she knew I had a teenage son. So, she generously sold me the car at a very low cost. What a blessing! My plan was that this car would get my son through his last year of high school and college. But, a blown head gasket changed that! We couldn't find a replacement engine, so I listed the car on Craigslist for sale as salvage.

I prayed someone would buy the car, then we could start saving again to get my son another reliable used car for college. Several weeks went by with no bites on the ad. After weeks, I finally began to see some interest. Five people offered to buy it for \$300, even though the ad stated, "\$500 cash - firm." With each of those offers, I felt a twinge of guilt and asked myself, "Am I being greedy? After all, \$300 is better than nothing. What if I wind up with nothing?!" I would pray before responding, "Lord, should I accept this offer? Please show me the way." Every time, I just had the sense God was telling me, "This is not the one. Wait." I trusted He was guiding me, but it wasn't easy. The ad was about to expire, and I feared I would be left with a junk car on my hands. I told my son he would have to go without a car for his first year of college. I helped him see that we are still blessed in so many ways. He would indeed be able to go to college, and it is very doable without your own car. A car is actually a luxury and a convenience, not a necessity. We still have one working car. We would have to be organized, but we would be fine.

Two days before my ad would expire, I got the call! A couple from Morton wanted the car and would pay the full \$500 in cash. Wow! Were we so grateful! We offered many prayers of thanksgiving, asking the Lord to bless the couple. We met them on a chilly Sunday afternoon. As my boys helped the man move the car from the muddy field and load it onto his trailer, I visited with his wife. She gave me the cash, and I signed over the title. They requested I leave the buyer section blank, as the plan was to give the car to someone who was in desperate need of a vehicle. She said, "God has truly blessed us. My husband is good at rebuilding and repairing cars, so this is just one way we can share our blessings and help others." She said he's done it many times. He keeps an eye out for junk cars, fixes them up, and gives them to someone who is going through a hard time.

I was so deeply moved by this couple. I told her, "That is such a beautiful way to use your gifts and it is incredibly generous! I love the way you serve God by helping others! You two have answered my prayers, and now you will turn around and bless someone else by this. I'm so thankful I waited for you to buy the car!" Immediately, I knew it was the Lord nudging me to be patient and not sell the car too quickly. He was indeed guiding me. I need not fear. He is present and will never abandon those who love Him. Waiting wasn't about the money I would be getting, it was about the opportunity to help this couple help someone in need. How truly wonderful! We were elated and inspired by their example. It was such a humble and holy encounter with these humble and holy people. It was affirmation for me. God is present. God is love.

But, that is not the end of this amazing story! The next day, the woman called me and said, "As we drove home yesterday we began praying, asking the Lord who needed this car. We believe, beyond a doubt, that He wants us to give it back to your son." I was speechless, and tears began to pour down my face! As soon as I found my voice, I said, "Thank you. Thank you so much! Of course, I am giving back the \$500! And, I will pay you \$500 more for fixing it!" She quietly replied, "Oh no! We don't want the money back. We just want your son to have a car and to be happy."

That is the very definition of humility. That is beyond anything I have ever experienced! Those people don't even know me! We only chatted for 15-20 minutes when we met. How could they be so giving to a stranger??? Only through the power of the Holy Spirit can we be so open and trusting!!! Only through faith and personal relationship with Jesus Christ, can we answer the call to serve others where we are, with what we have been gifted, and to sacrifice our time, money, and talent instead of only giving from our surplus. We want to hold on to our stuff, just in case. How often do we intentionally seek ways to help our friends, much less strangers???

May I go forth and serve others in such love and humility, just as all of these wonderful people God has placed in my life. — Monica Walton

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

What am I most tempted by? How do I resist the temptation?

Do I live by the Word, or am I mostly fed by food?

Do I ask God for proof, putting Him to the test?

What does my daily worship look like? How do I use my gifts to serve God?