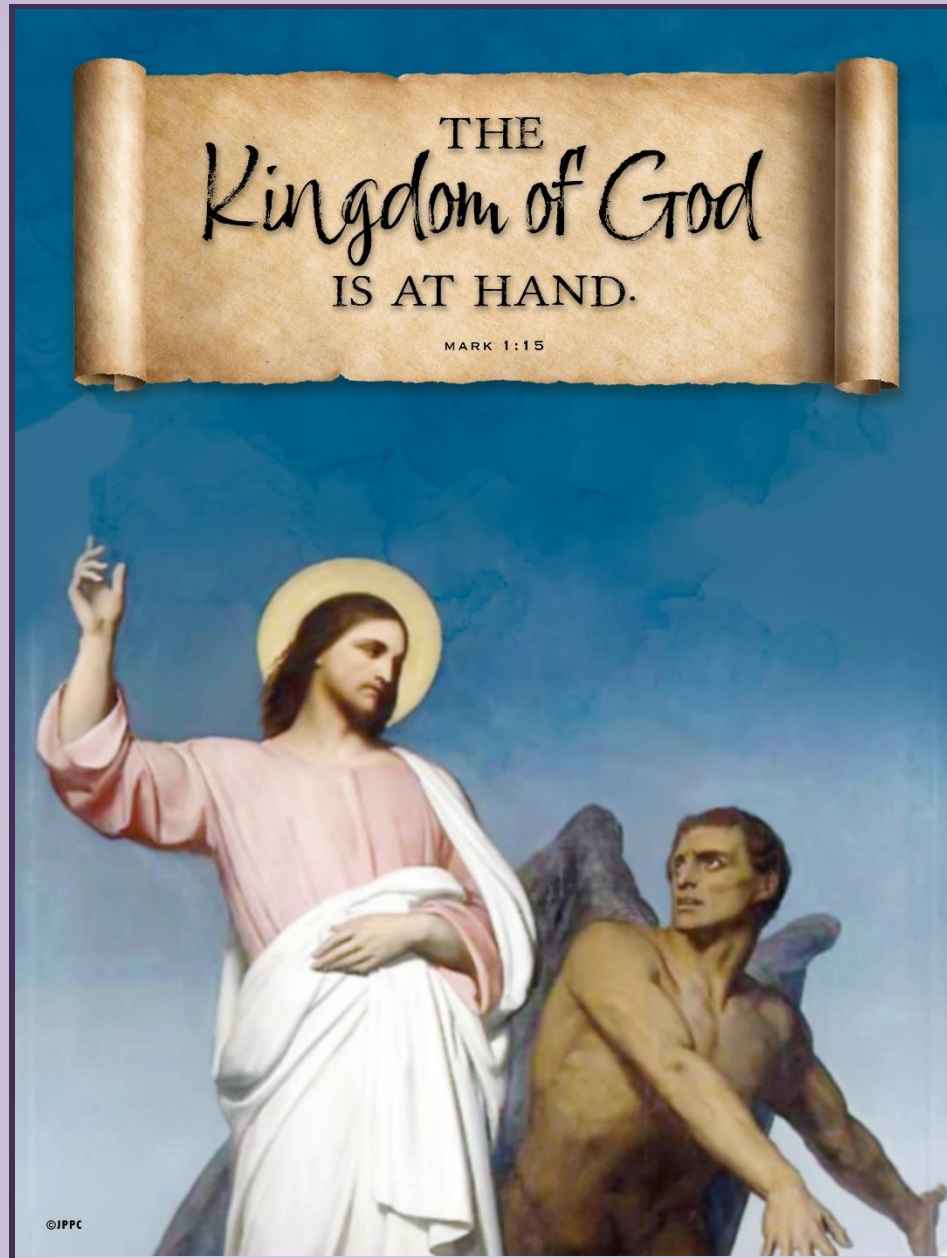


The First Sunday of Lent

February 18, 2024



Transfiguration of the Lord Parish

Saint Mary 14 Park Street + Sacred Heart 58 Church Street + Saint Mark 105 Stanley Street
North Attleborough, Massachusetts

Transfiguration of the Lord Parish

Rev. David A. Costa, Pastor
Rev. Deacon Joseph E. Regali, Parish Deacon
Sister Kathleen A. Corrigan, S.U.S.C., Pastoral Associate
Rev. Kenneth R. Sicard, O.P. & Rev. R. Gabriel Pivarnik, O.P., Weekend Assistants
Mrs. Martha O'Neill, Administrative Assistant
Mrs. Jean Howard, Business Manager
Mrs. Elaine Corvese, Director of Religious Education
Mrs. Lisa Serak, Principal, Saint Mary-Sacred Heart School
Mr. Adam Turcotte, Director of Music
Mr. Miguel Peixoto, Buildings Supervisor
Mr. James Kitsock, Building Maintenance

Saint Mary-Sacred Heart School

Mrs. Lisa Serak, Principal
57 Richards Avenue,
North Attleborough, Massachusetts 02760
(508) 695-3072 FAX (508) 695-9074
smsh@smsh.dfrcs.org www.smshschool.com

Saint Mary Cemetery

Mr. Jarrod Ward, Superintendent
Towne Street
North Attleborough, Massachusetts 02760
(508) 695-1173 or email ripco@comcast.net

Sacrament of Reconciliation

Saint Mary Church • Saturday 3:00 pm – 3:30 pm

Sacrament of Baptism

Baptisms are celebrated on designated Sunday afternoons at 12:30 pm, with a limit of four families at each baptism. Please contact the office at stmaryna@noozi.com for more information and available dates/locations.

Sacrament of Marriage

Marriage is usually celebrated on Saturday morning and afternoon. Please contact the Parish Office at least nine months in advance to begin preparation.

Sacrament of the Sick

Pastoral care to those in need of the sacrament of the sick is arranged through the parish office. Please call to arrange a visit.

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament is offered on the first Friday of each month in **Saint Mark Church** beginning at 9:00 am and ending at 6:00 pm with Benediction.

Parish Offering

If you are attending in person, you may drop your contribution in the collection basket. You are welcome to mail your budget envelope to the parish office, at 14 Park Street, North Attleborough, MA 02760. You may also leave your envelope in the drop box located outside the parish office door, to the right on the landing. Or you can use this link for online giving:
<https://chms.ecatholic.com/guest/mafrdiocese/31>
Thank you for your ongoing support!

Weekend Masses

Saturday 4:00 pm **Saint Mary Church**
Sunday 8:00 am **Saint Mark Church**
Sunday 9:30 am **Saint Mary Church**
Sunday 11:00 am **Sacred Heart Church**

Weekday Masses

Monday 8:00 am **Saint Mark Church**
Tuesday 4:30 pm **Saint Mark Church**
Wednesday 8:00 am **Saint Mark Church**
Thursday 8:00 am Communion Service
Saint Mark Church

Links to: Transfiguration of the Lord Facebook page
<https://www.facebook.com/Transfiguration-of-the-Lord-Parish-North-Attleborough-106529317647894/>
YouTube at <https://tinyurl.com/ysfaxaty>

Parish Office

14 Park Street, North Attleborough,
Massachusetts 02760
Parish e-mail • stmaryna@noozi.com
Parish website • www.saintmaryna.com
Phone 508-695-6161 Fax 508-695-5248
Faith Formation • TransfigurationRelEd@gmail.com
Faith Formation • 508-695-3823
Music Ministry • transfiguration.na.music@gmail.com



February 17/18 – The 1st Sunday of Lent

Saturday	February 17 – Vigil (St. Mary)
4:00 pm	Richard E. “Dick” Quinn, Jr.
Sunday	February 18 (St. Mark)
8:00 am	People of the Parish
Sunday	February 18 (St. Mary)
9:30 am	Denise Gaudette
Sunday	February 18 (Sacred Heart)
11:00 am	For the Intentions of Sister Rachel Pinsonnault

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Monday	February 19 (St. Mark)
8:00 am	Antonia Lucci
Tuesday	February 20 (St. Mark)
4:30 pm	People of the Parish
Wednesday	February 21 (St. Mark)
6:30 pm	Claire Poirier
	John & Elizabeth McCarthy
Thursday	February 22 (St. Mark)
8:00 am	Mark Pion

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February 24/25 – The 2nd Sunday of Lent

Saturday	February 24 – Vigil (St. Mary)
4:00 pm	All Souls in Purgatory
Sunday	February 25 (St. Mark)
8:00 am	People of the Parish
Sunday	February 25 (St. Mary)
9:30 am	Gertrude & Raymond Vandette, Sr.
Sunday	February 25 (Sacred Heart)
11:00 am	Thomas Sirois

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Parish Contributions

Collection for February 10/11: \$11,184.40
Catholic University of America: \$900.50

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Lenten Reconciliation Opportunities



The Sacrament of Reconciliation (confession) is celebrated every Saturday afternoon from 3:00 to 3:30 p.m. at Saint Mary Church. We will be scheduling an evening later in Lent where a number of priests will be available for the Sacrament of Reconciliation. As soon as this date is set we will post information in the parish bulletin and on our social media sites.

Lent 2024

Reflection Booklet: Each household of the parish is invited to use a daily reflection booklet entitled, “*The Season for Healing Hearts*,” by Fr. Joe Sica. Fr. Joe offers a reflection for each day of Lent followed by a practical action, and a short prayer to use throughout your day.

Daily Mass: Join us for daily Mass, Monday through Wednesday, and a Communion Service on Thursday morning. The Scripture readings and prayers of Lent offer much food for thought, prayer, and action. Our individual journeys are supported and strengthened by the prayer and presence of others in community. The daily Mass schedule is slightly adapted for Lent to afford the opportunity for those who work to participate at daily Mass at least once during the week. All Masses/Communion Service are celebrated at Saint Mark Church. The schedule is as follows:

Monday – Mass at 8:00 a.m.
Tuesday – Mass at 4:30 p.m.
Wednesday – Mass at 6:30 p.m.
Thursday – Communion Service at 8:00 a.m.

Stations of the Cross: Stations of the Cross will be prayed each Friday evening of Lent beginning at 7:00 p.m. in Saint Mary Church. Sister Kathee, Deacon Joe, and Fr. Dave will lead the Stations using various themed meditations.

Scripture Study: All are invited to a two-part presentation on the Passion of Jesus as found in Saint Mark’s Gospel. Saint Mark’s Passion is proclaimed on Palm Sunday this year. Fr. Costa will offer insights on Mark’s gospel in general and also focus on the nuances and insights the evangelist offers in his Passion account. The dates for these presentations are: **March 6 & March 13.**

Our Lenten Charity: The three disciplines of Lent – prayer, fasting, and charity – are interwoven. Fasting, is a concrete way of clearing, making space, for prayer and charity. We invite you to choose one or two things (food, “extras,” activities) that you will “give up” for the season of Lent. The money you would spend on these would then be donated to our parish Lenten charity.

This year we invite you to support the quickly growing mission of the Holy Union Sisters in Tanzania, Africa. Since 1973, Holy Union Sisters have served in education, (primary, secondary and college levels), parish ministry, and religious education. The Sisters also conduct a center for children with physical disabilities/needs, serving both children and families. The Tanzanian area of Holy Union is steadily attracting vocations with over 16 women currently in formation.

In celebration of their fiftieth anniversary of service and presence in Tanzania, the Sisters are focusing on three projects: an autism center, a new formation house, and a health center. Our donations will help further these new endeavors and their ongoing ministries. On Palm Sunday, envelopes for our parish Lenten charity project will be distributed.

Parish Office Closed – Presidents' Day Holiday



Please note that the Parish Office will be closed on Monday, February 19th in observance of the Presidents' Day holiday. Daily Mass **WILL** be celebrated at 8:00 am in Saint Mark Church on the holiday. Thank you!

Tuesday Communal Rosary Schedule



Tuesday, February 20, 2024: Prayer & Pizza (5PM)

Tuesday, February 27, 2024: Rosary for Life (4PM)

Tuesday, March 5, 2024: Rosary for Life (4PM)

Tuesday, March 12, 2024: Rosary for Life (4PM)

Tuesday, March 19, 2024: Prayer & Pizza (5PM)

Tuesday, March 26, 2024: Rosary for Life (4PM)

Tuesday, April 2, 2024: Rosary for Life (4PM)

Tuesday, April 9, 2024: Rosary for Life (4PM)

Prayer and Pizza

Are you looking for another way to deepen your spirituality? Do you have “knots” in your life that you need help undoing? Please join us on the third Tuesday of each month for “Prayer and Pizza.”

Following the 4:30 pm Mass this **Tuesday, February 20**, we together will pray the rosary, which will be offered up to Mary, Undoer of Knots (maryundoerofknots.com). Whether you pray the rosary daily or have never prayed it before, please consider joining us for “Prayer and Pizza.” All are welcome! Please contact Rick Leco (508 930 9264) or Vicky Curran (508 930 3306) with any questions.



Please Remember our Deceased Parishioners:

Gertrud K. Birle

Jeanne E. (Morrisseau) Duphiney

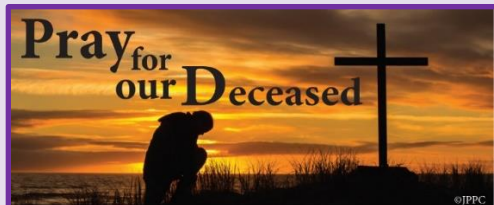
Pauline L. (Dyer) Arruda

Eleanor S. (Grimaldi) Legere

H. William “Bill” Donnelly

Eternal rest grant unto our beloved dead, O Lord.

Let perpetual light shine upon them.



Irish Night: Saturday, March 16th



Get ready to immerse yourself in the spirit of the Emerald Isle at our much-anticipated Irish Night Event! It's time to don your best green attire and embrace the warmth of Irish hospitality, complete with a scrumptious corned beef dinner, live music entertainment, and exciting raffles that could bring a touch of luck your way. The Irish Night event will be held on **Saturday, March 16th** starting at **6:30 p.m.** in **St. Mary Church Hall**. Tickets cost **\$20.00** per person and will be sold at all weekend Masses on the weekends of March 3rd and March 9th, or by calling Karen Smith at (508) 212-7377. Those of you who have attended this wonderful event in the past can attest to how much was had by all. We hope you can join us!

2024 Mass Intention Book

The 2024 Mass Intention Book is open. The current Mass schedule provides for fewer opportunities for parishioners to remember their beloved dead at weekend Masses. For this reason, we will schedule, when necessary, multiple intentions for weekend Masses. There is no limit on the number of daily Mass intentions. Please contact the office via email, phone, or in writing with your requests.



DO YOU WANT TO FAST THIS LENT?

In the words of Pope Francis

- Fast from hurting words and say kind words.
- Fast from sadness and be filled with gratitude.
- Fast from anger and be filled with patience.
- Fast from pessimism and be filled with hope.
- Fast from worries and have trust in God.
- Fast from complaints and contemplate simplicity.
- Fast from pressures and be prayerful.
- Fast from bitterness and fill your hearts with joy.
- Fast from selfishness and be compassionate to others.
- Fast from grudges and be reconciled.
- Fast from words and be silent so you can listen.

pietrafitness.com



SAINTS

SAINT MARY-SACRED HEART

Saint Mary-Sacred Heart School:
Your Story Starts Here!



Do you have a child who will be 4 years old by August 2024? As parents, you are the primary educators of your child; thus, it is never too early to plan for your child's education. Our **LITTLE SAINTS** program is an adventure to help each child encounter feelings of success and experience opportunities for discovery. We build upon a child's natural talents and curiosity to help your child become a confident learner and be fully prepared for Kindergarten – academically, socially, and spiritually. Call us at (508) 695-3072 to set up a time to tour our school and meet our amazing Pre-K4 staff! We invite you to learn more about our Saint Mary-Sacred Heart School students and programs by visiting our website www.smshschool.com.

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SMSH Auction - Friday, March 8, 2024, Luciano's Lake Pearl in Wrentham, MA:

This year's auction is particularly special as we celebrate the centennial of our school. We are expecting 200 in-person guests and will reach even more through our online auction. We greatly appreciate any donations you can make to support our cause. Whether it's a family vacation getaway or gift baskets filled with items from local businesses, every contribution is valuable. We also offer advertising and sponsorship opportunities for those who prefer to contribute in that way. Please reach out to our Auction Co-Chairs, Lisa Augusto O'Neill or Jillian Figueiredo at the following email address: SMSHAuctioncommittee@gmail.com. Thank you for considering our request. We truly appreciate your support!

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Saint Mary-Sacred Heart School Alumni:

Did you, your child, grandchild or other relative graduate from St. Mary's School, Sacred Heart School or Saint Mary-Sacred Heart School? If so, please go to the Saint Mary-Sacred Heart School website www.smshschool.com and under the Alumni tab fill in the form on reconnect with SSMH. We appreciate your support in this important part of our school's history!

Faith Formation Program 2023-2024

Director of Religious Education ~ Mrs. Elaine Corvese
508-695-3823; transfigurationreled@gmail.com

Faith Formation Office hours:

Monday – Thursday: 10:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Class Schedule:

February 25th: **Grades 1 & 2**, 9:00 – 10:15 a.m.
(following the 8:00 a.m. Mass)

February 25th: **Grade 9**, 6:00 – 7:30 p.m.

February 26th: **Grade 8**, 6:30 - 8:00 p.m.

March 3rd: **Grades 3 & 4**, 9:00 – 10:15 a.m.
(following the 8:00 a.m. Mass)

March 4th: **Grade 5**, 6:30 - 8:00 p.m.

March 10th: **Grades 1 & 2**, 9:00 – 10:15 a.m.
(following the 8:00 a.m. Mass)

March 10th: **Grade 9**, 6:00 – 7:30 p.m.

March 11th: **Grade 6**, 6:30 - 8:00 p.m.

March 17th: **Grades 3 & 4**, 9:00 – 10:15 a.m.
(following the 8:00 a.m. Mass)

March 18th: **Grade 7**, 6:30 - 8:00 p.m.

March 25th: **Grade 8**, 6:30 - 8:00 p.m.

Please see website: saintmaryna.com for the 2023-2024 calendar for all grades. Faith Formation classes are held at Saint Mark Church hall in Attleboro Falls.

Date of Confirmation:



CONFIRMATION

April 7, 2024: 1:00 p.m. Saint Mary Church

Dates of First Communion:



HOLY EUCHARIST

May 4, 2024: 10:00 a.m. Saint Mary Church

May 4, 2024: 1:00 p.m. Saint Mary Church

May 11, 2024: 10:00 a.m. Saint Mary Church

Cancellation of classes: In the event of cancellation of classes due to inclement weather, the Faith Formation Office will notify parents/guardians by email and the cancellation notice will also be on the answering machine of the Faith Formation office at 508-695-3823. Please note: if the North Attleboro School Department cancels school, Faith Formation classes are automatically canceled.

Transfiguration of the Lord Respect Life Group

RESPECT LIFE

Monthly Meeting:

The next meeting of the Respect Life Group will take place on Thursday, **March 7, 2024 at 6:30 pm in Sacred Heart Church's Library**. We hope to see you there!

Baptism Congratulations

Our prayerful best wishes are extended to three of our children and their families who recently celebrated the Sacrament of Baptism. Please welcome and remember:

Maeve Elizabeth Durfee



Daughter of Ryan & Diane Durfee
Godchild of Patrick Durfee & Leslie Praetsh

***Avery Lynn Pawluczonek
& Nolan Francis Pawluczonek***



Children of Frank & Katherine Pawluczonek
Godchildren of Cole Musgrave, Holly Odom,
Matthew Krappe, & Cristin Patch

Baptismal Preparation Classes Have Resumed

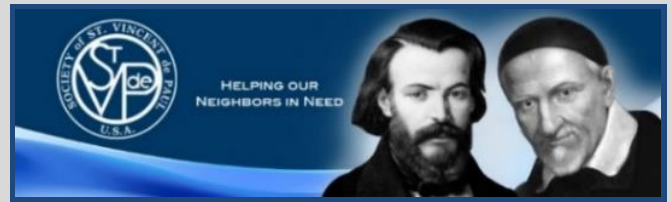
Parents requesting the baptism of their child should be registered members of the parish who attend weekend Mass here at Transfiguration of the Lord Parish on a weekly basis. Please pick up and complete one of the Parish Census forms if you have not already registered with the parish. If this is your first Baptism here at Transfiguration Parish, parents are asked to attend a brief baptismal preparation session. The next session will be held on Sunday, **March 10 at 12:30 pm** in the Sacred Heart Meeting Room. Advanced registration is required. Please call Martha at the parish office or email at stmaryna@noozi.com for more information.



Join us for the Stations of the Cross

Stations of the Cross will be prayed each Friday evening during Lent at 7:00 p.m. in Saint Mary Church. Each week we will use a different set of themed meditations for our prayer which will be led by Deacon Joe, Sister Kathee, or Fr. Dave. All are invited to participate. Join us for Stations of the Cross this **Friday, February 23**. This will include Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament and will conclude with Benediction!

Transfiguration of the Lord Parish Saint Vincent de Paul Society



Inspired by Gospel values, the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, a Catholic lay organization, leads women and men to join to grow spiritually by offering person-to-person service to those who are in need or are suffering, in the tradition of its founder, Blessed Frédéric Ozanam, and patron, St. Vincent de Paul. The Society meets on the 2nd Thursday of the month in the parish hall in Saint Mary Church. Please join us!

Call for Assistance:

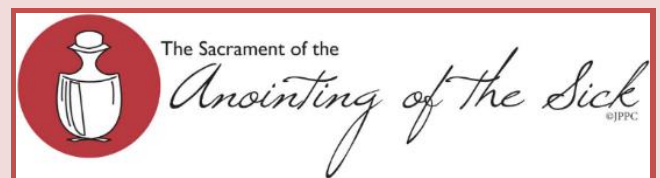
If you need assistance, please call the help line for our parish Saint Vincent de Paul Society. They can offer information about the types of assistance available. Please call 508-212-4755 for help or more information.

2023 Donation Statements Are Now Available

The 2023 year-end tax reports will be available, PER YOUR REQUEST, for those parishioners using the budget envelope system. **Loose checks mailed or placed in the collection are not recorded by the budget company.** Please contact Martha in the office at stmaryna@noozi.com or call 508-695-6161 and leave a message with your name and address if you would like your statement. Contribution letters will be mailed. Thank you for your support of our parish community.



The Sacrament of the Sick



If an ill family member is desirous of or in need of the comfort and grace of the Sacrament of the Sick, please call the parish office to make an appointment for Fr. Costa to visit. With the present vocation crisis in our Diocese, priest chaplains are not available at Sturdy Hospital. Pastoral Care of the Sick is provided ably and graciously by Deacon Del Malloy. If a family member is at Sturdy and would like to celebrate the Sacrament of the Sick, please call the parish office in order for Fr. Costa to visit as soon as he is able. The hospital does not send out notifications to the parishes when parishioners are admitted.

Saint of the Week:

Saints Jacinta Marto and Francisco Marto

Just over one hundred years ago, a deadly virus spread throughout the world spreading death, fear, and panic. In 1918 and 1919 the Spanish flu virus infected about 500 million people, one-third of the world population. About 50 million people died during the pandemic, including 675,000 in the United States. During this pandemic, most churches, businesses, and schools closed for several weeks in the United States.

Two siblings from the small village of Fatima, Portugal were among the many who died from the virus. Francisco Marto was 10 and Jacinta Marto was 9 years old. In their brief lives, their spirituality had drawn worldwide attention and inspired many to return to the practice of the Catholic faith.

Between May 13 and October 13, 1917, three Portuguese shepherd children from Aljustrel, received apparitions of Our Lady at Cova da Iria, near Fátima, a city 110 miles north of Lisbon. At that time, Europe was involved in an extremely bloody war. Portugal itself was in political turmoil, having overthrown its monarchy in 1910; the government disbanded religious organizations soon after. Along with their cousin Lucia, Jacinta and Francisco asked their local community in 1917 to gather monthly on a rocky cove where they encountered the Blessed Virgin Mary as they prayed the Rosary. At first, the villagers treated their request with deep skepticism and hostility, but large crowds eventually formed for these special moments of prayer. Some attended out of curiosity. Others out of genuine spiritual desire. Over 70,000 were present for the final gathering and experienced a supernatural "miracle of the sun" with the sun seemingly dancing in the sky on October 13, 1917.

The young children encouraged people to rediscover their Catholic faith. To simplify their lives by focusing more on prayer and penance. They spoke directly about the dangers of procrastination and putting off opportunities for spiritual conversion. As the deadly virus spread through Portugal, Francisco and Jacinta practiced what they had preached. They accepted the possibility that they might die from the virus, and spiritually prepared themselves for the possibility of death.

They eventually caught the virus and suffered greatly. Yet, they did not complain. They said they were offering up their sufferings for the conversion of sinners. They treated their suffering as a prayer, an act of love. They united themselves with Jesus on the Cross who offered his painful sufferings as an act of love for humanity. They chose to suffer and die as Jesus did, praying and loving. Francisco died at home on April 4, 1919. Jacinta underwent several interventions at hospitals, including a surgery without anesthesia, and then died alone in a children's hospital on February 20, 1920. They were both canonized saints on May 13, 2017. The site where the children prayed the Rosary with large crowds is now the Shrine of Our Lady of Fatima in Portugal, visited by millions of pilgrims each year. Their feast day is February 20.

The Feast Day of Saints Jacinta Marto and Francisco Marto: February 20th



Lord God, you chose Saint Francisco and Saint Jacinta to help many people rediscover the Catholic faith. Use our example and prayers to inspire others to return to the practice of the faith. Be especially near the dying, that they might experience your mercy through Christ our Lord. Amen. Saint Francisco and Jacinta Marto, pray for us!

Knights of Columbus Monthly Meeting

Council #330 of the Knights of Columbus has been serving the Catholic Community of North Attleborough for 125 years. The Knights meet on the 2nd Wednesday of each month at 7pm, in the St. Mary Church Hall. Please drop by on meeting nights if you'd like to learn more about the Knights. Council #330 is committed to assisting local charities that align with the values of our Faith such as the Parish, the Parish school, and Abundant Hope. Contact Jim Schromm with any questions: jim.schromm@verizon.net.



Saint Pope John Paul II once said:

"In the Mass and in Eucharistic Adoration we meet the merciful love of God that passes through the heart of Jesus Christ."

Please join us at **Saint Mark church** on Friday, **March 1st**, beginning at 9:00 a.m. and ending at 6:00 p.m. with Benediction. Remember, as we share in the work of Redemption, so will we be rewarded with our own redemption. For more information call Joanne Regali (508-643-3821) or Arlene Hall (508-801-2243). Please leave a message if the call is not answered immediately.

Friends of SSMH Outing

As announced in our parish bulletin a few weeks back, the Friends of SSMH is offering various one day and multi-day outings. Join us on Wednesday, April 24 for **The Beach Boys Ultimate Tribute** show, at Lake Pearl in Wrentham, MA. Price per person is \$89.00 and includes luncheon, tax and gratuity, and show ticket. Information flyers are available at the doors of the church or you may contact Nancy Chapman or May Courbron at 508-243-2904 or by email: friendsofssmh@gmail.com for more information.

The 1st Sunday of Lent - February 18, 2024



First Reading

A reading from the Book of Genesis

God said to Noah and to his sons with him:

"See, I am now establishing my covenant with you and your descendants after you and with every living creature that was with you: all the birds, and the various tame and wild animals that were with you and came out of the ark. I will establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all bodily creatures be destroyed by the waters of a flood; there shall not be another flood to devastate the earth."

God added:

"This is the sign that I am giving for all ages to come, of the covenant between me and you and every living creature with you: I set my bow in the clouds to serve as a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. When I bring clouds over the earth, and the bow appears in the clouds, I will recall the covenant I have made between me and you and all living beings, so that the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all mortal beings."

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.



Responsorial Psalm

R. Your ways, O Lord, are love and truth to those who keep your covenant.

Your ways, O LORD, make known to me;
teach me your paths,
Guide me in your truth and teach me,
for you are God my savior.

R. Your ways, O Lord, are love and truth to those who keep your covenant.

Remember that your compassion, O LORD,
and your love are from of old.
In your kindness remember me,
because of your goodness, O LORD.

R. Your ways, O Lord, are love and truth to those who keep your covenant.

Good and upright is the LORD,
thus he shows sinners the way.
He guides the humble to justice,
and he teaches the humble his way.

R. Your ways, O Lord, are love and truth to those who keep your covenant.

Second Reading

A reading from the first Letter of Saint Peter

Beloved:

Christ suffered for sins once, the righteous for the sake of the unrighteous, that he might lead you to God. Put to death in the flesh, he was brought to life in the Spirit. In it he also went to preach to the spirits in prison, who had once been disobedient while God patiently waited in the days of Noah during the building of the ark, in which a few persons, eight in all, were saved through water. This prefigured baptism, which saves you now. It is not a removal of dirt from the body but an appeal to God for a clear conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers subject to him.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Gospel Acclamation

R. Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ, King of endless glory!

*One does not live on bread alone,
but on every word that comes forth from the mouth of God.*

R. Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ, King of endless glory!

Gospel

The Lord be with you.

And with your spirit.

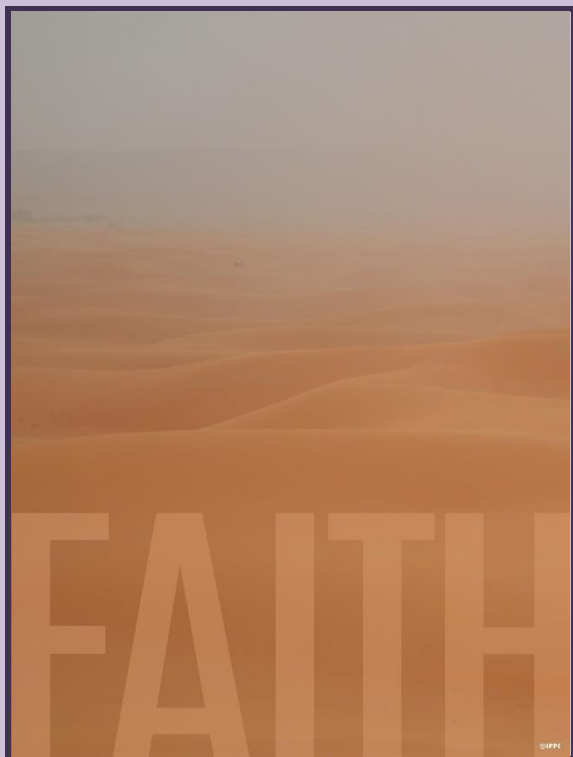
† A reading from the holy Gospel according to Mark
Glory to you, O Lord.

The Spirit drove Jesus out into the desert, and he remained in the desert for forty days, tempted by Satan. He was among wild beasts, and the angels ministered to him.

After John had been arrested, Jesus came to Galilee proclaiming the gospel of God: "This is the time of fulfillment. The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel."

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.



FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT

For a Change:

We are reminded today that the trouble has passed. The flood waters have receded and new plants are growing. A rainbow spans the sky and connects heaven and the cleansed and renewed earth. God is present in covenant and promise. This knowledge can hold us fast and set us moving all at once. This is the beginning of Lent. It helps a lot to see the end or purpose of Lent, and this Sunday gives us the boost we need.

Comment:

The opening reading from Genesis is surely among the most often told and well-loved. But, for all its charm and easy adaptation for children, the story of Noah carries deep meanings for mature people of faith. This reading tells the story of God's first covenant with the chosen people. The covenant comes as something of a surprise. It is not just a small arrangement between God and Noah's little family. This covenant is explicit, unilateral, and universal. What a great new beginning! This covenant, unbidden and unexpected, is made with Noah after the known world had drowned itself in its own willfulness and sinfulness.

Noah, a just and good man, escaped with his family and a pair of each living creature. Rarely must one begin all over again, but this seems to be the lot of Noah—and of God, too. The reseeded world is the story of a second chance given by a patient God to a faithful man and his family, and alas, his menagerie. The ark floating on the water is a miniature, saved world. Everything that is needed is present.

The first letter of Peter, which is our second reading this Sunday, refers to the story of Noah and uses it to illustrate a new understanding of water in salvation history. Noah's small and sufficient ark escaped "through the water." Peter sees this image of water not as a killing deluge, but as water that supports and sustains. The water to which Peter refers is the water of salvation, not of death.

The Gospel proclamation is so brief we almost miss it. Mark's Gospel assumes a world view that sees Jesus as the Savior, Son of God, and bearer of the Holy Spirit. This Spirit drives Jesus into the waterless desert, where he encounters and no doubt struggles with Satan. This struggle is a cameo of his entire mission of struggling with and finally overcoming the power of evil. For forty days, that is, for a sufficient time, Jesus takes on and subdues the power of evil.

Jesus then emerges, almost explodes, into the unsuspecting and relatively tranquil world of Palestine. He comes among a people going about their daily business and announces a time of fulfillment. A fresh, new day is upon us, he announces. God is here and seeks our repentance and our faith.

Reflection:

Jesus tells the people of his homeland that the reign of God is at hand. That is the main issue. He doesn't first remind them of their destructive ways. Jesus is definitely not the hell-and-brimstone preacher the self-righteous seem to think most of us deserve to hear. Jesus does not spend his time bawling us out, as it were. Rather, he first sets before us promise and fullness, and only then does he ask us to take it in and take on the work of conversion.

The reign of God is at hand, and we need only to open our hands to seize it. Our hands cannot be shaped to fists, and though a kind of dying must occur, we need not face it with white-knuckle determination, as if everything depended on us. We begin well when we focus on what is to be gained, not on what is to be given up. Only by focusing on the end of the lenten journey—Easter—will we be able to muster the courage and persistence needed for renunciation and repentance. All of the readings insist on this: God's promise to Noah and to the whole earth; Peter's reminder that we are saved through the baptismal waters; and finally, Jesus' announcement of the reign of God among us.

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Reflections for the Week beginning Sunday, February 18, 2024



Invest time each week to
expand your vocabulary and
deepen your faith.

18 February 2024

WORD OF THE WEEK

Papacy *\ˈpā-pə-sē*

The office of the bishop of Rome, familiarly known as the pope; the term of a pope's reign; a succession of popes; the church's system of government with the pope as first among equals with authority over all other bishops.

Pronunciation: <https://tinyurl.com/Take5-papacy>

CONTEXT

One of the main challenges of the **papacy** is to judge all tasks in the light of the gospel to avoid transforming ecclesiastical jurisdiction into political power.

—Father Jean-Marie Tillard, O.P.

We cannot dispute that the **papacy** itself, purely as a human institution, is unique.

—Paul Johnson in *The Papacy*

Since God has given us the **papacy**, let us enjoy it.

—Attributed to Pope Leo X, known for lavish living, patronage of the arts, and abuse of papal power

WHY IT MATTERS

Since the first century, the bishop of the local church in Rome has been understood to possess the "Chair of Peter," which endows great authority and carries the role of special keeper of the church's mission.

The power of the **papacy** stems from Jesus' choice to set Peter in authority over the rest: "You are Peter and upon this rock I will build my church." (Matthew 16:18). Papal primacy and the role of the pope as Vicar of Christ and pastor of the whole Church, with "full, supreme and universal power over the Church" was confirmed at numerous ecumenical councils, including Vatican II (*Lumen gentium*, 22).

RELATED WORDS

Pope | Pontiff | Vicar of Christ | Curia | Hierarchy

QUESTION OF THE WEEK

What are the qualifications for being pope?

The vast majority of popes were ordained. Priesthood is a plus, topped off with a hearty Roman education at a pontifical institute. Doing time in highly visible chanceries in large cities increases your chances. Attaining the status of bishop and cardinal tremendously increases your odds even though neither position is canonically required.

Medieval and renaissance popes had the advantages of coming from princely or aristocratic Roman families, but never mind if you don't have a fine pedigree. Sixtus V was the son of a laundress, and Pius X the child of a seamstress. A few popes were renowned preachers like the Franciscan Sixtus IV, and others were lawyers, professors, and poets. But just as many had their beginnings as monks, anchorites, and even a hermit (Celestine V, but he abdicated to return to his hermitage after six months).

Though being extraordinarily wicked hasn't always been a deal-breaker, more than a few popes were martyred or popularly acclaimed as saints. Holiness is a great asset. Wanting to be pope probably isn't.

—Alice Camille, from *Questions Catholics Ask* <http://tinyurl.com/QCA-papal-qualifications>

REFLECTION OF THE WEEK

CHAIR OF PETER, APOSTLE (FEBRUARY 22)

Power well exercised

The feast of the Chair of Peter honors the unity of the worldwide church and its teaching authority. This authority has given popes the ability to speak out for human rights and against injustice, which they have done with increasing frequency in the past century.

READINGS: 1 Peter 5:1-4; Matthew 16:13-19 (535 <https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/022224.cfm>). "Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven."

FAITH IN ACTION

Dip into the social teachings from recent popes <http://tinyurl.com/social-encyclicals> and be amazed by their thinking on labor, preferential option for the poor, human dignity, economic justice, and care of creation.



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