

SECOND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

BEHOLD, THE LAMB OF GOD.

— JOHN 1:36 —



OUR LADY OF MOUNT CARMEL

23-25 NEWTOWN AVENUE, ASTORIA, NY 11102 | 718.278.1834 | MOUNTCARMELASTORIA.

SUNDAY, JANUARY 14, 2024

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OUR LADY OF MOUNT CARMEL ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

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PASTOR

Rev. Msgr. Cuong M. Pham

PAROCHIAL VICARS

Rev. Michael McHugh
Rev. Sy Hung Tran

PERMANENT DEACONS

Deacon Ruben Mendez
Deacon Jacob Rodriguez

RETIRED PRIESTS IN RESIDENCE

Rev. Ed Brady, Pastor Emeritus
Rev. Joseph Tan Pham
Rev. Msgr. John Harrington, K.H.S.

MUSIC DIRECTOR

Lucille Mascia
music@mountcarmelastoria.org

Youth Minister

Dayonel Mejia
YouthMinister@mountcarmelastoria.org

MASS INTENTIONS FOR THE WEEK

SATURDAY, JANUARY 13 (*Saint Hilary*)

5:00pm Charles Cooper, Mercedes Beck,
Franco Braykovs, Rogelio Lopez, Nick Palomar

SUNDAY, JANUARY 14 (*Second Sunday in Ordinary Time*)

8:00am Woltor Bescar
9:00am Salvatore Barretta
9:30am John Thu Pham
11:00am John Lanca
12:30pm Ofelia Castro Diaz, Luz Lopez Molina,
Carlos de Jesus Marcial (*1 Aniversario*),
Richard Colombo (*Living*)
3:00pm For the People of the Parish

MONDAY, JANUARY 15 (*Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.*)

9:00am Giuseppe & Bernarda DiLorenzo

TUESDAY, JANUARY 16

8:00am Dominador V. Castroverde, Sr.
12:00pm Betty Escobar

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 17 (*Saint Anthony*)

8:00am Leonardo DiVittorio, Herbert Pope,
Ralph Immello, Sr. & Jr., Frank,
Marie & Carlo Cataldo
12:00pm Mosler Family

THURSDAY, JANUARY 18

8:00am Margaret Miller
12:00pm Rosa & Antonino DiLludio

FRIDAY, JANUARY 19

8:00am Thanksgiving In Honor of Sacred Heart of Jesus
12:00pm John Thu Pham (*3rd Anniversary*)

SATURDAY, JANUARY 20 (*Saint Fabian & Saint Sebastian*)

8:00am For Priestly & Religious Vocations
from Our Parish
5:00pm Natale Forzano, Emma Faytaren,
Mercedes Beck (*Birthday Memorial*),
Mercedes & Antonio Hernandez,
Aurelia Moreno & Ariel Moyano

SUNDAY, JANUARY 21 (*Third Sunday in Ordinary Time*)

8:00am Paulina Ramos
9:00am Gaspare Barretta
9:30am En Honor a La Señora de Altagracia
11:00am Souls of Nacinovich & Mejia Families
12:30pm Ofelia Castro Diaz, Maria Paula Lema,
Jose Antonio Lema Chimborazo,
Leonida Soresca, Lucille Mascia (*Vive*),
Leobarda Valencia (*Feliz Cumpleaños*)
3:00pm For the People of the Parish

MEMORIAL OF THE WEEK



*The Altar Bread & Wine are being offered
for Mercedes Beck,
by Nora Abreu*



*The Altar Candles are being offered for
Gaspare Barretta,
by Ida & Nicoletta Carullo*

SECOND COLLECTIONS

January 21: There will be a second collection after communion for our Parish Maintenance. Your generosity enables use to maintain our parish spaces in good condition for your use.



MASS SCHEDULE

Saturday	5:00 PM (Vigil Mass)
Sunday	<i>Main Church:</i> 8:00 AM (English) 9:30 AM (Spanish) 11:00 AM (English) 12:30 PM (Spanish) 3:00 PM (Vietnamese) <i>Chapel:</i> 9:00 AM (Italian) 10:30 AM (Czech-Slovak)
Weekdays	8:00 AM and 12:00 Noon
Saturday	8:00 AM
First Fridays	7:30 PM (Spanish)
Holy Days	8:00 AM, 12 PM (English) and 7:30 PM (Bi-lingual)
Holidays	Only one Mass at 9:00 AM

CONFESSIONS:
Saturday 3:30pm—4:30pm (Chapel)

CHURCH HOURS:
Weekday: 7:00am—7:00pm
Saturday: 7:00am—6:00pm
Sunday: 7:00am—4:00pm

OFFICE HOURS
Weekday:
9:00am—12:00 Noon
1:00pm—8:30pm
Saturday:
9:00am—12:00 Noon

PARISH REGISTRATION

We encourage all who worship with us to consider registering to our parish. This will enable our parish to serve your needs better. Please return this form in the collection or drop it off at the parish office. Your participation will strengthen your sense of belonging in God's family.

Name(s): _____

Address: _____ Apt _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

Telephone: _____

E-mail: _____

PLEASE CHECK:

New Registration Changed Address
 I prefer envelopes I prefer E-giving

TRIUMPH IN GENEROSITY



Annual Catholic Appeal 2023

DIOCESE OF BROOKLYN

We are happy to announce that our parish's contribution to the 2023 Annual Catholic Appeal (ACA) has not only met but surpassed our goal of \$67,815, reaching an inspiring grand total of \$75,936, pledged by 195 of our dedicated parishioners.



Impressively, only \$2,142 of this total remains outstanding! It is exciting to know that any amount exceeding our goal comes back to our parish, and in this case, it amounts to \$8,121—a significant sum that we can utilize as per our parish's needs.

We want to extend my deepest thanks to each one of you for your generosity and commitment. Your contributions reflect not just financial support, but a profound investment in the life and mission of our church. This achievement is a testament to the strength and unity of our parish community. Thank you for being a vital part of our parish's journey of faith and service.

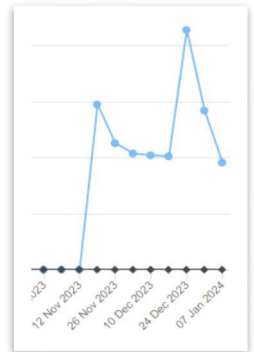
Msgr. Cuong M. Pham, Rev. Michael McHugh, Rev. Hung S. Tran

Welcome



MASS ATTENDANCE RECORD

Weekend of January 1/7	Number of Attendees
Saturday English Vigil 5:00pm	121
Sunday English 8:00am	91
9:00am Italian	17
9:30am Bilingual	121
10:00am Czech	16
English 11:00am	211
12:30pm Spanish	306
3:00pm Vietnamese	71



WEEKLY MASS OFFERINGS

REGULAR CONTRIBUTIONS

Last Sunday: \$4,683 Same Week Last Year: \$5,323

FAITH DIRECT CONTRIBUTIONS

December 2022: \$4,047 December 2023: \$10,231



Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

As the last shimmer of the Christmas season fades, we gracefully enter Ordinary Time. This period, often undervalued, is a unique opportunity for profound spiritual growth and renewal. Ordinary Time, contrary to its name, is far from mundane. It's a season rich with the structured rhythm of our faith, unfolding the life of Christ and His teachings. Named from "*ordinalis*" in Latin, meaning "*numbered*," it invites us on a methodical faith journey. From the first to the thirty-fourth Sunday, with Lent beginning on February 14 and the subsequent Easter season, Ordinary Time encompasses the entirety of Christ's mystery, unlike the seasons of Christmas or Easter, which focus on specific aspects of His life.

An interesting symbol of Ordinary Time is the color green in church vestments and decorations, representing new life and growth, reminiscent of spring's vibrancy. This season, particularly post-Pentecost, mirrors the early Church's expansion under the Holy Spirit, spreading the Gospel globally. Thus, Ordinary Time is "*ordered*" towards growth, renewal, and development, mirroring the dynamic evolution of our faith and community.

In this season of growth, I am thrilled to share exciting news that reflects our faith journey. Last year, I outlined a vision to expand our sacred space and enhance our parish community. Thanks to your generosity and commitment to our weekly collections and the Annual Catholic Appeal, this vision is now a reality. I am elated to announce the commencement of our new glass atrium's construction, along the previously underutilized church corridor adjacent to the rectory's side garden. More than an architectural addition, this atrium, extending from the existing greenhouse linking the side vestibule to the lower chapel, represents our collective spiritual growth, offering a welcoming space for meetings and prayer.

Following extensive collaboration with skilled architects, engineers, parish staff, diocesan officials, and Bishop Brennan's final plan approval, I have entrusted this important project to Victoria Construction Company. Their history of excellent work assures us of a harmonious blend with our beloved church, enhancing its aesthetic appeal without significant structural changes.

Furthermore, I am pleased to report the completion of the stained-glass window frame restorations on our church's facade. Their renewed splendor, now more visible thanks to new tempered glass coverings, is a testament to our enduring spirit and commitment to heritage preservation. The ongoing restoration of the remaining windows in the two towers symbolizes our physical and spiritual renewal journey.

As we progress through Ordinary Time, embracing opportunities for change, growth, and deepening our relationship with Christ, let's also welcome these positive parish developments. Each step in Christ's public ministry, each day of Ordinary Time, and each phase of our parish's enhancements are interconnected, leading us towards a greater appreciation of our faith and mission.

In conclusion, let's view this time not as a return to routine but as a chance for deeper, more vibrant faith. May this season guide us to live a life marked by enthusiasm and generosity.

With my blessings and prayers,

Msgr. Cuong M. Pham



Queridos hermanos y hermanas en Cristo,

A medida que el último resplandor de la temporada navideña se desvanece, entramos con gracia en el Tiempo Ordinario. Este período, a menudo subestimado, es una oportunidad única para un profundo crecimiento y renovación espiritual. El Tiempo Ordinario, contrario a su nombre, está lejos de ser mundano. Es una temporada rica en el ritmo estructurado de nuestra fe, revelando la vida de Cristo y Sus enseñanzas. Nombrado a partir de *“ordinalis”* en Latín, que significa *“numerado”*, nos invita a un viaje metódico de fe. Desde el primer hasta el trigésimo cuarto domingo, con la excepción de la Cuaresma que comienza el 14 de febrero y la subsiguiente temporada de Pascua, el Tiempo Ordinario abarca la totalidad del misterio de Cristo, a diferencia de las temporadas de Navidad o Pascua, que se centran en aspectos específicos de Su vida.

Un símbolo interesante del Tiempo Ordinario es el color verde en los ornamentos y decoraciones de la iglesia, representando la nueva vida y el crecimiento, reminisciente de la vitalidad de la primavera. Esta temporada, particularmente después de Pentecostés, refleja la expansión de la Iglesia primitiva bajo el Espíritu Santo, extendiendo el Evangelio globalmente. Así, el Tiempo Ordinario está *“ordenado”* hacia el crecimiento, la renovación y el desarrollo, reflejando la evolución dinámica de nuestra fe y comunidad.

En esta temporada de crecimiento, estoy feliz de compartir noticias emocionantes que reflejan nuestro camino de fe. El año pasado, delineé una visión para expandir nuestro espacio sagrado y enriquecer nuestra comunidad parroquial. Gracias a su generosidad y compromiso con nuestras colectas semanales y la Campaña Católica Anual, esta visión ahora es una realidad. Estoy encantado de anunciar el comienzo de la construcción de nuestro nuevo atrio de vidrio, a lo largo del corredor de la iglesia anteriormente subutilizado adyacente al jardín lateral de la Rectoría. Este atrio, que se extiende desde el invernadero existente que conecta el vestíbulo lateral con la capilla de abajo, ofrecerá un espacio acogedor para reuniones y oración.

Tras una extensa colaboración con arquitectos, ingenieros, personal parroquial, funcionarios diocesanos y la aprobación final del plan del Obispo Brennan, he confiado este importante proyecto a la Empresa de Construcción Victoria. Su historia de trabajo excelente nos asegura una integración armoniosa con nuestra amada iglesia, realzando su atractivo estético sin cambios estructurales significativos.

Además, me complace informar la finalización de la restauración de los marcos de las ventanas de vidrio emplomado en la fachada de nuestra iglesia. Su esplendor renovado, ahora más visible gracias a las nuevas cubiertas de vidrio templado, es un testimonio de nuestro espíritu perdurable y compromiso con la preservación de nuestro patrimonio. La restauración continua de las ventanas restantes en las dos torres simboliza nuestro viaje de renovación y embellecimiento, tanto físico como espiritual.

A medida que avanzamos a través del Tiempo Ordinario, abrazando oportunidades para el cambio, el crecimiento y profundizando nuestra relación con Cristo, también demos la bienvenida a estos desarrollos positivos en nuestra parroquia. Cada paso en el ministerio público de Cristo, cada día del Tiempo Ordinario y cada fase de las mejoras de nuestra parroquia están interconectados, guiándonos hacia una mayor apreciación de nuestra fe y misión.

En conclusión, veamos este tiempo no como un retorno a la rutina, sino como una oportunidad para cultivar una fe más profunda y vibrante. Que esta temporada nos guíe a vivir una vida marcada por el entusiasmo y la generosidad.

Con mis bendiciones y oraciones,

Mons. Cuong M. Pham

THIS WEEK AT OUR PARISH

Sunday, January 14

8:00am—11:30am	Italian Community	Lourdes A/B
9:00am—10:00pm	Viet. Lunar New Year	Gym
10:00am—12:00pm	Czech Community	Guadalupe A
10:00am—12:00pm	Spanish OCIA	Fatima
10:30am—12:30pm	Cursillo	Guadalupe B

Tuesday, January 16

3:30pm—6:00pm	Porque Ser Catolico?	Fatima
5:30pm—7:00pm	Mariachi School	Balcony
6:00pm—9:00pm	Marriage Encounter	Guadalupe+ Fatima
7:00pm—9:00pm	Coro #1	Nazareth

Wednesday, January 17

4:00pm—7:30pm	Religious Education	All Rooms
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Thursday, January 18

10:00am—11:30am	Legion of Mary	Guadalupe A/B
6:00pm—7:30pm	Religious Education	All Rooms
7:30pm—8:30pm	Grupo de Amistad	Lourdes A/B

Friday, January 19

6:30pm—9:00pm	Practica de Instrumentos	Upper Room
6:30pm—9:00pm	Youth Night	Guadalupe A/B
7:00pm—9:00pm	English OCIA	Fatima

Saturday, January 20

9:00am—1:00pm	AA Meeting	Guadalupe A/B
10:00am—12:00pm	Spanish Children's Choir	Fatima
5:00pm—7:00pm	Spanish Choir	Nazareth
6:30pm—8:00pm	Porque Ser Catolico?	Fatima

WEEKLY OFFERINGS

Dedicated offerings can be reserved every week in honor or in memory of a loved one. You can reserve by visiting the parish office. Prices for each are as follows:

Altar Candles: \$15.00 Sanctuary Lamp: \$25.00
 Altar Bread & Wine \$35.00 Altar Flowers: \$100.00

ROSARY SOCIETY

The next Rosary Society meeting will be held on February 4th, 2024. All ladies over 15 years old are welcomed. Refreshments will be served. Bring a friend!



ASK THE VOCATION DIRECTOR!

I'm here to help as you seek to discover God's call for your life! If you have questions, need to talk through your discernment, or want to make an appointment, please feel free to contact me, **Fr. Chris Bethge**, Vocation Director at 718-827-2454 or email cbethge@cathedralprep.org



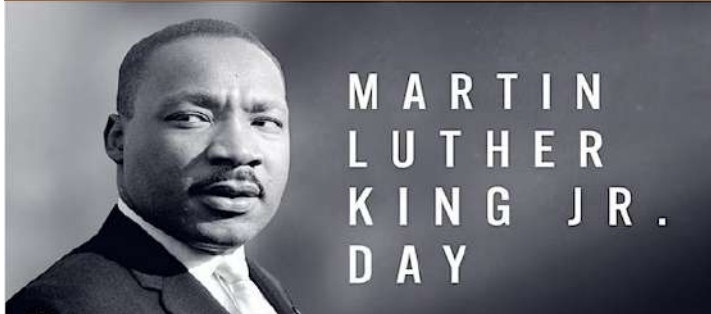
PRAYING FOR THE SICK

Prayer is one of the most powerful tools we have. It's a way for us to communicate with God and obtain His divine intervention. It can help sick people get well again and also gives us the strength in our own weakness and suffering. If you wish your loved ones who is sick to be prayed for at our daily Mass, kindly contact our parish office to place their names in our Prayer List. We are currently praying for **Frances Camisa**.

REMEMBERING OUR BELOVED DECEASED

Remembering our deceased loved ones by having them prayed for at Mass on every first Friday of the month — the day traditionally dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, is a meaningful way to express our love. Enrollment is \$10 per name. Those enrolled the Purgatorial Society will be remembered for a whole year. We have currently enrolled Minda Balhaman, Ralph Vitacco, Leonida Soresca, Eugenio Acevedo, Wasyl Bodnar & Lillie Bonanno.

OFFICE CLOSING



The parish office will be closed on Monday, January 15, 2024 in Honor of Martin Luther King Jr. There will only be one Mass celebrated in the Upper Church at 9:00am. The office will re-open on Tuesday, January 16th at 9:00am.

DIOCESAN YOUTH HOLY HOURS

The Diocese of Brooklyn & Queens invites all youth and young adults and their families to their monthly Youth Holy Hours. Below are the upcoming dates and locations. For more information please call the parish office.

February 2, 2024	St. Bernard, 2055 E 69 Street, Brooklyn
March 1, 2024	Incarnation, 89-43 Francis Lewis Blvd. Queens
April 12, 2024	Ss. Peter & Paul, 228 Berry Street. Brooklyn
May 3, 2024	Mary's Nativity/St. Ann, 4602 Parsons Blvd. Queens
June 7, 2024	Holy Family/St. Thomas Aquinas, 249 9th St. Brooklyn

SATURDAY FAITH FELLOWSHIP

The Saturday Faith Fellowship Ministry invites all to a series of Video Presentations by Fr. Chris Alar, MIC (Marian Fathers of the Immaculate Conception). The video series will take place in the Parish Institute, 10:00am—1:00pm on the dates shown below.

A major component of the program is the group discussions and feedback on how the points raised by the video presentations resonated with the participants experiences. All are welcome to join us!

**January 27: Blessing Same-Sex Couples—
Summary & Clarification**

REGISTRACION PARROQUIAL

Registrarse permite que nuestra parroquia les pueda servir sus necesidades espirituales. Por favor devuelva este formulario en la colecta o déjelo en la oficina parroquial. Su participación fortalecerá su fe y su sentido de pertenencia en la familia de Dios.

Nombre(s): _____
Dirección: _____ Apt _____
Ciudad _____ Estado _____ C. Postal _____
Teléfono: _____
E-mail: _____

POR FAVOR MARCAR:

Nueva Registración Cambio de dirección
 Prefiero Sobres Donaciones en línea

CONTRIBUTION STATEMENTS

If you need a contribution statement for the year 2023 for your tax return, please call the parish office and leave your name and envelope number. Your statement can be printed and left in the front office to be picked up or mailed to your home.

— END OF YEAR —
GIVING
STATEMENTS

FIRST FRIDAY EUCHARISTIC ADORATION

Spiritual writers speak of Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament as “the Mass held in contemplation.” As a way of encouraging devotion to the Eucharist, we invite all parishioners to come and spend some time before the Real Presence of the Lord on **Friday, February 2nd, 2024**. Exposition and Adoration will take place right after the 8:00am Mass and will conclude with Solemn Benediction before the start of the 12 Noon Mass.



INFANT BAPTISM/ BAUTISMOS

Preparation Meeting	Baptism Ceremony
Tuesday—6:00pm—Institute	12:00pm— Upper Church
January 23, 2024	January 27, 2024
February 20, 2024	February 24, 2024
March 19, 2024	March 23, 2024
April 23, 2024	April 27, 2024
May TBA	May TBA
June— NO CLASS	No English Baptisms
July 23, 2024	July 27, 2024
August 20, 2024	August 24, 2024
September 24, 2024	September 28, 2024
October 22, 2024	October 26, 2024
November 19, 2024	November 23, 2024
December 17, 2024	December 21, 2024

Reunión de Preparación	Ceremonia de Bautismo
Martes—6:00pm—Instituto	12:00pm—Iglesia de Arriba
9 de Enero, 2024	13 de Enero, 2024
6 de Febrero, 2024	10 de Febrero, 2024
5 de Marzo, 2024	9 de Marzo, 2024
Abril TBA	Abril TBA
Mayo TBA	Mayo TBA
4 de Junio	8 de Junio
9 de Julio	13 de Julio
6 de Agosto	10 de Agosto
10 de Septiembre	14 de Septiembre
8 de Octubre	12 de Octubre
5 de Noviembre	9 de Noviembre
10 de Diciembre	14 de Diciembre



JOIN OUR YOUTH GROUP

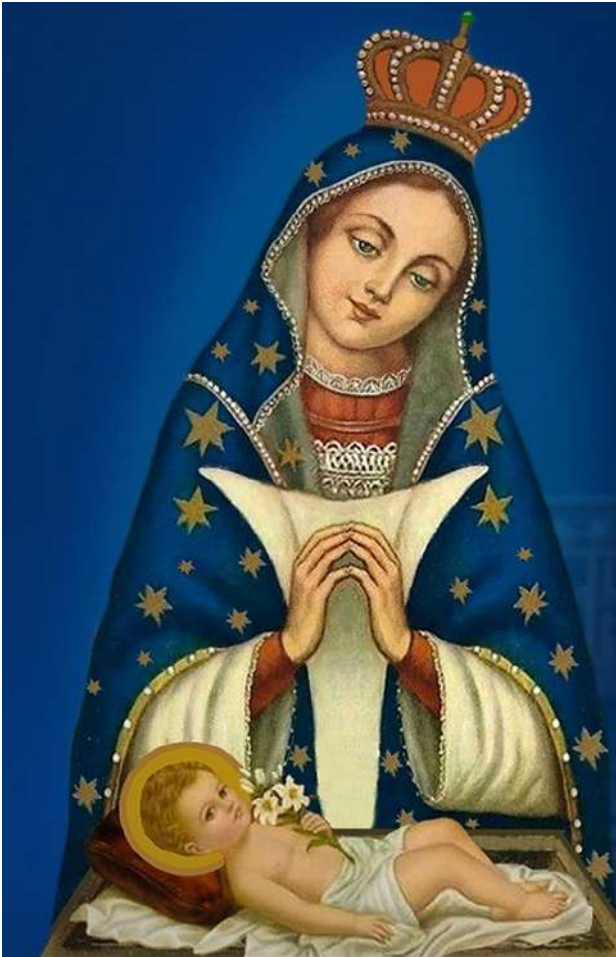
EVERY FRIDAY AT 7:00PM
GUADALUPE ROOM

JOIN US FOR

- * **DISCUSSIONS**
- * **ACTIVITIES/ ICE BREAKERS**
- * **COMMUNITY SERVICE HOURS**
- * **HOLY HOURS**
- * **SPORT NIGHTS**



Coordinators: Mr. Dayonel Mejia & Ms. Yolanda Lazo



Nuestra Señora de la **ALTAGRACIA** 21 Enero

The Our Lady of Mount Carmel Altagracia Committee would like to invite everyone to the Mass in honor of *Our Lady of Altagracia*, Protectress of the Dominican Republic, on January 21st at 9:30am.

It will be followed by a breakfast, courtesy of the committee, in the Institute across the street from the church.

*We will be selling raffle tickets for beautiful gift baskets!
Raffles will be sold by the entrances of the church and at the event.

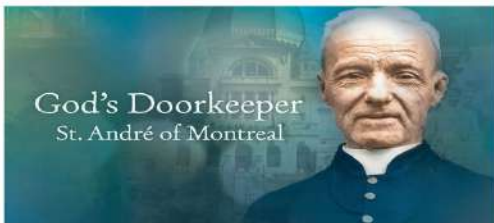
El Comité Altagraciano de Nuestra Señora del Monte Carmelo les invita a toda la comunidad a la Misa en honor a *La Virgen de la Altagracia*, Protectora y Guía Espiritual del Pueblo Dominicano, el 21 de enero, a las 9:30am.

Después seguimos con un desayuno cortesía del Comité, en el Instituto al cruzar la calle de la Iglesia.

*Venderemos boletos de rifa para unas excelentes canastas!
Boletos serán vendidos por las entradas de la Iglesia y en el evento

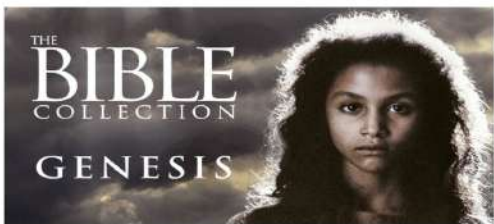
THIS WEEK ON **FORMED**

Week of January 14, 2024



God's Doorkeeper: St. André of Montreal

This week, we celebrate the memorial of a humble doorkeeper, St. André of Montreal. Learn how this man became a great saint through his small acts of love!



The Bible Collection - Genesis

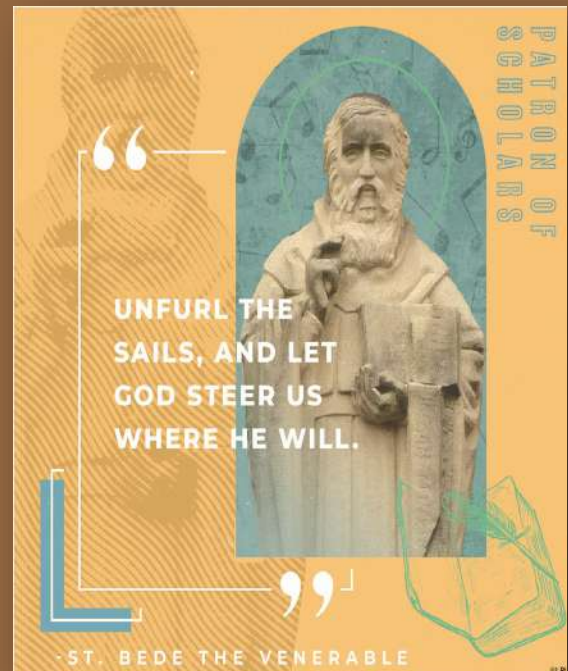
Experience the epic tale of creation in this Christian anthology that details the stories of Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, and Noah and the Ark.

WHY DO WE MAKE CHANGES IN THE MASS? THEY SEEM SO SMALL AND UNIMPORTANT. ARE THEY REALLY NECESSARY?

The celebration of the Eucharist is at the heart of our identity as Catholics. Our purpose as a Church community revolves around the Eucharist. Everything we are and everything we do is measured not only by how well we celebrate but also by how well we live the sacrament. If that is so, then we as a community will always strive to celebrate the Mass as best we can. The reasons for some changes might seem more obvious than others, but there is a reason behind each one.

The General Instruction of the Roman Missal is the introduction to the Missal that contains all the prayers for the celebration of the Mass. The Order of Mass we use now was issued in 1975 and, as often happens over the course of years, some questions have come up about the proper way of doing some things and whether or not other practices are acceptable. These changes clarify some things and make the celebration of the Mass more meaningful for everyone.

The opportunity is presented to us to better learn and understand each part of the Mass, which in turn should help us deepen our appreciation for its beauty and meaning. We will be a better Church if we have a clearer understanding and knowledge of Who and what we celebrate.



DIGGING DEEPER INTO SUNDAY'S READINGS

First Reading

In the Lord's call to Samuel, Eli teaches Samuel the importance of "listening" to God's voice. Can you name something you have heard from the Lord?

Second Reading

Paul saw our physical bodies as a temple of the Holy Spirit, destined to be raised after death just as Jesus was raised from the dead. What are some ways to treat your body with reverence and respect?

Gospel Reading

In John's account of the call of the first disciples, we hear the first words Jesus speaks in the Gospel of John: "What are you looking for?" How can you convince family or friends that Jesus is what we all should be looking for?

SAINT OF THE WEEK

St. Clare of Assisi, a devoted follower and friend of St. Francis, centered her life around poverty, prayer, and the Eucharist. As the founder of the Poor Clares, she promoted a ministry of simplicity, adoration, and service to the poor.

Prayer of Discernment

Dear Lord, Here I am! Help me to know the path You would have me walk, to speak the words You would have me speak, to love and serve those You put in my path. Amen.



Second Sunday in Ordinary Time

GOSPEL MEDITATION

As a priest, I'm amazed at how happily married couples remember the tiniest details of their earliest encounters. They effortlessly report things like: "he wore a blue shirt," "we ordered brussel sprouts," "her hair was up in a bun," and "he spilled shrimp cocktail sauce at my family's open front door when it was ten degrees below zero," (that one's courtesy of my mom). We delight in remembering and speaking of when our new life of love began. The little details are glorious reminders that it's all real.

It's similar for John the Apostle. He tells us of the two disciples who followed Jesus into his house, "...**they stayed with him that day. It was about four o'clock in the afternoon.**" Why does that tiny detail matter? Because that's the time of day when they encountered the love of Jesus the Messiah in their lives. Our religion is not primarily about abstract truths about God, no matter how true or sublime. It is about God meeting and saving us in our human nature. It's about a human relationship.

What was the time of day when you first recall encountering Christ and his Church? Who was there? What did you feel? How did things look and smell? What happened? Take some time to recall it in detail. For me, it was inside an old, rickety church on a hillside in Jerome, Arizona. It was about 9 p.m. on a Saturday evening. I was with my friends Jenny, Brad, and Laura. We were praying, singing, and laughing. When was it for you? Remembering the details isn't empty nostalgia. It reminds us now that God's love for us in our humanity is real.



THOSE WHO SEEK THE TRUTH

In my work as a freelance writer, I have a regular column in the archdiocesan paper writing profiles of ordinary people in the local church. Laity, religious, and clergy alike I hound them all to give me an interview, and when I do, the answer is almost always this: "You don't want to talk to me. There's nothing special about me."

I always try to convince them that there is something remarkable about everyone who is searching for the truth. It is easy to think we are not made for holiness because we are ordinary people with ordinary habits, ordinary abilities, and ordinary sins. It is easy (and very convenient) to designate holiness as something belonging to Better People. People like the saints. People like the Disciples.

The Bible gives us next to no personal information about the disciples. There is no archdiocesan newspaper profile on Andrew and Simon that can give us insight into who they were before they became St. Andrew, Inaugural Disciple and Announcer of the Messiah, and St. Peter, First Pope and the Rock- Upon-Which-Christ-Built-His-Church.

Yet I find myself insatiably curious about it. What was their childhood like? What games did they play with each other as the sun set, before their mother called them into bed? What did they think of as they fell asleep at night? What

secret jokes did they share to make each other laugh? What were they afraid of? What did they hope for? Who did they want to be? Before they were towering figures of salvation history, Simon and Andrew were just two men searching for the truth. When they looked at Christ, there was something that made it click. Perhaps they themselves could not identify what it was, but their hearts whispered it nonetheless: There it is. We finally found it. Isn't that the best we can all hope for?

"Jesus turned and saw them following him and said to them, 'What are you looking for?'" - John 1:38

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