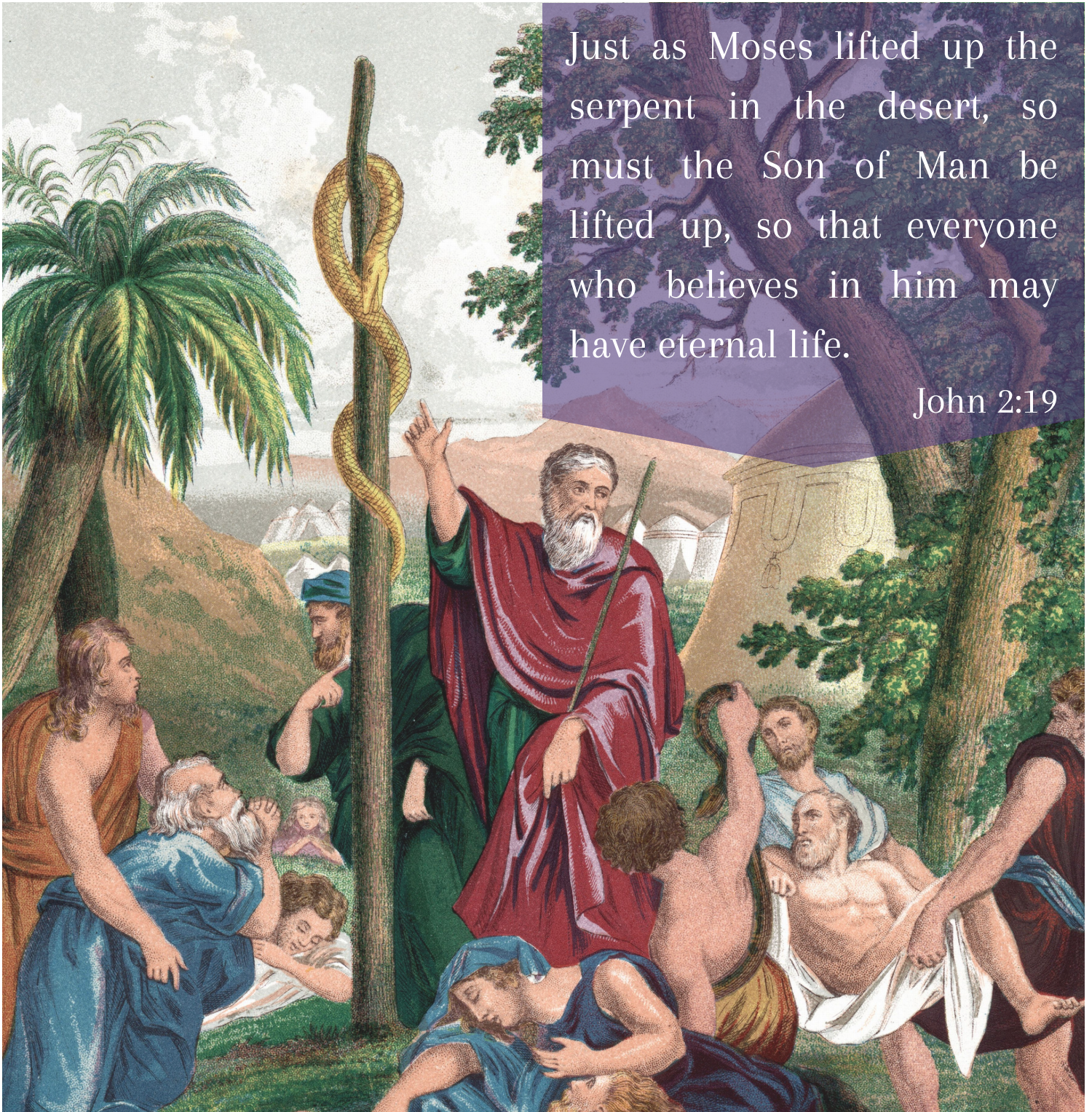


Just as Moses lifted up the  
serpent in the desert, so  
must the Son of Man be  
lifted up, so that everyone  
who believes in him may  
have eternal life.

John 2:19



# GOOD SHEPHERD

*Catholic Community*

FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT

MARCH 10, 2024



# GSCC AT A GLANCE

WELCOME!

WE'RE SO GLAD YOU'RE HERE WITH US!

IF YOU'VE BEEN WANTING TO GET INVOLVED IN OUR COMMUNITY AND ARE LOOKING TO CONNECT WITH US, PLEASE VISIT [GSCC.NET/START-HERE](http://GSCC.NET/START-HERE) TO EXPLORE MORE ABOUT OUR CHURCH FAMILY AND REGISTER TO BECOME A MEMBER.

## DO YOU BELIEVE?

MAYBE IT'S  
TIME TO

*belong*

- ARE YOU SEARCHING FOR A RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD?
- DO YOU WANT TO KNOW THE CATHOLIC FAITH MORE INTIMATELY?
- ARE YOU INTERESTED IN BECOMING A CATHOLIC CHRISTIAN?

VISIT US AT [GSCC.NET/RCIA](http://GSCC.NET/RCIA)

WELCOME | ENCOUNTER | GROW | SERVE | SHARE

**NOURISHED AT THE TABLE OF THE LORD, WE WELCOME ALL TO BECOME DISCIPLES WHO KNOW, LOVE, AND SERVE GOD AND NEIGHBOR.**

See where you are in your journey with Christ by scanning this code.



## FOLLOW US!



@GOODSHEPHERDCATHOLICCOMMUNITY COLLEYVILLE



@GOODSHEPHERD\_TX

## CONTACT US!

### PARISH OFFICE

1000 Tinker Road, Colleyville, TX 76034

Main: 817-421-1387 | Fax: 817-421-4709

Website: [www.gsc.net](http://www.gsc.net)

### OFFICE HOURS

Mon - Thurs: 8:00am - 5:00pm

Fri: 8:00am - 2:00pm

Sat: 8:00am - 5:00pm

Sun: 8:00am - 5:00pm

### STAFF

**Pastor:** Fr. Michael Ciski, TOR

**Parochial Vicar:** Fr. John Mark Klaus, TOR

**Parochial Vicar:** Fr. Zachary Burns, TOR

For a complete list of staff and contacts, please visit [gsc.net/staff](http://gsc.net/staff)

### FEED OUR FRIARS

Providing a healthy meal for our friars is simple and easy. Visit [gsc.net/fof](http://gsc.net/fof) to learn more.

## JOIN US!

### MASS

Sat: 5:00pm | Sun: 7:00am, 9:00am, 11:00am, & 4:00pm

Mon, Tues, Wed, Thurs, Fri, Sat: 8:30am

Tues: 7:00am | Wed: 7:00pm

### RECONCILIATION

Mon: 9:00am | Wed: 6:00pm

Sat: 3:30 - 4:30pm

By appointment: 817-421-1387

### EUCCHARISTIC ADORATION

Monday & Tuesday: 9:00am - 5:00pm

Wednesday & Thursday: 9:00am - 8:30pm

Friday: 9:00am - 12:00pm

Saturday: 9:00am - 12:00pm

Sunday: 5:30pm - 8:30pm

### ANOINTING OF THE SICK

The Catechism of the Catholic Church (#1514-1515) teaches that this sacrament is not only for those at the point of death, but for anyone seriously ill or facing serious surgery. In fact, it is preferred that parishioners entering the hospital for surgery should ask the priest for this sacrament before being admitted. Parishioners should never wait until the last minute to call. We encourage parishioners facing surgery to let the parish priest know of their condition before entering the hospital so that they can be anointed before admission.

# SUNDAY'S READINGS

## First Reading

The causes for the Israelites' captivity in Babylon are described. (2 Chronicles 36:14-16,19-23)

## Psalm

A lament from exile for the loss of Jerusalem (Psalm 137:1-2,3,4-5,6)

## Second Reading

In grace we have been saved, so that we may do the work of the Lord. (Ephesians 2:4-10)

## Gospel

Jesus tells Nicodemus that the Son of Man will be raised up so that those who believe in him will have eternal life. (John 3:14-21)

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## WEEKLY READINGS

Monday: Is 65:17-21; Ps 30:2 and 4, 5-6, 11-12a and 13b; Jn 4:43-54

Tuesday: Ez 47:1-9, 12; Ps 46:2-3, 5-6, 8-9; Jn 5:1-16

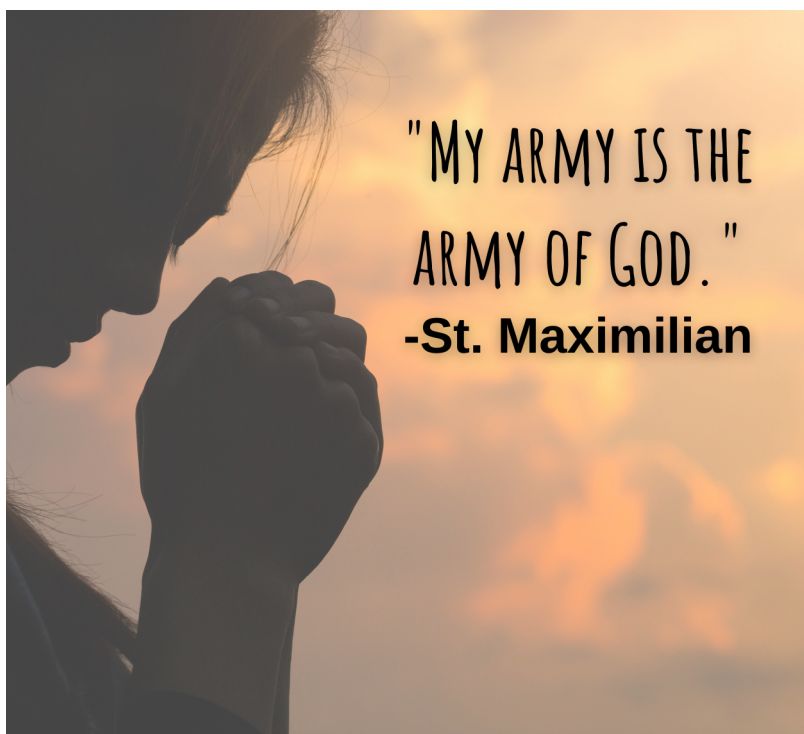
Wednesday: Is 49:8-15; Ps 145:8-9, 13cd-14, 17-18; Jn 5:17-30

Thursday: Ex 32:7-14; Ps 106:19-20, 21-22, 23; Jn 5:31-47

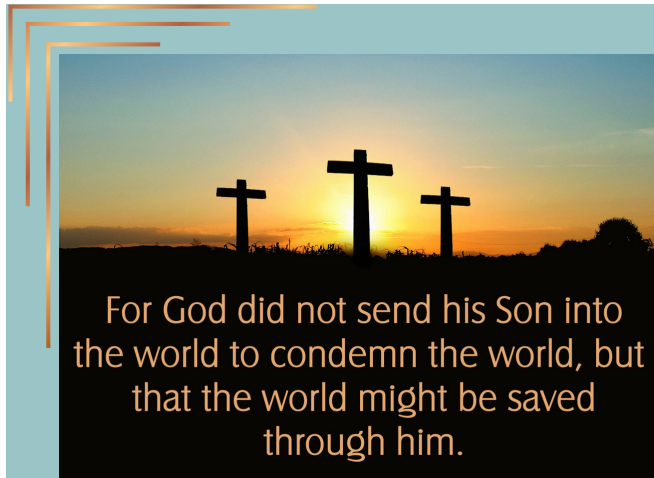
Friday: Wis 2:1a, 12-22; Ps 34:17-18, 19-20, 21 and 23; Jn 7:1-2, 10, 25-30

Saturday: Jer 11:18-20; Ps 7:2-3, 9bc-10, 11-12; Jn 7:40-53

Sunday: Jer 31:31-34; Ps 51:3-4, 12-13, 14-15; Heb 5:7-9; Jn 12:20-33



"MY ARMY IS THE  
ARMY OF GOD."  
-St. Maximilian



For God did not send his Son into  
the world to condemn the world, but  
that the world might be saved  
through him.

## EXPLORING THE WORD

### SAYING, DOING, OR BEING?

St. Paul tells us in his letter to the Ephesians that we are saved through grace: God's actions of sending his Son to die for us, and raising Jesus from the dead show the love God has for us. It comes entirely from God. We are saved by our faith in Jesus, but even that faith comes from God. So when Paul says that no one can boast about being saved, he means that we can't add up our good deeds like reward points for heaven. He also means that we can't brag about our faith because we can recite the creed or answer an altar call. So if being saved is not a matter of saying the right things, or doing good deeds, what is it?

The answer comes from the gospel. Jesus tells us that he will be lifted up, or crucified, so that we can believe in him and have eternal life. Notice he doesn't give a list of facts about God that we are required to believe. When we "believe in" someone, we put our love and trust in that person. We want to be with that person as much as we can. We know that we are loved and so respond by giving love. Our response of love is not just a happy feeling. It inspires us to stop being selfish and start noticing that others need our help. Jesus describes it as living in the light: we are not ashamed to help someone, forgive someone, or comfort someone. While we do not force our faith on others, we don't hide it either. Our life is in the light, open to anyone who wants to see what God has done for us. That brings us back to the question about salvation: it is not something we do or say. It is what God does for us. Our response of faith is also his gift. So when we recognize all that God has done for us and believe in his Son Jesus, the Spirit will guide us to live that faith and share it with others.

By Tom Schmidt

# WORSHIP



YOUR ACCUMULATED OFFENCES DO NOT SURPASS THE

*multitude of God's mercies:*

YOUR WOUNDS DO NOT SURPASS THE GREAT  
PHYSICIAN'S SKILL.

- ST. CYRIL OF JERUSALEM

“...SO THAT  
EVERYONE  
WHO BELIEVES  
IN HIM MAY  
HAVE ETERNAL  
LIFE.”





# Fully Alive

Liturgical Living for Every Day

## Washing Feet

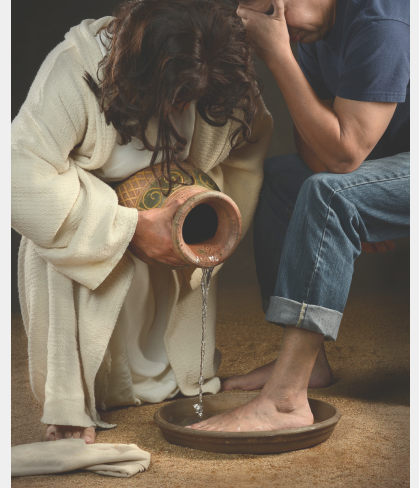
"No shirt, no shoes, no service." Restaurants often display this sign to show who's not welcome at their table. A sign at the Last Supper could have read, "No shirt, no shoes = service." It would have shown who was welcome at the table.

One of the most striking scenes at the Last Supper happens when Jesus pulls off his tunic, invites the disciples to remove their sandals, and he then begins a service like none other - washing feet. The episode, which occurs only in John's Gospel, comes where we expect to find Jesus' most famous line from the Last Supper. "This is my body. This is my blood." Instead of pointing at the bread and wine, he gives an example of service. We begin to see that Eucharist involves more than food and drink - it involves commitment, community, faith, and selflessness. Other New Testament writers tell us Jesus said, "Do this," in reference to the celebration of the Eucharist. John's Jesus says it in reference to the service of washing feet.

For this reason, the liturgy of Holy Thursday invites us to imitate literally the example of Jesus. The presider may wash the feet of members of the community. In this act, the local Church witnesses the selfless service of Christ and sees an example of faith in action. If we are believers, if we share in the bread and the cup, then we also share in service.

Sometimes we hear the complaint that the washing of the feet is too old-fashioned, that it doesn't fit our modern culture. Sometimes we search for a more meaningful adaptation: washing hands, or shining shoes! But it's hard to beat the shocking humility of the original gesture. It didn't fit Jesus' culture very well either. Peter objected to the whole idea. The service to which Jesus calls us also doesn't fit the culture. Businesses may call it service, but they charge us even if it's self-service. The service of the Gospel is freely given.

Holy Thursday invites us to the table not as guests who dine and run, but as hosts who eat and serve. The meal isn't over till the cleanup.



Hey Family,  
Let's Talk About This!

What Gospel is the Washing of the Feet reading found in?

Why did Jesus wash his disciple's feet?

How can you help those around you during this Lenten season?

Bulletin Inserts for the Liturgical Life of the Parish: The Mass © 2020 Archdiocese of Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications. All rights reserved. Written by Paul Turner.

# Vocations

Answering God's Call

*"Whoever lives the truth comes to the light."*

Your vocation is your sanctification in this life to lead you to sainthood in the next. Are you called to belong to Christ alone as a priest or through consecrated life?

## Prayer for Vocations

Jesus, you are the Good Shepherd. You know each of us and call us by name. Help us to respond generously to your voice by opening our hearts to discern your holy will. We pray especially for those whom you are calling to serve the church as priests, deacons, sisters, and brothers. Give courage and guidance to all, so that we may respond to your call and serve you devoutly.

Contact the Vocation Office at (817) 421-1387 or email: [jklaus@gscc.net](mailto:jklaus@gscc.net)



# Shepherd's Corner

I am the good shepherd, and I know mine and mine know me

I'm not a sports fan. My family watched very few sports on television, and I never played sports in high school (I was working to put myself through college). But I can remember a few times my parents watched the Detroit Tigers baseball games on the TV. One of the things I remember is when the cameraman would focus, not on the ball players, but on the man sitting in the bleachers wearing a rainbow wig and holding the sign that said, John 3:16. I asked my parents what that sign meant, and they told me it was a verse from the Bible. I asked them what it said, and like good parents they told me, "Look it up and see for yourself." (I was a fast learner and knew better than to ask them any more questions on this subject.)

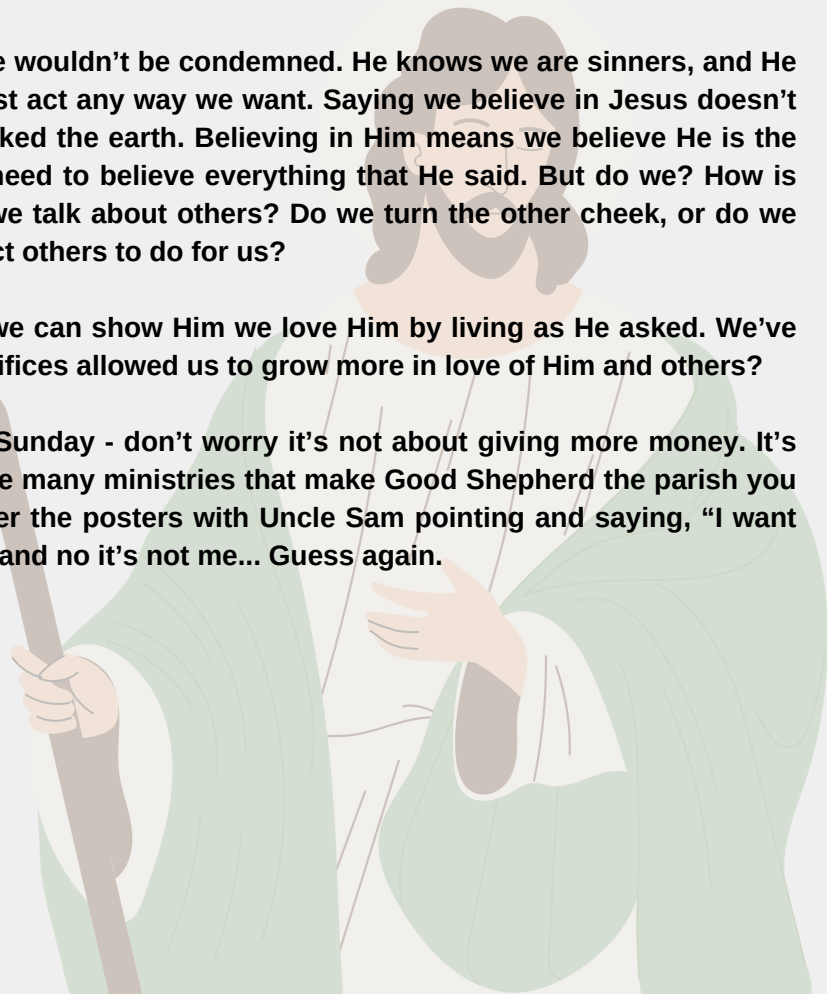
Because of that man in the outfield, many have come to know that verse by heart. "For God so loved the world that He gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him might not perish but might have eternal life." A wonderful verse. But too often we just stop there. In fact, I think I like John 3:18 a little bit more. (Now part of me wants to stop right there, hoping you'd be intrigued and rush home to look it up in your Bible, but I know better than that, so I'll continue.) Verse 18 says, "Whoever believes in Him will not be condemned, but whoever does not believe has already been condemned, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God."

God loves us. He sent his Son to save us so we wouldn't be condemned. He knows we are sinners, and He still loves us. But that doesn't mean we can just act any way we want. Saying we believe in Jesus doesn't simply mean believing that He existed and walked the earth. Believing in Him means we believe He is the Son of God. And if He is the Son of God, we need to believe everything that He said. But do we? How is 'love thy neighbor' lived out in our lives? Do we talk about others? Do we turn the other cheek, or do we seek to get even? Do we do for others, or expect others to do for us?

While it is true that we can't earn God's love, we can show Him we love Him by living as He asked. We've just passed the midpoint of Lent, have our sacrifices allowed us to grow more in love of Him and others?

Next week we are going to have Commitment Sunday - don't worry it's not about giving more money. It's about asking if we have given time to one of the many ministries that make Good Shepherd the parish you love. Some of us of a certain age will remember the posters with Uncle Sam pointing and saying, "I want you." Well, it's not Uncle Sam saying that now, and no it's not me... Guess again.

Peace and Blessings,  
Fr. Mike, TOR







# THIS WEEK

AT A GLANCE

## **MONDAY, MARCH 11**

- Knights of Columbus | 6:15pm | Upper Room
- Women's Group Meeting | 6:30pm | Parish Hall
- Sodality of St. Monica | 7:00pm | St. Monica
- RCIA | 7:00pm | St. Elizabeth of Hungary

## **TUESDAY, MARCH 12**

- Faith & Focus | 5:30am | Parish Hall
- Women Growing in Faith | 9:30am | Upper Room
- Men's Tuesday Morning Scripture Study | 9:30am | St. Maria Goretti
- Walking with Purpose: Opening Your Heart | 7:00pm | Upper Room

## **WEDNESDAY, MARCH 13**

- Wednesday Morning Scripture Study | 10:00am | St. Maria Goretti
- Vocations Rosary | 6:30pm | Church

## **THURSDAY, MARCH 14**

- Thursday Morning Scripture Study | 10:00am | Upper Room
- St. Clements Teen Bible Study | 6:30pm | Frassati Room
- GriefShare | 7:00pm | St. Maria Goretti

## **FRIDAY, MARCH 15**

- CRL Rosary | 9:00am | Marian Chapel
- Lenten Fish Fry | 5:00pm | Parish Hall
- Mini Ministry Fair | 5:00pm | Parish Hall
- Stations of the Cross | 6:30pm | Church

## **SATURDAY, MARCH 16**

- Commitment Weekend
- Men's R&D | 7:00am | Daily Chapel
- Interreligious Dialogue Meeting | 9:30am | St. John Bosco
- Easter Basket Collection | Before & After all Masses | Parish Hall

## **SUNDAY, MARCH 17**

- Commitment Weekend
- Easter Basket Collection | Before & After all Masses | Parish Hall

LENT

## **STAY UP TO DATE**

Are you receiving our weekly e-newsletter? To receive updates on important info and events, visit [gsc.net](http://gsc.net) and scroll to the footer on any page to sign up!





# COMING UP AT GSCC

**MAR 22**

## LENTEN MUSIC SERVICE

**Friday, March 22**

**7:00pm | Church**

Come prepare for Holy Week with a prayerful Lenten Music Service featuring our GSCC Music Ministry Ensembles. Scripture passages will be combined with reflective music to deepen our understanding of the sacrifice Christ made for the salvation of the world.



**MAR 27**

## ARCHANGEL MOMS MASS & NIGHT OUT

**Wednesday, March 27**

**7:00pm | Church & Palio's**

Join us for Mass at Good Shepherd followed by dinner out at Palio's in Colleyville. Feel free to join us for dinner even if you can't make it to Mass! This is a great way to meet other moms who are walking the same journey as you!



## FEED OUR FRIARS

Providing a healthy meal for our friars is simple and easy. If you wish to help feed our friars, please visit [gsc.net/fof](http://gsc.net/fof) to sign up.



**APR 2**

## WOMEN GROWING IN FAITH

**Tuesdays, April 2 - May 21**

**9:30am | Upper Room**

Come join us to learn about our Blessed Mother! Women Growing in Faith is diving into Brant Pitre's study of Mary through Augustine Institute's Lectio Bible Studies. The study begins Tuesday, April 2 at 9:30am in the Upper Room. Learn more and register at [gsc.net/scripturestudy](http://gsc.net/scripturestudy). Materials are offered at a discounted rate through the registration. We look forward to seeing you there!



**MAR 24**

## EASTER EGGSTRAVAGANZA

**Sunday, March 24**

**After 9am & 11am Masses**

Please join the Knights of Columbus on Sunday, March 24, after the 9am and 11am Masses for our annual Easter Eggstravaganza. We will have breakfast burritos and donuts for sale followed by an egg hunt for the children. Bring your own baskets to collect those eggs!

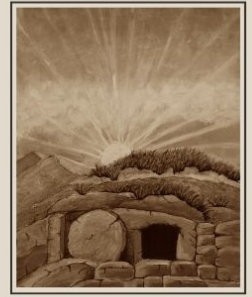
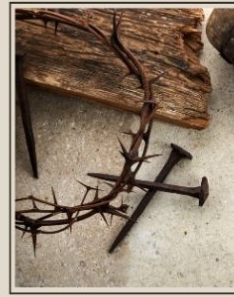


For all events and ministries currently meeting and coming up, please visit [gsc.net/ministries](http://gsc.net/ministries) or [gsc.net/calendar](http://gsc.net/calendar)





# *Holy Week & EASTER*



## SCHEDULE

### **PALM SUNDAY - Sunday, March 24**

The Holy Week begins with the memorial of Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem to accomplish his Paschal Mystery. We celebrate this memorial by means of a solemn procession, outside the church's main entrance, before all the Masses, except for 7:00am Mass.

### **HOLY THURSDAY - Thursday, March 28**

- Office Closed
- No 8:30am Mass or scheduled Eucharistic Adoration in the Daily Chapel
- 7:00pm: Mass of the Lord's Last Supper
- Solemn Eucharistic Adoration following Mass in the Parish Hall until Midnight

### **GOOD FRIDAY - Friday, March 29 - Church**

- Office Closed
- No 8:30am Mass or scheduled Eucharistic Adoration
- 3:00pm: Stations of the Cross
- 7:00pm: Celebration of the Lord's Passion

### **HOLY SATURDAY - Saturday, March 30 - Church**

- Office Closed
- No 8:30am Mass, scheduled Eucharistic Adoration or Reconciliation
- 12:00pm: Blessing of Easter food in the chapel
- No 5:00pm Mass
- Easter Vigil 8:30pm

### **EASTER SUNDAY - Sunday, March 31**

- Office Closed

Masses at 7:00am, 9:00am, 11:00am, & 1:00pm; concurrent Masses in the church and the parish hall at 9:00am & 11:00am

### **EASTER MONDAY - Monday, April 1**

- Office Closed
- 8:30am Daily Mass, but no scheduled Eucharistic Adoration or Reconciliation



# FLOWER DONATIONS

## for the month of February

Thank you to all those who contributed to our celebrations. Your generosity has provided flowers at the altar and at the statues of our Blessed Mother and Saint Joseph.

### DONATION FROM:

### IN MEMORY

Dave & Donna Deyo  
Patrick Downey  
Charles & Melanie de  
Chateauvieux

Brett Deyo  
Linda Downey  
Albert L.  
Mango

### DONATION FROM:

### IN HONOR

### DONATIONS TO GOOD SHEPHERD FLOWERS

Mr. & Mrs. Michael Dzura Mr. Dennis & Mrs. Cynthia Case  
Mr. & Mrs. Robert Schulz Mr. & Mrs. Matthew Donaldson  
Mr. Logan Cox & Mrs. Marielisa Loopez Mr. & Mrs. John Vick  
Mr. Boren & Mrs. Regan Grelling Mr. & Mrs. Joseph Rice  
Mrs. Barbara Gillis Mr. & Mrs. Patrick Duffy  
Mr. Vuth & Mrs. Sovan Bau Mr. Nicholas & Mrs. Abigal Vanikiotis Mr. &  
Mrs. William Johnson Mr. Raymond Javier  
Mr. & Mrs. Antoney Carmel Mr. Robert Kozeluh & Mrs. Carol Bell Mr. &  
Mrs. John Pietrobon Mr. & Mrs. Joseph Ryan  
Mr. & Mrs. Dwan Stregles Mr. Daniel Ortega  
Mr. & Mrs. Kyler Schumann Mr. & Mrs. James Rising  
Mr. & Mrs. John Furin Mr. Michael & Mrs. Jennifer Steinmetz Mr. & Mrs.  
Phillip Madden Mr. & Mrs. Larry Allen  
Mr. Brian & Mrs. Cynthia Viohl Mr. & Mrs. Leandro Celedonio  
Mr. & Mrs. German Chavez Mr. & Mrs. Michael Davidson  
Mrs. Terrie Hartman





## **Art & Environment Fresh Flowers**

Would you like to commemorate special days in the year? Donations for flowers on our altars or at the Blessed Mother will be to honor or memorialize the special people and events in our lives. Flowers can fittingly mark the anniversary of a birth, baptism, confirmation, marriage, or death, as well as expressions of thanksgiving during Easter, Mother's or Father's Day, and Christmas. Arrangements will be of seasonal flowers only, no exotics, and are ordered by the Art & Environment committee only.

Donations of any amount are accepted. Outside of the seasons of Easter and Christmas no more than 3 arrangements can be on the church altar, two placed near the candles and one in front of the Ambo. The parish bulletin will have acknowledgements of these donations monthly.

**There will be no floral arrangements in the church during the season of Lent. The donations made during Lent are for the Easter season flowers and plants.**

Thank you for supporting this new effort at Good Shepherd!

For donations, please complete the form below or use your monthly **FLOWER COLLECTION ENVELOPE**:



**Please provide the following information at least two (2) weeks in advance:**

Your name \_\_\_\_\_ \$ \_\_\_\_\_.

Email \_\_\_\_\_

phone number \_\_\_\_\_ (used only for questions)

*Check one:*

\_\_\_\_\_ In honor of \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ In memory of \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ In thanksgiving of \_\_\_\_\_

*I would like this gift used towards:*

\_\_\_\_\_ Holy Week and Easter Season

\_\_\_\_\_ Commemoration Month of \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Blessed Mother/ Altar Flowers for Mother's or Father's Day

\_\_\_\_\_ Pentecost Altar Decor

\_\_\_\_\_ Confirmation flowers

\_\_\_\_\_ Advent and Christmas Season

Please place this form, along with your donation, in an envelope marked **Attn: A&E**

- in the weekly collection basket in the parish office
- or by mail at GSCC 1000 Tinker Rd, Colleyville, TX 76034



**A HAVANA  
NIGHT**

*Gala*  
**BENEFITING**

# **HOLY TRINITY** — **CATHOLIC SCHOOL** —

All are invited to support your parish school by donating auction items, sponsoring, or buying tickets to join us for a fun night out with friends, Havana style! Thanks for your generosity!

**April 20, 2024**

Hurst Conference Center

**Sponsor • Buy Tickets:**  
**[holytcs.org/gala](https://holytcs.org/gala)**

[events@holytcs.org](mailto:events@holytcs.org)

**Have a  
business?**

Contact us  
about how  
you can  
support the  
HTCS Gala!



## **Donations Wish List:**

- Entertainment, Recreation and Sports Experiences
- Travel & Vacation Packages
- Collectibles & Memorabilia
- Gift Baskets or Basket Items
- Restaurant and Experience Gift Cards (\$25+)
- Wine Bottles (\$25+) and Whiskey Bottles (\$50+)

**Donations can be  
dropped off at the parish  
office before April 4.  
Thanks for your support!**



**GSCC aims to be a faith-filled, Catholic community, inspired by the Holy Spirit, serving God's people and leading others to Christ.  
Whether you're an introvert, extrovert, or ambivert, there's a place for you and people needing your witness!**

Archangel Moms  
Mondays & Thursdays | 9:30am & 7:00pm

Sack Lunch Project  
First & Third Thursday of the Month | 7:00pm

American Heritage Girls

Samuel Ministry  
First Saturday of the Month | 6:00pm

Baby Looms  
Second Friday of the Month | 9:30am

SCAN, SHOP and DROP Collection  
Collected every weekend in the Narthex

Catholic Respect Life  
Third Tuesday of the Month | 5:30pm

Schoenstatt Rosary

ChristCare

Secular Franciscans  
First Sunday of the Month | 12:30pm

Christ Renews His Parish Retreats\*  
February and August

Set and Strike

College Connection

Small Church Communities

GriefShare  
Thursdays during the Spring & Fall | 7:00pm

Social Justice

Interreligious Dialogue  
Third Saturday of the Month | 9:30am

Social Seniors  
First Friday of the Month | 12:00pm

Knights of Columbus  
Second Monday of the Month | 6:15pm

Sodality of St. Monica  
Second & Fourth Monday of the Month | 7:00pm

Marriage on Tap  
First Saturday of the Month | 6:30pm

St. Rita Ministry

Men's Club  
Third Monday of the Month | 6:30pm

Stephen Ministry

Men's Rosary and Discipleship  
Every Saturday of the Month | 7:00am

Trail Life USA

Mission-Outreach Ministry

Women's Group  
Second Tuesday of the Month | 6:30pm

Prayer Shawl Ministry  
First Wednesday of the Month | 9:30am

Women's Rosary & Readings

Learn more about all of our ministries at  
**[gsc.net/ministries](http://gsc.net/ministries)**

# Lent: A Time to Forgive

As Catholics, we all recognize Lent as a season to ask for forgiveness and go to confession, but it's also a time to search our heart for any unforgiveness that may be there and extend the Lord's mercy to those who have hurt or offended us. As the season draws to a close, I hope you are welcoming Lent's entire invitation to hope and healing.

Forgiveness has factored heavily in my spiritual life. I grew up in a violent alcoholic home. My father broke my mother's jaw so severely she had to eat her meals through a straw for six weeks. I was told she had been in a terrible car accident. A year later, at age five, I witnessed the violence first hand when my father knocked my grandmother unconscious because she dared to interfere in a fight between my parents. Though my parents weren't religious, I was very active in my faith, thanks to my grandparents and nourishing neighbors. It became an anchor in the storm for me. Although I was very religious, I still cultivated a seething hatred for my dad. He was a horrible human being and didn't deserve my respect or love. When I was seven, he died unexpectedly. Sadly, my mother married another alcoholic, and the pattern continued until I left home at eighteen. Still very religious, I experienced the same hatred for my step-father and felt completely justified because of the way he treated my mother and siblings.

In my early twenties, I went from "being religious" to having a real encounter with God. You see, I knew a lot about him but didn't know him personally. So what do you imagine he immediately targeted so I could grow in this relationship? My "pain point" of unforgiveness. Every time I opened the Bible, I was pierced by passages about forgiveness (Matthew 5:48; Luke 6:36; John 13:34; Galatians 5:25; Philippians 2:1, 5; Ephesians 4:32). I remember saying to God, "I can't forgive them!" And I was right. I couldn't forgive in my own power, but as I gave my heart more completely to the Lord, he began to heal it. It was black, hard and nearly impenetrable, but "where sin increased, grace abounded all the more" (Romans 5:20). If you've ever struggled with unforgiveness, you know it is rarely healed overnight. The Catechism of the Catholic Church expresses the process so well, "It is not in our power not to feel or to forget an offense; but the heart that offers itself to the Holy Spirit turns injury into compassion and purifies the memory by transforming the hurt into intercession" (CCC, 2843).

Eventually, I had a profound moment of forgiveness at my birth father's graveside, and I decided to cultivate a relationship with my step-dad. I used to be so self-righteous around him; now I was able to see him as a broken human being like me. I learned his story (he also grew up in a violent alcoholic home) and began to appreciate his positive qualities. We ended up having a great relationship in my adulthood. At the end of his life, I was with him. I spoon fed him his meals, changed his diapers ... I loved him to death. That's only possible by the grace of God. Sharing my story has provided countless opportunities for me to help others through similar painful pasts. Letting go of unforgiveness freed my heart to love God and others more fully and fruitfully.

Sometimes unforgiveness hides in our heart or is so subtle we don't even recognize it as such. So as we approach the gift of Holy Week, let us make the psalmist's prayer our own, "Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!" (Psalms 139:23-24).

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