

ST. MARY'S CATHOLIC CHURCH

NEWSLETTER – JULY 2026

For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them. Matthew 18:20

From the Pastor's Desk

Greetings!

A happy and blessed 4th of July to you all. This month brings with it more than the celebration of 250 years as a nation, but also an opportunity to return to a mission-mindset and the ordinary routine of parish life. I can remember a time when we did not distinguish between church buildings and parishes; a time when we did not speak of parishes as "corporations." I remember a time when words like "merger" and "consolidation" were words I associated more with Delta Airlines than the Diocese of Saint Cloud or our Catholic parishes.

There is a story I have often told but it seems worthwhile to tell it once more. Someone once insisted to me, "The church is a business." And my reply was always the same, "We are not a business: We are a family with administrative realities." Well, these past few months, indeed for over a year, the concerns for many of us have been administrative details, accompanied by a slate of decisions that were sure to disappoint some at best or many at worst. Decisions about things like Mass times, finances, final Masses and more.

Without neglecting the pain many are certainly still feeling, I am hopeful you will join me in turning a corner and return to some kind of normality as a parish, even if it will have to be a newer kind of normal. I hope you will help me return to using words like mission and stewardship more than civil and canon law; return to using phrases like 'love of neighbor' and 'pastoral care' more than 'merger decrees' and 'design parameters.'

Parish administration is certainly a loving service, just as parents bringing direction and correction to a household is seen as a lifestyle defined by loving deeds. But if a home isn't meant to feel like a business, maybe the parish shouldn't either. Lately, it has for me, and maybe I am not alone in this. However, with hearts centered on Christ and an abiding concern for one another, we will live and act each day as a people sent forth in peace to glorify the Lord by our life.

Happy 4th of July. Be sure to enjoy, and give thanks, for those freedoms which you have been blessed with and use them for doing good in all things. Thank you, and God bless you.

In Christ,

Father Mitchell Bechtold

Parish Life & Ministry Updates

Liturgy & Worship: Sarah

Liturgical ministers have been emailed their new schedule that runs through Labor Day (Sept. 7). If you were missed on the schedule or if you would like to start helping with a ministry, please contact me (Sarah Woeste) in the office (320-256-9516).

With changes in locations and Mass times we anticipate a larger crowd during the 9:00 am Mass. We ask that everyone does their best to welcome newcomers. This can be as simple as smiling and moving into the pew to allow space for others. If you are able bodied, please park farther away from the entrances. We have an agreement with Stearns Electric to use their lot for overflow.

No matter how full the church becomes, please keep the area in front of the glass windows clear. This wide area is required per the fire code and needs to stay clear in case of medical emergencies or in case of an evacuation.

Liturgical ministers were sent a separate ministry update. Here are some of the details.

- Sacristans & Eucharistic Ministers will have some changes starting on July 12th. They will have a meeting on July 8th at 7 pm at St. Mary's. Starting on July 12th we will be adding an additional team of Eucharistic Ministers. This team will serve the section closest to the Mary Statue and then go to serve anyone seated in the Gathering Space. The sacristan will continue to serve handicap persons and where needed.
- We have a wonderful group of 28 lectors who had training this past winter. To allow them to serve more frequently the new schedule has 2 lectors assigned for each Mass. Lectors are asked to use the ramps when entering and leaving the sanctuary.
- We also have many people who like to serve as greeters for Mass. We will have 3 greeters, or a family scheduled to greet for each Mass. Some greeters will be located at the office/west entrance to open doors and assist as needed.
- The ushers met for a meeting at the end of June. We discussed hospitality, safety, and bringing dignified order to our celebrations. Ushers will be setting up additional seating in the Gathering Space when necessary. It was decided that it is more hospitable to have overflow seating facing the altar rather than a TV screen. Ushers will also be releasing pews for communion.
- Neal Anderson, a seminarian, will be serving at Masses and will also be holding Altar Server Training in July. Altar Servers should watch for more information from him.
- We are always welcoming new singers, accompanists and instrumentalists in music ministry. Parish Choir will usually sing 2 Sundays a month and Youth Choir one

Sunday a month. Cantors or small groups will sing when the choirs are not scheduled. Stop by the choir area after Mass for more information. Music Liturgy plans can be found on our One in Faith website <https://www.oneinfaith.org/music-ministries>. Contact me if you need the password.

· Audio Visual ministry names have been changed on the schedule. “ProPresenter” is the minister who runs the ProPresenter program on the computer and changes the slides on the projection screen. “Cameras” is the minister who uses the video cameras in church to show images on the livestream or on the projection screens. “Sound” is the minister who adjusts the volume of microphones.

· Liturgical ministers use a web-based program called Ministry Scheduler Pro that allows users to easily request a substitute, update their “can’t serve times” and find ministry rosters.

Family Faith Formation: Mark

- If you haven’t already, please register your family for next year’s Faith Formation! Forms are online at www.oneinfaith.org (click the Education tab) and on the Faith Formation table (near the office) at church.
- I want to thank everyone for such a warm welcome. I am excited to lead our youth closer to Christ with all of your help, we can make a tremendous difference in the faith life of our young people. Come and join the team.
- We will have new programs this year for faith formation and youth ministry. The Life Teen Program is designed for youth in grades 9-12. It has four parts to it : The Gather, The Proclaim, The Break, and the Send. The Goal of this program is to lead our high school youth closer to Christ. The new program for our Middle School Youth is called Edge. This program follows the same four parts but is designed for Middle School Youth in grades 6-8. Our 1st, and 3rd-5th graders will be doing the Finding God series. This will give them a great opportunity to experience God within our parish, while developing their knowledge of Christ and his Church.
- If you would like to volunteer for faith formation please contact Mark Kociemba at 320-256-9501 or faithformation@stmarysofmelrose.com. We are looking for more volunteers to work with our 6-12 graders this year.
- Volunteers who want to work with our 6-12 graders this year, we will have a training on July 11th from 9-2 with lunch provided. I hope to see you all there. We will meet in the Gathering Space at Saint Mary’s.
- August 8th we will have our first Mini-retreat for youth in grades 6-12. More information will be coming out soon, but save the date. It will be a blast. All youth and parents are welcome.

Building, Grounds, Maintenance: Roger

- We have a reciprocal overflow parking agreement with Stearns Electric! In the circumstance that our parking lot is full, please park in the Stearns Electric parking lot and not on the road.

- The baptismal font is under construction again. Thank you for being patient as we continue to solve this ongoing inconvenience.
- Thank you to the volunteers who came to Cemetery Volunteer Day in May. Your help is greatly appreciated!

Finance: Katie

- Our 35th Annual Parish Raffle was held in conjunction with Riverfest on June 27th! Congratulations to the winners and thank you to all who participated. List of winners will be in the bulletin.
- Our fiscal year has come to a close at the end of June. We will notify you and have financial reports available in the kiosks once complete.
- In the July packet of envelopes, you will find an envelope labeled “Bazaar Collection.” I have been told, this envelope was put in place of hosting a parish festival. Please consider contributing as you see fit.
- As part of our commitment to being good stewards of the resources entrusted to us, we are exploring ways to reduce parish expenses. One option is electronic giving through automatic contributions. If you would like to establish a recurring donation, please contact Katie at the parish office. Automatic contributions may be designated to multiple funds, including the cemetery, maintenance, and school. Setting up automatic withdrawals helps reduce administrative costs and the use of offering envelopes while providing consistent support for our parish ministries and operations. Thank you for your continued generosity and stewardship.

Parish Administration: Pam

Parish Gathering Spaces – Our gathering spaces are available for parishioners to reserve for meetings, celebrations, and other events. If you would like more information or are interested in reserving a space, please contact the parish office.

New Secure Drop Box – For your convenience, a secure, locked drop box has been installed outside the parish office. Registration forms, documents, payments, and other parish materials may be placed in the box anytime the office is closed.

Cemetery & Columbarium Information – If you are considering a cemetery plot or columbarium niche for yourself or a loved one, we invite you to schedule an appointment with Pam in the parish office. She will be happy to answer your questions and help you explore the available options.

A Heartfelt Thank You to Fr. Oswaldo – We extend our sincere gratitude to Fr. Oswaldo for his faithful ministry and dedicated service to our parishes over the past two years. We wish him well as he begins his new assignment.

Former Rectory Property Update – The former rectory and the adjacent parcels of land have been listed for sale. As we continue to honor the history of our parish, plans are underway to relocate the grotto to a new location, where it can continue to be a place of prayer and reflection. While the new location is being finalized and prepared, the statues will be

carefully moved and placed into storage. There are also plans for a memorial to be established at the former church site to respectfully commemorate the faith, memories, and generations who worshiped there.

Thank you to all of the volunteers at St. Mary's! Each day I am reminded of the incredible generosity of our parish family. So many of you share your time, talents, and hearts in countless ways, helping make St. Mary's a welcoming, vibrant, and well-cared-for parish. We are especially grateful for the many volunteers who have recently stepped forward to help with maintenance, landscaping, and caring for our church, school, and cemetery grounds. Your willingness to lend a hand has made a tremendous difference and is deeply appreciated. Because of your dedication, our church is not only a beautiful place to worship, but also a place where people feel at home. We are truly grateful for each and every one of you. Thank you for being such an important part of our parish community.

Growing in the Faith

Ordinary Time is the part of the Catholic Church's liturgical year that focuses on the life, teachings, and ministry of Jesus Christ. Despite its name, "ordinary" does not mean unimportant—it comes from the word *ordinal*, meaning "counted" or "numbered," because the weeks are numbered (First Week, Second Week, etc.).

Ordinary Time occurs in two periods:

- After the Christmas season until the beginning of Lent.
- After Pentecost until the start of Advent.

During this season, Catholics reflect on how to follow Christ in everyday life. The Scripture readings highlight Jesus' miracles, parables, and teachings, helping believers grow in faith, discipleship, and holiness through the ordinary moments of daily living.

The liturgical color for Ordinary Time is **green**, symbolizing hope, spiritual growth, and the ongoing life of the Church.

Prayer for the Quarter

Prayer for Parish Renewal and Transition

Heavenly Father,

You have called us together as Your people,
to worship You, to serve one another,
and to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ.

As our parish family enters a time of change,
we entrust ourselves to Your loving care.

We give thanks for all who have built and sustained our communities through faith, sacrifice,
and love.

Bless the memories made within these sacred walls,
the sacraments celebrated,
the friendships formed,
and the generations who have called these parishes home.

When change brings grief, grant us comfort.
When the future seems uncertain, give us hope.
When we are asked to let go, fill us with trust in Your providence.

Guide our pastors, parish leaders, and all the faithful
with wisdom, compassion, and courage.
Help us to see not only what is ending,
but also the new opportunities You are preparing for us
to grow together as one Body in Christ.

May we welcome one another with open hearts,
honor the gifts of every community,
and continue to be living witnesses of Your love.
Unite us in faith, strengthen us in hope,
and inspire us to serve with joy.

We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.



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