

ST. MARY'S CATHOLIC CHURCH

NEWSLETTER – SEPTEMBER 2026

God is with you in everything you do. Genesis 21:22

From the Pastor's Desk

Greetings.

It's back to school for our sons and daughters, but that should not mean that it is back to learning for them. Even if they MUST go to school, this should not distract from the fact that they GET to go to school. School is just one outlet where a love of lifelong learning can be nourished; an extension of the home and living.

Church is our own sort of school. Where we get to learn more about the Lord, His teachings and our Catholic life in an intentional way. And that we must go should not distract from the fact that we get to go to church. I often consider that the reason we have churches is not firstly because a priest showed up in Melrose and said, "You need this," but because the people collectively told the Church, "We want this." And so we should.

Church is a crucial part where we give expression to our faith and discipleship, and our lives extend beyond this school. And so, please hold this message near and dear: the Christian life is not simply an obligation, but an opportunity, born out of God's love for us and fulfilled in our own loving response.

To our sons and daughters, may you learn lots at school and continue to foster your love for learning. To the rest of us, may you learn lots at church, and continue to foster your discipleship through a life of love.

God bless.

In Christ,

Father Mitchell Bechtold

Parish Life & Ministry Updates

Liturgy & Worship: Sarah Woeste

Fall Liturgical Ministry schedules for St. Mary- Melrose have been completed and emailed. Copies are available in the kiosk. Schedules for St. Mary's - Meire Grove will be created next week. Both locations have schedules created with Ministry Scheduler Pro, a web-based program. This allows for ministers to easily request substitutes and see updated schedules online.

Three altar servers are scheduled for each Mass. There will be a "lead" server who is a student in grades 6-12 who instructs and leads younger servers, one or two "experienced" servers and a "novice" server. Novice servers are those who began serving within the past year.

This is the time of year when new servers are recruited for Mass. Letters will be sent home with faith formation students and St. Mary's School students at the beginning of September. Students in grade 3 and older are invited to this ministry. Fr. Mitchell does all the training for new servers.

We would love to pray the rosary before our weekend Masses - 5 pm in Meire Grove and 9 am in Melrose. Additional leaders are needed. Please contact the parish office if you are interested in helping.

Family Faith Formation: Mark Kociemba

Faith Formation classes begin on September 9th! We are so excited to welcome our young people back for another year of growing in faith.

- Grades 1 and 3-5 will meet at St. Mary's Catholic School on Wednesdays from 6:00-7:00 PM, beginning September 9.
- Grades 6-9 will meet at St. Mary's Catholic School on Wednesdays from 7:15-8:30 PM, beginning September 9.
- Grade 11 Confirmation students will meet at St. Mary's Catholic Church on Wednesdays from 7:15-8:30 PM, beginning September 9.
- Students preparing for First Sacraments will meet at St. Mary's Catholic Church on Sundays from 10:00-11:15 AM, beginning September 13.

Thank you to all the parents who attended the parent meetings. Your dedication to helping our young people grow closer to Christ is greatly appreciated. If you have questions or concerns about Faith Formation, please contact me.

Youth Group for students in grades 6-12 will begin Sunday, September 13, from 10:00-11:15 AM at St. Mary's Catholic School. If you would like to help with Youth Group this year, please

contact Mark. Come join the fun!

Our Youth Group will attend the Diocesan-sponsored Apostle Games on October 25. This exciting day will provide opportunities for fun, fellowship, and growth in faith. Watch for more information coming soon!

We still need volunteers for the Fall Picnic on September 13. We are looking for four adults and four youth to help lead the children's games. Youth volunteers should be in fifth grade or older. Please contact Mark if you are interested in helping.

Mass at the Barn will be held September 30. Please let Mark know if you plan to attend so we can prepare enough food for everyone.

Building, Grounds, Maintenance

- The baptismal font has been repaired and filled again. Once it is determined that there are no more leaks, all the stone will be put back on.
- You may see the robotic lawn mower around in the cemetery. It is currently being mapped out to mow on its own. Stay tuned for updates!
- Our maintenance staff has repeatedly needed to straighten the yellow driveway markers that have been hit or pushed over. While the markers can be replaced, we must ask: What if those markers were people? Please slow down, remain attentive, and use extra caution in all church driveways and parking lots. Thank you for helping keep everyone safe.
- Thank you to everyone who has been volunteering throughout the summer! We appreciate your dedication to this parish.

Finance: Katie Roerick

- Thank you to all those who donated to the Kenya Mission. We raised a total of \$8,559 between our four parishes.
- In your contribution envelope packet in October you will see an envelope labeled Cemetery. This is offered twice a year for the maintenance and upkeep of the cemetery. On this envelope there is the option to donate toward any of the four cemeteries in our communities. Please indicate clearly which you would like to contribute towards so we can get this to the correct place.
- Financial Clarifications Related to All Things New:
 - As of now, all four of the parishes are covering most of their own expenses. St. John's is helping St. Mary's cover the expenses of the priests, staff, and parish office. St. Mary's is covering the assessment cost for St. Michael's and St. Andrew's. If St. Michael's, St. Andrew's, or St. John's runs out of funds, the current expectation is that St. Mary's would be responsible for covering their expenses.
 - I want to emphasize that the Diocese is taking **no** money from any parish. The Diocese is only sent funds for priest expenses, diocesan collections, and parish assessments.

- Please write your checks payable to St. Mary's Church or St. John's Church depending on your intentions.
- If you have any questions, please contact Fr. Mitchell or the parish office and we will do our best to answer them.
- As we continue to make changes as a result of All Things New, you will notice your envelopes will look different starting in September. These envelopes are used for all households (families) from the four parishes, so please clearly indicate how you would like your contribution designated. If you have any questions, please contact the parish office and we will do our best to clear up any confusion. Envelope descriptions and schedules are available in the kiosks if you haven't already picked one up.
- If you are going to Mass at another parish other than the one you are registered at, PLEASE continue using your contribution envelopes. They will get back to the parish office and into the correct account as intended.
- If you would like to simplify how your contributions are designated, setting up an automatic contribution is a great option! Automatic contributions are taken directly from your account either once or twice a month and may be designated to multiple funds, including the general contributions, cemetery, maintenance, and school. Forms can be found in the kiosk outside the office door and online and brought to the parish office once completed. Thank you for your continued generosity and stewardship.
- As many of you know, or maybe don't know, I am expecting my second child in September. While I am on leave, Judy Caveny has agreed to assist part-time. Please be patient with her as she gets reacquainted with the processes and procedures again. Thank you!

Parish Administration: Pam Pundsack

The parish office will be closed on Monday, September 7, in observance of Labor Day.

Please plan to attend St. Mary's Fall Picnic and Golden Ladle Soup Cook-Off Sunday, September 13, from 4–7 PM! Enjoy delicious soups, sandwiches, cookies, drinks, music, entertainment, and fellowship. Be a food critic for the evening by sampling the soup and chili entries and voting for your favorites! Be sure to also visit the St. Mary's School Lemonade Stand. This event is hosted by the Parish Life Committee. All free-will offering proceeds will benefit the Melrose Area Food Shelf.

The Diocese of St. Cloud has completed the transfer of the Frozen Pension Plan from Christian Brothers to its new trust. It is very important to note that ***the benefits employees earned under the Christian Brothers pension plan have not been reduced as a result of this transition, and retirees continue to receive their monthly payments as scheduled.*** The parishes of the Diocese have begun making required contributions to the new trust to help cover the shortfall and we have been told this will likely continue for the next 20 or so years. The Diocese continues to work diligently toward the plan's long-term sustainability and is also implementing a new 403(b) retirement plan through TIAA for active employees. Additional information will be shared as it becomes available.

Did You Know? When a cemetery plot or columbarium niche is purchased, the purchaser receives the right of burial or entombment—not ownership of the land or columbarium. St. Mary's remains the owner of these sacred spaces. To preserve the beauty, dignity, and safety of our cemetery, please do not add dirt, sod, landscaping, or other materials without prior approval from the pastor. We are grateful for everyone's cooperation in helping St. Mary's prayerfully care for the resting places of our loved ones.

Growing in the Faith

The devotion to the Seven Sorrows of Mary invites us to reflect on the profound suffering the Blessed Mother experienced throughout her life as she faithfully accompanied Jesus from His infancy to His burial. Through her sorrows, Mary teaches us unwavering trust in God, steadfast faith, and compassionate love even in times of great suffering.

The Seven Sorrows are:

1. The Prophecy of Simeon (Luke 2:22–35) – Simeon foretells that a sword will pierce Mary's soul, preparing her for the suffering she will endure as the Mother of the Messiah.
2. The Flight into Egypt (Matthew 2:13–15) – Mary and Joseph flee with the infant Jesus to escape King Herod's persecution, experiencing the hardship and uncertainty of exile.
3. The Loss of the Child Jesus in the Temple (Luke 2:41–50) – Mary and Joseph search anxiously for three days before finding Jesus in the Temple, reminding us of the importance of seeking Christ in our own lives.
4. Mary Meets Jesus on the Way to Calvary (Traditional devotion; cf. Luke 23:27–31) – Mary witnesses her Son carrying His cross, sharing deeply in His suffering with a mother's compassionate heart.
5. The Crucifixion and Death of Jesus (John 19:25–30) – Standing faithfully at the foot of the Cross, Mary remains united to Jesus in His sacrifice for the salvation of the world.
6. Mary Receives the Body of Jesus (Traditional devotion; cf. Matthew 27:57–59) – Mary lovingly holds the lifeless body of her Son after He is taken down from the Cross, a moving image of sorrow and enduring love.
7. The Burial of Jesus (John 19:40–42) – Mary accompanies Jesus to His tomb, entrusting everything to God's promise even in the darkness of grief.

As we meditate on these seven sorrows, we are reminded that suffering, united with Christ, can become a path to hope and holiness. Mary's example encourages us to bring our own crosses to Jesus with confidence, knowing that God's love is always greater than our pain. Through her intercession, may we grow in faith, perseverance, and trust in the promise of the Resurrection.

Prayer for the Month

Heavenly Father,

As we begin this new school year, bless our students, teachers, staff, and families. Fill our hearts with wisdom, kindness, and courage. Help us to learn with joyful minds, serve others with loving hearts, and grow each day in faith.

May Jesus guide us, the Holy Spirit strengthen us, and Mary watch over us throughout the year.

We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Amen.



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