



IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

Catholic Church

A Stewardship Community served by the Oblates of St. Francis de Sales



A People Not a Place
Learning to Live Jesus

OUR VISION

Our parish is the vibrant expression of the presence of the Risen Christ through sacred worship and loving service.

OUR MISSION

We live Jesus Christ by proclaiming the Gospel, by celebrating the Eucharist, by nourishing our Faith and by loving and serving all God's people.

6650 Carolina Beach Road, Wilmington, NC 28412

De Sales Faith
Formation Center
910-791-9857

Church Office
910-791-1003
Fax: 910-791-0081
www.iccwilm.org

Office Hours
Monday – Friday
9:00am – 4:00pm

Parish Staff, Councils & Commission Chairs

<u>Title</u>	<u>Staff Member</u>	<u>Phone Number & Ext.</u>	<u>Email Address</u>
Business Manager	Charlie DaVolio	910-791-1003, Ext. 105	cdavolio@iccwilm.org
Director of Faith Formation	Gina Drost	910-791-1003, Ext. 112	gdrost@iccwilm.org
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Youth Minister	Marie Marshall	910-791-1003, Ext. 110	mmarshall@iccwilm.org
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Director of Music	Andrea Reynolds	910-791-1003, Ext. 114	areynolds@iccwilm.org
Office Manager	Claudia Sing	910-791-1003, Ext. 100	csing@iccwilm.org
Treasury Assistants	Johanna Hug & Chris Puritis	910-791-1003, Ext. 107	

Commission Chairs

Fr. John McGee, OSFS (Liturgy)
 Charlie DaVolio (Facilities)
 Gina Drost (Faith Formation)
 Mary Swack (Inreach)
 Position Open (Outreach)

Parish Pastoral Council

Matthew Simms, Chair Julie Bowling, Vice Chair

 Mike LaBruno Caroline Paulhus

 Susan Taylor Angela Zombek

Parish Finance Council

Pete Bartel, Chair
 Stephen Conroy
 Paul Dries, Vice Chair
 Connor Duncan
 Bob Smith
 Andrew Tomlin

Liturgies and Devotions

Weekend - Saturday: 5:00 pm
 Sunday: 8:30 & 10:30 am
Weekday - See "This Week at Immaculate Conception" - Page 3
Devotions - Rosary for World Peace/
 Novena to Our Lady, Monday - 9:30 am
 Chaplet of Divine Mercy to end human trafficking, Thursday - 9:30 am
 Rosary, Devotion to the Sacred Heart, First Friday
Eucharistic Adoration -
 First Friday, 9:45 am - 11:00 am *and*
 Tuesdays, 9:30 am - 10:30 am

Bulletin Deadline

Bulletin requests must be emailed to the Bulletin Editor: tkruger@iccwilm.org, by 12:00 noon on Wednesdays, ten days in advance of the weekend of publication. All articles will run for three weeks, space allowing, and must have name, phone # of contact person, and dates requested to be in the bulletin. Articles must be limited to 100-150 words and include the *who, what, why, where and when*. A summary/result article with facts and figures should be submitted within a week of the event's completion.

New Parishioners

If you are new to Wilmington or to Immaculate Conception, we would like to take this opportunity to welcome you. We are an active and vibrant parish and ask, if you have decided to join us, that you will seriously consider giving of your time, talent, and treasure for the Lord's work. Completion of an Interest Card, Parish Registration Form and

attendance to a Welcome/Orientation/Registration Event is part of active membership and provides you with parish mailings. Please find an Interest Card located in the pamphlet rack in the Gathering Area of the church.

Sacramental Life

Infant Baptism: Celebrated monthly. Registered (minimum 3 months) and participating parishioners may schedule infant baptism after completion of a baptism preparation workshop and reception of godparent documents. Contact Gina Drost, Director of Faith Formation, at 910-791-1003, ext 112, preferably prior to the child's arrival. *Children over 7 are not baptized as "infants." Instead they are prepared to receive all 3 sacraments of initiation at a later date.

To Be a Godparent/Sponsor: for Baptism or Confirmation; you must be a registered, participating member for at least 6 months prior to requesting letter.

1st Reconciliation & 1st Eucharist: Second grade is our Sacramental year for First Reconciliation and First Eucharist. First grade faith formation is a prerequisite for the second grade Sacramental year. We require four meetings for the parents/guardians of youth receiving these Sacraments.

Confirmation: Confirmation in our Diocese is celebrated in the high school years, and is a two year process. Candidates may enroll in Level I as a freshman with immediate preparation and celebration of the sacrament in Level II the sophomore year. Stewardship opportunities and attendance to a Confirmation retreat are mandatory.

Reconciliation: We celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation/confession, normally, Saturdays from 3:30-4:30 pm in the Church's Reconciliation Room. In addition, the sacrament is available by appointment. Please call the Parish Office to speak to the pastor.

RCIA: Adults seeking Initiation into the Full Communion of the Catholic Church are invited to contact Gina Drost, gdrost@iccwilm.org or 791-1003, ext.112

Matrimony: Only parishioners registered at ICC for at least 6 months may request to be married here. The couple must meet with a priest before setting a date and at least 6 months in advance of an anticipated wedding in order to complete the preparation process. All aspects of marriage planning requires the participation and approval of trained personnel. Contact: Claudia Sing, csing@iccwilm.org., 791-1003, ext. 100.

Anointing of the Sick: Anyone who is seriously ill or who is anticipating surgery or an extended hospital stay or who is weakened because of a prolonged illness or advanced age is encouraged to call the Parish Office to receive the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick.

Funerals: After a funeral director has been contacted but before any arrangements have been made public, the funeral director will contact the Parish Office in order to arrange for funeral time and/or vigil service. All aspects of parish funeral liturgy planning requires the participation and approval of trained parish personnel.

Vocations to Priesthood or Religious Life: Religious vocation as a priest, brother or sister, Fr. Michael Newman, OSFS, mnewman@oblates.us or 419-531-1421, x231. Vocation to diocesan priesthood, please visit the Diocese of Raleigh's Vocations website at dioceseofraleighvocations.org.

This Week at Immaculate Conception

There Are No Altar Flowers During Lent

Sunday, March 8—3rd Sunday of Lent

8:30 am Liturgy, Lois Sheehy
 10:30 am Liturgy, Roger Fry
 12:00–2:00 Youth Faith Formation, DFFC
 2:30–3:30 The Athanasius Center, DFFC

Monday, March 9, 2026

9:00 am Funeral Liturgy, Dorothy Maloney
No Stations of the Cross

Tuesday, March 10, 2026

9:30 am Eucharistic Adoration

Wednesday, March 11, 2026

9:00 am Liturgy, Margaret Mikes

Thursday, March 12, 2026

9:00 am Liturgy, Martha Davis
 9:30 am Chaplet of Divine Mercy, Adoration Chapel

Friday, March 13, 2026

9:00 am Liturgy, Grace Deich

Saturday, March 14, 2026

3:30 pm Reconciliation, Church
 5:00 pm Liturgy, Bronislaw & Wladyslawa
 Rafalowski

Sunday, March 15—4th Sunday of Lent

8:30 am Liturgy, John the Baptist & Joseph
 10:30 am Liturgy, Living & Deceased Members of
 Immaculate Conception
 12:00–2:00 Level 2 1st Eucharist Parent Workshop,
 DFFC
 2:30–3:30 The Athanasius Center, DFFC

Liturgical Color for March 14 & 15 is Rose



Sanctuary Candle

A 14-day Sanctuary Candle will burn in memory of **Bernie Maguire**, and was donated by **Joyce Maguire**.

Stewardship - A Way of Life Following "God's Plan for Giving" Stewardship of Treasure Report

February 31 & March 1, 2026

Envelopes	160 (Envelopes)	\$ 7,258.00
e-Giving	45	\$ 2,549.71
Loose Check	38 (Checks)	\$ 2,580.00
Identifiable Contributions		\$12,387.71
Loose Cash		\$ 1,642.52
Total Contributions		\$14,030.23

Offertory/1st Collection:

Annual Budget: July 1, 2025 - June 30, 2026

\$1,165,000.00

Total Collected YTD: July 1– Mar 1, 2026

\$ 827,927.84

**Hearing Devices Available
 for the Hearing Impaired
 Please see an Usher for Assistance**

Diocesan Second Collection

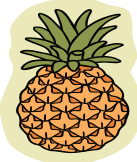
Catholic Relief Services

Next week our parish will take up the Catholic Relief Services Collection. Funds from this collection provide food to the hungry, support displaced refugees, and bring Christ's love and mercy to vulnerable people here and abroad. Next week, please give generously to the collection and reveal Christ's love to those most in need.

Learn more about the collection at www.usccb.org/catholic-relief.

Welcome Events

Welcome/Orientation/Registration Events



New to the area? Want to join ICC? Pick up an Interest Card in the pamphlet rack in the Gathering Area, fill it out and return to the church office, then attend one of the listed

Welcome / Orientation / Registration Events. The events are on Saturday mornings, 9:00 am-10:45 am (refreshments available at 8:30 am).

The Next Welcome Events

June 6, 2026

Stewardship Reflection

*“Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again.”
(John 4:13)*

Jesus reminds us that material things, even something as basic as water, can never satisfy us over the long run. When we build our lives around material possessions we will always want more, and no amount will ever satisfy our desire. True joy and peace only come when we follow Jesus—when we become more ‘God-centered’ and less ‘self-centered.’

The Help Center Needs

The Help Center Food Donations

The following items are needed in **March 2026**:

March 1	Rice
March 8	Pasta sauce
March 15	Jelly
March 22	Canned carrots
March 29	Pasta



Any other packaged or canned food items or toiletries are gratefully accepted. **Thank you so much for your continued generosity.**

Anointing of the Sick
Thursday, March 12
at the Weekday Liturgy



All are reminded to dress with reverence and respect as they come to the liturgy all year long.



JOIN US FOR STATIONS OF THE CROSS

Mondays 9:30 am in the Church

Feb 23 -The Way of the Cross-Kelly
Leader: Joe Mazur

March 2- Praying the stations with
Pope Francis Leader: Susan Taylor

March 9- Canceled due to Funeral

March 16- Mary's Way of the Cross
Leader: Gina Drost

March 23 -The Way of the Cross with
St. Francis de Sales Leader: Phyllis
Filgate

Our Parish COMMUNITY

March 8, 2026

Third Sunday of Lent (A)

Exodus 17:3-7 / Romans 5:1-2, 5-8 / John 4:5-42 or 4:5-15, 19b-26, 39a, 40-42



Are You Listening?

FR. THOMAS M. SANTA, CSSR

"If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts." (See Psalm 95.) Our psalm prayer invites us to respond to the Word of God. A positive response should be assumed as ordinary: very few among us would deliberately ignore God's voice. The challenge is not in responding "yes" to the invitation of the Lord but rather in "hearing" his voice.

There are so many voices that daily compete for attention. We seem to be bombarded every waking moment with some kind of noise that demands attention and action. At one time, Neil Diamond might have been able to celebrate the "Beautiful Noise" of the city, but it is far more difficult for us today. Frankly, the noise around us is deafening, and most people long for true silence, a break in the pattern, a vacation from the frantic anxiety that seems to be present.

A wonderful Lenten practice—indeed, a spiritual practice that goes well beyond Lent—is to freely choose to disconnect from distraction. Resist the temptation to plug in the earbuds. Refrain from the distraction of social media content. Leave your cell phone in the living room, go sit in the backyard, and pay attention to nothing. "Be still and know that I am God" (Psalm 46:11), the psalmist reminds us. Listen for God's voice, hear his call, and respond to the invitation. ●



LEARN ABOUT THE AUTHORS OF OUR PARISH COMMUNITY



The love of God has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.
ROMANS 5:5

Reflect
Do I need more silence?
Do I find silence difficult?

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Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
MARCH 9 Lenten Weekday 2 Kgs 5:1-15ab Lk 4:24-30	MARCH 10 Lenten Weekday Dn 3:25, 34-43 Mt 18:21-35	MARCH 11 Lenten Weekday Dt 4:1, 5-9 Mt 5:17-19	MARCH 12 Lenten Weekday Jer 7:23-28 Lk 11:14-23	MARCH 13 Lenten Weekday Hos 14:2-10 Mk 12:28-34	MARCH 14 Lenten Weekday Hos 6:1-6 Lk 18:9-14	MARCH 15 Fourth Sunday of Lent 1 Sm 16:1b, 6-7, 10-13a Eph 5:8-14 Jn 9:1-41 or 9:1, 6-9, 13-17, 34-38

Do you have a question for the Padre?

Go to DearPadre.org to send your question and to learn more about *Dear Padre*.



MARCO JACOBICCI EPF / SHUTTERSTOCK

A WORD FROM POPE LEO XIV

We feel a deep and burning thirst that no drink in this world can satisfy. Knowing this, let us not deceive our hearts by trying to satisfy them with cheap imitations!... Let us turn this thirst into a step stool, like children who stand on tiptoe, in order to peer through the window of encounter with God.

HOMILY, ROME, AUGUST 3, 2025



Cape Fear Deanery

LENT

Communal Reconciliation Services



February 17

11:00am St. Brendan the Navigator
Shallotte
910-754-8544

February 19

7:00pm UNC-W
Wilmington
(910) 792-0507

February 24

11:00am Basilica of St. Mary
Wilmington
910-762-5491

7:00pm St. Stanislaus

Castle Hayne
910-675-2336

February 25

7:00pm St. Joseph *Bilingual*
Burgaw
910-259-2601

February 26

7:00pm St. Therese
Wrightsville Beach
910-256-2471

March 3

7:00pm St. Mark
Wilmington
910-392-0720

March 4

11:00am Sacred Heart
Southport
910-457-6173

7:00pm All Saints

Hampstead
910-270-1477

March 10

7:00pm Immaculate Conception
Wilmington
910-791-1003

March 12

11:00am St. Mark
Wilmington
910-392-0720

7:00 pm Sacred Heart *Bilingual*

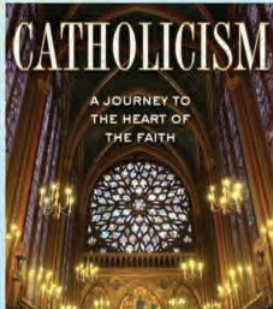
Whiteville
910-642-3895

March 19

7:00pm Basilica of St. Mary *En español*
Wilmington
910-762-5491

Adult Faith Formation

Catholicism & Community:
MONTHLY LUNCH AND LEARNING



De Sales Faith Formation Center 12-2

January 14	July 8
February 11	August 12
March 18	September 16
April 22	October 14
May 13	November 11
June 17	December 9

Join fellow parishioners as we explore our Catholic faith through the award-winning Catholicism Series by Bishop Robert Barron. Each month we'll watch an episode and enjoy a guided community discussion. Bring your lunch or sign up for a Firehouse Subs Box Lunch.

Register online at ICCWilm.Org or contact Gina Drost Director of Faith Formation for more information

Catholic Daughters Meeting

Join Us!



CDA Court Immaculate Conception will conduct its regularly scheduled monthly meeting on Friday, March 13. The meeting begins in the DeSales Faith Formation Center at the 9:00 AM Liturgy. SGT Gene Moore of the New Hanover County Sheriff's Office will discuss situational awareness and fraud prevention. All women of the parish are cordially invited to attend.

Tending Your Lenten Garden

Fasting: Sustainable Growth

If the grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it bears much fruit. -John 12:24

In our culture of obesity and 24/7 activity, a wise gardener knows the virtue of cutting back to facilitate sustainable growth. Just as crops are rotated and fields are left fallow so the land may regenerate, Lent offers us the spiritual fallowness of fasting so that our souls may be renewed. Those who know the truth that "less is more" soon grow richer in the harvest of the Spirit.

<p>1st, 2nd & 3rd Week</p> <p>Feb 21 & 22 Feb 28 & Mar 1 March 7 & 8</p> <p>PURPLE</p> 	<p>4th Week Laetare</p> <p>March 14 & 15</p> <p>ROSE</p> 	<p>5th Week</p> <p>March 21 & 22</p> <p>PURPLE</p> 	<p>Palm Sunday</p> <p>March 28 & 29</p> <p>RED</p> 	<p>Holy Thursday</p> <p>April 2</p> <p>WHITE</p> 	<p>Good Friday</p> <p>April 3</p> <p>RED</p> 	<p>Vigil & Easter Sunday</p> <p>April 4 April 5</p> <p>WHITE</p> 
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The Colors of Lent

Lenten Family Project



Meals in a Bag Lenten Family Project

“Meals in a bag” are simple, budget-friendly meal kits. Each bag contains everything needed for one complete meal for four people, and are shelf-stable items like pasta, canned vegetables, beans, rice, or packaged proteins. These meals are designed to be affordable, easy to assemble, and require minimal cooking skills or equipment.

As part of our Faith Formation Family Lent Event, our families will be assembling meal bags for donation to The Help Center and Catholic Charities. By assembling these bags, we support local food pantries and neighbors in need while gaining a deeper understanding of how communities work together to help one another. We just need our parishioners to help by donating the items we need.

We will be collecting these items over the weekends of
March 14 & 15 and 21 & 22.

If you're able to donate a single item, or an entire meal kit, your support is greatly appreciated! Please remember, these items should be shelf-stable, and can be found at Dollar Tree as well as any grocery store.

Individual Items Needed

Black Beans
Canned Chicken
Canned Diced Ham
Carrots
Chili Seasoning Packet
Cream of Chicken Soup
Cream Style Corn
Diced Potatoes
Diced Tomatoes
Diced Tomatoes & Green Chiles
Evaporated Milk
Garlic & Herb Biscuit Mix
Green Beans
Kidney Beans
Mixed Vegetables
No Bean Chili
Pasta Sauce, 24 oz

Pinto Beans
Small Pasta
Spanish Rice
Tomato Sauce
Whole Kernel Corn

***Want to shop a whole bag?
Here's what you'll need for the
heartiest meals we're
assembling!***

Creamy Chicken & Dumplings

1 Box of Garlic & Herb Biscuit Mix
2 cans of Chicken
1 can of Cream of Chicken Soup
1 can of Evaporated Milk
1 can of Mixed Vegetables
1 can of Diced Potatoes

Homestyle Ham Chowder

2 5 oz. cans Diced Ham
1 can Diced Potatoes
1 can Whole Kernel Corn
1 can Cream Style Corn
1 can Cream of Chicken Soup
1 can Evaporated Milk

Cheesy Chicken and Rice Soup

1 large can of Chicken
1 can Black Beans
1 can Whole Kernel Corn
1 can Diced Tomatoes & Green Chiles
1 package Spanish Rice

**bags and certain additional ingredient items have already been acquired*

The Athanasius Center



Did you know that we have a Catholic ministry that welcomes people of all religious denominations to gather and discuss theological topics impacting personal and global

life? We are *The Athanasius Center*, and we welcome you to join us to share and explore ideas. All men and women, ages 18 and up, are welcome. We meet on Sundays from 2:30—3:30 pm in the DeSales Faith Formation Center, located on the campus of Immaculate Conception Catholic Church.

For more information, please email or text us:

- **Oliver Galbraith:** olivergalbraith@gmail.com or text 910-619-3933
- **Julianna Breit:** julianna.breit@gmail.com or text at 910-338-8802

You can also find us on social media:

- **Instagram Name:** [athanasius_center](#)
- **Whatsapp QR code:**



Besides our Sunday meetings, the Athanasius Center also offers the following activities, which are hosted at the homes of participating members:

- **Book Club: Christianity Through the Centuries - 1st Friday of the Month at 7:00PM**
- **Bible Study: 3rd Friday of the Month at 7:00PM**

Homeworks 2026



Home Works Summer Mission

A group of 20 teens and adults will be traveling to Fayetteville, NC on June 14–19, 2026 to take part in a week long session that offers service projects that are prayerful and spiritual in nature. Home Works' activities focus on providing repairs to homeowners in need, assisting youth in their development, and empowering communities to meet the needs of its members. To learn more about the program, you can visit their website at www.homeworksofamerica.org.

The cost of the trip is a \$200 dollar donation, which will be covered this year through the generosity of the parishioners of ICC. If you are interested in attending, a non-refundable \$50 deposit with completed registration form should be turned into Marie Marshall, Youth Minister, in the Parish Office. You can only secure a spot with your registration and the deposit, and it is first come first serve! If you are unable to make the deposit, please reach out to Marie - no one will be turned away for inability to pay. Registration forms are available on the parish website and through the Youth Ministry Office.

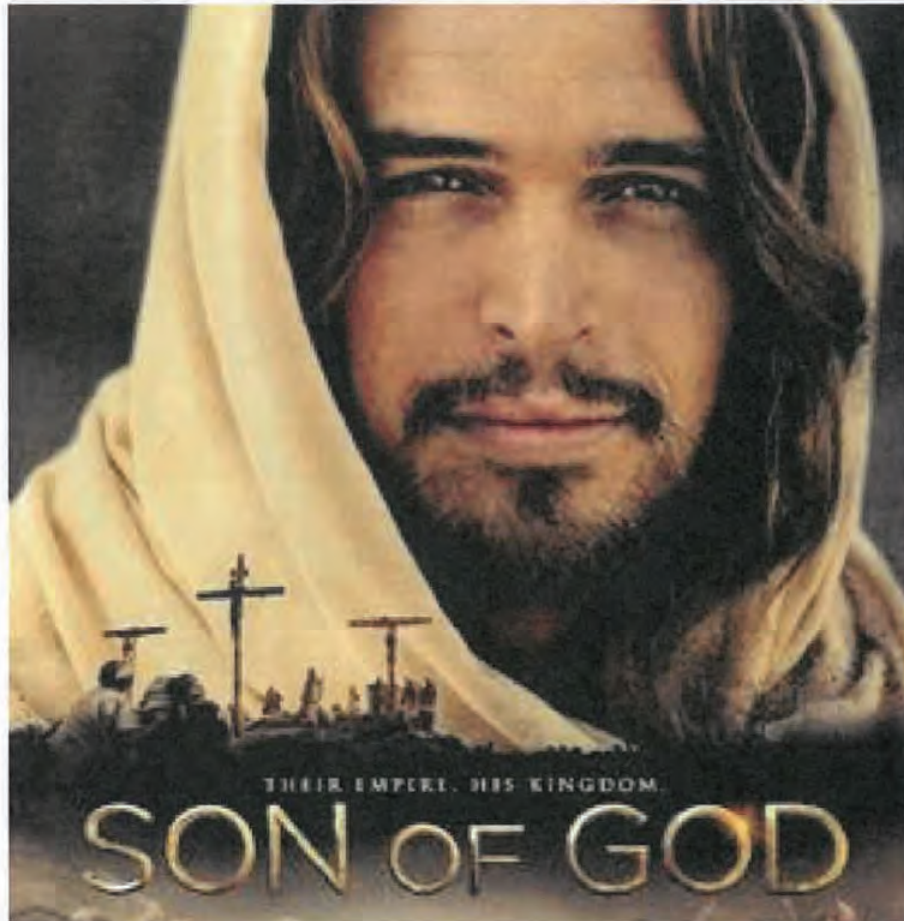
Sponsoring a Youth

Want to help out? The registration fee may be out of the budget for some interested families. If you would like to help sponsor a youth for this trip (partially or fully), or would like to contribute to the overall cost of this mission, please let Marie Marshall know today at mmarshall@iccwilm.org or 910-791-1003x110!



ICC Lenten Retreat

Immaculate Conception Lenten Retreat
Saturday March 14, 2026



All ages welcome.

Doors open at 9am for coffee and light refreshment.

Movie begins at 9:30am. Discussion following

Free admission, however registration is required
online at iccwilm.org or contact Gina Drost, Director
of Faith Formation.

Prayer Matters

Please remember the following people in your prayers:

Herbert Aiken	John Lyons
Margaret Ager	Julia Macdougall
Kelly Avgerinos	The Maney Family
Denise Barnes	Petar Manolev
Marley Basurto	Frankie Marcinkiewicz
Iliana & Maria Bouneva	Sonia Martin
Lee Bowling	Teri Massey
Barry & Teresa Brighten	CJ Miley
Julie & John Bussi	Diane Miller
The Casiere Family	Chris Moore
John Clavin	Irene & Kyle Muccia
Christine Coco	Barbara McCann
Eva Congleton	Ed McCann
Lizzie Cooper	Paul McCauley
Joe Craig	Leah McDaniel
Margaret Deaton	Denise McGee
Marion DeCoursey	Maura McGoldrick
Bertha Dennard	Joan McKillop
Leslie Dixon	Loretta McManus
Judith Dreisbach	Maureen McNally
Kathy Driscoll	Vince McNally
Skip & Charlotte Fairall	Anne Obermeyer
Robert Flavin	Edward O'Neill
Jennifer Freeman	Joanne Owens
Mary Gable	John Paulhus
Jim Gallagher	Debra Paulson
Keira Gibson	Camden Peterson
Donna Glisson	Natalina Pittari
Brenda Grainger & Family	Martin Plage, Jr.
Sandy Greggs	Lexie Queen
Lisa Plarre Griffith	Alice Radewicz
Lenora Guy	Susan Reynolds
Maureen Hayes	Ken Rowe
Sandra Hobbs	Tom Russell
Linda Hogan	Patti Schacht
Ruth Hohmann	Jonathan Schoo
Marcia Horvath	Beatrice Schultz
Pam Hulst	Misty Moore Seals
Ann & Don Hutton	Rita & Ralph Seidl
Dan Janusek	Bob Smith
Theresa Jeffers	Fr. Greg Spencer
Dwayne Jessup	Lorraine Stattel
Denise Kassem	Cynthia & Paul Streb
Tom Lakas	Luanne Styron
Tracy Langone	Christopher Swan
Gene Laskowski	Ginny Tascone
Eileen Lavelle	Mike Temple
Riley Liberati	Marieange Tribie
Emily & Lauren Limbach	Jack Walsh
Darryl Lindner	John Weisenreider
Margaret Lupton	Suzanne Westlake
Dianne Lusk	Diane Wiegand
Nicholas Lusk	Jim Wirth

Names will remain on the list for one month from time of request. Please call the office if you wish to renew.

Catholic High School Information

Fr. Thomas F. Price Catholic High School

Fr. Thomas F. Price Catholic High School, located at the Tileston Building at the Basilica of St. Mary in Wilmington, has officially launched!

Applications for admission for the 2026-2027 school year are now being accepted. For more information, or to apply, please visit <https://www.ftpchs>.

Lenten Adoration

Asked by the Lord: ONE HOUR

“Could you not keep watch for one hour?”

On the night before Christ’s death, during the Lord’s agony, in the Garden of Gethsemane, the Lord spoke these words to Simon Peter. Jesus had found Peter asleep.

Can YOU keep watch with Jesus, your loving Savior, for one hour, or part of one hour, this Lent? You may be surprised what the Lord will give you in return.

Adoration takes place every Tuesday morning from 9:30—10:30 in the church. Come for all or any part of the hour.

St. Stanislaus Food Sale

Frozen Food Sale

On Saturday, March 21, St. Stanislaus Catholic Church will host their Easter frozen food sale from 9:00 am - 12:00 pm in the church parish hall.



The pierogis, which are imported from our supplier in PA, are available in Potato & Cheese, Jalapeno & Cheese, Sauerkraut, Farmer’s Cheese, Cabbage, Cheddar & Bacon, Spinach & Feta, and Prune.

The kielbasa is from our supplier in NJ and there will be nut rolls and poppyseed rolls as well.

For more information, please call Rebecca at the St. Stanislaus Parish office at 910-675-2336.

2026 Bishop's Annual Appeal

\$31,422.57 Received of ICC Goal of \$150,556



Your Gift **In Action**

Because of your generosity, lives across eastern North Carolina are being transformed through faith in action. Gifts to the Bishop's Annual Appeal strengthen seminarians answering God's call to the priesthood, provide critical support for Catholic Charities' outreach to families in need, form the next generation through youth and campus ministry, and care for our most vulnerable neighbors through advocacy and pastoral services. Every dollar given becomes a living expression of Christ's love—building hope, nurturing vocations, and bringing the light of the Gospel to communities throughout the Diocese of Raleigh.



SCAN HERE
to make an online gift



Lenten Message from Pope Leo



FEDERATION OF DIOCESAN LITURGICAL COMMISSIONS
NEWSLETTER
VOLUME 53 No. 1 FEBRUARY 2026

MESSAGE OF POPE LEO XIV FOR LENT 2026

LISTENING AND FASTING: LENT AS A TIME OF CONVERSION

Dear brothers and sisters,

Lent is a time in which the Church, guided by a sense of maternal care, invites us to place the mystery of God back in the center of our lives, in order to find renewal in our faith and keep our hearts from being consumed by the anxieties and distractions of daily life.

Every path towards conversion begins by allowing the word of God to touch our hearts and welcoming it with a docile spirit. There is a relationship between the word, our acceptance of it and the transformation it brings about. For this reason, the Lenten journey is a welcome opportunity to heed the voice of the Lord and renew our commitment to following Christ, accompanying him on the road to Jerusalem, where the mystery of his passion, death and resurrection will be fulfilled.

LISTENING

This year, I would first like to consider the importance of making room for the word through *listening*. The willingness to listen is the first way we demonstrate our desire to enter into relationship with someone.

In revealing himself to Moses in the burning bush, God himself teaches us that listening is one of his defining characteristics: "I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry" (Ex 3:7). Hearing the cry of the oppressed is the beginning of a story of liberation in which the Lord calls Moses, sending him to open a path of salvation for his children who have been reduced to slavery.

Our God is one who seeks to involve us. Even today he shares with us what is in his heart. Because of this, listening to the word in the liturgy teaches us to listen to the truth of reality. In the midst of the many voices present in our personal lives and in society, Sacred Scripture helps us to recognize and respond to the cry of those who are anguished and suffering. In order to foster this inner openness to listening, we must allow God to teach us how to listen as *he does*. We must recognize that "the condition of the poor is a cry that, throughout human history, constantly challenges our lives, societies, political and economic systems, and, not least, the Church." [1]

FASTING

If Lent is a time for listening, *fasting* is a concrete way to prepare ourselves to receive the word of God. Abstaining from food is an ancient ascetic practice that is essential on the path of conversion. Precisely because it involves the body, fasting makes it easier to recognize what we "hunger" for and what we deem necessary for our sustenance. Moreover, it helps us to identify and order our "appetites," keeping our hunger and thirst for justice alive and freeing us from complacency. Thus, it teaches us to pray and act responsibly towards our neighbor.

With spiritual insight, Saint Augustine helps us to understand the tension between the present moment and the future fulfilment that characterizes this custody of the heart. He observes that: "In the course of earthly life, it is incumbent upon men and women to hunger and thirst for justice, but to be satisfied belongs to the next life. Angels are satisfied with this bread, this food. The human race, on the other hand, hungers for it; we are all drawn to it in our desire. This reaching out in desire expands the soul and increases its capacity." [2] Understood in this way,

fasting not only permits us to govern our desire, purifying it and making it freer, but also to expand it, so that it is directed towards God and doing good.

However, in order to practice fasting in accordance with its evangelical character and avoid the temptation that leads to pride, it must be lived in faith and humility. It must be grounded in communion with the Lord, because “those who are unable to nourish themselves with the word of God do not fast properly.” [3] As a visible sign of our inner commitment to turn away from sin and evil with the help of grace, fasting must also include other forms of self-denial aimed at helping us to acquire a more sober lifestyle, since “austerity alone makes the Christian life strong and authentic.” [4]

In this regard, I would like to invite you to a very practical and frequently unappreciated form of abstinence: that of refraining from words that offend and hurt our neighbor. Let us begin by disarming our language, avoiding harsh words and rash judgement, refraining from slander and speaking ill of those who are not present and cannot defend themselves. Instead, let us strive to measure our words and cultivate kindness and respect in our families, among our friends, at work, on social media, in political debates, in the media and in Christian communities. In this way, words of hatred will give way to words of hope and peace.

TOGETHER

Finally, Lent emphasizes the communal aspect of listening to the word and fasting. The Bible itself underlines this dimension in multiple ways. For example, the Book of Nehemiah recounts how the people gathered to listen to the public reading of the Law, preparing to profess their faith and worship through fasting, so as to renew the covenant with God (cf. 9:1-3).

Likewise, our parishes, families, ecclesial groups and religious communities are called to undertake a shared journey during Lent, in which listening to the word of God, as well as to the cry of the poor and of the earth, becomes part of our community life, and fasting a foundation for sincere repentance. In this context, conversion refers not only to one’s conscience, but also to the quality of our relationships and dialogue. It means allowing ourselves to be challenged by reality and recognizing what truly guides our desires — both within our ecclesial communities and as regards humanity’s thirst for justice and reconciliation.

Dear friends, let us ask for the grace of a Lent that leads us to greater attentiveness to God and to the least among us. Let us ask for the strength that comes from the type of fasting that also extends to our use of language, so that hurtful words may diminish and give way to a greater space for the voice of others. Let us strive to make our communities places where the cry of those who suffer finds welcome, and listening opens paths towards liberation, making us ready and eager to contribute to building a civilization of love.

I impart my heartfelt blessing upon all of you and your Lenten journey.

From the Vatican, 5 February 2026, Memorial of Saint Agatha, Virgin and Martyr
LEO PP. XIV

[1] Apostolic Exhortation *Dilexi Te* (4 October 2025), 9.

[2] Augustine *The Usefulness of Fasting*, 1, 1.

[3] Benedict XVI, *Catechesis* (9 March 2011).

[4] Paul VI, *Catechesis* (8 February 1978).





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