

# St. Gerard Majella Roman Catholic Church

300 Terryville Road  
Port Jefferson Station, NY 11776  
Phone: 631-473-2900 Fax: 631-473-0015  
www.stgmajella.org



## Pastoral Staff

### Pastor

Rev. Gregory Rannazzisi [frgreg@stgmajella.org](mailto:frgreg@stgmajella.org)

### Parochial Vicars

Rev. Frank Grieco  
Rev. Sijomon Varghese [frsijomon@infantjesus.org](mailto:frsijomon@infantjesus.org)

### In Residence

Rev. Matthew Udobi  
Rev. Vitus Ezeiruaku

### Deacons

Deacon Frank DellAglio [deaconfrank@stgmajella.org](mailto:deaconfrank@stgmajella.org)  
Deacon John Grebe [deaconjohn@stgmajella.org](mailto:deaconjohn@stgmajella.org)  
Deacon Carlito Roman [deaconcarlito@stgmajella.org](mailto:deaconcarlito@stgmajella.org)

## Parish Trustees

Art Reyling & Ralph Carusillo

## Pastoral Staff

Dcn. Carlito Roman, Pastoral Associate for Administration [chuck@stgmajella.org](mailto:chuck@stgmajella.org)  
Chuck Pramnieks, Music Director [rpaplin@stgmajella.org](mailto:rpaplin@stgmajella.org)  
Bob Paplin, Facilities Manager [jennifer@stgmajella.org](mailto:jennifer@stgmajella.org)  
Jennifer Donnellon, Office Manager [patty@stgmajella.org](mailto:patty@stgmajella.org)  
Patty Longo, Director of Religious Ed. [thrift@stgmajella.org](mailto:thrift@stgmajella.org)  
Denise Nienburg, Thrift Shop Manager [secretary@stgmajella.org](mailto:secretary@stgmajella.org)  
Jackie Maggiore, Receptionist

## Parish Office Hours

Monday — Thursday: 9:00am-4:30pm  
Sunday: 8:00am-1:00pm Closed Friday and Saturday

## Mass & Devotions

Saturday: 5:00pm Sunday: 8:00am, 10:00am, 12:00pm  
Weekdays: 9:00am  
Rosary: Monday – Friday: 8:30am  
Chaplet of Divine Mercy: Monday - Friday: 9:30 am  
First Saturday: 11:00am Mass with the Anointing of the Sick

## Penance

The sacrament of Reconciliation (Confession) is celebrated on Saturdays from 3:45pm-4:45pm. You may call the Parish Office to make an appointment with one of the priests.

## Baptism

Baptisms are typically held twice a month at 1:30pm. Please call the Parish Office to schedule an appointment to set a date. Selection of godparents should be made after speaking with one of the priests or deacons.

## Marriage

Please call the Parish Office to make arrangements for your wedding at least six months in advance. No date can be set until the couple meets with a member of the clergy.

## Parish Outreach Hours

### Food Pantry

Tuesday: 11:30am-3:00pm  
Wednesday: 12:30pm-3:00pm  
Thursday: 11:30am-1:30pm & 4:30pm-5:30pm

### Thrift Shop/Barn

Monday — Thursday: 9:30am-3:30pm  
Friday: 9:30am-2:00pm  
Donations accepted Monday-Thursday: 10:00am-3:00pm  
and Friday: 10:00am-1:00pm. Please refer to our website for a list of items that can be donated.

### Stewardship Supper

The Thursday evening dinner is served between 4:30pm and 5:30pm. All are welcome.

You have been called to  
a holy life because of  
**CHRIST**  
**✠ JESUS**  
who destroyed  
death and  
brought life and  
immortality to  
light through  
the gospel

This is my  
**BELOVED SON**  
Listen to him!



©Religious Graphics, Ltd.

Sunday, March 1, 2026  
Second Sunday of Lent



*SAVE THE DATES!*  
LENTEN OFFERING  
JOINT-PARISH MISSION

FOR THE PARISHES OF INFANT JESUS AND ST. GERARD

March 3rd, 4th & 5th—7:15pm



Fr. Stephen Pietrowski is the Pastor of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish in Lake Ronkonkoma. He also serves as the Bishop's Delegate for Senior and Retired Priests, overseeing the St. Pius X Residence for retired priests.



*Stations of the Cross*



WE INVITE YOU TO JOIN US FOR THE STATIONS OF THE CROSS EVERY FRIDAY DURING LENT AT 7PM IN THE CHURCH. IT IS A BEAUTIFUL OPPORTUNITY FOR PRAYER AND REFLECTION ON JESUS' ULTIMATE SACRIFICE OF HIMSELF.

*Second Sunday of Lent*



*Lent*

**MOVIE AFTERNOON**  
**AT ST. GERARD'S**  
**SATURDAY, MARCH 14TH**  
**DOORS OPEN 2PM MOVIE STARTS 2:30PM**



**ENHANCE YOUR LENTEN JOURNEY BY JOINING US FOR A PARISH MOVIE EXPERIENCE AT THE CHURCH! ADMISSION IS \$3. PAY AT THE DOOR. ENJOY FREE SNACKS, INCLUDING FRESHLY POPPED, AUTHENTIC MOVIE-THEATER-STYLE POPCORN. WE LOOK FORWARD TO SHARING A FUN AND MEANINGFUL AFTERNOON TOGETHER! RATED PG (THEMATIC MATERIAL, VIOLENT CONTEXT, AND SOME SCARY MOMENTS.) 1 HOUR AND 45 MINUTES LONG**

*Our Parish Mission Statement: Formed by God's word and nourished at the Eucharist, we strive to be faithful witnesses to Jesus Christ by handing on the Catholic faith to our families and community and serving those in need.*

**March 1, 2026**



## Parish Outreach Ministry

*"Be diligent in serving the poor. Love the poor, honor them as you would Christ himself."*

*—St. Louise de Marillac*

### **Food Pantry Needs**

- Peanut Butter
- Canned Pasta
- Jelly
- Toilet Paper
- Rice
- Granola Bars
- Shelf Stable Milk
- Baked Beans
- Stuffing
- Pork n Beans
- Baby Wipes
- Shampoo
- Toothpaste
- Diapers
- Soap

# Easter Outreach Drive

**HELP FAMILIES HAVE A JOYFUL EASTER!**

We will be collecting donations of hams, boxed potatoes, canned green beans, apple sauce, juice, canned yams, cans of coffee, tea bags, baking mixes, frosting, candy, cream of mushroom soup, French crispy onions, biscuit mixes, plastic eggs, baking pans, plastic tablecloths, napkins, and grocery store gift cards. God bless you for your generosity! We would not be able to help so many families if it wasn't for YOU!

**ALL DONATIONS ARE  
DUE BY SUNDAY,  
MARCH 15TH**



# Religious Education

## Religious Education Classes

Level 1, 2, and 3 are on site this week.

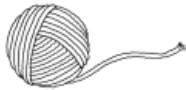
Level 7-Tuesday 7pm-8:15pm and Level 8-Wednesday 7pm-8:15pm

### Works of Mercy Tree

#### Materials:

Coffee can	Leafless tree branch
Gift wrapping paper	Yarn
Glue	Paper punch
Plaster of paris	

You may need one or two aides for this project.



#### FAITH CONNECTION

*Explain that the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy are concrete ways of showing our love of neighbors.*

#### Directions:

1. Cover a coffee can with gift wrapping paper.
2. Fill the coffee can with plaster of paris. Set the branch down into the plaster of paris and hold the branch upright.
3. Have the students make little booklets from gift wrapping paper and write a promise to perform a work of mercy inside each booklet. (One or two aides will be needed to help the younger students write their works.)
4. Write the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy on the board.

#### Corporal Works of Mercy

Feeding the hungry  
Sheltering the homeless  
Clothing the naked  
Visiting the sick and those in prison  
Giving alms to the poor  
Burying the dead

#### Spiritual Works of Mercy

Instructing  
Advising  
Consoling  
Comforting  
Forgiving  
Bearing wrongs with patience

5. Punch a hole in each booklet. Using yarn, tie each booklet to the tree.
6. Help the students remember to do their works of mercy by suggesting they make a "promise" tree at home.
7. This project can be brought to the liturgy and presented as the students' gift.



### OCIA Christian Initiation of Adults

Are you an adult thinking of becoming part of the Catholic community and completing your sacraments?  
Contact Deacon Frank at [deaconfrank@stgmajella.org](mailto:deaconfrank@stgmajella.org) or 631-473-2900.

March 1, 2026

# Mass Intentions and Presider Schedule for the Week of March 2-March 8

## Monday, March 2nd

9:00am Vince Ficarrota

## Tuesday, March 3rd

9:00am Domenico Scordamaglia

## Wednesday, March 4th

9:00am Frank Hickey, Fr. Richard Donovan,  
Donna Wayne

## Thursday, March 5th

9:00am Jason Montalvo

## Friday, March 6th

9:00am Martin Schilling

## Saturday, March 7th

5:00pm Jimmy Bridges, Paul Szabo, Mildred Malone, Bill Popielaski,  
Joan McHugh, Thomas Catalano Jr.

## Sunday, March 8th

8:00am Intentions of Mary Francisca Ezeiruaku

10:00am Dominic Dentici

12:00pm Joan Gallagher



## Stewardship Report

Last Week's Collection - \$7,021.00

## Weekly Memorials

***Our Sanctuary Candle has been lovingly  
donated in memory of:***

***Thomas Catalano Jr.***

***Our Bread and Wine has been lovingly  
donated in memory of:***

***Souls in Purgatory***



## Prayers for the Sick

All the sick and residents of Atria, St. Joseph's Village, Woodhaven Adult Home & Nursing Home & Jefferson's Ferry, Luke John Carusillo, Erin Whitehead, LouEllen Klints, Arline & Paul Guma, Charles Ricottone, Connie & Frank Biscardi, Vinnie Surwilo, Barbara Klein-Croner, Robert Mutschler, Joan Francavilla, Barbara & Pat Consorte, Nancy Mulvihill, Antonio Loiacone, Vincent Ricottone, Frank Perugini, Mary Louise Delano, Jean Maglione, Michael Maglione, Donna DiBiago, John Schlauraff, Elena Badami, Thomas Hayes, Jaclyn Lin, Andrew DiPierno, Sal & Rosalie Cottone, Jill Pagliuca, Kathy Dailey, Kelly Bosco, Karl Wolf, Mario Cappellieri, Barbara Forbes, Kara Philippi, Faith Greulich, Eugene Zampiero, Anthony Mazzarino, Annette Brownell, Otto Schmidtman, Gail Seith, Marie Bilbao, Elissa Murphy, Denise Tesone-Shaw, Tim Hawn, Anthony Paletto, Martin Hetrich.

We pray for all recently deceased, remembering  
Nelly Bassi and Eugene Zampieron.

May they find eternal rest and joy.



## Breaking Open the Word

Reflecting on next Sunday's Gospel before you come to Mass can bring so much more meaning to your experience of the Liturgy. Here's the Gospel for next Sunday. How does this Gospel touch your life?

### March 8, 2026 Third Sunday of Lent John 4:5-42

Jesus came to a town of Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of land that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there. Jesus, tired from his journey, sat down there at the well. It was about noon. A woman of Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." His disciples had gone into the town to buy food. The Samaritan woman said to him, "How can you, a Jew, ask me, a Samaritan woman, for a drink?" —For Jews use nothing in common with Samaritans.— Jesus answered and said to her, "If you knew the gift of God and who is saying to you, 'Give me a drink, ' you would have asked him and he would have given you living water." The woman said to him, "Sir, you do not even have a bucket and the cistern is deep; where then can you get this living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us this cistern and drank from it himself with his children and his flocks?" Jesus answered and said to her, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again; but whoever drinks the water I shall give will never thirst; the water I shall give will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I may not be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water." Jesus said to her, "Go call your husband and come back." The woman answered and said to him, "I do not have a husband." Jesus answered her, "You are right in saying, 'I do not have a husband.' For you have had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband. What you have said is true." The woman said to him, "Sir, I can see that you are a prophet. Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain; but you people say that the place to worship is in Jerusalem." Jesus said to her, "Believe me, woman, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You people worship what you do not understand; we worship what we understand, because salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, and is now here, when true worshipers will worship the Father in Spirit and truth; and indeed the Father seeks such people to worship him. God is Spirit, and those who worship him must worship in Spirit and truth." The woman said to him, "I know that the Messiah is coming, the one called the Christ; when he comes, he will tell us everything." Jesus said to her, "I am he, the one speaking with you." At that moment his disciples returned, and were amazed that he was talking with a woman, but still no one said, "What are you looking for?" or "Why are you talking with her?"

The woman left her water jar and went into the town and said to the people, "Come see a man who told me everything I have done. Could he possibly be the Christ?" They went out of the town and came to him. Meanwhile, the disciples urged him, "Rabbi, eat." But he said to them, "I have food to eat of which you do not know." So the disciples said to one another, "Could someone have brought him something to eat?" Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of the one who sent me and to finish his work. Do you not say, 'In four months the harvest will be here'? I tell you, look up and see the fields ripe for the harvest. The reaper is already receiving payment and gathering crops for eternal life, so that the sower and reaper can rejoice together. For here the saying is verified that 'One sows and another reaps.' I sent you to reap what you have not worked for; others have done the work, and you are sharing the fruits of their work." Many of the Samaritans of that town began to believe in him because of the word of the woman who testified, "He told me everything I have done." When the Samaritans came to him, they invited him to stay with them; and he stayed there two days. Many more began to believe in him because of his word, and they said to the woman, "We no longer believe because of your word; for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is truly the savior of the world."

### Reflection Questions

- In verse 9, the Samaritan woman was surprised that Jesus spoke to her because Jews did not associate with Samaritans. What does this tell us about how Jesus treats people? How can we follow His example in how we treat others?
- Jesus told the woman that He could give her "living water" (v. 10). What do you think He meant by that? How is Jesus like living water in our lives?
- Jesus told His disciples that the fields were "ripe for harvest" (v. 35). He was talking about people who were ready to believe in Him. What do you think this means for us today? How can we be part of the "harvest"?
- The Samaritan woman told others about Jesus, and many believed because of her testimony (v. 39). Why is it important to share what Jesus has done in our lives? How can you do this in your own life?

# Worship

## Catholic Ministries Appeal

### Ways To Give

*"Do not be afraid of what God asks of you! It is worth saying 'yes' to God. In him we find joy."*

### Gift Of Cash

Checks should be made payable to the "Catholic Ministries Appeal" and mailed to P.O. Box 4000, Rockville Centre, NY 11571

### Matching Gifts

Go to [www.matchinggifts.com/drvc](http://www.matchinggifts.com/drvc) to see if your employer will match the charitable contributions of employees.

### Memorial Gifts

<https://www.drvc.org/donate/cma-memorial/>

### By Text

Text keyword CMA

to: (516) 271-3338

### Over the Phone

Call us at (516) 678-5800 ext. 296 and we can take your payment information.

Scan to give to  
CMA!



## Offertory and Online Giving

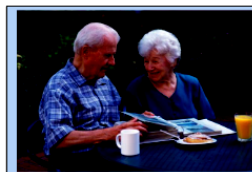
Request weekly giving envelopes in our Parish Office or scan the QR code to give online!

### Remit Offertory Envelopes by mail

St. Gerard Majella Church  
300 Terryville Road Port Jefferson Station, NY 11776

Attn: Business Office

### Charitable Donations



**The IRA Charitable Rollover is back and is now permanent!**

What's called a rollover is actually a "qualified charitable distribution" that can be made to our Parish.

### If...

1. You are at least 70 1/2 years old on the date you make your gift
2. Your IRA is a traditional or Roth
3. You don't exceed your personal maximum of \$100,000 per year in qualified charitable distributions

**You will not have to report your distribution as income.** It will be free of federal and New York State income tax, and it will count toward your required minimum distribution (RMD).

The best way for you to start is with your IRA custodian. Tell them you want to make a "qualified charitable distribution". In most cases you will only have to fill out a simple form.

**VERY IMPORTANT!!** Your gift must go directly from your IRA to the Parish. If you receive the money first then you'll be taxed on it like any other distribution.

*Example: Mrs. Connors, age 76, has \$125,000 in a traditional IRA and would like to contribute \$5,000 to her Parish in 2016. Upon hearing of the Charitable IRA Rollover opportunity, she directs the custodian of her IRA to transfer this amount not later than December 31, 2016 directly to the Parish as a 2016 gift. She will not be subject to income tax on her \$5,000 qualified charitable distribution.*

## ALTAR EASTER FLOWERS

Would you like to make a donation towards our Altar Easter flowers in memory of a loved one or for a special intention?

Please fill out the form below and drop it off in the office with Jackie or in the collection basket along with your offering. The names will be printed in the *Easter Bulletin* so please print clearly.

### Altar Flowers Form

Donation made in memory of: \_\_\_\_\_

or

For the intention of: \_\_\_\_\_

Requested by:

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone# \_\_\_\_\_

*Second Sunday of Lent*

## Our Ministries and Groups

### Knights of Columbus

To learn more, please call Peter Santoro

631-457-9973

**YOU ARE BORN A MAN  
YOU BECOME A KNIGHT!**

Scan with phone camera!



**YOU ARE CALLED! JOIN TODAY!**

**Free 12 Month Membership**

Visit

**KofC.org/JoinUs**

Use Promo Code

**BlessedMcGivney**

## Join the Columbiettes!



### A Sisterhood of Faith, Charity and Service

Are you a Catholic woman looking to grow in faith, friendship, and service to your parish and community?

The Columbiettes is a united group of women who work side-by-side with the Knights of Columbus, dedicated to charitable works, spiritual growth, and strengthening our Catholic values.

### What We Do:

- Support parish and community events
- Engage in charitable projects
- Grow together in faith and fellowship
- Make a real difference with our time and talents

**Whether you're young or young at heart, single or married—there's a place for you in our sisterhood!**

**Interested?**

Email us at:  
[SGMColumbiettes@gmail.com](mailto:SGMColumbiettes@gmail.com)

Follow us on Instagram! @SGMColumbiettes

## St. Joseph Men's PRAYER GROUP

Men, ages 18 and up, from St. Gerard Majella and Infant Jesus Parishes are invited.



Thursday  
March 19, 2026



7:30PM  
9:00PM



St. Gerard's Parish Hall  
300 Terryville Rd, PJS

### What to Expect:

- ✓ Guided prayer time
- ✓ Reflection & Sharing
- ✓ Refreshments & Fellowship
- ✓ Bring Rosary beads!

**R.S.V.P.**



Parish Office  
631-473-2900



Peter Santoro  
[peter.m.santoro@gmail.com](mailto:peter.m.santoro@gmail.com)



## Breathwork and Meditation

Presented by our  
Parishioner, Karen Santoro.

**Thursday, March 19th  
7:30pm to 8:30pm  
in our Parish Lobby.**

Wear comfy clothes!

All are welcome!

March 1, 2026

## Weekly Memorials Available

Would you like to have a loved one remembered? Give thanks for one of God's many Graces? Or offer up a prayer for someone in need? Please consider a Weekly Memorial. These are Memorials that are dedicated for an entire week, running from Monday to Sunday. Memorials are listed each week in the parish bulletin. Please contact our parish office to reserve a memorial for your intention. Memorials are available for:

Bread & Wine (\$30)

Sanctuary Lamp Candle (\$20)



# RENEWBYTE

Student-Run Nonprofit Organization



## WHAT WE DO



### Free Repair

We offer **free labor** on screen replacements, battery swaps, and general electronics repair — **you just pay for the parts.**



### Donations

We accept tech in **any condition** to support our mission.

## WHO WE ARE

Hi! Our names are Austin and Jinxu, and we're part of the Class of 2027 at Ward Melville High School. Our mission is to repair damaged electronics and provide technology to low-income families.

We started this organization to give back to our community and show that anyone can make a difference. We are deeply grateful for your support and are confident in the change we will achieve with it.



@renewbytesolutions



renewbytesolutions@gmail.com

## Fellowship of Readers

Our next read will be *Sensible Shoes: A story about the Spiritual Journey* by Sharon Garlough Brown. Our next meeting will be on Wednesday March 11 @ 10am in the Parish hall. Look forward to seeing you all there.

## LECTIO DIVINA

- Lectio
- Meditatio
- Oratio
- Contemplatio



Join Bishop Andrzej  
For Scripture Reflection Series  
**ENCOUNTERS with JESUS**  
Tuesday, March 3, 2026  
at 7:30 pm - ZOOM webinar.



Bible Study Verses

## SAMARITAN WOMAN

Gospel of John 4: 5-42

Registration is required in order to receive the ZOOM link to each session.  
Please contact the Western Vicariate office with your name, parish, email address and phone number.  
Send your email to:  
[westernvicariate@drvc.org](mailto:westernvicariate@drvc.org)  
or call Suzanne at 516-744-6850.



## COFFEE with JESUS

Morning Lenten Scripture Reflections  
on the Meaning of Season in Christian Life

Join Bishop Andrzej  
Fridays of Lent  
February 27, March 13 and 27 at 11 am  
for Webinar Lenten Reflections



Registration Required  
Call Suzanne at 516.744.6850  
or email - [westernvicariate@drvc.org](mailto:westernvicariate@drvc.org)  
to receive Zoom Webinar Link





## **Clutter Out-of-Control?**

Piles of Pots? Tons of Towels?

Acres of Accessories?

Gobs of Games?

Loads of LPs?

Scads of Scarcely Used Stuff?

**HELP US TO HELP YOU!**

**OUR BARN NEEDS YOUR NON-CLOTHING DONATIONS!!!**

**Your Closet Chaos Is Our Dream Come True!**

Donations Accepted: Monday-Thursday 9:30-3  
and Friday 9:30-1:30

**Can't Get Here During The Week?**

**We Will Be OPEN**

**Saturday, March 7**

**10:00 am -2:00 pm**

**for both shopping and donating!**



# *St. Gerard Majella Adult Enrichment Series*

Deacon Frank Dell'Aglio

presents

## HOW & WHEN JESUS CELEBRATED THE PASSOVER SEDER IN THE YEAR OF HIS DEATH

Exploring how God used the Passover seder and the apparent contradiction concerning when it was to take place that year to fulfill His plan for our salvation.



2 Monday Evenings 7:15pm-9pm in St. Gerard's Parish Hall

(Classes will be video recorded)

MARCH 16TH & 23RD

Spend some time deepening your knowledge of our Catholic Faith!

Registration Form - Complete and Return to the St. Gerard Parish Office

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Phone # \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address \_\_\_\_\_

Please mail or return form to the church office in a sealed envelope marked  
Adult Enrichment Course.

Church of St. Gerard Majella | 300 Terryville Road | Port Jefferson Station, NY | 631-473-2900  
[www.stgmajella.org](http://www.stgmajella.org)

## *A Safe Drive Through The Aging Process*



*An Informative Presentation For  
St. Gerard Majella & Infant Jesus Parishioners  
Thursday, March 5th, 1:00pm  
St. Gerard Majella Parish Hall*

**Identifying and correcting driving issues.**

**Warning signs of diminishing skills.**

**Exercise and driving.**

**What can the older driver do to continue driving safely?**

**Self-evaluating your driving skills.**

**Cognitive self assessments related to safe driving.**

**And much more beneficial information!**

*Speaker: Alan Goldman, Seniors Driving Specialist  
Refreshments*

*RSVP: Jennifer Donnellon-631-473-2900*

*Email: Jennifer@stgmajella.org*



# Bowling

## FUNDRAISER

HOSTED BY THE ST. GERARD MAJELLA COLUMBIETTES

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**MARCH 7TH**

**12:00 PM**

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**TICKETS: \$25**

**TICKET INCLUDES:**

GAME PLAY FROM 12PM TO 2PM, SHOE RENTAL, PIZZA, SODA AND FRENCH FRIES

JOIN US FOR FAMILY FRIENDLY FUN AT

**CORAM COUNTRY LANES**  
**615 MIDDLE COUNTRY RD**  
**CORAM, NY**

TO PURCHASE TICKETS, CONTACT  
MARY AT 631-352-7974

**TICKETS MUST BE PURCHASED BY MARCH 1**

**RAFFLES AND A 50/50 AVAILABLE FOR  
AN ADDITIONAL FEE**



## ***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.”

**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.” 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.” 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.” 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*

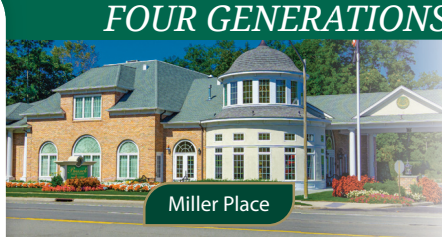
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