



HOLY NAME OF JESUS PARISH

National Catholic Church

15 THAYER STREET

SOUTH DEERFIELD, MA 0137

Rev. Fr. Robert M. Koerber, Pastor

Email: koerber702@charter.net

Emergency contact: (413) 530-8575

Parish phone: (413) 665-2129

Website: holynamesouthdeerfield.org

FB: Holy Name of Jesus, South Deerfield

MARCH 23, 2025 – 3RD SUNDAY OF LENT

9:00 am – Holy Mass of the Eucharist to be celebrated in the Traditional Rite of the PNCC.

OPENING HYMN

“TO THEE, WE COME, O LORD OUR GOD”

To Thee we come, O Lord, our God,
Before Thine altar, Father
Thou knowest best our yearning hearts;
This supplication answer.
Lift up from want Thy people, Lord,
Bless us, O God; O Father, bless our toil.
Under Thy cross we stand prepared,
To serve Thee with devotion;
Be it with sweat of blood or tears,
Or humble resignation.
For we Thy people are, O Lord,
Save us, O God; O Father, bless our toil.

ENTRANCE HYMN

(Habakkuk 3:17a,18; Isaiah 3:10)

- V. For though the fig tree blossom not, nor fruit be of the vines, yet will I rejoice in the Lord and exult in my saving God.
- R. Happy the just, for it will be well with them, the fruit of their works they will eat.
- V. Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,
- R. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

OPENING PRAYER

V. The Lord be with you.

R. And also with you.

V. **Let us pray.** Almighty, merciful God, You call us to leave the barren ways of the world and return to You. Give us the grace of repentance that we may live our lives in accord with the teachings of Your Son, Jesus Christ. We ask this through the same Jesus Christ, Who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

R. Amen.



LITURGY OF THE WORD OF GOD

A READING FROM THE BOOK OF EXODUS

(Exodus 3:1-8, 13-15)

Moses was tending the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian. Leading the flock across the desert, he came to Horeb, the mountain of God. There an angel of the LORD appeared to Moses in fire flaming out of a bush. As he looked on, he was surprised to see that the bush, though on fire, was not consumed. So Moses decided, “I must go over to look at this remarkable sight and see why the bush is not burned.” When the LORD saw him coming over to look at it more closely, God called out to him from the bush, “Moses! Moses!” He answered, “Here I am.” God said, “Come no nearer! Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground. I AM the God of your fathers,” He continued, “the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob.” Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God. But the LORD said, “I have witnessed the affliction of my people in Egypt and have heard their cry of complaint against their slave drivers, so I know well what they are suffering. Therefore, I have come down to rescue them from the hands of the Egyptians and lead them out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey.” Moses said to God, “But when I go to the Israelites and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you, ‘if they ask me, ‘What is

his name?' what am I to tell them?' God replied, "I am who am." Then he added, "This is what you shall tell the Israelites: I AM sent me to you." God spoke further to Moses, "Thus shall you say to the Israelites: The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob, has sent Me to you. "This is My name forever; thus am I to be remembered through all generations."

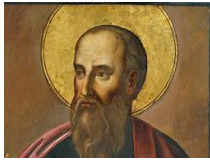
V. This is the Word of the Lord.
R. Thanks be to God.

GRADUAL

(Lamentations 5:19-21)

V. You, O Lord, are enthroned forever: Your throne stands from age to age. Why, then, should You forget us, abandon us so long a time?

R. Lead us back to You, O Lord, that we may be restored: give us anew such days as we had of old.



A READING FROM THE FIRST LETTER OF PAUL TO THE CORINTHIANS

(1 Corinthians 10:1-6, 10-12)

I do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, that our ancestors were all under the cloud and all passed through the sea, and all of them were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. All ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink, for they drank from a spiritual rock that followed them, and the rock was the Christ. Yet God was not pleased with most of them, for they were struck down in the desert. These things happened as examples for us, so that we might not desire evil things, as they did. Do not grumble as some of them did and suffered death by the destroyer. These things happened to them as an example, and they have been written down as a warning to us, upon whom the end of the ages has come. Therefore, whoever thinks he is standing secure should take care not to fall.

V. This is the Word of the Lord.
R. Thanks be to God.

TRACT

(Ezekiel 18:30-31)

V. Repent and turn away from all your transgressions: otherwise iniquity will be your ruin.

R. Cast away from you all transgressions that you have committed against me, and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit.



THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO SAINT LUKE

(Luke 13:1-9)

V. The Lord be with you.

R. And with you.

V. A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Saint Luke.

R. Glory be to You, O Lord.

Some people told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with the blood of their sacrifices. Jesus said to them in reply, "Do you think that because these Galileans suffered in this way, they were greater sinners than all other Galileans? By no means! But I tell you, if you do not repent, you will all perish as they did! Or those eighteen people who were killed when the tower at Siloam fell on them— do you think they were more guilty than everyone else who lived in Jerusalem? By no means! But I tell you, if you do not repent, you will all perish as they did!" And he told them this parable: "There once was a person who had a fig tree planted in his orchard, and when he came in search of fruit on it but found none, he said to the gardener, 'For three years now I have come in search of fruit on this fig tree but have found none. So cut it down. Why should it exhaust the soil?' He said to him in reply, 'Sir, leave it for this year also, and I shall cultivate the ground around it and fertilize it; it may bear fruit in the future. If not, you can cut it down.'"

V. This is the Gospel of the Lord.

R. Praise be to You, Lord Jesus Christ.

PROFESSION OF FAITH

I believe in One God, the Father, the Almighty,
Maker of heaven and earth
Of all that is seen and unseen.
I believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
The only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father.
God from God, Light from Light, True God
from true God, begotten not made
Of one being with the Father.
Through Him all things were made
For us and for our salvation.
He came down from heaven:
By the power of the Holy Spirit
He was born of the Virgin Mary
And became man.
For our sake, He was crucified
under Pontius Pilate
He suffered death and was buried.
On the third day He rose again
In fulfillment of the Scriptures.
He ascended into heaven and
Is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory
To judge the living and the dead
And His kingdom will have no end.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
The Lord and Giver of Life
Who proceeds from the Father,
With the Father and the Son
He is worshipped and glorified.
He has spoken through the prophets.
I believe in One, Holy, Catholic
and Apostolic Church
I acknowledge one
for the forgiveness of sins.
I look for the resurrection of the dead
And the + life of the world to come. Amen.



OFFERTORY VERSE

(Jeremiah 8:13)

V. I will gather them all in, says the Lord: no grapes
on the vine, no figs on the fig trees, foliage
withered.

PRAYER OVER THE GIFTS

V. Lord our God. You call us to return to You.
Receive these gifts which we offer as a sign of our
repentance. We ask this in the name of Your Son,
Jesus Christ, Who lives and reigns with You and the
Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

COMMUNION VERSE

(Zechariah 1:3b)

V. Return to Me says the Lord of hosts, and I will
return to you.

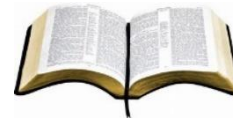
CLOSING PRAYER

V. The Lord be with you.

R. And also with you.

V. Let us pray. Heavenly Father, You have
refreshed us through this Holy Sacrament. Renew
us in spirit so that we may draw ever closer to You
and share in the life of Your Son. We ask this
through the same Jesus Christ, Who lives and reigns
with You and the Holy Spirit, One God, forever and
ever.

R. Amen.



RELECTIONS

“I AM THAT I AM”

(Exodus 3:14)

Found in today’s first prescribed reading, we
read of the time in the Old Testament, where Moses
came into the presence of God, or in Hebrew
“Yahweh,” At this encounter, Moses was given a
divine directive, of approaching the Pharaoh of
Egypt, widely believed to have been Ramesses II, to
free the Israelites who were enslaved. Moses,
looking for understanding and purpose to this
mission, ascended Mt. Sinai and there he met God.

Moses, on this encounter, asked God: “But when
I go to the Israelites and say to them, ‘The God of
your fathers has sent me to You,.’ If they ask me,
‘What is His name?’ what am I to tell them?” God
replied: “This is what you shall tell the Israelites:

I AM sent me to you.”

The very reference of the great “I AM,” pronounced by God to Moses, was not only in the past tense, nor in the future tense, but rather, which can be defined as the “Eternal Now,” where God known in many faiths, as simply the “Creator” or as Jesus taught his followers in the NT as “Our Father.”

In the Old Testament, we read in Genesis 1:1, from the First book of the “Torah”, or in Greek, from the “Pentateuch” that “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth”



The identification of the great “I AM.” was to be coined 1500 years later by Jesus, who as the “Anointed One of God,” the “Christos” or the “Christ” in Greek and the “Messiah” or “Mashiach” in Judaism, was seen.

In the Gospel of John, we hear Jesus proclaim: “I AM the Good Shepherd, I AM the Living Bread which has come down Heaven; I AM the Light of the World; I AM the Way, the Truth, and the Life; I AM the Resurrection and the Life”

These and other declarations by Jesus were not only to confirm His own divinity, as the “only begotten” of God, but most importantly, in this moment in history, would be a most special visitation of the Divine among God’s people, through His Son, Yeshua or as we know Jesus

We read from Paul’s Letter to the Hebrew 1:1-4, the following:

“Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, but in these last days He has spoken to us by a Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom He also created the worlds. He is the reflection of God’s glory and the exact imprint of God’s very being, and He sustains all things by His powerful word. When He had made purification for sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become as much superior to angels as the name He has inherited is more excellent than theirs.”

Yahweh was to reveal Himself not in a burning bush, as revealed to Moses, not through the words of the prophets but in the Son, who John the Evangelist proclaimed in the beginning of His Gospel account: “In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God.”

Again, Jesus was to proclaim His identity in the “Eternal now” for He was and is and ever will be. “I am the Alpha & the Omega, the First and the Last” as He proclaimed in the book of Revelation 22:13. There are some who look at Jesus as one who lived 2000 years ago but yet fail to acknowledge the Eternal Jesus alive in their lives today. He promised that He would ever be present among us. And just as He is eternal, so also are the truths that He spoke, for they represent the highest spiritual and moral teachings known to man revealed by His Son.



The Book of Exodus

The Book of Exodus is the second book of the Old Testament and is part of the Pentateuch, which comprises the first five books of the Old Testament, also known as the Torah or the Law of Moses, It is commonly accepted that Moses is the author of the Pentateuch or the “Torah,” as revealed to Him by God. The key thought for the Book of Exodus is “Deliverance.” Exodus starts with the death of Joseph and ends with the second year of wandering of the Israelites in the wilderness.

From Genesis, there is a “Fall, where in the Book of Exodus, the theme becomes “Deliverance.

It can be said that the Book of Exodus can be divided into four periods of the history of Israel.

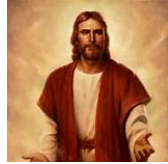
The first period of the Hebrews came slavery, Bondage and Oppression of the Israelites by the Egyptians. Please read (Chap. 1:1-17) The Book of Exodus, also covers the early life of Moses, from his birth to his marriage (Chapters 2: 1-22).

The second period has been called the “period of Deliverance.” It begins with the call of Moses at the

burning bush (Chap. 3:1-10), his divine calling (Chap. 3:12-4:9), the battle with pharaoh and the ten plagues (Chap. 7-11), and finally the first Passover (Chap.12).

The third period has been called the “period of Discipline.” It begins with the Exodus from Egypt (Chap. 12:31-51) and the experiences of the Israelites on their way to Mt. Sinai (Chap. 13-18).

The fourth period has been called the “period of Revelation, Organization and Legislation of the Law.” This period starts with the arrival at Mt. Sinai (Chap. 19), the appearance of the Lord on Sinai and the giving of the Ten Commandments (Chap. 19-20), and other laws given (Chap. 21-24), the directions on the building of the first tabernacle (Chap. 25-27), the appointment of the first high priest (Chap. 28), the worship of the golden calf (Chap. 32), and finally the building of the tabernacle (Chap. 35-40). The end of the Book of Exodus (Chap. 40:38) has the following words: “For throughout all their journeys, the cloud of the Lord was on the tabernacle by day, and there was fire in it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel.”



SIMILARITIES OF MOSES AND JESUS

When we look closer at the lives of Moses and Jesus we find many parallels. Among the similarities of Moses and Jesus:

1. Moses, a Jew was born when the Egyptians (gentiles) ruled the people of Israel . (Ex.1:8-10).
Jesus a Jew was born when the Romans (gentiles) ruled the people of Israel. (Lk. 2:1-5).
2. Pharaoh decreed that all male Hebrew babies should be killed by casting them into the river. (Ex. 1:23).
King Herod, decreed that all male Hebrew babies should be put to death by the “sword.” (Mt. 2:16).
3. Moses' mother put him in the river in a basket. (Ex.2:3).

Jesus' mother put Him in a manger. (Lk. 2:7).

4. Moses was hidden in Egypt for 3 months to keep him alive. (Ex 2:2).

Jesus was also hidden in Egypt to keep Him alive. (Mt. 2:13).

5. Moses was in exile in a foreign land in Israel until the king of Egypt had died. (Ex 2:23).

Jesus was in exile in a foreign land, Egypt, until King Herod died. (Mt. 2:19-20).

6. Moses means “drawn out of the water”. (Ex. 2:10. Moses was to be Israel's way of salvation.

Jesus' name in Hebrew is “Yeshūa” which means “salvation.” Jesus was man’s way to salvation. “I am the Way, the Truth and the Life.” (John 14:6).

7. The favor of God was upon Moses, even as an infant. Pharaoh's daughter took him out of the river and he became a prince of Egypt (Ex 2:5).

The favor of God was upon Jesus. Wise men worshipped Him and presented gifts to Him. He was to be the Regenerator as well as the Savior of the world. (Matthew 2:11).



OUR PARISH CALENDAR

March 24th - March 30th

8:45 am Liturgy of the Hours
9:00 am Holy Mass of the Eucharist

- | | |
|------------------|---|
| Mon. 3/24 | Feast – Gabriel, Archangel
Gabriel, NT – Archange
Irenaeus of Sirmium, Bishop & Martyr
Alderman, Abbot |
| Tue. 3/25 | Solemnity – Annunciation of the BVM
Annunciation of the BVM
Dismas, the Good Thief, NT
Barontius, Confessor |

Wed. 3/26 **Mass of Health and Healing**
 Castulus, Martyr
 Felix of Trier, Bishop
 Ludger of Munster, Bishop

Thur. 3/27 **Mass to the Holy Saints of God**
 John of Damascus, Priest, D. & C.
 Rupert of Salzburg, Bishop
 John of Egypt, Confessor

Fri. 3/28 **Mass to the Holy Angels of God**
 Guntramnus, King and Confessor
 Tutilo, Confessor
 Jonas & Brachisius, Martyr

Sat. 3/29 **Mass to the Holy Name of Jesus**
 Mark & Cyril, Martyrs
 Armogastes, Archinimus & Saturas,
 Martyrs



PRAYERS FOR HEALTH AND HEALING

In our prayers, let us please remember all our brothers and sisters, who are in need of the blessings of God for health and healing.

We ask, that if you know of anyone, who are need in prayer, whether it be of health and healing, or another need, please write out your request. Cards may be found in the vestibule of our Church.

In our prayers, may we especially remember:

George Sadowski, Wayne Shaw, Karen Herzig, Richard Foster, Cindy Benjamin, Marge Sanderson, Carolyn Rapelye, Liam and Evelyn Spatcher, Paula Winn, Jerry Pawlikowski, as well as others. May we also pray for each other.

Let us pray. O Lord, God of mercies, in Your kindness stretch out Your hand and heal all our brothers and sisters who are in any way ailing. Make them worthy of health, deliver them from their present sicknesses and illnessness and grant them recovery in Jesus' holy name. We ask this through the same Jesus Christ, Who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.



NEXT SUNDAY, MARCH 30, 2025

THE FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT

9:00 am – Holy Mass of the Eucharist to be celebrated in the Contemporary Rite of the PNCC.

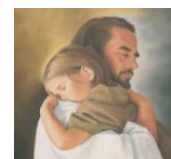


MARCH 25th

SOLEMNITY OF THE ANNUNCIATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

On Tuesday, March 25th, Holy Mass will be celebrated to mark the time when Mary was visited by the Archangel Gabriel to announce that she was chosen by God to be the sacred vessel to bring His Son, Jesus into the world.

“The angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town of Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the house of David, and the virgin’s name was Mary. And coming to her, he said, “Hail, full of grace! The Lord is with you.” - Luke 1:26-28



OUR PARISH OUTREACH PROGRAMS

“Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others.” - Philippians 2:4



Our Food Ministry: “To Feed the Hungry”

“I was hungry, and you gave me something to eat.”

- Matthew 25: 35

I am happy to announce that our parish gave out 12 bags of groceries and 10 children's bags this past Saturday.

A special thanks goes out to Cheryl Major, Sue and Eric Dibrindisi who helped give out groceries.

Due to the observance of Holy Saturday, our next grocery give-a-way has been moved to April 26, which is the fourth Saturday of April.

- Cereals and packets of instant oatmeal.
- Fruit juices, - V8, Apple and cranberry
- powder milk / condensed milk.
- Hot chocolate and tea bags.
- Pasta and spaghetti sauce
- Boxes of Mac-n-cheese
- Canned tuna in water
- Canned meats- chicken, salmon, etc.
- Ramen noodles
- Soups- all varieties
- Canned veggies and fruits.
- Children's snack pack.

Please note: We are also collecting in our Parish ministries, full sized containers of personal care as well as cleaning items for the various survival centers. Some of those items that are needed:

- Bar soaps and body wash, shampoo, toothpaste and toothbrushes, deodorant, hand sanitizers, toilet paper, and personal products for incontinence (pads & panty liners, baby powder, baby wipes and diapers.
- Liquid dish soap, laundry detergent, paper towels, bathroom and kitchen cleansers, dish sponges/scrubbers, trash bags.



Collecting plastic tops

One of our dear parishioners, Maryanna Foster, who works closely with veterans, has asked for our help in collecting **white or clear plastic bottle tops** that will be donated to aid in the making of prosthetics for veterans in need. A collection

container has been set up in the vestibule of our church. Please help donate your plastic tops to this new ministry. May God bless all of our endeavors.



Can Soda Tabs

We are also collecting tabs from soda cans that are then donated to aid the Shriners Hospitals for Crippled children. Please save your can soda tabs. There are containers that are located in our Parish vestibule for this purpose. Thank you to all who have donated to this cause and may God bless all our endeavors.



ED MISSION & EVANGELIS COMMISSION WEDNESDAYS AT NOON – CALL TO PRAYER

On Wednesdays at 12:00 Noon, during the month of February, a “call to prayer” the following two prayers are said.

Let us pray for those who do not believe in God. May they receive the gift of faith that they may come to believe in One God, the Father, the Almighty, Maker of Heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.

Let us Pray: Almighty and Eternal God, You created humanity in Your own image and likeness. Grant grace to those who do not believe in You,, so that all might come to acknowledge You as the one true God and Father of us all. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen. +



THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father who art in Heaven, hallowed by Thy Name, Thy Kingdom come, Thy Will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us our daily bread and forgive us of our trespasses this day as we forgive those who trespass against us and led us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. Ame

ED MISSION & EVANGELISM COMMISSION LENTEN COLLECTION BOXES

At a meeting of the Eastern Diocesan M & E Commission, it was decided that beginning with Septuagesima Sunday, all parishes in our Diocese will be asked to help contribute donations during this Lenten season. It should be noted, that as in the past, each parish will determine what charitable organization(s) they wish to donate all monies collected at the end of the Lenten season. Thank you.



ANNUAL FOOD & BAKE SALE APRIL 12, 2025

On Saturday, April 12, 2025, the day before Palm Sunday, our Parish will hold its **Annual Food and Bake Sale** in our Parish Hall from **9 AM – Noon**.

Many traditional Polish food such as pierogi, galabki and kapusta will be available, as well as soups, sandwiches, along with many cakes and pastries.

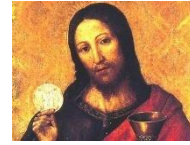
We ask that all baked goods be brought to the church either on Thursday, April 10th between 4:00 pm and 5:30 pm or Friday morning, April 11th. We ask for help on the day of this event. For more information, please call Linda at (413) 657-5362. Thank you.

We are also collecting gift cards and cash prizes for a raffle that will take place at our Food and Bake Sale. For donations, please see Sue Dibrindisi. Thank you.



CALENDAR RAFFLE FOR MAY

Prizes are now being collected and can be turned over to either Sue Dibrindisi or Mary Tudryn. Tickets will be made available at the beginning of April and will also be made available at our Annual Food and Bake Sale on April 12th. Thank you.



ORDINATION OF DEACON JUSTIN DAVIAULT

This past Wednesday, on St/ Joseph's Day, March 19, 2025, Deacon Justin Daviault was ordained to the Priesthood of Jesus Christ, through the imposition of hands by the Rt. Rev. Paul Sobiechowski, Bishop Ordinary of the Eastern Diocese of the PNCC. Pictures of this important day may be viewed on our Facebook page.



MEAL IN THE UPPER ROOM

On Passion Sunday, April 6th at 4:00 pm, St. Joseph's PNCC in Westfield, MA will host the Annual Central Seniorate **"Meal in the Upper Room."** An invitation is extended to all to participate in this most important gathering in preparation for Holy Week and Easter. Please see Fr. Koerber if you would like to attend or call Fr. Sr. Soltysiak at (413) 562-4403.



PRAYER FOR PEACE FOR UKRAINE

O Lord, our God: Your Son taught us how blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called Your children We come before You this day,

Father, we pray for the people in Ukraine. We pray for all those who have lost and will lose their lives in a war that they did not seek nor provoke. We pray for the people of Ukraine, and for all the innocent victims, who have been displaced from their homes and country: especially the women, the children and the aged, who are now seeking safety and security. We pray today for the defenders of this great nation and ask for the protection of Your Holy angels to guard and protect all of them at this time of crisis. May all the people of Ukraine have the blessed assurance that you are ever present. Amen.



REFLECTIONS ON TODAY'S GOSPEL

And Jesus taught this parable: "There once was a person who had a fig tree planted in his orchard, and when he came in search of fruit, he found none."
- Luke 13:6

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

The fig tree (*Ficus carina*) is found throughout the Middle East and can grow to a height of 33 ft. The edible fig is one of the first plants that was ever cultivated by humans. Fossils have been found as early as 9400 BC near the ancient city of Jericho. These fossils precedes the domestication of wheat and barley, and may therefore be the first instance of agriculture known to man. Figs were widespread throughout ancient Greece, and their cultivation was described by Aristotle. It is well known that figs were also a common food source and staple for not only for the Greeks and the Romans, but also for the Israelites.

Figs are first mentioned In the Book of Genesis, where Adam and Eve clothed themselves with fig leaves (Genesis 3:7)

In Matthew 21:18–22, there is a story of Jesus finding a fig tree when He was hungry. He found that the tree had leaves on it, but no fruit and in the end Jesus curses the fig tree, and it withered.

Among the many diseases that can affect a fig tree, the most common disease is a fungus known as "Pink Blight" which begins to affect the fruit. If untreated, this fungus spreads from its fruit to the leaves and then to the tree, causing dying tissues to affect healthy ones, and in the end, this fungus destroys the whole tree

In today's Gospel, Jesus gives His listeners a parable: "There once was a person who had a fig tree planted in his orchard, and when he came in search of fruit, he found none."

My brothers and sisters: We can take this Parable of Jesus about the fig tree and apply it not only to our lives but also to a church. Wellness is dependent on the soundness of its leaves and in the end the soundness of the fruit that it helps to produce. The sun gives life to the individual leaves and then it gives unto the fruit. The owner in today's parable states that for three years he searched for fruit, found none, and rationalized that maybe the tree should be cut down for it was taking nutrients from the soil and the other trees in the orchard.

But the gardener pleads with the owner: 'Sir, leave it for this year also, and I shall cultivate the ground around it and fertilize it; it may bear fruit in the future. If not, you can cut it down.'

Cultivation begins with the soil. It is in the foundation by which the success of plants and trees are found. Unhealthy soil will affect its future growth. The gardener pleads with the owner, wanting to save the tree.

I am reminded of the words of our Lord as found in the Gospel of John 15: 4-6: "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. If a man does not abide in me, he is cast forth as a branch and withers."

My brothers and sisters: We all need to ever be vigilant to not only hear the words of our Lord, but most importantly to take His message it carries within our hearts. We have all been called as gardeners of ourselves and of His Church which has been entrusted to us. May we all seek this day, a commitment to cultivate, in a positive way for the good its future. We also need to also understand that like any blight or illness, unless unchecked and untreated the fig tree, like ourselves and His holy church, without His divine grace, will wither and die.



A MORNING DEVOTIONAL

At the time of prayer, the following is said:

O Lord come to my assistance. Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit; as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be world without end. Amen.

OPENING HYMN

On this day, the first of days,
God the Father's name I praise.
Who, creation's Lord and spring,
Did the world from darkness bring?

On this day the eternal Son,
Over death His triumph won,
On this day the Spirit came,
With the gifts of living flame.

God, most blessed, Three in One,
May Your holy will be done:
In Your word my soul is free.
And I rest this day with Thee.

A DEVOTIONAL READING

(1 Kings 8:51-53)

O Lord God, for we are your people and heritage, which You brought out of Egypt. Let your eyes be open to the plea of your servant, and to the plea of your people Israel, listening to them whenever they call to you. For you have separated them from among all the peoples of the earth, to be your heritage, just as you promised through Moses, your servant, when you brought our ancestors out of Egypt, O Lord GOD."

CLOSING PRAYER

Lord God, I praise You with my lips, and with my life and heart. My very existence is a gift from You; to You I offer all that I have and ever will be. Be with me this day and may I be guided by Your Holy Spirit to help and assist others in need and be faithful as a member of the "Body of Christ." Bless all those for whom I hold dear with health and Your divine Presence. All of this I pray in the name of Your Son and my Lord, Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit and art One God, forever and ever. Amen.



AN EVENING DEVOTIONAL

At the time of prayer, the following is said:

O Lord come to my assistance. Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit; as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be world without end. Amen.

OPENING HYMN

Lord Jesus, You are the light and day
Which drives away the night.
The ever-shining Son of God
And pledge of future light.

And now the ev'ning shadows fall.
Please grant unto me, O Lord, I pray,
A quiet night to rest in You,
Until the break of day.

A DEVOTIONAL READING

(Romans 12:1-2)

I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect. For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you. not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned to you.

CLOSING PRAYER

Heavenly Father, At the close of this day, I come to You, the Eternal light that never fades. Shine in the darkness of this night and sent forth Your blessings on all those who are dear to me. Forever will I praise and glorify Your most Holy Name, for You have made me in Your own image and likeness, out of love, and breathed in me Your most precious gift, the gift of life. We ask this in the name of our Lord, Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, One God, for ever and ever. Amen.