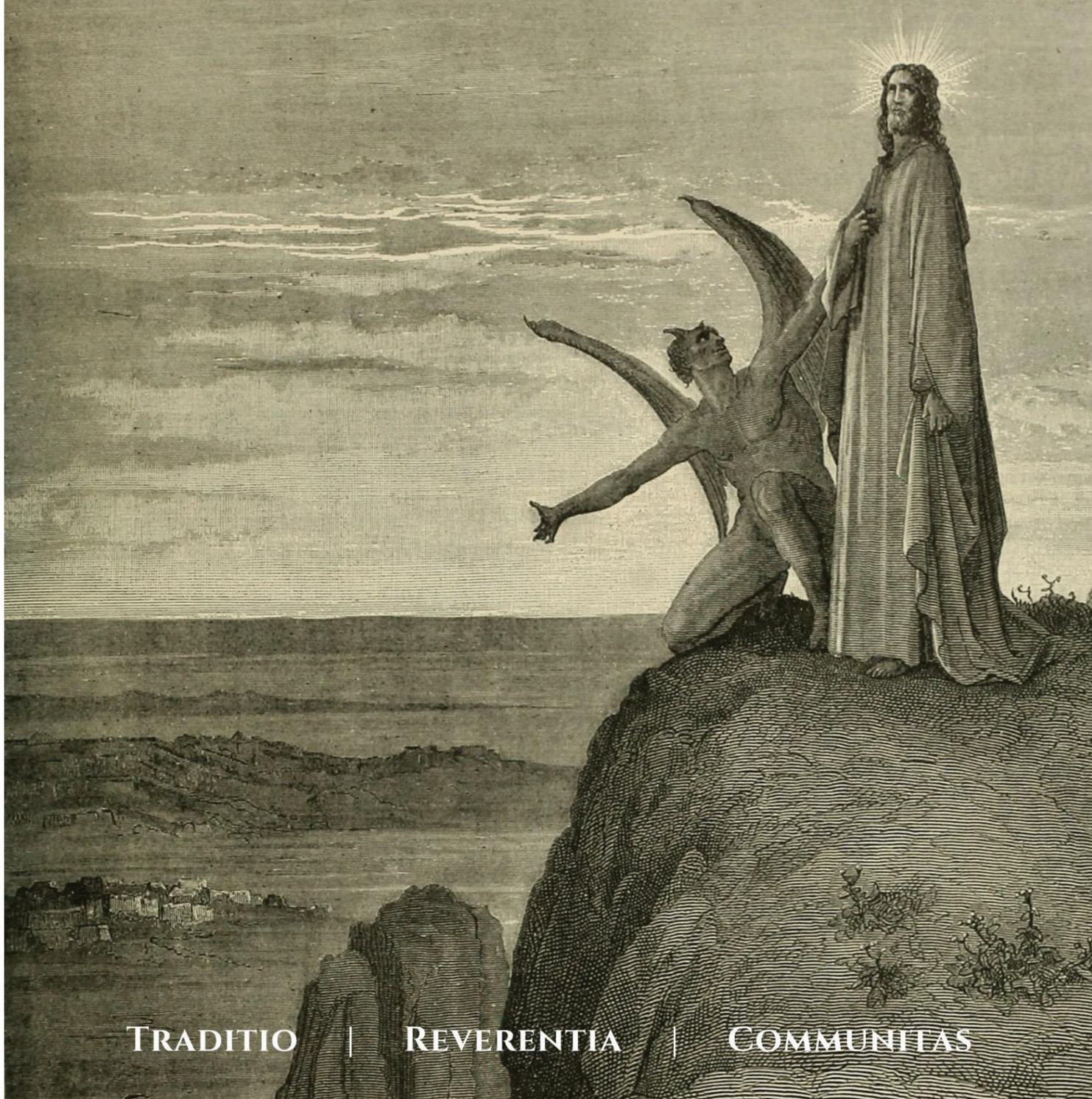


THE ORATORY OF SAINTS  
GREGORY & AUGUSTINE



TRADITIO

REVERENTIA

COMMUNITAS

## Welcome to the Oratory of Saints Gregory and Augustine

The Oratory of Saints Gregory and Augustine is pleased to welcome you. We are an apostolate of the Archdiocese of Saint Louis faithful to the teachings of the Church and striving to grow as a family of faith through the celebration of the Traditional Latin Mass and other Sacraments.

In the First Book of *The Confessions*, the other great St. Augustine (of Hippo) wrote the following: “Thou hast made us for Thyself and our hearts are restless until they find rest in Thee.” Whether you are curious about the traditional Latin Mass and interested in exploring its beauty, searching for a parish community where you and your family will feel at home, or seeking rest for your heart, we hope that the Oratory of Saints Gregory and Augustine can provide that respite for you.

Our bulletin serves to provide information about the weekly activities occurring here at the Oratory. Along with our website ([www.stlouislatinmass.com](http://www.stlouislatinmass.com)), the bulletin is your point of contact with the ever-increasing activities at the Oratory. I hope this will give you some sense of the grace of God, the love of Jesus Christ, and work of the Holy Spirit in our midst. I am delighted that God has brought you here! *Oremus pro invicem!* ~ The Very Reverend Monsignor C. Eugene Morris, Rector

### MASS AND SACRAMENTS

#### Sunday Masses

- 6:30 am (Low Mass)
- 8:00 am (Low Mass)
- 10:00 am (High Mass)

#### Weekday Masses

- Monday thru Friday: 6:30 am & 12:15 pm
- First Friday: 6:30 pm
- Saturday: 8:15 am

#### Confession

- Sunday: 7:30 am – 10:30 am
- Monday thru Friday: 11:00 am – 12:00 pm
- Wednesday: 5:00 pm – 6:00 pm
- First Friday: 5:00 pm – 6:00 pm
- Saturday: 7:00 am – 8:00 am

#### Adoration

- Wednesday: 5:00 pm – 6:00 pm
- First Friday: 1:00 pm – 6:00 pm (starting 2/6/26)

#### Divine Office

- Sunday: Prime @ 7:20 am; Terce @ 9:40 am; Vespers @ 2:30 pm
- Monday: Vespers @ 6 pm; Compline @ 6:30 pm
- Tuesday & Thursday: Compline @ 6:30 pm
- Wednesday: Vespers @ 6 pm; Compline @ 6:30 pm

**Infant Baptism** – Baptisms are normally scheduled on the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, and 4<sup>th</sup> Saturdays of the month beginning at 10:00 am. Families expecting newborns and anticipating that they will be baptized here at the Oratory should schedule their baptism at the earliest convenience by contacting the Oratory office.

**Adult Baptism** – If you are interested in becoming Catholic or if you are an adult Catholic not yet confirmed, please contact the Oratory office for more information about adult catechesis.

**Matrimony** – Please contact the Oratory office at least six months prior to the desired date for the rite of marriage. The date is reserved after consultation and confirmation from the Rector of the Oratory.

**Extreme Unction/Visitation of the Sick** – Contact the Oratory to arrange the sacrament either at home or in the hospital.

### STAFF/ORGANIZATIONS

- **Rector:** Msgr. C. Eugene Morris  
[rector@oratorysga.org](mailto:rector@oratorysga.org)
- **Vice-Rector:** Fr. Michael Rennie  
[vicerector@oratorysga.org](mailto:vicerector@oratorysga.org)
- **Deacon:** Deacon Steve Pieper, MD  
[deacon@oratorysga.org](mailto:deacon@oratorysga.org)
- **Administrative Assistant:** Donna Mueller  
[office@oratorysga.org](mailto:office@oratorysga.org)
- **Facilities Manager:** Ben Schubert  
[facilities@oratorysga.org](mailto:facilities@oratorysga.org)
- **Auxiliary:** Anna Kalinowski  
[auxiliary@oratorysga.org](mailto:auxiliary@oratorysga.org)
- **Almonry of Ss. Gregory & Augustine:**  
[almonry@oratorysga.org](mailto:almonry@oratorysga.org)
- **Altar and Rosary Society:**  
[altarandrosary@oratorysga.org](mailto:altarandrosary@oratorysga.org)
- **Altar Servers:**  
[servers@oratorysga.org](mailto:servers@oratorysga.org)
- **Choir:**  
[choir@oratorysga.org](mailto:choir@oratorysga.org)
- **Confraternity of Christian Doctrine (CCD):**  
[ccd@oratorysga.org](mailto:ccd@oratorysga.org)
- **Co-Op:**  
[co-op@oratorysga.org](mailto:co-op@oratorysga.org)
- **Events:**  
[events@oratorysga.org](mailto:events@oratorysga.org)
- **Knights of Columbus:**  
[kofc17355@oratorysga.org](mailto:kofc17355@oratorysga.org)
- **Schola:**  
[schola@oratorysga.org](mailto:schola@oratorysga.org)
- **Troops of Saint George:**  
[tsg@oratorysga.org](mailto:tsg@oratorysga.org)
- **Ushers:**  
[ostiarum@oratorysga.org](mailto:ostiarum@oratorysga.org)
- **Young Adults:**  
[youngadults@oratorysga.org](mailto:youngadults@oratorysga.org)
- **Online Giving:**  
<https://www.osvhub.com/st-louis-latin-mass>

### CONTACT US

314-644-2144 / [stlouislatinmass.com](http://stlouislatinmass.com)  
7230 Dale Avenue, Richmond Heights, MO 63117

**FROM THE RECTOR**

And so it begins. The Church in her wisdom provides us the opportunity to contemplate the love of Christ and the mystery of His Cross during the Lenten season. Through intense prayer, fasting, and almsgiving each of us can more completely configure ourselves to the mystery of the Lord’s cross. The work of salvation belongs completely to Christ who invites us to cooperate in His work through our human efforts. The Lord has redeemed our human efforts on the cross and through His passion made fruitful our cooperation with His grace. As such we should be serious about our Lenten disciplines, not easily excusing ourselves from them and taking advantage of the sacrament of penance as often as needed. The success of the Lenten journey in large measure consists of dedication and resolution to the tools given to us by God and Holy Mother Church. There are a great many temptations that plague us and make it even more difficult for us to subject ourselves to the will of God. We will encounter those temptations and difficulty during this Lenten journey. To overcome temptation and sin requires radical and complete trust in the grace of Christ. As we journey with Our Lord to the Cross, let us use wisely these days set before us that we might overcome our own weaknesses and find our strength in God alone!

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**UPCOMING EVENTS**

**Monday, 23 February:**

- Server Training @ 4:30 pm
- Girls’ Guild @ 4:30 pm
- Vespers @ 6:00 pm
- Troops of St. George @ 6:30 pm
- Compline @ 6:30 pm

**Tuesday, 24 February:**

- Compline @ 6:30 pm
- Choir practice @ 7:00 pm

**Wednesday, 25 February:**

- Adult Catechesis Class @ 4:00 pm
- Holy Hour/Confessions @ 5:00 pm
- Vespers @ 6:00 pm
- Holy Mass @ 6:30 pm

**Thursday, 26 February:**

- Compline @ 6:30 pm

**Friday, 27 February:**

- Stations of the Cross @ 1:15 pm

**Saturday, 28 February:**

- Hofmann Baptism @ 10:00 am
- Kenney Baptism @ 11:00 am

**Sunday, 1 March:**

- Prime @ 7:20 am
- Confessions @ 7:30 am
- Coffee Hour @ 9:00 am
- Terce @ 9:40 am
- Vespers @ 2:30 pm

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**PILGRIM VIRGIN MARY STATUE 2026**

02/08-02/15 D’Cunha	02/15-02/22 Alexander
02/22-03/01 Stolarski	03/01-03/08 Henry
03/08-03/15 Santschi	03/15-03/22 Kiser
03/22-03/29 Agnew	03/29-04/05 Buyle
04/05-04/12 Leljedal	04/12-04/19 Grizzle
04/19-04/26 Turntine	04/26-05/03 Haulard
05/03-05/10 Kelly	05/10-05/17 Jones
05/17-05/24 Holman	05/24-05/31 Carapella

Drop off and pick up the statue in the vestibule (back of church). Place the statue bag on the floor to left of the Oratory table. To join or to quit the schedule contact Sharon Alexander saalexa@sbcglobal.net

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**MASS INTENTIONS**

**Monday, 23 February – *St. Peter Damian***

- 6:30 am: John Mendel (d)
- 12:15 pm: Poor Souls in Purgatory

**Tuesday, 24 February – *St. Matthias***

- 6:30 am: Michael McDonald (d)
- 12:15 pm: Debra Matsusiak (d)

**Wednesday, 25 February – *Ember Wednesday***

- 6:30 am: Jim Griffin (d)
- 12:15 pm: Tony Joe DiBlasi (d)

**Thursday, 26 February – *Feria***

- 6:30 am: William McKenzie
- 12:15 pm: Rosalie Cenni

**Friday, 27 February – *St. Gabriel of Our Lady of Sorrows***

- 6:30 am: Pro Populo
- 12:15 pm: Matthew Schnur

**Saturday, 28 February – *Ember Saturday***

- 8:15 am: William H. Kuhlmann (d)

**Sunday, 1 March – *2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Lent***

- 6:30 am: Pro Populo
- 8:00 am: Emily Benedick
- 10:00 am: Tony Joe DiBlasi (d)

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~ 02/15/2026 ~	
Weekly Collection Total	\$ 12,463.88
Online Giving	\$ 6,414.69
Total	\$ 18,878.57
Needed	\$ 16,800.00
Year to Date Total	\$ 623,600.71

# First Sunday of Lent

22 February 2026

## BLESSING OF ITEMS: NEW PROCEDURE

Going forward, the blessings of religious items will take place after the 8:00 am Holy Mass at St. Joseph Altar. This will happen on the Second Sunday of each month. In this way, items can be blessed and retrieved in a more timely manner. This process will replace bringing items to the rectory to be blessed. **ALL ITEMS TO BE BLESSED MUST BE BROUGHT TO THE ST. JOSEPH ALTAR ON THE 2ND SUNDAY OF EACH MONTH BEFORE HOLY MASS.** Those who desire to have items blessed should bring them to the St. Joseph Altar before the 8:00 am Holy Mass with their names clearly marked on the items to be blessed. These items should be left on the St. Joseph Altar. If there are a large number of items, they can be placed around the altar but should not impede the distribution of Holy Communion. Two blessings will be given: one for rosaries and one for all other items grouped together. There is no need to take items from their packaging. **This new process begins Sunday, 8 February 2026, therefore the rectory is not accepting any additional items to be blessed as of 9 February.**

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## BLESSING & IMPOSITION OF THE BROWN SCAPULAR

Twice a year at Advent and Lent, the Oratory invests its faithful in the Brown Scapular. To assist those who desire to have a scapular blessed and imposed on them, **on the First Sunday of Lent, 22 February 2026 after the 8 am Holy Mass**, there will be the blessing and imposition of scapulars on those who present themselves at the communion rail. Please bring your own scapular, have it unwrapped and off your neck if you are already wearing it. As there might be a great number of people presenting themselves for this blessing, the only thing that will be blessed this day is the scapular. Any questions, please contact Msgr. Morris directly via email at [rector@oratorysga.org](mailto:rector@oratorysga.org).

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## CALLING POTENTIAL CANTORS!

The Cantores Sancti Ludovici, who provide Gregorian Chant at the Oratory of Ss. Gregory and Augustine, are looking to add 2-4 cantors to our Schola. If you have some experience singing in a choir, or believe yourself capable of learning and you are interested in joining, please reach out to Precentor Kevin Murphy at [schola@oratorysga.org](mailto:schola@oratorysga.org) to schedule an audition and learn more.

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## THE LENTEN SEASON

**Stations of the Cross** will be celebrated on the Fridays of Lent after the conclusion of the 12:15 pm Holy Mass. **\*\*We will not have Stations of the Cross on 6 March due to Adoration.\*\***

The schedule for **Holy Week**: **HOLY THURSDAY @ 5:00 PM; GOOD FRIDAY @ 3:00 PM; HOLY SATURDAY @ 2:00 PM.** This information is shared early so that you might plan your schedules accordingly.

All of this information will continue to be available both in our bulletin and online. We hope to have a flyer of the Liturgical schedule in the bulletin soon that will have all this information for our Lenten season.

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## FSSP VISIT: HOST FAMILIES NEEDED

Dear Faithful,  
I am excited to announce that the seminarians of Our Lady of Guadalupe Seminary (FSSP) will be making a trip to St. Louis over 25 April – 28 April. Over 60 traditional seminarians and priests will come to St. Louis for a few days of touring before they buckle down for the last push through their semester.

The seminary has reached out to our Oratory to coordinate some shared events, such as liturgies and receptions where our faithful may have the chance to meet the seminarians.

There is also the opportunity for host families to house seminarians (25 April – 27 April, i.e. three nights). Please see the following criteria for this:

1. No minors (under 18 years old) may be in the household at any time during the seminarians' stay.
2. Host families should be comprised of at least one adult man (no single female hosts).
3. Host houses should be within about a 45-minute commute from Ss. Gregory & Augustine.

If you happen to meet these criteria and you are interested in hosting, please contact Anna Kalinowski at [auxiliatrix@oratorysga.org](mailto:auxiliatrix@oratorysga.org) no later than 27 March.

Please follow the bulletin for future announcements about this visit. Peace in Christ, Msgr. Morris

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## FSSP VISIT: DONATIONS WELCOME AND APPRECIATED

If you would like to make a donation to the Oratory to offset our expenses to cover the seminarians' meals, etc. please write FSSP in the memo line of your check and drop it in the collection basket or mail it the rectory. You can make an online donation under the "FSSP visit" fund; donations are tax deductible.

<https://www.osvhub.com/st-louis-latin-mass/giving/funds>

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## FIRST FRIDAY EUCHARISTIC ADORATION: CLARIFICATION

It has long been a desire of mine as rector to have more Eucharistic Adoration at the Oratory of Ss. Gregory and Augustine. Our hope is that Adoration will take place every First Friday afternoon going forward to honor the Sacred Heart of Jesus. As a reminder: faithful are needed to adopt an hour of adoration to ensure that the Blessed Sacrament is never left alone. To sign up for an hour, please email Anthony Jones at [events@oratorysga.org](mailto:events@oratorysga.org)

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## 2026 CALENDARS

**The calendars for 2026 for the Oratory Community have arrived!!** The calendars are available in the main vestibule and at the side doors. You are kindly asked to initially take one calendar per household. Once everyone has had a chance to pick up a calendar, there should be more available in late February for those who need another one. This year's calendar comes from the Transalpine Redemptorists, a community of traditional monks rooted in the Redemptorists charism who practice both the contemplative and active life. Their motherhouse is in Scotland and they have recently founded a house in Montana.

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## IN GRATITUDE

As we continue to rejoice in the mystery of the Incarnation and thank God for His mercy, I want to express my gratitude to all the faithful of the Oratory for your on-going monetary support for the work of the Oratory. I am particularly grateful for your generosity not only to the weekly commitments needed to sustain the Oratory, but also to the success of Giving Tuesday in early December and your generosity to the Advent fundraiser for the Men's Schola. In a short period of time, there were many financial expectations set before you and the community has responded generously to these various requests. Please know of my daily prayers for our whole community and my personal

gratitude in being able to serve a community so generous and faithful.

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**CRITICAL/EMERGENCY RESPONSE**

The recent violence against Christians, and particularly the Catholic Church, is a serious cause for concern. While being vigilant and aware of the various situations in which we might find ourselves, we must guard ourselves against living fearfully in the world. Assisting in finding this proper balance, the Oratory of Ss. Gregory and Augustine has plans in place in the event of a critical or emergency incident. In consultation with the Rector of the Oratory, the Ushers of the Oratory will be the men in charge of responding to any emergency situation. All the faithful of the Oratory are asked to follow their directives in the case of any critical incident or emergency situation. A proper chain of command, led by those with the necessary training, will assist the whole community if a critical and/or life-threatening situation should present itself. I am grateful to Dr. Robert Morgan and Tim Turtine for their leadership and expertise along with other members of the community and all of the ushers for undertaking this necessary and serious responsibility. If anyone is interested in serving in this capacity, please contact Dr. Morgan at [ostiaraii@oratorysga.org](mailto:ostiaraii@oratorysga.org) to become an usher which will facilitate your participation. Finally, if any member of our community has concerns, please communicate those directly to Rector.

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**STREET PARKING**

As our community continues to grow, parking on Sundays is at a premium, especially at the 10:00 am Holy Mass. If you are parking on the street, please do not block any driveways. It was recently communicated that a driveway was blocked and the person living there was unable to get out. Fortunately, this neighbor was willing to wait until the conclusion of Holy Mass. Sadly, not all of our neighbors are happy about our presence or our growth and it is important that we work with them even if they do not want to work with us. Let's not provide any opportunity to cause or create a problem. Please be conscious of working to be good neighbors and do not block drives or park in places that are not available to us.

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**ADULTS SEEKING THE SACRAMENTS OF INITIATION**

We welcome those interested in becoming Catholic. To get started in that process within the OSGA community, please email one of our priests for an introductory meeting. Their contacts are available in the bulletin. After this, candidates for Initiation at the Oratory will be directed to complete a registration form with our Administrator.

Catechism classes are held in the St Joseph Room (rectory basement) generally on a bi-monthly basis on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesdays from 4:00-5:15 pm.

The content surrounds a set of topics central to Catholic teaching, as set forth by Msgr. Morris. Deacon Pieper moderates most meetings through a question and answer format and hopes to promote sincere dialogue with the candidates regarding those topics and/or related questions. The intent is to communicate Christ and His Church. Sacraments are offered on an individual basis, on a rolling schedule throughout the year, after mutual discernment by the candidate, our deacon, and priests.

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**NEW PRO-LIFE COORDINATOR**

The whole community would like to thank Rory (Aurora) Miller for serving as the coordinator of Pro-Life activities for the Oratory for the past several years. Rory has done a great job leading the Oratory's involvement in fostering the culture of life. She has elected to step down from this position and we are in need of a new volunteer coordinator.

The duties of the position in its current configuration include:

- Attends diocesan pro-life meetings at Rigali Center.
- Coordinates 40 Days for Life twice each year.
- Goes to monthly meetings at the pro-life Advocacy group.
- Gathers information about upcoming Pro-Life events and submits this for posting and publication at the Oratory of Ss. Gregory and Augustine.

The new coordinator is encouraged to explore other avenues for the Oratory community to remain involved in and part of the Pro-Life efforts of the Archdiocese of St. Louis.

If you are interested, please contact the rector, Msgr. Morris ([rector@oratorysga.org](mailto:rector@oratorysga.org)). In advance, thank you for your consideration and generosity.

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**RECEPTION OF HOLY COMMUNION**

For those in our community who are new to the Traditional Latin Mass, when you approach the altar rail for holy communion it is the custom to begin filling in the altar rail at the far right near St. Joseph's altar and fill in the rail until its end at the Marian altar. This practice is not impacted by which side of the Church you are seated. You are allowed, and encouraged, to switch sides in order to keep the communion line moving. This is particularly important when there are two sacred ministers distributing Holy Communion. So too, do not overly delay approaching the rail waiting for others to return to their pews. If everyone moves with attention to what is happening, there should be a flow of movement between those departing the altar rail and those approaching the altar rail. Also, for daily Holy Mass: please kneel at the rail only where the houseling cloth has been prepared for communion. Please keep in mind that we should not keep the Lord waiting but moving with grace and deliberation to the altar rail to receive our Eucharistic Lord.

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**NEW FAMILIES for JANUARY (alphabetical order)**

A warm welcome to our new parishioners!

- Owen Bruns
- Barbara Cardona
- Molly Laiben
- Dan Leonardi
- Christian Reller
- The Terry Family ~ Jake & Amy, Simeon and Seraphina
- The Wilcox Family ~ Brennan & Emma
- Brendan Wilmarth

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**PRAYERS FOR THE SICK**

In your charity, please pray for the following members of the Oratory who are ill: Mary Jane Bolte; Amanda Camarillo, daughter of Gregory & Nancy Latham; Heath Cheaney, son of Michael & Jaime; Jeanmarie DeCoster; Donna Hagan; Dotty Kuhlmann, mother of Donna Mueller; Mary McMahan; Kim Morgan; Donna Mueller; Michael Norfleet, son of Marsha Norfleet; Elizabeth Ryan; Mary Joseph Schenk, daughter of Nicholas & Elaine; Patrick Schneider; Sylvester Soldinie; Caleb

# First Sunday of Lent

22 February 2026

& Sheila Ten Eyck; Lara Trudell, daughter of Sharon and Jim Alexander; Renee Weidner; and Msgr. Witt.

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## PRAYERS FOR THE FAITHFUL DEPARTED

- Robert Anthony, father of Jeanmarie DeCoster
- Sheryl Ann Gibbs, wife of Jeff Gibbs
- Andrew Richard “Andy” Gilfoil, brother of Joe Gilfoil
- Shane Kiser, husband of Maggie Kiser

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## USHERS’ SCHEDULE

### Sunday, 22 February

- 6:30 am Brayden Bauman\*, Chris Bauman
- 8:00 am Michael Nelson\*, Kenny Buyle, Terry Conway, Ken Catalano
- 10:00 am Jordan Hermann\*, Mark Scheer, Zach Morley, Jesse Hermann

### Sunday, 1 March

- 6:30 am Ben Schubert\*, Jeff Logullo
- 8:00 am Kenny Buyle\*, Terry Conway, Ken Catalano, Sam Ashlock

10:00 am Mark Scheer\*, Zach Morley, Robert Morgan, Cory Conway

### Sunday, 8 March

- 6:30 am Brayden Bauman\*, Chris Bauman
- 8:00 am Terry Conway\*, Sam Ashlock, Ken Catalano, Greg Rheinheimer
- 10:00 am Zach Morley\*, Robert Morgan, Cory Conway, Jesse Hermann

### Sunday, 15 March

- 6:30 am Evan Adair\*, Jim Alexander
- 8:00 am Sam Ashlock\*, Greg Rheinheimer, Ken Catalano, Kip Babington
- 10:00 am Robert Morgan\*, Cory Conway, Jesse Hermann, Charlie Raymond

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BULLETIN COVER: Temptation of Jesus – From Gustave Doré’s Bible Engravings

## + Altar Server Schedule: February – March 2026 +

Date	Time	MC at High Mass / Acolyte at Low Mass	Thurifer	Acolyte 1	Acolyte 2
22 February 2026	6:30	Ben Schubert			
	8:00	Benedict Armesto			
	10:00	Peter Blum	Thomas Koschmeder	Cabhan Ten Eyck	Joseph Sinak
1 March 2026	6:30	Michael Norfleet			
	8:00	Matthew Rheinheimer			
	10:00	Castor Armesto	Michael Rennier	Benedict Armesto	Scott Fowler
8 March 2026	6:30	Jack Ryan			
	8:00	Castor Armesto			
	10:00	Joseph Noble	Michael Blum	William Hayes	Theodore Grizzle

## FIRST FRIDAY/FIRST SATURDAY

6 March 2026	6:30 pm	Peter Blum	Anthony Green	Kolbe Grizzle	Dominic Green
7 March 2026	8:15 am	Sebastian Petrick	Paul Keys	Silas Buyle	Sean Kenney

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## WELLSPRING OF TRADITION: LENT: LESS IS MORE

In my younger years I was not much of a fan of Lent. All that fasting and sacrifice and darkness and depriving really puts a damper on things. We eased into it in stages, burying the Alleluia on the Saturday before Septuagesima Sunday, chanting the haunting melody of the Introit *Exsurge* on Sexagesima, using the purple Vestments, and not bringing flowers to decorate the altars. Then it began in earnest on Ash Wednesday with the pointed reminder that we are humans and destined for death: *Memento, homo, quia pulvis es, et in pulverem reverteris*. The changes in our diet and music reinforced the message that we needed to make some changes in our lives if we were to be properly prepared for that moment of death and what lay beyond. After 40 days of the diet changes, I welcomed no day of year as much as I did Holy Saturday. After the long and lovely Vigil, we saw the return of regular meat and sweets to the dinner table and I could again have snacks between meals. And the organ was back again! This left me with no doubts that the Resurrection of our Lord from the dead was the most important event in history, and the annual celebration of that day was certainly my most important annual mood shift. Winter was finally ending and Lent was done for another year, thank God! That lifted my spirits and was in turn its own resurrection of sorts for me. It was something visceral.

Through the years, my perceptions have changed. I’ve come around now to a point where I almost welcome Lent. The reduction in my consumption of conversation, food, drink, sleep, and fun offers a certain satisfaction. It helps heighten my awareness that this is a sacred time, a special gift of a season to prepare for my redemption from self-absorbed over-consumption and stimulation and other obstacles to the freedom that God wants His children to enjoy. Pope St. Gregory the Great put this in poetry, in a wonderful hymn, *Ex more docti mystico*, that we sing Matins on the Sundays of Lent.

<i>Utamur ergo parcius</i>	More sparing therefore let us make,
<i>verbis, cibis et potibus,</i>	our words and food and drink we take,
<i>somno, iocis et arctius</i>	our sleep and mirth—and closer barr’d
<i>perstemus in custodia</i>	be every sense in holy guard.

Even in the secular world today, it's become fashionable to see certain deprivations as cleansing and healthy. Some fasting from food, some abstaining from alcohol or sweets, some limits to conversation, television, and media stimulation, are all techniques recognized as helping restore balance to areas of our lives that have become distorted. Dedicated time for meditation and sharing of our material goods with others are also ways the self-help industry has identified and promoted as being important steps along the road to greater self-actualization. Less is more.

In Christian spirituality, such focused activities have a long history. We have traditionally labelled them fasting, prayer, and almsgiving; they constitute the 'three pillars' of a good Lent. The deprivations of pleasure and external stimulation along with the time for prayer that I impose on myself are, as the self-help gurus will agree, not designed to make me miserable or to encourage suffering for its own sake. Rather, I do these things to remove distractions that can prevent me from seeing who I really am, God's own likeness and dwelling place, and learning to love myself so that I can then truly love the image of that same God in others. *In silentia procedit pius animus*, Thomas a Kempis writes in *The Imitation of Christ*, 'in silence the devout soul makes progress.' In the quiet, with external distractions moved, I can begin to have time to hear the voice of the indwelling Spirit who calls out to me in love. The cares and pleasures of the world are all too quick to drown out that call. St. Gregory's hymn continues:

<i>Memento quod sumus tui,</i>	Remember Thou, though frail we be,
<i>licet caduci, plasmatis;</i>	that yet Thine handiwork are we;
<i>ne des honorem nominis</i>	nor let the honor of Thy Name
<i>tui, precamur, alteri.</i>	be by another put to shame.

In addition to the joy of self-discovery, the discipline involved in these traditional practices, done properly, also has other beneficial side-effects. I find it less difficult to avoid doing things that are harmful or to correct or modify bad habits I've developed. In more traditional language, I find it easier to 'turn away from sin.' Once again, St. Gregory's hymn puts it in poetry:

<i>Vitemus autem pessima</i>	Avoid the evil thoughts that roll
<i>quæ subruunt mentes vagas,</i>	like waters o'er the heedless soul;
<i>nullumque demus callido</i>	nor let the foe occasion find
<i>hosti locum tyrannidis.</i>	our souls in slavery to bind.

This radical pruning of all the encumbrances that I've allowed myself to develop, the removal of obstacles to a re-discovery of my real self, is an important step in preparing myself for the 'new life' that Easter offers to those who live the Paschal mystery. Sharing my material goods with others, especially the poor, is simply a logical consequence of this process of pruning. Becoming a 'new being in Christ' won't happen if I try to include all of the unnecessary baggage I've been lugging along.

It goes without saying that all of this is ultimately intended, as the formula for the imposition of ashes so clearly states, to help me re-align my priorities in life with what is truly important and in line with the goal of life without end when this earthly body returns to dust. To use the well-known quote from S Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews: *non enim habemus hic manentem civitatem*. 'We have not here a lasting city.' Although the grace of God is with me here and now, I am on the way to somewhere else. Lent is to remind me of that, and to prepare me to celebrate the mystery of the passing over from this life to the next, by way of Christ's death on the cross and resurrection from the dead. His passover, or 'paschal' mystery, is the first fruits of what is intended to be my destiny and yours: *quo processit gloria capitis, eo spes vocatur et corporis*, we pray in the collect for the feast of the Ascension, 'the hope of the Body is that of being called to where the glory of the Head has gone on before.'

St Gregory concludes his hymn with this prayer:

<i>Laxa malum quod fecimus,</i>	Forgive the sin that we have wrought;
<i>auge bonum quod poscimus,</i>	increase the good that we have sought:
<i>placere quo tandem tibi</i>	that we at length, our wanderings o'er,
<i>possimus hic et perpetim.</i>	may please Thee here and evermore.

<i>Præsta, beata Trinitas,</i>	Blest Three in One, and One in Three,
<i>concede, simplex Unitas,</i>	Almighty God, we pray to Thee,
<i>ut fructuosa sint tuis</i>	that this our fast of forty days
<i>hæc parcitatis munera.</i>	may work our profit and Thy praise.

This is the real fruit we hope to produce from our Lenten endeavors: a cleansed, renewed, refreshed person, body and spirit, ready to be raised up to new life to the glory of God. And we cannot separate one element of this fruitful result, our gain, from the other, God's glory, as St Irenaeus wrote: *gloria Dei vivens homo* [the glory of God is the human person fully alive.] As a winemaker carefully prunes his vines to improve the quality of his fruit, so we allow God in His loving mercy to prune us to bear ever richer fruit. May He in His loving mercy grant us all a holy and blessed Lent.

p.s. We owe a debt of gratitude, as is so often the case, to the eminent John Mason Neale for his rendering of Pope St. Gregory's hymn into English.

\*\*\*\*\*  
***Our Lady of Walsingham, intercede for us who have recourse to thee!***  
***Ss. Gregory and Augustine, pray for us!***

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