

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), 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 2nd, 3rd, and 4th 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
- **Vice-Rector:** Fr. Michael Rennie
vicerector@oratorysga.org
- **Deacon:** Deacon Steve Pieper, MD
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- **Administrative Assistant:** Donna Mueller
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- **Auxiliary:** Anna Kalinowski
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- **Almonry of Ss. Gregory & Augustine:**
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- **Altar and Rosary Society:**
altarandrosary@oratorysga.org
- **Altar Servers:**
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- **Choir:**
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- **Confraternity of Christian Doctrine (CCD):**
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- **Co-Op:**
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- **Events:**
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- **Knights of Columbus:**
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- **Troops of Saint George:**
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- **Ushers:**
ostiarum@oratorysga.org
- **Young Adults:**
youngadults@oratorysga.org
- **Online Giving:**
<https://www.osvhub.com/st-louis-latin-mass>

CONTACT US

314-644-2144 / stlouislatinmass.com
7230 Dale Avenue, Richmond Heights, MO 63117

FROM THE RECTOR

The liturgical celebration of Our Lord’s triumphal entrance into Jerusalem along with the first proclamation of the Lord’s Passion are set before our eyes today with great simplicity reinforcing gravity and profound nature of what is being celebrated. The sacred liturgy begins with the blessing of palms and a procession which call to the mind the Lord’s joyful entrance into Jerusalem. Our ritual participation draws us into the events that took place two thousand years ago when our Savior entered His city in order to redeem His people. Holy Mass follows! Now we, the faithful, must confront the sorrow of the Redeemer’s Passion and the part our sins have played in the Lord’s suffering. Entrance into today’s mysteries brings us one step closer to the holiest of days when we celebrate the triumph of life over death and the victory of mercy and sacrifice over selfishness and sin. All of our preparations during this Lenten pilgrimage were undertaken to aid us in not turning away from the horror of the Cross; rather, we have prayed, fasted, and sacrificed in order to rejoice in the victory the Cross brings to each of us. Life entails suffering and even now we are beset with the burdens of sin and sacrifice that overwhelm us. The life of faith calls us to confess that Christ conquers sin, suffering and death upon the Cross once for all. We adore thee O Christ and we bless thee, because by thy holy Cross you have redeemed the world!

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UPCOMING EVENTS

Monday, 30 March: (Cf. Holy Week Schedule)

- **NO** 6:30 am Holy Mass
- Confessions @ 10:30 am
- Holy Mass @ 12:15 pm
- Server Training @ 4:30 pm
- Girls’ Guild @ 4:30 pm
- Troops of St. George @ 6:30 pm

Tuesday, 31 March: (Cf. Holy Week Schedule)

- **NO** 6:30 am Holy Mass
- Confessions @ 10:30 am
- Holy Mass @ 12:15 pm
- Server Training @ 4:30 pm
- Choir practice @ 7:00 pm

Wednesday, 1 April: (Cf. Holy Week Schedule)

- **NO** 6:30 am Holy Mass
- Confessions @ 10:30 am
- Holy Mass @ 12:15 pm
- Adoration/Confessions @ 5:00 pm
- Tenebrae @ 9:00 pm

Thursday, 2 April: (Cf. Holy Week Schedule)

- **OFFICE CLOSED**
- Mandatum @ 4:00 pm
- Solemn Mass of the Lord’s Supper @ 5:00 pm
- Confessions @ 7:00 pm
- Tenebrae @ 9:00 pm

Friday, 3 April: (Cf. Holy Week Schedule)

- **OFFICE CLOSED**
- Confessions @ 12 Noon
- Mass of the Pre-Sanctified @ 3:00 pm
- Confessions @ 5:00 pm
- Tenebrae @ 9:00 pm

Saturday, 4 April: (Cf. Holy Week Schedule)

- **NO CONFESSIONS**
- Blessing of the Easter Food Baskets @ 9:00 am
- Easter Vigil @ 2:00 pm
- Easter Vigil BBQ @ 6:15 pm

Sunday, 5 April: EASTER SUNDAY

- Prime @ 7:20 am
- **NO CONFESSIONS**
- Terce @ 9:40 am
- Sext & None @ 12 Noon
- Vespers & Compline @ 1:00 pm

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PILGRIM VIRGIN MARY STATUE 2026

03/22-03/29 Agnew	03/29-04/05 Buyle
04/05-04/12 Lejedal	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 saalex@sbcbglobal.net

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MASS INTENTIONS

Monday, 30 March – **Feria of Holy Week (privileged)**
12:15 pm: Shane Kiser (d)

Tuesday, 31 March – **Feria of Holy Week (privileged)**
12:15 pm: Pro Populo

Wednesday, 1 April – **Feria of Holy Week (privileged)**
12:15 pm: Br. Macarius of Jesus Christ Crucified

Thursday, 2 April – **HOLY THURSDAY**
5:00 pm: Pro Populo

Friday, 3 April – **GOOD FRIDAY**

Saturday, 4 April – **HOLY SATURDAY/EASTER VIGIL**
2:00 pm: Pro Populo

Sunday, 5 April – **EASTER SUNDAY**
6:30 am: Pro Populo
8:00 am: Meara Gray Nelson
10:00 am: Sheryl Ann Gibbs (d)

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~ 03/22/2026 ~	
Weekly Collection Total	\$ 12,291.29
Online Giving	\$ 9,067.69
Total	\$ 21,358.98
Needed	\$ 16,800.00
Year to Date Total	\$ 725,568.40

ORATORY CO-OP IS LOOKING FOR A CATECHIST

The OSGA True, Good and Beautiful Homeschool Co-op is looking for help. We offer both a Catechesis of the Good Shepherd program for 3-5 year olds and a supplemental Art, Music, and Literature program for 6-14 year olds. We are in need of a CGS Level 1 Catechist for Thursday morning. If you are trained and would like to volunteer your time for one morning a week, OR if you would like to be trained, a local training is beginning for the school year. The co-op is willing to fund this training in return for leading our Thursday CGS program. If you are interested or know of anyone who is, please contact Cory Grizzle at co-op@oratorysga.org

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GIRLS' GUILD SALE OF HAND-PAINTED DECORATIVE EGGS AND BAKED GOODS

The Our Lady of Walsingham Girls' Guild will hold an Easter bake-sale following the 10 am Mass on Sunday, 12 April. In addition to baked goods, the girls will also be selling hand-painted decorative eggs for use as Easter decorations at home (goose and chicken available). Look for the station between the church and the school or in the St. Joseph Room in the event of rain. All proceeds go to future Girls' Guild activities. Cash and Venmo accepted.

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THE NAMED DAYS OF HOLY WEEK

Most Catholics are familiar with titles for days in Holy Week such as "Palm Sunday" and "Good Friday." But actually, coming from the English Catholic tradition, each day of Holy Week has a special nickname:

- **Palm Sunday:** The day of Our Lord's triumphal entry into Jerusalem celebrated with palm branches.
- **Fig Monday:** Traditionally the gospel reading for this day was the passage where Our Lord curses the fig tree that does not bear fruit.
- **Temple Tuesday:** Traditionally the gospel reading for this day was the passage where Our Lord cleanses the temple.
- **Spy Wednesday:** Because this is the day when Judas (the spy) performed his wicked dealing with the pharisees.
- **Maundy Thursday:** The day on which we have the custom of the mandatum (the washing of the feet).
- **Good Friday:** The day of our redemption.
- **Holy Saturday:** The beginning of the Paschal celebration.

In other languages such as Italian, all of the days of Holy Week simply have the title "Holy" like our Holy Saturday. It is only in English that we find this memorable diversity of nicknames. Here at the Oratory, we thought it a nomenclature worth reviving.

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OFFICE OF TENEBRAE

"Tenebrae" is the name given to the service of Matins and Lauds belonging to the last three days of Holy Week and normatively anticipated the evening before. These services are marked by a somber and sober, nearly mournful praying of the Divine Office. The structure of the office is sparse, reflecting the seriousness of these sacred days and the sadness that should accompany all of us because Christ our Savior suffered for our sins. The Oratory of Ss. Gregory and Augustine will have the opportunity to pray Tenebrae on the following evenings:

- **Wednesday, 1 April @ 9:00 pm – Tenebrae of Holy Thursday**
- **Thursday, 2 April @ 9:00 pm – Tenebrae of Good Friday**

• **Friday, 3 April @ 9:00 pm – Tenebrae of Holy Saturday**

This is a solemn and profound way to enter more deeply into the Sacred Triduum and the Paschal Mystery which has brought us our salvation.

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HOLY WEEK SCHEDULE

Holy Thursday @ 5:00 PM; Good Friday @ 3:00 PM; and Holy Saturday @ 2:00 PM.

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HOLY WEEK/OCTAVE OF EASTER

As we move closer to the celebration of the holiest days of the liturgical year, please mark your calendars regarding the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass during Holy Week and the Octave of Easter. **HOLY WEEK:** The Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday of Holy Week, Holy Mass will only be celebrated at 12:15 pm. In order to accommodate those wanting to go to confession, they will begin at 10:30 am and go until 12 Noon. **OCTAVE OF EASTER:** The Oratory will celebrate High Mass every day during the Octave of Easter. Everyone is encouraged to attend to truly celebrate well the Resurrection of Our Savior. The schedule will be as follows: (Monday – Friday) Holy Mass will only be celebrated at 12:15 pm with the normal time of 11:00 am for confessions.

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BLESSING OF EASTER FOOD BASKETS

On Holy Saturday, 4 April, promptly at 9:00 am, the traditional blessing of Easter Baskets will take place in the church. All families are encouraged to bring samples of their Easter feast in a decorated basket to be blessed. There will be a designated table set up at the front of the church for baskets. The blessing will take fifteen minutes. Families should stay in the church to witness the blessing. Upon completion of the blessing, families should take their baskets back home. **NOTE: Due to the extensive duties of all church staff and clergy on this day, baskets left behind at the blessing will not be returned. Be sure to re-claim your basket immediately upon the conclusion of the blessing.**

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EASTER VIGIL CELEBRATION

The Oratory would like to invite all members to join us in celebrating the Resurrection of the Lord at a picnic feast immediately following the Easter Vigil liturgy on Saturday, 4 April 2026. The celebration will be held at McMahan Field (directly across the street from the Church on Dale Avenue). We invite you to enjoy burgers, barbecue, and most importantly fellowship. Please bring lawn chairs for your family and a side or dessert and your drink of choice but don't let empty hands prevent you from joining us. We look forward to seeing you there!

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OFFICE HOURS: EASTER WEEK

The offices **will be completely closed** the Monday (4/6) and Tuesday (4/7) of the Octave of Easter. If there is an emergency and one of the priests is needed, please call 314/606-2461. Normal business hours will resume on Wednesday, 8 April 2026.

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EASTER EGG HUNT

Please join us for our Annual Low Sunday Easter Egg Hunt on Sunday, 12 April. We will meet at the ball field across from church 15 minutes after the conclusion of Holy Mass. There is no admission fee and all ages are welcome. Children will be sorted by age.

CELL PHONES

There has been an increasing number of cell phones ringing during Holy Mass. Please be sure to silence your cell phones before entering Church. Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

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ST. LOUIS MARIAN CONFERENCE

The 27th Anniversary St. Louis Marian Conference is 15-17 May 2026 at the Renaissance St. Louis Airport Hotel. Everyone is welcome and parking is FREE. The cost is only \$60 for 3 full, dynamic days of inspiring talks, Holy Mass, Adoration, Confession, a large selection of vendors, beautiful music, and fellowship with Catholics from all over the country (20 states so far). The hotel group rate is \$119 per night (1-4 people).

Confirmed speakers: His Eminence Raymon Leo Cardinal Burke; Fr. Mitch Pacwa, S.J.; Fr. Bill Casey, CPM; *Msgr. Eugene Morris*; Sr. Gianna Casino, LIHM; Patty Schneier; Susan Tassone; Ken and Mary Ann Duppong (parents of Servant of God, Michelle Duppong); and Eric Genius.

For more information, to register, or to book your hotel room please visit us at www.stlmc.org or call 314-850-7718.

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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 began Sunday, 8 February 2026, therefore the rectory is no longer accepting items to be blessed (as of 9 February).**

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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 men to join as cantors in 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 to schedule an audition and learn more.

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SOCIAL ENGAGEMENTS DURING LENT FOR THE RECTOR

In years past, I have found it spiritually profitable to limit my social engagements during the Lenten season and will do so for this Lenten season as well. Obviously, I am available to the faithful for spiritual counseling and matters related to faith but will limit social engagements and dinners until after the Octave of Easter. **If you do need to contact me for any reason, please do not hesitate to email or call.** I look forward to visiting, blessing homes, and other opportunities for us to socialize together after the completion of the great Lenten retreat.

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FIRST FRIDAY EUCHARISTIC ADORATION

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

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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 2nd and 4th 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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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 FEBRUARY (alphabetical order)

A warm welcome to our new parishioners!

- The Bateman Family ~ Rob & Kathryn, Saoirse, Lilly, and Joey
- Christopher Borro
- Basil Damukaitis
- Ken Hinton
- Kim Perry

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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

Palm (Passion II) Sunday

29 March 2026

Michael & Jaime; Jeanmarie DeCoster; Donna Hagan; Dotty Kuhlmann, mother of Donna Mueller; Mary McMahan; Kim Morgan; Michael Norfleet, son of Marsha Norfleet; Elizabeth Ryan; Mary Joseph Schenk, daughter of Nicholas & Elaine; Patrick Schneider; Sylvester Soldinie; Caleb & Sheila Ten Eyck; Lara Trudell, daughter of Sharon and Jim Alexander; Renee Weidner; and Msgr. Witt.

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
- Joan Rita Short, aunt and godmother of Gregory Latham
- David M. Smith, brother-in-law of Carol Smith

USHERS’ SCHEDULE

Sunday, 29 March

- 6:30 am Bill Saccente*, Ben Schubert
- 8:00 am Kip Babington*, Jeff Martin, Michael Nelson, Kenny Buyle

10:00 am Patrick Kelly*, Mark Scheer, Brandon Roberts, Owen Bruns

Holy Thursday, 2 April

5:00 pm Mark Scheer*, Brandon Roberts, Owen Bruns, Jesse Hermann

Good Friday, 3 April

3:00 pm Jim Alexander*, Jeff Logullo, Ken Jones, Ken Catalano

Holy Saturday, 4 April

2:00 pm Sam Ashlock*, Jim Alexander, Cory Conway, Jordan Hermann

Easter Sunday, 5 April

6:30 am Bill Saccente*, Jeff Logullo

8:00 am Kip Babington*, Ken Catalano, Michael Nelson, Ethan Lamons

10:00 am Ben Schubert*, Owen Bruns, Jesse Hermann, Cory Conway

BULLETIN COVER: Entry of Jesus into Jerusalem – From Gustave Doré’s Bible Engravings

+ Altar Server Schedule: March – April 2026 +

Date	Time	MC at High Mass / Acolyte at Low Mass	Thurifer	Acolyte 1	Acolyte 2
29 March 2026	6:30	Jack Ryan			
	8:00	Joseph Blum			
	10:00	Philip Petrick	Castor Armesto	Elijah Garvey	Scott Fowler
5 April 2026	6:30	Matthew Pickert	TBD	TBD	TBD
	8:00	Paul Thomas Blaxton	Matthew Rheinheimer	Paul Keys	Leo Indelicato
	10:00	Sebastian Petrick	Thomas Koschmeder	Elijah Garvey	William Hayes
12 April 2026	6:30	Ben Schubert			
	8:00	Matthew Rheinheimer			
	10:00	Joseph Noble	Paul Keys	Jude Kelly	Sean Kenney

WELLSPRING OF TRADITION: ALLELUIA IS OUR SONG: CONTEMPLATING OUR SALVATION: CANTICLES OF THE EASTER VIGIL

In the liturgical drama that underlies the rites of Holy Week and the Sacred Triduum, there are a number of obvious high points that command our attention. The washing of feet during the *Mandatum* and the procession to the Altar of Repose on Holy Thursday evening, the chanting of St John’s Passion and the veneration of the Cross in the Solemn Liturgy of Good Friday, and the *Exultet* over the paschal candle and the blessing of water during the Easter Vigil are all vivid actions that move our minds and emotions toward a deeper understanding of the meaning of our divine Lord’s death and resurrection and how it must take root more deeply in our lives. But there are also quieter moments that afford us an opportunity to contemplate that great Paschal Mystery. Prominent among these are the great responsories to the lessons during the Easter Vigil.

The chanting in full of the Gradual and Tract at our sung Masses is standard at the Oratory, where we enjoy the blessing of capable cantors. For most Catholics, sadly, it is a rare experience. But these chants, sung by a soloist or a few select voices, provide the rest of us with a moment of deep calm amid the otherwise steady pace of the Mass of the Catechumens. After hearing the Scriptures proclaimed, we are given a time to reflect and respond inwardly to what we have heard. The Gregorian melodies are elaborate, belonging to the chant type known as *melismatic*. There are so many notes over some syllables that we lose touch with the text, and find ourselves moved on a higher level by the soaring sound alone. For a few moments, we can hear an echo of the eternal song that transcends language, time, and place, as St Augustine so eloquently puts it.

The Easter Vigil responsories are among the oldest and most venerable of these melismatic chants, some of which St Augustine tells us were already established in his day. Though the melodies have undergone some changes since then, their use as tools of contemplation has endured. The lessons remind us of the most dramatic moments of the history of our salvation: God created the world and all that is in it to be a reflection of and to have a share in His own goodness. After each lesson, we pause to reflect on the astounding goodness of God and the bounty of His loving kindness that he would give us a share in His own divine life. All this He continues to offer despite our own sinful failure to return that great love. The three oldest of these are the canticles *Cantemus Domino*, *Vinea facta est*, and *Attende caelum*.

After the dramatic reading from Exodus 14 of the Israelites’ crossing of the sea and being saved from the hands of the Egyptians, the text itself dictates our natural response: the song the Israelites sang after their deliverance. The first two verses of that song, which are the next verses of Exodus that follow those of the reading, make up the canticle *Cantemus Domino*.

Let us sing to the Lord, for He has been gloriously triumphant.
Horse and charioteer he has thrown into the sea.

He has become my strength and my protection for my salvation.
This is my God and I will honour Him; my father's God and I will exalt Him.
The Lord who shatters the forces of war—Lord is His name.

If you are in the Oratory regularly, the melody of this canticle—as well as the other two—may seem familiar. Parts of it can be heard in several graduals and tracts sung for us through the year. At some points, we can experience the *melisma* phenomenon described above. In fact, on the final syllable of the Latin text, (*il-)*li, the cantor sings 38 notes on that single sound. As the notes come in rapid succession, the net effect is just what the composer intended. No words required; active listening is our full participation. We are moved in body and mind to a higher plane, where for that brief moment we have a capacity to be more intimately united by our inner silence to the One who is Saviour and Lord. We know in our hearts that He indeed saves us, here and now, just as He saved the people of Israel from their slavery so long ago. We can flee from the sin and slavery that pursue us, and we can rightly expect His powerful help and protection.

Vinea facta est is the famous song of the vineyard in the first part of the Prophet Isaiah (5:1-2).
My beloved had a vineyard on a hill in a very fertile place.
He built a wall around it, and dug a ditch around it, and planted it with the vine of Sorec.
He built a watchtower in the midst of it, and hewed out a wine vat in it.
Now the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel.

The canticle is given to us as a response to a reading from the second part of the Prophet Isaiah, chapter 55, which begins with the all too familiar invitation to 'Come to the waters and drink . . . without cost,' a favourite of modern composers of 'pop' music not really suitable for the sacred liturgy. Unfortunately, most pop renditions ignore key passages in the lesson that remind us that we owe God something in return for his many gifts: He deserves our fidelity. The Church, in her wisdom, gives us this canticle to remind us that our interior disposition must have that fidelity. Like many chants, the canticle was composed in an age when, contrary to popular misconceptions, people were actually more familiar with scripture than most fervent fundamentalists are even today. It only sings a verse or two, but that would be enough to remind those listening of the rest of the canticle, in which the Lord tells Israel the woes that will befall them because 'He looked for justice, but saw bloodshed; for righteousness, but heard cries of distress.' (Is 5:7) We need to reform our lives so that we who are the Lord's vineyard now bear good fruit. As we celebrate the night of our deliverance and empowerment, we are asked to rededicate ourselves to that.

The canticle *Attende caelum* responds to a reading too seldom heard in most celebrations of the Easter Vigil. It comes from the book of the scribe Baruch, disciple and secretary of the Prophet Jeremiah. It is a poem of praise to Wisdom, personified as a woman, a common theme in the late Old Testament period. It admonishes Israel, living with the pain of exile, to change its sinful ways and return to the faithful God whom they have abandoned.

You have forsaken the fountain of wisdom.
If you had walked in the way of God, you would be living in peace forever.
Learn where there is wisdom, where there is strength, where there is understanding,
so that you may at the same time discern where there is length of days, and life,
where there is light for the eyes, and peace.

A few verses later, we have a recap of texts we heard earlier in the Vigil:

The one who prepared the earth for all time filled it with four-footed creatures; the one who sends forth the light, and it goes; he called it, and it obeyed him, trembling; the stars shone in their watches, and were glad; he called them, and they said, 'Here we are!' They shone with gladness for him who made them.
This is our God; no other can be compared to him. He found the whole way to wisdom, and gave her to his servant Jacob and to Israel, whom he loved.
Afterwards she appeared on earth and lived with humankind.
She is the book of the commandments of God, the law that endures forever.
All who hold her fast will live, and those who forsake her will die.
Turn, O Jacob, and take her; walk towards the shining of her light.
Do not give your glory to another, or your advantages to an alien people.
Happy are we, O Israel, for we know what is pleasing to God.

To which our canticle from the book of Deuteronomy (32:1-4) responds:

Give ear, O heavens, and I will speak, and let the earth hear the words from my mouth.
May my speech be awaited as the rain, my words drop down like the dew, like gentle rain upon the tender grass, and like snow upon the hay.
For I will proclaim the name of the Lord; ascribe greatness to our God!
God, his works are true, for all his ways are justice. God is faithful and without iniquity, righteous and holy is the Lord.

And so the Vigil gradually reminds us that the whole history of God's interaction with us—from creation to sin to Israel to Incarnation to Death to Resurrection to Pentecost to right now—is a manifestation of His loving wisdom, as S John Henry Newman's great hymn reminds us. Jesus Himself is the true Wisdom, now come to us in human flesh. He Himself is the Way to salvation, to genuine freedom to be who we really are in God's plan for our eternal happiness, to share His own life. Listening attentively to the canticles of the Easter Vigil is an opportunity to spend more time in meditation on the Scriptures and let the Holy Ghost help us find new meaning for our lives in a world increasingly hostile to the divine plan for our happiness. Don't miss it.

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

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