

Old St. Joseph's Church

Est. 1733 | Philadelphia's Jesuit Parish

321 Willings Alley
Philadelphia PA 19106
215-923-1733
www.oldstjoseph.org

March 31, 2019 | Fourth Sunday of Lent

Bless me, Father, for I have sinned

The parable of the Prodigal Son, which is today's Gospel, has gotten me thinking about how we go to confession. And since our communal reconciliation service for Lent is coming up on April 9, I thought I would share a few reflections with you.

One of the comic routines Stephen Colbert regularly drags out on his late-night TV show is called *Midnight Confessions*. It's a parody on going to confession, mimicking the closed confessional with the sliding screen and the role of the penitent, played by Colbert himself, making ridiculous statements. It's common for comics to play Catholics for a laugh, portraying them as riddled with neurotic guilt, mostly over sex. The usual jokes are even more poignant today in light of the abuse scandal, when the sex-addicted priest is mocked for the hypocrisy that is allegedly endemic to the Catholic Church. So, for a Catholic to come before a priest and recite the traditional words to begin confession is a radically countercultural act: *Bless me, Father, for I have sinned*. No wonder confession has fallen on hard times when it comes to Catholic practice.

Up through the early 1960's, it was different. Catholics routinely went to confession, as a matter of course, in far greater numbers than is true today. Confession was the way to prepare to receive communion, we were taught. Private preparation began with the examination of conscience, going through the ten commandants—everybody had them memorized. List the sinful actions along with the number of times, perhaps adding some



extenuating circumstances. Arrange the list so the really serious sins can be slipped by the priest, attracting as little attention as possible. Practice the act of contrition so you won't be embarrassed by a memory lapse. Accept your penance and then get out fast. Oh, you feel so good after it's over.

Why have people given up this practice? And why does it receive such public ridicule?

A friend of mine has a favorite retort when people complain about a liturgy or Church ceremony. *God still showed up*, she says. God showed up for penitents in the past, and still does. So, we can be rightly offended when Catholic practices are so mocked, especially by unbelieving people who seem eager to deny that God could ever 'show up.' And yet, it can be helpful to listen to our critics. Maybe some Catholic practices from the past, as much as they once served the Church so well, nevertheless today obscure as much as they once revealed about the mystery of God's forgiveness. In fact, the Church has indeed altered the practice of 'going to

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Old St. Joseph's is equipped with an audio hearing loop. Switch on the T-coil function of your device to use the loop. Booklets with the Sunday readings are in the rear of the church.

This Week at Old St. Joseph's

Date		Mass Intention and Presider	Calendar Events	
Mon	12:05 PM	<i>Old St. Joseph's Memorial Society</i> Presider: Fr. Dougherty SJ	6:00 PM	PREP
1				
Tues	12:05 PM	<i>Edward and Mary Britt Families (D)</i> Presider: Fr. Modrys SJ	12 Noon	Faith, Food & Friends (Barbelin)
2			12 Noon	Al-Anon Meeting (Drexel)
Wed	12:05 PM	<i>James and Katherine Henderson (D)</i> Presider: Fr. Dougherty SJ		
3				
Thurs	12:05 PM	<i>Old St. Joseph's Memorial Society</i> Presider: Fr. O'Donnell SJ	12 Noon	Faith, Food & Friends (Barbelin)
4			7:00 PM	Schola Cantorum rehearsal (Barbelin)
Fri	12:05 PM	<i>The Whitfield Family</i> Presider: Fr. Dougherty SJ	12:30 PM	Litany of the Sacred Heart
5				
Sat	12:05 PM	<i>Nancy Shashaty (D)</i> Presider: Fr. Modrys SJ	12 Noon	Faith, Food & Friends (Barbelin)
6			12:05 PM	Anointing of the Sick (at Mass)
	5:30 PM	Presider: Fr. Dougherty SJ		
Sun	7:30 AM	Presider: Fr. Modrys SJ	9:30 AM	Children's Liturgy of the Word (Barbelin)
7	9:30 AM	Presider: Fr. O'Donnell SJ	10:30 AM	Coffee Hour & Hard Hats (Barbelin)
	11:30 AM	Presider: Fr. Modrys SJ	12:30 PM	Coffee Hour & Hard Hats (Barbelin)
	6:30 PM	Presider: Fr. O'Donnell SJ	5:30 PM	Loyola Choir rehearsal (Church)
			5:30 PM	YAC Pre-Mass Reflection (Greaton)
			7:30 PM	Parish Cookout Dinner (Barbelin)

In your prayers,
please remember our sick and homebound brothers and sisters
and our ministry at Pennsylvania Hospital.

Debbie Brooks, Brenda Byrne, Tony Corvaia, Ann Crowther, Jane Crowther, Simeon Crowther, Toby Epstein, Lenny Felixson, Susan Friend, Jillian Grayson, Fr. Mike Hricko SJ, Aaron Hull, Mary Jacobs, Edith Ruth Jett, Catherine Keddie, Raymond LaPalme, Karen Lessing, Fr. Jerry McAndrews SJ, Marge Marziani, Allen May, D. Minter, Frank Orloski, Bernie Paquette, Ursula Reed, Sara Smith, Arlene Tomlin, Thomas Turnbull, Patricia Yusko and Mickey Zippo.

Bringing Communion to the Homebound

Those who are confined to home—even for a short time—can remain connected to our shared worship by receiving Communion at home. If you, a family member, friend or neighbor (with their approval of course), would like to receive Communion at home, contact the parish offices at 215-923-1733 to arrange for a parish Eucharistic Minister to visit.

Old St. Joseph's Prayer List

It's time again to update the bulletin's prayer list. If you would like a name to remain on the current list, please email office@oldstjoseph.org by Monday, April 8. As always, you may continue to add names at any time by email, by calling 215-923-1733 or by leaving a message in the parish offices. Thank you!

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confession,' though most Catholics, so rooted in the past, have never understood or experienced the change, or even heard about it.

No doubt Catholic piety at times did harp too much on an unhealthy kind of guilt, especially as a way of advancing conformity to the external rules. And the traditional teaching that the priest was to act like a judge in confession in order to affix a suitable penance hardly captured the mystery of God's all-forgiving love as expressed in the parables of Jesus. And too much emphasis was placed on making what was called an "integral confession," which meant that every serious sin must be confessed, including its frequency, as if one's spiritual life can be so efficiently itemized, like a shopping list. The emphasis was all on confession. I know a bishop who seems to suggest that the preparation for the sacrament is essentially just a rehearsal for what you're going to say to the priest. This fixation with what you say—your confession—is a common sentiment from the past and I think it's wrong. I've had the experience as a priest of people being so relieved they got through the confession that they want to walk out even before they can receive absolution. Why are we so fixated on what are we going to say when every story in the Gospel about forgiveness emphasizes something else: what Jesus says! This point is perfectly modeled in the Prodigal Son parable when the father interrupts his son's rehearsed confession because the father is so eager for the celebration to begin. Jesus never portrayed forgiveness as the recitation of a detailed listing of sins.

So what has changed? How is going to confession supposed to be different today?

To begin with, the name changed. The liturgical documents call it The Sacrament of Reconciliation and Canon Law calls it The Sacrament of Penance. I like the former title because it seems to resonate better with the Gospel stories. So let's call it Reconciliation.

Reconciliation refers to a whole experience of real spiritual conversion. What happened to confession? That's one of the steps in the process. Referring to the whole sacrament as confession is to take a part—arguably a small part—for the whole.

What does celebrating Reconciliation entail? Opening Prayer, Scripture Reading, Communal Examination of Conscience and Prayer of Contrition, Confession of Sins, Absolution, and Prayer of Thanksgiving. It's quite a list! Note the essential role of prayer and Scripture and the emphasis on community—breaking down how individualized and privatized the experience of the sacrament was in the past. As a result of Vatican II, the Church gave us three different rituals or ways of celebrating reconciliation—one of which has been suppressed for dubious reasons (more on this at a later time). But all the rituals contain all those elements in one form or another and the preferred ritual is to do this together—no more standing on line waiting to go to confession.

So which part of the process is most important? Maybe it's best to realize that all the parts work together and the essential ingredient is what God does for us when we are open to his grace. If you think of the Gospel stories that should really serve as our model for Reconciliation, the answer is obvious. What's really important is the way we come together to pray for forgiveness, hear the word of God, express our forgiveness to the people who have injured us, acknowledge our sins and open ourselves to God's grace. In other words, not surprisingly, it's what's in our hearts that really counts. And even more important is God's action in Jesus through the power of the Spirit—not what we do. The Sacrament of Reconciliation, like all the sacraments, is God's way of sharing his grace with us as his free gift, not as a reward for our actions. Let's admit honestly that we are a sinful people—that's the confession part—but redeemed, too. We come to thank the Lord for accomplishing that miracle of transformation in us.

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—bulletin essay, concluded.

There are always the sour critics who relish admonishing us to wallow in our sins, who demand that we catalogue our faults and mistakes and sins as if that's all God wants to hear from us. As a sinner myself, I can understand their point of view. But meeting the Lord in the Sacrament of Reconciliation is far more consoling—and more challenging. Are you really embracing a conversion in your life, or at least the desire to be converted, by God's grace?

Front page image: James Tissot, The Return of the Prodigal Son, c.1886–94, Brooklyn Museum.

Join us on **Tuesday, April 9 at 7:30 PM** for our parish celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. The liturgy will include Scripture reading, prayer and a shared examination of conscience. Opportunity for sacramental absolution will be available for those who wish to approach a priest for individual confession. Come as you are; all are welcome!

Announcements

Thank you!

A wonderful evening was enjoyed by all at the Mass and dinner celebrating the feast of St. Joseph on Tuesday, March 19. Many thanks to Termini Brothers Bakery for donating the delicious zeppole for dessert. Thanks to all those who donated a dessert or wine. Special thanks also to the men of Faith, Food and Friends who set up the hall and to the crew of volunteers who prepared, served and cleaned up after the dinner. Many hands went into making this parish event a great success; we are grateful for all your help!

Easter Eggs

The annual OSJ Easter Egg Hunt will take place on **Sunday, April 21 after the 9:30 AM Mass** (bring a basket!) in the North Park adjacent to the Church. Donations of plastic eggs filled with treats can be dropped off at the parish offices until **Saturday, April 20**, and volunteers are needed to set out the eggs. Please contact Joe Casey at parishlife@oldstjoseph.org or 215-843-3573 to help out.

I recently passed a Protestant church that had a sign outside. It said, "Come as you are; you can change inside." So come as you are, on Tuesday, April 9, at 7:30 PM, and maybe God's grace through the Sacrament of Reconciliation will change you. One thing for sure: if we come with open hearts, humbly confessing our sins, as halting as our words may be, we can be certain that God will definitely show up.

—Walter F. Modrys, SJ
Pastor

Schedule for Holy Week

Holy Thursday

Reconciliation, 11:30 AM–12:30 PM

No 12:05 PM Mass

Mass of the Lord's Supper, 7:30 PM

Compline, 10:00 PM

Good Friday

Stations of the Cross, 12:05 PM

Celebration of the Lord's Passion, 3:00 PM

Easter Vigil

Liturgy begins at 8:00 PM

Easter Sunday

Mass at 7:30 AM, 9:30 AM, 11:30 AM

There is no 6:30 PM Mass on Easter Sunday.

Announcements

Family Activity Afternoon

Parishioners young and old are invited to reflect on the role that faith plays in family life on **Saturday April 6, 3:30–5:15 PM** in Barbelin Hall. There will also be a time to share in Catholic Relief Services' Rice Bowl advocacy for families in need.

April Pre-Baptism Class

The April Pre-Baptism class will be held on **Thursday, April 11 at 7:00 PM** in the Drexel Parlor. For additional information, contact Fr. Dougherty at 215-923-1733.

Book Group

The Old Saint Joseph's Book Reading Group will discuss Elaine Pagels's *The Gnostic Gospels* this **Tuesday, April 2 at 7:30 PM**, in the Loyola Room of the parish offices. Contact Carol Shloss at shlosscarol@gmail.com if you need more information.

Ministry Schedule Posted

Altar servers, Eucharistic ministers, lectors, and ushers: please log-in online for the **April 1–May 31** ministry schedule. New volunteers are always welcome to sign up through the Ministry Scheduling Program at www.oldstjoseph.org.

Young Adult Community Updates

There will be no Spirituality Night on Tuesday, April 2. Instead, please join YAC at the parish Reconciliation Service on **Tuesday, April 9 at 7:30 PM**. Questions? Email osjyac@gmail.com.

Save the date for the OSJ Young Adult Community (YAC) Semi-Annual Planning Meeting, **Saturday, April 27, 10:00 AM–4:00 PM**. All members and ideas are welcome; please join us for as much of the day as you can. Email Megan at mprilutski@gmail.com with questions.

Lenten Choral Vespers Service Today

Please join us **today, Sunday March 31 at 4:00 PM** in the Church. In addition to chanting the antiphons and psalms appointed for the day, the Schola Cantorum, under the direction of Dr. Mark Bani, will sing a choral gem from the late Georgian period, *The Wilderness*, by Samuel Sebastian Wesley, and Herbert Sumsion's lyrical setting of the *Magnificat in G Major*. Organ music will include Brahms' poignantly moving setting of *O Sadness, O Heart Sorrow*, and Buxtehude's setting of *O Sacred Head Surrounded*. (A free will offering will be gratefully accepted). We hope you will join us for this ancient prayer of the church and an opportunity for Lenten reflection and prayer.

Special Cookout Dinner

The next parish cookout dinner, on **Sunday April 7 after the 6:30 PM Mass**, will feature a meal prepared from Catholic Relief Services' Rice Bowl recipes. There will also be another opportunity to write letters and emails advocating for full funding of international humanitarian aid in the Fiscal Year 2020. CRS uses these funds for emergency relief and food security programs. Details are online at catholicsconfrontglobalpverty.org. Click on "Take Action" in the Eliminate Hunger box. You can also text NOURISH CHANGE to 306-44 and receive a text back from CRS with a link enabling you to email your representatives in Congress.

Easter Vigil Hospitality

Volunteers are needed to help serve refreshments after the Easter Vigil on **Saturday, April 20**. Please contact Joe Casey at parishlife@oldstjoseph.org or 215-843-3573 to volunteer.

INFORMATION

Rectory Office Hours

Monday through Friday: 9:30 AM to 4:30 PM

Sunday: 9:00 AM to 2:00 PM

Mass Times

Monday through Saturday: 12:05 PM

Saturday Vigil Mass for Sunday: 5:30 PM

Sunday: 7:30, 9:30, 11:30 AM and 6:30 PM

Holy Days: 12:05 and 7:30 PM

Medical Emergency

In a medical emergency when the need for a priest is urgent, please call the rectory.

Hearing Enhancements

Old St. Joseph's is equipped with an audio hearing loop. Switch on the T-coil function of your device to use the loop. Booklets with the Sunday readings are available in the rear of the church.

Registration

Persons who want to register as parishioners should complete a parish registration form and return it to the rectory office by mail or in person. Registration forms are available in the rectory office during normal office hours, on the bookcases in the back of the church and online at www.oldstjoseph.org.

Sacrament of Reconciliation

Monday through Saturday: 11:30 AM to noon or by appointment

Sacrament of Baptism

Persons wanting to arrange a baptism should call Fr. Dougherty at the parish office at least two months before the desired date to arrange catechesis and the baptism celebration.

The Sacrament of Anointing

The Sacrament of Anointing (the sacrament of the sick) is administered during the 12:05 PM Mass on the first Saturday of each month. Homebound or hospitalized persons wanting to receive the Sacrament of Anointing should call the parish office.

Sacrament of Matrimony

Persons wanting to be married in the parish should call Fr. O'Donnell at the parish office at least nine months before the desired date.

Rite of Christian Initiation

Unbaptized adults who are considering baptism into the Catholic Church, baptized Catholics who have received no other sacraments and who want to be confirmed and to receive First Eucharist, and baptized non-Catholics who are considering full communion in the Catholic Church should call Fr. O'Donnell at the parish office.

Mass of Christian Burial

The funeral director should call the parish office.

Pastor

Fr. Walter Modrys SJ (pastor@oldstjoseph.org)

Parochial Vicar

Fr. Edward O'Donnell SJ (eodonnell@oldstjoseph.org)

In Residence

Br. Robert Carson SJ

Fr. Edward Dougherty SJ (dougherty@oldstjoseph.org)

Pastoral Associate

BJ Brown (bjbrown@oldstjoseph.org)

Business Manager

Eric German (germane@oldstjoseph.org)

Director of Music

Mark Bani (music@oldstjoseph.org)

Parish Offices

(office@oldstjoseph.org)

Religious Education (PREP) Coordinator

Christine Szczepanowski (prep@oldstjoseph.org)

Faith, Food & Friends Director

Deborah Hluchan (faithandfriends@oldstjoseph.org)

Parish Pastoral Council

Rana McNamara and Richard Le, co-chairs
(osjpc@oldstjoseph.org)

Parish Finance Council

Paul Shay, chair

Historic Preservation Corporation Board

Fr. Walter Modrys SJ, president

Adult Education

Rita O'Brien and Jeanmarie Zippo
(adulted@oldstjoseph.org)

Eldership

Pat Nelson (eldership@oldstjoseph.org)

Parish Life

Joe Casey (parishlife@oldstjoseph.org)

Ignatian Spirituality and Formation

John Bitterman (osjspirituality@oldstjoseph.org)

Women, Faith and Fellowship

Rana McNamara (wff@oldstjoseph.org)

Young Adult Community

Jenn Lydic and Megan Prilutski (osjyac@gmail.com)

Altar Servers

Maria Ramirez (altarserver@oldstjoseph.org)

Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion

Bill Stewart (EM@oldstjoseph.org)

Hospital Ministry

Luanne Balestrucci (hospitalEM@oldstjoseph.org)

Homebound Ministry

Neal Hébert (homeEM@oldstjoseph.org)

Lectors

Lou Anne Bulik (lectors@oldstjoseph.org)

Ushers

Nikola Sizgorich (ushers@oldstjoseph.org)

Children's Liturgy of the Word

Peggy Connolly ([clow@oldstjoseph.org](mailto:cw@oldstjoseph.org))