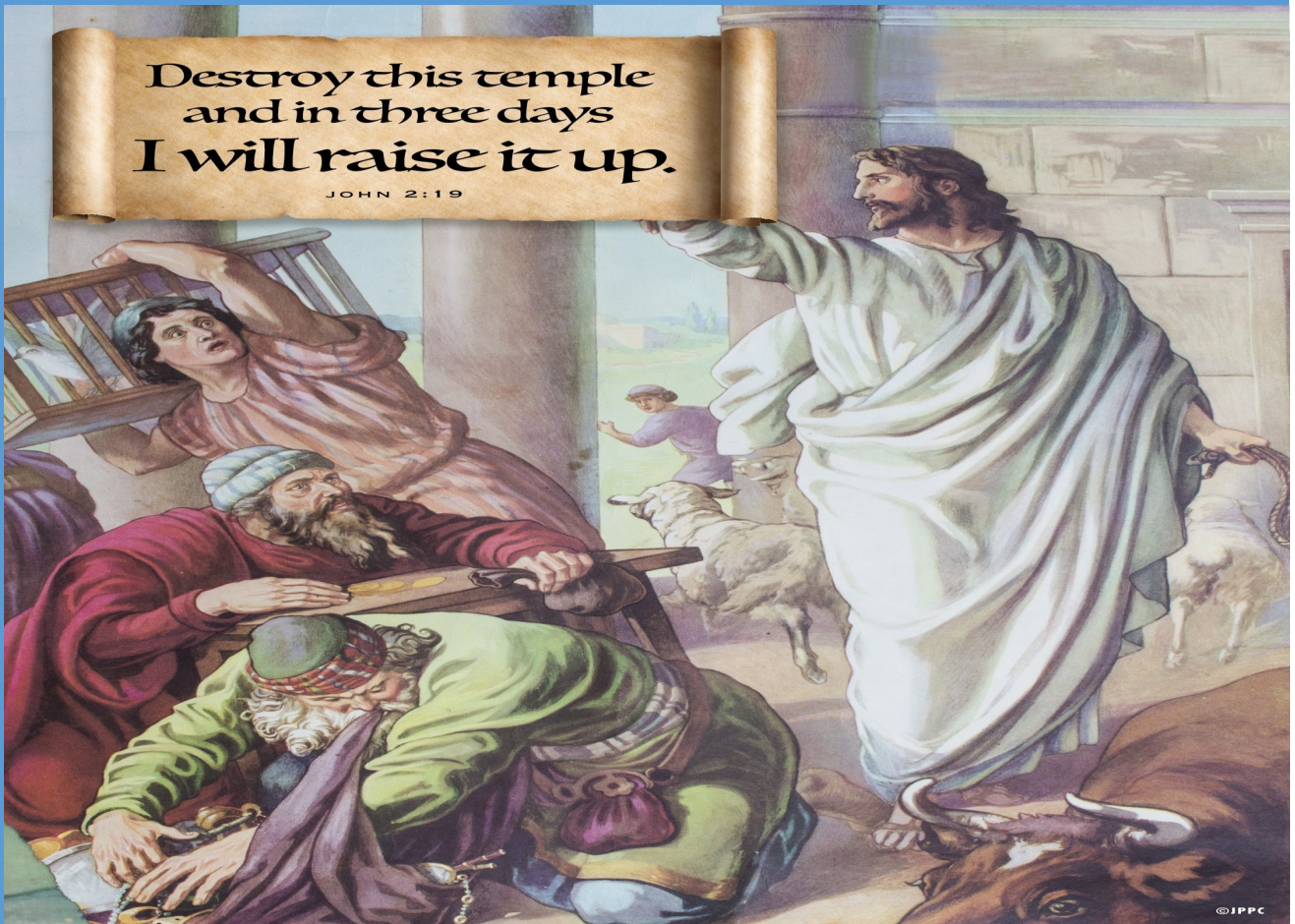




3rd SUNDAY OF LENT 2024

MARCH 3, 2024



Mission Statement

“Good Shepherd parish, under the guidance of the true Shepherd Jesus Christ, is a Catholic faith based community seeking to proclaim and live the gospel message. Recognizing our diversity, we strive to bring together a church family, welcoming all people as we grow together in faith, hope and love.”

954 Stuyvesant Ave Irvington NJ 07111 Phone: (973) 375-8568

Fax (973) 375-7040 Email gsirvington@comcast.net

Website: www.goodshepherdnj.com



SERVED BY

Rev. Valentine Ugwuanya Pastor
Ed Stolarz Director of Music Ministry
Denise Perry Secretary

For more information on our parish please go to:
Goodshepherdnj.com
Or email us at
gsirvington@comcast.net

FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK. 3RD SUNDAY OF LENT OF YEAR B MARCH 3.

We are in the age of technology. For some of us who know how to use these modern technologies, or gadgets like phones, internets etc, they find life easier than many of us who don't know how to use them. Our little children of today, even a one-year-old knows how to use these smart phones and even computers. They tell you where and where to press or touch if something goes wrong or you don't know how to figure it out, they tell you what to do. When I bought my phone I spent some time, one afternoon setting-up android not iPhone I bought and going through the menu, guided by "the book of words" which until today I don't know much of my phone or even my gadgets in my car which now manual still lives very securely in my desk. "Follow the rules" and it works excellently, and will do all sorts of things that are helpful (and all sorts of things that are just fun, as well); lose your grip on the rules and it can just sit there not doing anything at all. So I keep tight hold of "the book of words," the owner's manual, because it tells me how this gadget works and how it doesn't work. Some of you also have been in the situation I found myself you may already be making the same connection I found myself making with regard to today's readings. What we have in the Ten Commandments is "the book of words" for the human being: not an arbitrary set of rules imposed from outside that restrict us, or take away all that seems to delight, but an owner's manual for being a person. Couched in the language and images of a different time and place, the Ten Commandments point to the truth of who I am.

Note that: the ten Commandments tell me the truth of who I am. They don't simply tell me what I must do – or mustn't do – but in telling me that, (in their language, from their time and place), they tell me who I am, and what is the world in which I live. They tell me the truth; that I, and the world in which I live, are where the holiness of God is made visible, where the Holy is to be found. The first reading today is from the Book of Exodus and gives us the commandments of the Lord. Knowing the commandments of the Lord and striving to live in our lives these commandments is one of the way of being cleansed for God. We cannot achieve our own salvation but we can strive to cooperate with what God is asking of us and has asked of His People throughout the ages. The Book of Exodus makes it clear that God wants His People for Himself and is jealous in His love for us. This is a good jealousy that leads us to salvation and assures us that God is always there striving to love us and draw us to Himself. Lent is a wonderful time to reflect on our own responses to God's love. First, we can always ask ourselves: Do I really believe that God loves me, just as I am right now? Do I believe that God is my ally in seeking to cleanse my life of all that impedes my relationship with God? Do I really trust the love of this God, who never wants to destroy me but who always wants me to be for Him? The second reading is from the First Letter to the Corinthians. Saint Paul is clear that he proclaims Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles. We can imagine how odd it must have sounded to people of the time of Saint Paul to say that a Savior had actually come and was crucified—but that the Crucified One was and is God! Even today people find it very difficult to believe that Jesus is Lord and God. We can think of a Eastern song that proclaims: Christ is risen from the dead, trampling down death by death, and upon those in the tombs bestowing life! That is the heart of our Christian proclamation. We must believe that Jesus is fully human and fully God, that Jesus lived among us, that Jesus was crucified for us—and yes, Jesus rose from the dead for us. Today's Gospel is quite familiar to us: the cleansing of the Temple, except that John's version that we have today is different from what we find in the other Gospels. In Matthew, Mark and Luke, this courageous action took place near the end of Jesus' public ministry and, as far as his adversaries were concerned, was the last straw. Mark says, "The chief priests and scribes heard of this and began to look for a way to destroy him" and Matthew and Luke say pretty much the same thing — notice there was no mention of the Pharisees. In John, however, the cleansing of the Temple took place at the beginning of Jesus' ministry, right after the wedding feast of Cana, and Jesus' adversaries are described simply as "the Jews", which John uses as a kind of shorthand to refer to the chief priests whose identity is spelled out in the other Gospels. This is, of course, an unfortunately broad usage of the term "Jews" because all of Jesus' supporters were also Jews, many of whom, today's Gospel says, "began to believe in his name when they saw the signs he was doing." We have to keep this in mind whenever we read John's Gospel because misreading his account has too often led simple believers to blame all Jews for Jesus' death when in fact only a relatively small number of people were involved in it then (and none today) and it was in fact the Romans — gentiles (our ancestors, so to speak) — who actually killed Jesus. What is significant about each of these signs is their capacity to reveal the identity of Jesus and the glory of God revealed in him. Notice also that while John places the cleansing of the Temple at the beginning of Jesus' ministry, he does so with a view to his future passion and death, such that when Jesus says, "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up," he's referring to the temple of his body. The material building in which up to now animals have been sold and sacrificed on an altar of stone will soon give way to the spiritual temple of Jesus' body, the true Lamb of God sold for 30 silver pieces and sacrificed on the altar of the cross. The second thing to notice is that John's Gospel talks about "signs", some of which are miracles like at the wedding feast of Cana, but others are symbolic actions like today's cleansing of the Temple. What is significant about each of these signs is their capacity to reveal the identity of Jesus and the glory of God revealed in him. These signs have the purpose of opening their minds to the underlying meaning of the remarkable things they were experiencing, which was crucial because the person who is unwilling to perceive this underlying meaning will be incapable of that personal faith that Jesus seeks in his disciples. Many people met Jesus but only those who opened their hearts to him truly encountered him, and these signs helped make that possible. And isn't it true that you and I encounter Jesus most powerfully through signs even today? That's what all the sacraments are: "outward signs instituted by Christ to give grace." That's what the Eucharist is: Jesus' Body and Blood really present under the signs of bread and wine, and the person unwilling to perceive this reality will be incapable of encountering Jesus through this sacrament — whether at Mass or in adoration, even though he's really there.

Let us ask our loving God to give us the strength to observe and keep the commandments and to listen to the voice and commandment of love of His only begotten Son. Amen.

Good Shepherd Parish Schedule for Mass & Worship (schedules are subject to change)

Saturday (anticipated) 5:30pm
Holy Day TBD.

Sundays —9:00am, 11:00am
Reconciliation: Saturdays 4:45-5:15pm

National Holidays —9:00am
Adoration Mo-Fri 7:30am-5:00pm

Mass Intentions For the week of March 2, 2024—March9, 2024

Saturday 5:30pm For the Repose of the Soul of Louis and Mildred Meola
Mar 02

Sunday 9:00am For God’s Guidance and Protection of Venus Matthews
Mar 03 11:00am

Monday 7:00am For God’s Guidance and protection of Benjamin Perry 3rd
Mar 04

Tuesday 7:00am For the Repose of the Soul of Maurice Persons
Mar 05

Wednesday 7:00am For the Repose of the Soul of Debra Chapman
Mar 06

Thursday 7:00am For Guidance and Protection of Venus Matthews
Mar 07

Friday 7:00am For God’s Guidance and Protection of Milton Hinton
Mar 08

Saturday 8:30am For God’s Guidance and Protection of Sandi Mosley
Mar 09 5:30pm For the Repose of the Soul of Cosimo Mancino


Kindly keep our parishioner's family, with health and other challenges, in your prayers

Let us always remember in our prayers the sick members of our Parish

Denise Younker	Paul Kocum	Sandi Mosley	Debbie Watson	Rihanna Scott
Elizabeth Cassata	Pope Francis	Frank Rocchi	Camile Laidlaw	
Frederick Hamilton	Curtis Richards	Carlos Quinones	Venus Matthews	
Jean Michelin	Corizon Abuzied	Bob and Barbara Nezlick		

* Please advise if any names should be added or delete from the list

Hospital Privacy | Please remember that current privacy laws regarding patients in hospitals do not allow hospitals/ pastoral care offices to contact parishes. If you or a loved one are in the hospital and want a priest to visit, please call the I office at (973)375-8568




SAFE ENVIRONMENT CORNER

HOW TO REPORT ABUSE

The Archdiocese of Newark takes very seriously any and all allegations of sexual misconduct by members of the clergy, Religious and lay staff of the Archdiocese. We encourage anyone with knowledge of an act of sexual misconduct to inform us so that we may take appropriate action to protect others and provide support to victims of sexual abuse. Call the Coordinator for the Office of Accompaniment in the Archdiocesan Department for the Protection of the faithful at

201-407-3256



Please contact Fr. Valentine or call the rectory if you are interested in Intentions, of a Sanctuary Lamp, Alter bread and wine or Alter Flowers

Ministries: If you’re interested in ministries of service either as a Lector or Eucharistic Minister, please call the rectory at 975-375-8568 or fill out the Information below and place in the collection basket.

Name : _____

Telephone #: _____

Lector _____ Eucharistic Minister _____

Collection Report		February 25, 2024
Weekly Target		\$6,500.00
Collection (Offering+ Fuel & Energy)		\$ 2,396.00
Surplus (Deficit)		\$ 4,104.00
Fiscal Year to Date		
Budget:		\$346,811.00
Actual:		\$61,860.00
Surplus (Deficit)		\$295,251.00
Rolling 4 Week Averages		
Average Collection:		\$ 2,580.00
Average Surplus (Deficit)		\$3,920.00

Minister Assignments March 2– March 3, 2024

Saturday Sunday	Lectors	Eucharistic Ministers	Presider
03/09 5:30pm	Denise Perry	Denise Perry Barbara Banks Nellie Bate	Fr. Val
03/10 9:00am	Paulette Andreson -Spence	Augustine Boakye Helen Chife-Akude Alexandra Dunac	Fr. Val
03/10 11:00am	Janice Camacho	Melyn Lopina Luer Drews Janet Drews	Fr. Val

GSP EVENT CALENDER	
Sunday Mar 03	
Monday Mar 04	
Saint Caimir	
Tuesday Mar 05	
RCIA 4:00pm in the Rectory	
Wednesday Mar 06	
RCIA 4:00pm in the Rectory	
Thursday Mar 07	
Saint Perpetua and Felicity	
Friday Mar 08	
Saint John of God	
Stations of the Cross 12Noon and 7:00PM	
Saturday Mar 09	
Saint Frances of Rome	

Good Shepherd Parish Information

RECTORY HOURS: Monday Thru Wednesday 10:00AM-2:00PM; Thursday / Friday 9:00AM-12:00PM

Parish Registration Forms can be found at the back of the church or call the rectory at (973) 375-8568

THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION Saturday 4:45-5:15 pm

THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM In order to have your child baptized at Good Shepherd, the parents must be registered and active members of our parish. Godparents or sponsors must meet qualifications as to have received both sacraments of Communion and Confirmation, attend Mass regularly and been a registered parishioner at a Catholic Church For more information please call the Rectory at (973) 375-8568

THE SACRAMENT OF MATRIMONY Couples who are planning a wedding should call the parish office to meet the priest, to choose the date of the wedding and before any other arrangements are made call (973)375-8568

PASTORAL OF THE SICK Notify a priest of all who are hospitalized, home-bound, or Emergencies call (973)375-8568

ORDER OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION OF ADULTS, RCIA. Adults interested in becoming members of the Catholic Church and Catholics in need of Sacraments, Confirmation or Eucharist; inquire at the Rectory. To register please call the rectory at(973-375-8568

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION Sunday of October-April from 10:00-11:00 am in the Church building. For more information please call the Rectory at (973-375-8568

THE REFLECTION OF THE PASTOR ON 3RD SUNDAY OF LENT MARCH 3RD 2024.

During my second deployment in Afghanistan in 2008 to 2009, I was a total stranger when I first arrived at Bagram to cover the RC East before been transferred to other parts of Afghanistan like RC South Kandahar, and covering to the boundary with Iran. I remember flying in that September morning and seeing the verdant mountains surrounding the city. There were so many open-land, like arid area, desert, full of sands and so many track-roads, not main road and streets like we have here, few shades different from other parts of the modern, developed and developing nations or countries. With my two Soldiers who had weapons, I had to walk through the towns for some days with an interpreter with me to visit and see the people. The people in these villages, some were happy especially the Islamic fundamentalists -the Mushahdim, the ISIS that I came to reach out to, and to give them food and other necessary people from here in our country collected to give to the Soldiers and some them in these areas and the villagers didn't welcome me because I am an American Soldier, but others said to me and my Soldiers "Welcome to Paktika province, -the 'land of dust.' Thanks for coming to see and to help us.

During our training here before our deployment, we were instructed not to eat anything offered to us by the people of Afghanistan not to poison us. I had some apprehension about what I was getting myself into: this was my first time going to meet and encounter people who hated Americans, to talk to them for peace and reconciliation, even though I did it in Iraq when I was there during my first deployment. I was thirsty after working for two and half hours with no water visiting and meeting with the villagers and now in this town, we called Harare. The questions that I was asking myself were: Would I make friends here even though we engaged with them in a power fight on the road? Am I going to ask from these people I do not know for water to drink? How would the people accept what I am going to tell and will they understand me? Am I going to make any impact in their lives and the dialogue?

As the stranger, I was unknown, *seeking* to be known. Those first hours after arriving, I played soccer with the young boys in the courtyard. There I was graciously, joyfully, lovingly, and unanimously welcomed and accepted me. After a few minutes of drinking the Afghan tea and flat bread and water with them, I began to feel at home and so they too. Our tea-drinking in the courtyard is a place well-versed in welcoming strangers. After playing soccer with the young boys and drinking tea with the elders, I was still thirsty. It seemed that a young lady in the house knew that I needed water, brought a jug of water for me to drink. It was a hot afternoon, and it was a hot day, the temperature was high and I was in need of water and the one I had with me had turned into hot water. This lady came and gave me, a stranger, water to drink and she said to me, you need water, drink because it's a hot day and you have walked a lot of places. This young lady changed my life, world view and perception of the people of Afghanistan- she showed me care and hospitality, and she gave me water to drink from the buried pot with sand in their family house. Now I realized why women and children do not like and cannot go to the well in the afternoon to fetch water, because the weather is always hot and brutal during the day and the sun is too intense over 140 degrees hot every day. I was surprised to see that this woman was able to talk to me, she crossed the barriers of their culture, whereby women do not talk to men and men don't come in contact with women. But she overcame these odds and spoke to me.

The same thing happened to Jesus. It was a hot day during his journey in Samaria. Not all places are so welcoming, however. When Jesus encounters the Samaritan woman at the well and asked for water to drink, he, too, is a stranger. For generations, the Jewish and Samaritan peoples were enemies. Both descendants of Jacob, they disagreed on many things, cultural and religious, including where was the proper place to worship God.

When Jesus speaks to the Samaritan woman, she is surprised that a Jewish man would address her. He appears to be a stranger, but he knows deeply personal things about her life. Quickly, the woman recognizes Jesus as a prophet and then Messiah, there was a progression in her faith, and she went and proclaimed the news to her people. Suddenly, debates about *where* to worship become unimportant. God is standing right in front of her! Jesus says to her, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem." Jesus comes not just for his own people, but for all the peoples of the world, in all of the unique places where they can be found.

Because of the testimony of the Samaritan woman, many of her fellow Samaritans come to meet Jesus and our Lord remained with them for two days. This is one example among many of when Jesus chooses women as ministers of his word. Her gracious willingness to help an unknown man asking for water opens her to the gift of receiving Christ face-to-face.

"She came to draw water" (v.7). The empty water jar (v.28) that she was carrying then becomes a symbol of her own inner emptiness, which she was trying to fill with her dubious relationship with men. She was not fulfilled. Her strategy to cope with that thirst left her even more empty, more thirsty and more wounded. I tend to see her as an addict – a sex addict, a prostitute, who used her body or sex for money. Thus, her thirst for water which drew her to the well could be a symbol of her inner thirst for God that will draw her to Jesus.

This is our own story. We are wounded. We are thirsty. We try to fill the emptiness deep within us with the things of the world: pleasure, power and possession and prestige. They leave us more-empty. The acceptance of the thirst is the beginning of our Christian life journey.

Next morning, as I woke up from that village, I had this thought (a message from God?): "Read John 4". On reading it again later during the day, I realized that the whole story of the Samaritan woman revolves around the theme of water. But there was no exchange of water. So 'the living water' that Jesus talks about is HIMSELF. And receiving that water is experiencing HIM as the Son of God.

This Afghan woman, when I spoke to her about Jesus she desired to know about him, there was the eagerness, the thirst for Jesus even if she embraced Christianity would be an outcast and be stoned to death. But she insisted and believed and embraced Jesus and few weeks later she left her home, went away from Afghanistan to Pakistan to be with the Christians there.

Let us summarize the steps that the Samaritan woman (Jn 4:1-42) went through in her encounter with Jesus. The story begins in a situation of wounded-ness. This woman comes to the well with her empty water jar at 12 noon. The timing shows that she wanted to avoid people (v.6). At the well she encounters a Jew who requests water from her (v.7). Jesus begins a journey with her talking about the water in the physical context of the well. She is very physical in her interpretation of things (vv.9,11,15). Jesus continues to challenge her to a higher level of being. At the appropriate time he makes her aware of the cycle of addiction that she had got into (v.16). She has had relationship with six men and yet there is no one whom she can call a husband (vv.17,18). At this, she becomes interested in theological truths (v.20). She is evidently impressed by Jesus' approach to her; by his knowledge of things. "The woman said to him, 'I know that Messiah – that is, Christ – is coming; and when he comes he will explain everything'"(v.25).

Be a stranger. Follow Jesus's example to go into places where you are unknown. Maybe it's a new parish church or an organization or a place that needs volunteers where you can be of help. Maybe God is calling you to come on a mission of evangelization. It's important to practice or have an experience of being the stranger in a foreign land, not only to get out of our comfort zones, but to allow those we encounter to change our hearts and plans—just as the Samaritan woman changed Jesus.