

# SAINT JOHN THE BAPTIST ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

69 VALLEY STREET, HILLSDALE NJ 07642 • STJOHNHILLSDALE.ORG

MARCH 22, 2026



Fast not only from food, but  
from harsh words and quick judgment.

## 5<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY OF LENT

**PASTOR**  
Rev. Msgr. Peter Smutelovic

**WEEKEND ASSISTANTS**  
Rev. Bogumil Misiuk  
Rev. Frank Lennie

**DEACONS**  
Deacon Jack Gray  
Deacon Albert Ganter

- **RECTORY 201.664.3131**  
Cathy Williamson, *Office Manager/Outreach*  
Jennifer Cannon, *Business Administrator*  
Glen Ford, *Plant Superintendent*
- **PARISH CENTER 201.666.2707**  
Kathy Breitenbach, *Registrar / CCD*  
Roberto Sabastiani, *Director of Music*  
Paulette Gilchrist, *Safe Environment Coordinator*
- **ST. JOHN'S ACADEMY 201.664.6364**  
Ann Mitchell, *Principal*

### MASS SCHEDULE

**SATURDAY VIGIL**  
5:00 PM

**SUNDAY, THE LORD'S DAY**  
8:00 AM, 10:00 AM, 12:00 PM

**WEEKDAYS, SATURDAY**  
8:00 AM

**HOLY DAYS**  
8:00 AM, 12:00 PM, 7:00 PM

**CONFESSIONS**  
- Saturdays 2:00 - 3:00 PM  
- After 8:00 AM Mass—Weekdays  
- Any time by appointment

## 5th Sunday of Lent — March 22, 2026

Dear Brothers and Sisters of the Saint John the Baptist Parish Family,  
Dear Friends of our Parish,

Welcome to our celebrations of the Fifth Sunday of Lent. In a well-known passage from John's Gospel, we read this Sunday about the rising from the dead of Jesus' dear friend Lazarus. Although both of his sisters, Mary and Martha, and also the disciples of Jesus are mentioned by John in this mesmerizing story, one of the most decisive realities of this amazing miracle is an unambiguous declaration of Martha's faith: "Jesus told Martha, "I am the resurrection and the life; whoever believes in me, even if he dies, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" She said to him, "Yes, Lord. I have come to believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, the one who is coming into the world" (John 11:25-27). It was Martha's faith in the Lord's divinity and her "yes" to God's plan in Lazarus' life which brought about the truly Divine outpouring of love and might.

It is perhaps providential that we - as Christians and Catholics - also celebrate during this week, (on Wednesday, March 25) the Annunciation of the Divine plan of our salvation to the Blessed Virgin Mary. This is simple math of that very precious liturgical celebration: March 25 + 9 months of Mary's pregnancy brings us to December 25 = Christmas. A young woman named Mary in that moment of the Annunciation by Archangel Gabriel - and, in fact, throughout her entire life - had to give her personal "yes" to the plan of God with her and with the entire humanity. She is presented to us in various liturgical celebrations dedicated to her as a woman of faith who during her earthly life re-affirmed and re-lived that "nothing will be impossible for God" (cf. Luke 1:37). Her own story, and many other Gospel narratives, introduce us into one of the most significant mysteries and joys of our Christian faith, which is the Lord's reassurance that through Him, with Him, and in Him, there are really no impossible and hopeless situations. So many times, during his public ministry, until our own days, and for all eternity, He "walks into" countless difficult situations filled with doubts and perplexities and entirely changes them into moments of hope, peace and fullness of life.

In those moments he asks us, as he asked Martha and Mary, his disciples, and all his followers: "I am the resurrection and life. [...] Do you believe this?" I pray that your answer and mine, in all situations of our lives, will be: "Yes, Lord. I have come to believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, the one who is coming into the world" (cf. John 11:27). May our Almighty God bless you, guide you, and protect you all.

— Fr. Peter

## *Mass Intentions*

*We remember our loved ones  
and community*

### **SATURDAY, MARCH 21**

5:00 PM Bob Higgins (1st. Anniv.)

### **SUNDAY, MARCH 22**

8:00 AM Lorraine Donaghy

10:00 AM Frank A. Barker

12:00 PM Elizabeth Rotar

### **MONDAY, MARCH 23**

8:00 AM Remy Librinca

### **TUESDAY, MARCH 24**

8:00 AM Ed Collis

### **WEDNESDAY, MARCH 25**

8:00 AM Deacon Donald Quigley

### **THURSDAY, MARCH 26**

8:00 AM Robert Genardi

### **FRIDAY, MARCH 27**

8:00 AM Ernestina Gonzalez

### **SATURDAY, MARCH 28**

8:00 AM Ken Gibney

5:00 PM Angelo Carpentieri &  
Pasquale Botta

### **SUNDAY, MARCH 29**

8:00 AM James Farrell

10:00 AM Joan Driscoll

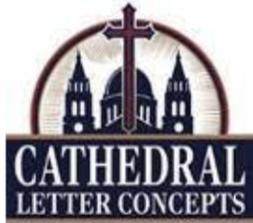
12:00 PM Kathleen Foley

### *Prayers for Healing and Peace:*

Kim Costa, Thomas Tobin, Anthony K., Peter Spaccarotella, Florence Sacco, Jr., Jim Derbyshire, James Carbone, Terry Medino, Anita Lawrence, Ann Walsh, Elaine McBreen, Baby Rocco, Brett Kelly, Edward Sandt, Jr., Caroline Bisi

### *Remembering Those Who Have Passed:*

Edmund Collis, Donald Quigley, Tiana Vega, Baby Asani, Beverly Buonocore, Patti Barone, Valerie Valko, Tommy Ivancich  
Angela Armstrong



Dear Msgr. Smutelovic,

We sincerely apologize for the delay in the distribution of your tax statements and End-of-Year reports.

As part of ongoing improvements to our services, we implemented a new system this year. During this transition, we encountered several unexpected errors while processing the information, which has unfortunately contributed to the delay. Additionally, part of this extended timeframe is due to the additional quality review measures we have put in place to carefully verify that all figures and reporting details are accurate. Our goal is to ensure complete confidence in the information you receive moving forward.

We are pleased to share that these issues now appear to be under control, and our team is working diligently to finalize and distribute the statements as quickly as possible. Our current goal is to have all tax statements mailed out by the end of next week, March 13, 2026.

We understand how important it is to receive this documentation in a timely manner and truly regret any inconvenience this delay has caused. We greatly appreciate your patience and understanding as we work to ensure accuracy and reliability going forward.

If you have any immediate concerns or questions, please do not hesitate to reach out.

Sincerely,

Billie Jo Sents

*Account Manager*

632 Ellsworth Road, Rome, NY 13441

Almsgiving



Every time when, for love of God, we share our goods with our neighbor in need, we discover that the fullness of life comes from love and all is returned to us as a blessing in the form of peace, inner satisfaction and joy. Our Father in heaven rewards our almsgiving with His joy. What is more: Saint Peter includes among the spiritual fruits of almsgiving the forgiveness of sins: "Charity," he writes, "covers a multitude of sins" (1 Pt 4,8). As the Lenten liturgy frequently repeats, God offers to us sinners the possibility of being forgiven. The fact of sharing with the poor what we possess disposes us to receive such a gift. In this moment, my thought turns to those who realize the weight of the evil they have committed and, precisely for this reason, feel far from God, fearful and almost incapable of turning to Him. By drawing close to others through almsgiving, we draw close to God; it can become an instrument for authentic conversion and reconciliation with Him and our brothers. Almsgiving teaches us the generosity of love.

We find this moving passage inserted in the description of the days that immediately precede Jesus' passion and death, who, as Saint Paul writes, made Himself poor to enrich us out of His poverty (cf. 2 Cor 8,9); He gave His entire self for us. Lent, also through the practice of almsgiving, inspires us to follow His example. In His school, we can learn to make of our lives a total gift; imitating Him, we are able to make ourselves available, not so much in giving a part of what we possess, but our very selves. Cannot the entire Gospel be summarized perhaps in the one commandment of love? The Lenten practice of almsgiving thus becomes a means to deepen our Christian vocation. In gratuitously offering himself, the Christian bears witness that it is love and not material richness that determines the laws of his existence. Love, then, gives almsgiving its value; it inspires various forms of giving, according to the possibilities and conditions of each person.

Lent invites us to "train ourselves" spiritually, also through the practice of almsgiving, in order to grow in charity and recognize in the poor Christ Himself. In giving alms, we offer something material, a sign of the greater gift that we can impart to others through the announcement and witness of Christ, in whose name is found true life. Let this time, then, be marked by a personal and community effort of attachment to Christ in order that we may be witnesses of His love. May Mary, Mother and faithful Servant of the Lord, help believers to enter the "spiritual battle" of Lent.



## Message of the Holy Father Leo XIV for Lent 2026

Dear brothers and sisters,

Lent is a time in which the Church, guided by a sense of maternal care, invites us to place the mystery of God back in the center of our lives, in order to find renewal in our faith and keep our hearts from being consumed by the anxieties and distractions of daily life.

Every path towards conversion begins by allowing the word of God to touch our hearts and welcoming it with a docile spirit. There is a relationship between the word, our acceptance of it and the transformation it brings about. For this reason, the Lenten journey is a welcome opportunity to heed the voice of the Lord and renew our commitment to following Christ, accompanying him on the road to Jerusalem, where the mystery of his passion, death and resurrection will be fulfilled.

### ***Listening***

This year, I would first like to consider the importance of making room for the word through listening. The willingness to listen is the first way we demonstrate our desire to enter into relationship with someone. In revealing himself to Moses in the burning bush, God himself teaches us that listening is one of his defining characteristics: “I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry” (Ex 3:7). Hearing the cry of the oppressed is the beginning of a story of liberation in which the Lord calls Moses, sending him to open a path of salvation for his children who have been reduced to slavery.

Our God is one who seeks to involve us. Even today he shares with us what is in his heart. Because of this, listening to the word in the liturgy teaches us to listen to the truth of reality. In the midst of the many voices present in our personal lives and in society, Sacred Scripture helps us to recognize and respond to the cry of those who are anguished and suffering. In order to foster this inner openness to listening, we must allow God to teach us how to listen as he does. We must recognize that “the condition of the poor is a cry that, throughout human history, constantly challenges our lives, societies, political and economic systems, and, not least, the Church.”

### ***Fasting***

If Lent is a time for listening, fasting is a concrete way to prepare ourselves to receive the word of God. Abstaining from food is an ancient ascetic practice that is essential on the path of conversion. Precisely because it involves the body, fasting makes it easier to recognize what we “hunger” for and what we deem necessary for our sustenance. Moreover, it helps us to identify and order our “appetites,” keeping our hunger and thirst for justice alive and freeing us from complacency. Thus, it teaches us to pray and act responsibly towards our neighbor.

With spiritual insight, Saint Augustine helps us to understand the tension between the present moment and the future fulfilment that characterizes this custody of the heart. He observes that: “In the course of earthly life, it is incumbent upon men and women to hunger and thirst for justice, but to be satisfied belongs to the next life. Angels are satisfied with this bread, this food. The human race, on the other hand, hungers for it; we are all drawn to it in our desire. This reaching out in desire expands the soul and increases its capacity.” Understood in this way, fasting not only permits us to govern our desire, purifying it and making it freer, but also to expand it, so that it is directed towards God and doing good.

However, in order to practice fasting in accordance with its evangelical character and avoid the temptation that leads to pride, it must be lived in faith and humility. It must be grounded in communion with the Lord, because “those who are unable to nourish themselves with the word of God do not fast properly.” As a visible sign of our inner commitment to turn away from sin and evil with the help of grace, fasting must also include other forms of self-denial aimed at helping us to acquire a more sober lifestyle, since “austerity alone makes the Christian life strong and authentic.”

In this regard, I would like to invite you to a very practical and frequently unappreciated form of abstinence: that of refraining from words that offend and hurt our neighbor. Let us begin by disarming our language, avoiding harsh words and rash judgement, refraining from slander and speaking ill of those who are not present and cannot defend themselves. Instead, let us strive to measure our words and cultivate kindness and respect in our families, among our friends, at work, on social media, in political debates, in the media and in Christian communities. In this way, words of hatred will give way to words of hope and peace.

### ***Together***

Finally, Lent emphasizes the communal aspect of listening to the word and fasting. The Bible itself underlines this dimension in multiple ways. For example, the Book of Nehemiah recounts how the people gathered to listen to the public reading of the Law, preparing to profess their faith and worship through fasting, so as to renew the covenant with God (9:1-3).

Likewise, our parishes, families, ecclesial groups and religious communities are called to undertake a shared journey during Lent, in which listening to the word of God, as well as to the cry of the poor and of the earth, becomes part of our community life, and fasting a foundation for sincere repentance. In this context, conversion refers not only to one’s conscience, but also to the quality of our relationships and dialogue. It means allowing ourselves to be challenged by reality and recognizing what truly guides our desires — both within our ecclesial communities and as regards humanity’s thirst for justice and reconciliation.

Dear friends, let us ask for the grace of a Lent that leads us to greater attentiveness to God and to the least among us. Let us ask for the strength that comes from the type of fasting that also extends to our use of language, so that hurtful words may diminish and give way to a greater space for the voice of others. Let us strive to make our communities places where the cry of those who suffer finds welcome, and listening opens paths towards liberation, making us ready and eager to contribute to building a civilization of love.

I impart my heartfelt blessing upon all of you and your Lenten journey.

*From the Vatican, 5 February 2026, Memorial of Saint Agatha, Virgin and Martyr*

*Leo P.P. XIV*

# OUR PARISH STEWARDSHIP

## SUNDAY, MARCH 15, 2026

		2025	BUDGET
Envelope & In Pew Giving:	\$9,039	\$ 9,272	\$ 7,900
Online Giving via ParishSOFT:	5,241	\$ 4,813	\$5,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	\$14,280	\$ 14,085	\$12,900

Your financial support enables our parish home to continue the mission of the Church.  
Thank you and God bless you!

## HOLY WEEK & EASTER SCHEDULES

### PALM SUNDAY MARCH 28/29

5:00pm (Sat.)  
8:00am (Sun.)  
10:00am (Sun.)  
12:00pm (Sun.)

*For those who wish to join us outside, we will initiate the Mass with a reading of the Gospel, prayers and then procession from the St. John the Baptist statue area.*

### HOLY THURSDAY APRIL 2

MORNING PRAYER  
8:00am  
  
LITURGY OF THE  
LORD'S SUPPER  
7:00pm

*Church open for private prayer until 11:00pm*

### GOOD FRIDAY APRIL 3

MORNING PRAYER  
8:00am  
  
LITURGY OF THE  
LORD'S PASSION  
3:00pm

STATIONS OF THE CROSS  
7:00pm

### HOLY SATURDAY APRIL 4

MORNING PRAYER  
8:00am

EASTER BASKETS BLESSING  
12:00pm

EASTER VIGIL  
8:00pm

### EASTER SUNDAY APRIL 5

EASTER MASS  
8:00am  
10:00am  
12:00pm



### DAILY MASS

8:00 am

### EUCCHARISTIC ADORATION

Thursdays 3:00 - 6:00 pm  
Community Prayer & Benediction  
shortly before 6pm.

### CHURCH IS OPEN DAILY

### THE STATIONS OF THE CROSS COME AND PRAY WITH US

Fridays 8:30 am  
(following 8:00 am Mass)

Fridays 7:00 pm

Sundays 9:15 am



**WeAreHisWitnesses.org**  
for updates, timelines  
and resources.

“We must trust in the mighty power of God’s mercy. We are all sinners, but His grace transforms us and makes us new.”  
— Pope Benedict XVI (1927 – 2022)