



OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

## DIOCESE OF WHEELING-CHARLESTON

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### PASTORAL LETTER FOR LENT, 2021

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

We enter the season of Lent with hope and determination: hope that God's grace may touch us and determination to engage seriously in the work of moral and spiritual renewal. We do this so that we may live our Christian faith with greater integrity and celebrate the Lord Jesus' death and resurrection with true joy. I believe that the rivers of grace, which never run dry, flow even more abundantly in this holy season. We should all bathe in that grace, for by it we may be cleansed of sin and refreshed in mind and spirit.

The terms used for Lent in different languages emphasize various aspects of this penitential season. *Quadragesima* in Latin points to the forty days Jesus fasted and battled against temptations in the desert; the Italian *Quaresima*, the Spanish *Cuaresma* and the French *Carême* follow the Latin. The Germans call it *Fastenzeit* or "Fasting Time," underlining the penitential aspect of the season. (In Malta the Catholics call Lent "Random," from the Moslem practice of fasting.) The English *Lent* refers to the gradual lengthening of daylight in the northern hemisphere as we embrace spring and leave winter behind. For most of us, overcoming sin and learning to love better are a gradual process, not accomplished overnight, so our English term suggests that.

St. Leo the Great wrote: "What the Christian should be doing at all times should be done now with greater care and devotion, so that the Lenten fast enjoined by the Apostles may be fulfilled not simply by abstinence from food but above all by the renunciation of sin." The great challenge in Lent is to address sin in our lives. On a personal level, I recommend a focused approach. As a laser beam is effective by concentrating its power narrowly, a focus on what I call an embedded sin can lead to its weakening or elimination.

An embedded sin is one that we just can't seem to get rid of or perhaps don't really want to renounce. It may be a constant habit of criticizing others, a refusal to reconcile with someone, a prejudice against people of another race, religion or national origin, a tendency to lie to get our way, a sin of impurity or other form of self-indulgence. We first must desire to be rid of it. We need an honest talk with ourselves: do we want to do God's will or not? Then we must admit that we have not been able by our own efforts to overcome that sin – in fact, as St. Paul would say, we are enslaved by it. We must implore God's help each day in our prayers.

The Sacrament of Penance has great value in this effort, for it not only forgives sin but, if received sincerely, it keeps us from hardening in sin. Some embedded sins, like wounds that require frequent applications of a salve and new bandages, need frequent confession, each confession and absolution weakening the hold of that sin on us. We may also benefit in confession or apart from it from the advice a priest may give us. Some priests (and others) have much experience and wisdom to offer a person who genuinely wants to overcome an embedded sin.

The traditional Lenten practices of prayer, fasting and almsgiving serve us well in overcoming personal sin. Prayer to an unbeliever seems to be a waste of time, but to us who believe in the living God, it is a daily lifeline that connects us with the One who created, redeemed and loves us. As a monk once said, “Pray as you can, not as you can’t.” Traditional prayers are valuable for their simplicity and depth. God will listen to our own words as well and, in some fashion – by an inspiration He gives us, by a Scripture passage we hear or read, by a remark made by a friend, by something that happens – God will respond to us. The important thing is to give Him the opportunity and that is what prayer does.

Fasting, whether from food or from a form of entertainment or from buying something we really don’t need, is like a silent prayer that cries out to God, saying we recognize our need for Him above all else. We hunger more for His Word than for bread. Almsgiving helps, too, for Scripture says: *As water quenches a flaming fire, so alms atone for sins* [Sirach 3:29]. Any kind of good work is a form of almsgiving: patiently listening to a distressed person, shoveling the snow off the steps and sidewalk of an elderly couple, calling up a friend who is sick to encourage her. Good works take us out of ourselves and strike a blow at the self-centeredness that is at the heart of all sin.

There is also a social dimension to sin that is found at more than one level. At a very personal level, I may indulge in bigotry against a group because of its race, religion, political affiliation or other identifying mark. Even if I never say or do anything overtly that could be called bigoted, my interior disdain for the group makes me unwilling to protest injustices toward its members or to do them any good. If the Samaritan in Jesus’ parable, giving into Samaritan bigotry toward Jews (which they reciprocated) had passed by the Jew beaten by the robbers, his interior bigotry would have led to a sin of omission. He overcame bigotry and helped the wounded man. Conversion starts within. If we want to be fair and charitable to all, as our faith teaches us to be, then we must confront negative attitudes we may have toward others.

At another level, the social dimension of sin is evident in the corrupting of public morals. Many are calling today for peace and an end to divisions in our country but social peace is not possible as long as our people cannot agree on the most basic moral values. Sinful behavior in private is bad enough, but laws and publicly approved and applauded behavior that are morally wrong are worse, because they corrupt the impressionable, especially the young.

Aborting unborn babies is barbaric, the strong overpowering the weak, even when the mother’s situation is very difficult. Gay persons deserve respect and fair treatment, but sexual relations between members of the same sex cannot fulfill the fundamental purpose of our sexuality – to produce offspring – and are therefore inappropriate, as are heterosexuals’ intimate relations if they deliberately frustrate their procreative dimension. Harsh rhetoric and cruel actions directed at immigrants demean their humanity and reveal a national selfishness that conveniently forgets how much immigrants have contributed to this country. Allowing large corporations to trample on the poor in rural parts of our country, like Appalachia, making their profit while giving little or nothing back to those areas, is unjust and immoral.

We Catholics are equipped to challenge these and other manifestations of social corruption. As St. Paul said in another context: *there have to be factions among you in order that those who are approved among you may become known* [I Corinthians 11:19].

Our strength is in our Catholic anthropology, which starts from the principle that every human being is endowed by God with a genuine human nature that is both personal and social. That principle leads us to favor treating fairly members of different races, religions, sexual orientations and national origins. It leads us to promote the good of marriage and the family and to defend parents’ right to educate their children as they judge best. It leads us to oppose ideologies and acts which harm human beings and their communities: abortion, racist activities and discriminatory practices held over from the past, domestic violence and the death penalty, among others. The same principle keeps us from embracing harmful departures from a correct view of human nature, such as measuring human beings essentially in economic terms or thinking that we can choose our sex in defiance of our body or insisting that equality of opportunity must, regardless of effort and circumstances, always result in equality of outcomes. If we can hold to the basic principle of a God-given

human nature that unfolds in community, we have a way to thread our way through the clashing viewpoints on these issues and to promote a sane understanding that leads to true human flourishing.

So, what can we do about social sins? Again, the traditional Lenten practices of prayer, fasting and almsgiving come to our aid. Do you believe in the efficacy of prayer? Read Luke 18:1-8, where a persistent widow obtains her rights from an unjust judge. Jesus comments: *Will not God then secure the rights of his chosen ones who call out to him day and night? Will he be slow to answer them? I tell you, he will see to it that justice is done for them speedily.* Make it a habit this Lent to pray that our people may awaken to the signs of moral decay in our society. Fasting for this purpose is also effective, a prayer of the body telling God we mean what we say in our vocal prayer. St. Leo the Great said, “What we save by fasting we give to feed the poor,” so fasting leads to actions that help others.

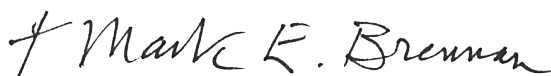
Which brings me to almsgiving. How can that help in dealing with social sin? First, we can support groups that serve those ignored by the elites that control our society. We have a number of pregnancy centers in the state that help families to have and take care of their children. They need volunteers and money! Catholic Charities West Virginia has stepped up heroically during this pandemic to help those left aside by our economy. CCWV needs volunteers, too, especially as many have had to stay home because of age or illness.

A second form of almsgiving is advocacy. We can take individual action by contacting those who represent us in local, state and federal government. The more of us who contact them about issues that are affecting the moral welfare of our country, the more they will take notice. We can also join with others who advocate for social justice issues. West Virginians for Life advocates for the unborn and their parents, the Catholic Committee of Appalachia addresses issues of poverty and cultural and environmental degradation in our region, Catholic Education Partners advocates for fair treatment by government of our young people in Catholic schools. Other groups are also working to put our nation on a better course. Common efforts often bear more fruit than individual ones, so consider supporting or joining such a group. In various ways we can make a difference in overcoming the corrupting of public morals in our land.

Finally, nourish your faith by religious practices typical of Lent: daily Mass, the Stations of the Cross, the Rosary or the Liturgy of the Hours (prayed with others, if possible), Bible study and especially the beautiful liturgies of Holy Week. Consult your parish or go online for other resources. Keep in mind that some West Virginians, never baptized or baptized in other Christian churches or baptized Catholic but never raised in the faith, are completing their preparations for the sacraments of Christian initiation in Lent. In the early Church, the baptized would join the elect (that is, the catechumens “elected” for full initiation at Easter) in their fasting and prayers as a sign of solidarity with them. What you do this Lent is not for you alone. Pray for the elect and the candidates for full communion with our Catholic Church in support of their holy intentions.

As I close this letter, I remind you that Jesus Christ died and rose from the dead to make us a new creation. St. Paul wrote: *From now on we regard no one according to the flesh . . . So, whoever is in Christ is a new creation: the old things have passed away; behold new things have come* [II Corinthians 5:16-17]. Lent is a privileged time to slough off our corrupt old self and put on Christ, the truly new man in history. For some, this will be their last Lent. Others will have more, but why wait to do what’s right? Forty days of fasting, prayer and good works, striving to eradicate embedded sins and counteract social sins, will make this a good Lent for us. As St. Junipero Serra, the Franciscan Apostle of California said, “¡Siempre para adelante, nunca atrás!” (Always go forward, never go back!). May that be our spirit this Lent.

Faithfully yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Mark E. Brennan". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial 'M'.

+Mark E. Brennan

Bishop of Wheeling-Charleston





## THE FEAST OF ST. PETER'S CHAIR FEBRUARY 22

The significance of celebrating the Feast of the Chair of Saint Peter the Apostle celebrates a pivotal act of Jesus Christ and our history of the universal Church on earth.

We are not adoring a piece of ornamental furniture, but rather are honoring the role bestowed unto Simon Peter our first Pontiff (from the Latin word that means “bridge builder”) more than 2,000 years ago. The Church looks to the Chair of Saint Peter as it represents servant authority of the Church that God gave Peter and his successors.

Matthew recounts the moment in Chapter 16:16-18. Jesus says to Peter: *You are the Messiah, Son of the living God. Jesus said to him in reply, “blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah. For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my heavenly Father. And so I say to you, you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys to the kingdom of heaven. Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.*

At the Vatican in the back of St. Peter's basilica there is an actual “Chair of St. Peter,” the Cathedra Petri. It is suspended above the altar. The ornate bronze sculpture is an encasement for an ancient oak chair that St. Peter may have sat in, but historians are uncertain. Regardless, the chair is a concrete symbol for the mission and ministry of Peter and his successors. It represents the principal power held by the chair of the Church through the Holy Spirit for serving, evangelizing, and shepherding the faithful followers of Jesus Christ.

Today, let us pray for our Holy Father Pope Francis, who has lovingly accepted the role of “bridge builder,” and gracious bishop over the world-wide Church.

“God has left the guidance of the Church into the hands of the Holy Spirit,” Pope Francis said, referring to John 14:26 “The Holy Spirit will teach us everything, and remind us what Jesus taught us.”

## OUR WV CATHOLIC SCHOOLS LEAD CHILDREN CLOSER TO GOD

God is in our schools.

Everything we do, choices we make, and plans we develop are prayerfully made with the best intentions of our students' success. The social, emotional, physical, spiritual, and mental well-being of each child is just as important to intellectual achievements, said Mary Ann Deschaine, superintendent.

That focus creates tomorrow's champions and a better future for us all. Many families choose Catholic schools not only because of values, academics, and class size, but also because they are focused on nurturing community leaders and service to others.

The principals, teachers, and staff in our schools, weave God's word and strong morals into every class, activity, and service project, Deschaine said. Nurturing strong character and good attitudes are part of teaching a grateful and confident spirit.

We all need to think like these faith leaders do instinctively and without hesitation:

We say – It's Impossible. God says – All things are possible. (Luke 18:27)

We say – I'm too tired. God says – I will give you rest. (Matthew 11:28-30)

We say – I can't figure it out. God says – I will direct your steps. (Proverbs 3:5-6)

We say – I can't. God says – You can do all things. (Philippians 4:13)

We say – It's not worth it. God says – It will be worth it. (Romans 8:28)

We say – I'm afraid. God says – I have not given you a spirit of fear. (2Timothy 1:7)

We say – I'm overwhelmed. God says – Cast all your cares on Me. (1Peter 5:7)

We say – I feel all alone. God says – I will never leave you. (Hebrews 13:5)

Check out your local Catholic school online or give them a call. **Registration is now open for 2021-2022!**





## IS OUR LORD CALLING YOU TO THE HOLY PRIESTHOOD?

If you are asking yourself, “Is God calling me to the priesthood?” You are invited to begin to find the answer. The Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston’s Vocation Office is hosting the Men’s Priestly Discernment Retreat on Saturday, March 20, from 10 am to 5 pm, at the St. John XXIII Pastoral Center in Charleston for men 18 and older.

Not certain? Pray about it and know you are welcome to join or listen in on a conversation about responding generously to God.

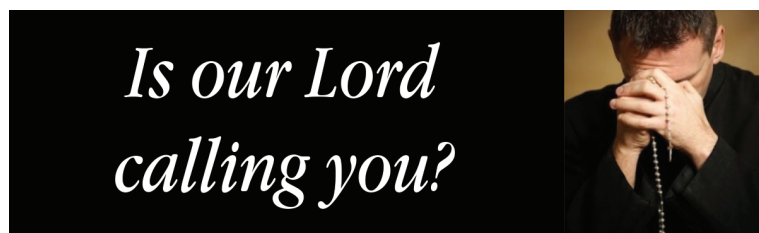
In the meantime, make time in your day for quiet time – a time to listen to God through Sacred Scripture. Talk to a local priest or deacon you admire. Broaden your scope and check out testimonials online. Here are a few:

- Rev. Mr. Phillip Szabo was featured in a video posted on the page for Saint James the Greater Roman Catholic Church in Charles Town. The video (which you can see [HERE](#)) highlights Szabo’s ordination to the transitional diaconate in May 2020.
- Fr. Mike Schmitz, chaplain for Newman Catholic Campus Ministries at the University of Minnesota, and Fr. Josh Johnson, pastor of Our Lady of the Holy Rosary Catholic Church in the Diocese of Baton Rouge, share their honest and sincere vocation stories through an Ascension Press video you can see by [CLICKING HERE](#).
- Father Michael David Moses, parochial vicar at St. Faustina Church in Fulshear, Texas/ - I’m a Roman Catholic priest and I just want to go to heaven and bring as many people with me along the way. Watch his video [“A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A CATHOLIC PRIEST.”](#) You can check out his other YouTube videos by [CLICKING HERE](#).

Father Brian Crenwelge, the vocation director for the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston, noted the March 20th

retreat will include Holy Mass, prayer, reflections on the priesthood, and the opportunity for the Sacrament of Confession. Bishop Mark Brennan will also be presenting. Father Crenwelge also serves as pastor of St. John University Parish in Morgantown and is the director of campus ministry at WVU. You can follow the posts for his campus ministry on Facebook at [@WVUMOCA](#) and the vocations office at [@WVPRIESTS.ORG](#).

If you are interested in attending please, email Rick Teachout at [RTEACHOUT@DWC.ORG](mailto:RTEACHOUT@DWC.ORG) or call (304)233-0880, ext. 442.



You may find the answer at the

## Men’s Priestly Discernment Retreat

Saturday, March 20

St. John XXIII Pastoral Center, Charleston

**For college-age young men and older**

Do you desire a life of sacrifice and faithful service to God and His People? Do you desire to give yourself completely to God in a life of consecration and commitment to building up the kingdom of God here in West Virginia? Perhaps the Lord is calling you to be a Priest of Jesus Christ in the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston!

The annual diocesan Men’s Priestly Discernment Retreat will be held on Saturday, March 20 at the Pope St. John XXIII Pastoral Center (100 Hodges Rd, Charleston, WV 25314) from 10AM – 5PM. This event is open to men 18 years and older who are simply open to re-flecting on God’s will for them in their lives. The day will consist of Holy Mass, prayer, reflections on the priesthood, and the opportunity for the Sacrament of Confession.

**For any men interested in attending, email Rick Teachout at [rteachout@dwc.org](mailto:rteachout@dwc.org) or call (304) 233-0880 ext. 442**



## MESSAGE FROM OUR CEO

By: Beth Zarate, Catholic Charities West Virginia President and Chief Executive Officer

Recently, when delivering a meal route for the Catholic Charities Neighborhood Center, I encountered a neighbor outside his home anxiously waiting for me – the volunteer with lunch. As a last minute “jump in” volunteer, not familiar with the neighborhoods, I was running late and saw his relief to see me arrive. He told me that his neighbor is an amputee; every day he watched for her lunch to arrive, took it in his home and heated it up when she was ready to eat. He then delivered a warm lunch and the day’s news to his neighbor. He stole my heart with his kindness – truly what Christ meant when he said, “Love your neighbor.”

As we celebrate Ash Wednesday, this encounter reminds me that our lives are short, and we must live them to the fullest. We are called to be incredible, yet we know we are broken. The ashes we receive remind us that we are sinners, but the cross lets us know that there is a God who fully believes in us.

At Catholic Charities, we often begin our meetings with a prayer. I am always stilled by one line: “Grant us wisdom to respond effectively to the needs of your people with grace and compassion.” I reflect on it often. “Who we serve” depends on where we connect with someone in his or her life journey. At times in our lives, we may need a handout, but at other times, we can be the hand up that another person needs. “How we serve” is the meaningful question. From those who seek us, to our funders, donors, community partners and parishes, the expectations are varied and vast.

Guided by Catholic Social Teaching and our Gospel call to be the hands and feet of Christ, we strive to serve with compassion and caritas. Our professional staff is held to best practices in many areas, including social work, educational standards, children’s services and immigration law. Our resources are limited and sometimes restricted; yet we carry the hope of serving the most vulnerable of our citizens. Our goal is to engage the Catholic community and beyond in our mission and work.

My experience with the neighbor’s kindness reminds me that there are thousands in our community who are working quietly to serve God and one another. These faithful servants multiply the effectiveness of Catholic Charities. As we reflect on Ash Wednesday and the intimacy of Lent, let us remember that the Gospel call to serve is our privilege. They will know we are Christians by our love.

Catholic Charities West Virginia  
*Shining a Light on Hope*

*Save the Date*  
March 16, 2021

**VIRTUAL GALA**



## FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT

### First Reading GENESIS 9:8-15

God said to Noah and to his sons with him: "See, I am now establishing my covenant with you and your descendants after you and with every living creature that was with you: all the birds, and the various tame and wild animals that were with you and came out of the ark. I will establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all bodily creatures be destroyed by the waters of a flood; there shall not be another flood to devastate the earth." God added: "This is the sign that I am giving for all ages to come, of the covenant between me and you and every living creature with you: I set my bow in the clouds to serve as a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. When I bring clouds over the earth, and the bow appears in the clouds, I will recall the covenant I have made between me and you and all living beings, so that the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all mortal beings."

### Responsorial PSALMS 25:4-5, 6-7, 8-9

**R. (cf. 10) Your ways, O Lord, are love and truth to those who keep your covenant.**

Your ways, O LORD, make known to me; teach me your paths, Guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my savior.

**R. Your ways, O Lord, are love and truth to those who keep your covenant.**

Remember that your compassion, O LORD, and your love are from of old. In your kindness remember me, because of your goodness,  
O LORD.

**R. Your ways, O Lord, are love and truth to those who keep your covenant.**

Good and upright is the LORD, thus he shows sinners the way. He guides the humble to justice, and he teaches the humble his way.

**R. Your ways, O Lord, are love and truth to those who keep your covenant.**

### Second Reading 1 PETER 3:18-22

Beloved: Christ suffered for sins once, the righteous for the sake of the unrighteous, that he might lead you to God. Put to death in the flesh, he was brought to life in the Spirit. In it he also went to preach to the spirits in prison, who had once been disobedient while God patiently waited in the days of Noah during the building of the ark, in which a few persons, eight in all, were saved through water. This prefigured baptism, which saves you now. It is not a removal of dirt from the body but an appeal to God for a clear conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers subject to him.

### Alleluia MATTHEW 4:4b

**R. Alleluia, alleluia.**

One does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes forth from the mouth of God.

**R. Alleluia, alleluia.**

### Gospel MARK 1:12-15

The Spirit drove Jesus out into the desert, and he remained in the desert for forty days, tempted by Satan. He was among wild beasts, and the angels ministered to him. After John had been arrested, Jesus came to Galilee proclaiming the gospel of God: "This is the time of fulfillment. The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel."

## PRAYER INTENTIONS

For Pope Francis, bishops, and pastors, that through their words and actions they may proclaim the gospel and lead us in repentance during this holy season of Lent, let us pray to the Lord. . .

That God's life-affirming covenant with humanity, all living creatures, and this whole earth might inspire a renewed respect for life in all its forms, let us pray to the Lord. . .

For those preparing for baptism this Easter, *especially our own catechumens*, that they might find support and encouragement from their baptized family, friends, and neighbors as they make their journey to the Lord, let us pray to the Lord. . .

For all of us, that these forty days we spend in the Lenten desert might strengthen us as we proclaim the gospel and build the kingdom of God, let us pray to the Lord. . .

*Lord hear our prayer*





# LET US GO *Rejoicing* TO THE HOUSE OF THE LORD.

PSALM 122

## UPDATED GUIDELINES RELEASED

Bishop Mark E. Brennan released updated guidelines for our churches and facilities.

- New Norms for Reopening Parish Facilities for Meetings and Gatherings
- Updated Liturgical Guidelines
- Music Protocols for Liturgical Celebrations

These are available online at [www.dwc.org](http://www.dwc.org).

## *Liturgy of the Hours* LITURGY OF THE HOURS

Pray the prayer for this day, this hour!

Scan the QR code or visit the link below to view a PDF version of the Liturgy of the Hours.

[EBREVIARY.COM](http://EBREVIARY.COM) [LITURGY OF THE HOURS](http://LITURGY OF THE HOURS)



## WV CATHOLIC RADIO BROUGHT TO YOU BY YOU

Berkeley Springs - Hancock, MD	FM	96.3
Berkeley Springs	FM	107.9
Clarksburg-Bridgeport	FM	97.5
Dunbar - Charleston	AM	1450
Grafton - Clarksburg	AM	1190
Montgomery - Beckley	FM	89.7
Purgitsville	FM	98.7
St. Marys - Parkersburg	FM	105.3
Star City - Morgantown	FM	89.7
Summersville	FM	91.3
Wheeling - Martins Ferry, OH	FM	90.7
Weirton - Steubenville	FM	97.7

~Also Streaming in WV at [www.rdo.to/WLOL](http://www.rdo.to/WLOL)~

WV Catholic Radio [www.WVCatholicRadio.org](http://www.WVCatholicRadio.org)

## A LITTLE CATHOLIC HUMOR



## ENROLL TODAY

WV Catholic Schools

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by knowledge.  
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**Register today**

**[wvcatholicschools.org](http://wvcatholicschools.org)**

## MASS ONLINE

Saturday 6pm Masses will continue to be livestreamed from the Cathedral of St. Joseph, and will be available on our website each Sunday at [DWC.ORG](http://DWC.ORG).

Below are four options for enriching your spirit through daily Mass online.

- EWTN airs daily Mass from Our Lady of Angels Chapel, in Irondale, Alabama, at 8am, noon, and 7pm: [HTTPS://WWW.EWTN.COM/TV/WATCH-LIVE](https://www.ewtn.com/tv/watch-live)
- St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York has daily Mass live streamed at 7am: [HTTPS://SAINTPATRICKSCATHEDRAL.ORG/LIVE](https://saintpatrickscathedral.org/live)
- Catholic TV also streams its daily Mass: [HTTP://CATHOLICTV.ORG/MASSES/CATHOLICTV-MASS](http://catholicTV.org/masses/catholicTV-mass)
- Daily Mass Online at Notre Dame' Basilica of the Sacred Heart is live at 11:30 am Monday-Friday: [HTTPS://CAMPUSMINISTRY.ND.EDU/MASS-WORSHIP/BASILICA-OF-THE-SACRED-HEART/WATCH-MASS/SPECIAL-MASSSES/](https://campusministry.nd.edu/mass-worship/basilica-of-the-sacred-heart/watch-mass/special-masses/)