



Happy Mother's Day

Let us all show our love & appreciation to our mothers, grandmothers, godmothers, & all the women who form our faith. May Mary's example continue to be the grace that strengthens their spirit.



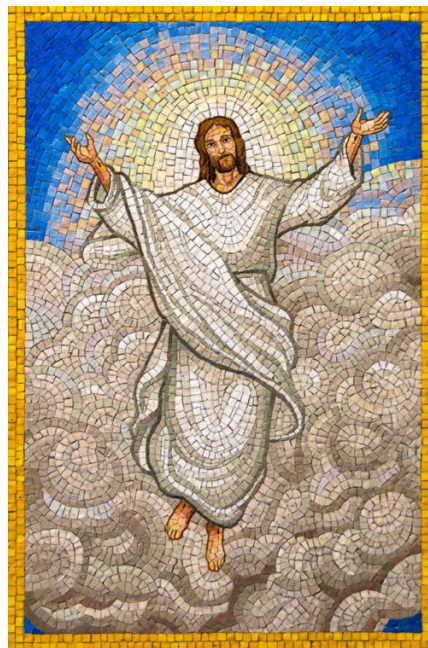
CHRIST'S VICTORY IS OURS

CELEBRATE THE ASCENSION OF OUR LORD

As we celebrate the Solemnity of the Ascension of Our Lord this weekend, we share excerpts St. Pope John Paul II's homily delivered 45 years ago. His message emphasizes Christ's love, victory over death, and the instruction for the Apostles to wait on the One who will guide them and help them clearly share the Word of God - the Holy Spirit. May we all be great disciples filled with the Holy Spirit, and confident Christ will never leave us.

"In the providence of God - in the eternal design of the Father - the hour had come for Christ to go away. He would leave his Apostles behind, with his Mother Mary, but only after he had given them his instructions. The Apostles now had a mission to perform according to the instructions that Jesus left, and these instructions were in turn the faithful expression of the Father's will.

"The instructions indicated, above all, that the Apostles were to wait for the Holy Spirit, who was the gift of the Father. From the beginning, it had to be crystal-clear that the source of the Apostles'



strength is the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit who guides the Church in the way of truth; the Gospel is to spread through the power of God, and not by means of human wisdom or strength.

"The Apostles, moreover, were instructed to teach - to proclaim the Good News to the whole world. And they were to baptize in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Like Jesus, they were to speak explicitly about the Kingdom of God and about salvation. The Apostles were to give witness to Christ to the ends of the earth. The early Church clearly understood these instructions and the missionary era began. And everybody knew that this missionary era could never end until the same Jesus, who went up to heaven,

would come back again.

"The words of Jesus became a treasure for the Church to guard and to proclaim, to meditate on and to live. And at the same time, the Holy Spirit implanted in the Church an apostolic charism, in order to keep this revelation intact. Through his words Jesus was

to live on in his Church: I am with you always. And so, the whole ecclesial community became conscious of the need for fidelity to the instructions of Jesus, to the deposit of faith. This solicitude was to pass from generation to generation – down to our own day....

“And the second reflection on the meaning of the Ascension is found in this phrase: Jesus took his place. After having undergone the humiliation of his passion and death, Jesus took his place at the right-hand of God; he took his place with his eternal Father. But he also entered heaven as our Head.... And as man, the Lord Jesus lives forever to intercede for us with Father. At the same time, from his throne of glory, Jesus sends out to the whole Church a message of hope and a call to holiness.

“Because of Christ’s merits, because of his intercession with the Father, we are able to attain justice and holiness of life, in him. The Church may indeed experience difficulties, the Gospel may suffer setbacks, but because Jesus is at the right-hand of the Father the Church will never know defeat. Christ’s victory is ours.”

May we all celebrate the Ascension of Our Lord and find strength and clarity through the Holy Spirit to understand and live out the Word of God.

Editor’s note: The art with this article is a mosaic of Christ’s Ascension at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, DC.



Rosary & Intentional Silence Fitting Focus for May and Year of Prayer



Pope Francis has called for 2024 to be a Year of Prayer. Throughout this year we need to dedicate ourselves “to rediscovering the great value and absolute need for prayer, prayer in personal life, in the life of the Church, prayer in the world,” he said.

It is a time to intentionally silence the world around so we can be in the presence of the Lord, and listen to Him. Making a personal commitment to these reverent moments will separate us from others – quite the contrary.

After all, Pope Francis said, “Prayer unites us; it makes us brothers and sisters. It is in prayer that our hearts find the strength not to be cold and insensitive in the face of injustice. In prayer, God keeps calling us, opening our hearts to charity.”

Saint Teresa of Calcutta said it was prayer and the Blessed Sacrament that strengthened her great work on earth. Even the simplest of prayers, when said in sincerity call God closer.

“You can pray while you work,” she said. “Work doesn’t stop prayer and prayer doesn’t stop work. It requires only that small raising of the mind to him: I love you God, I trust you, I believe in you, I need you now. Small things like that. They are wonderful prayers.”

Make time to pray.

“Love to pray,” she said. “Take the trouble to pray. Prayer opens your heart until it is big enough to hold and keep

God. We must know Jesus in prayer before we can see him in the broken bodies of the poor.”

So as Pope Francis has called 2024 the Year of Prayer bring a sweet focus on Mary, Our Blessed Mother, during this Marian month of May. Commit to pray the Rosary - our rhythmic meditative prayer that helps us call to mind the life and mysteries of our faith.

Saint Teresa prayed the Rosary each day. It didn’t matter where she was, and she always prayed the Rosary with her congregation during Eucharistic Adoration. She would tell the Sisters and the faithful that the Rosary enables us to not only contemplate but feel the true glorious, joyful, sorrowful, and luminous moments of Christ’s life through Mary.

Prayer is love, hope, and charity. As she said, anytime, anywhere talk to God.

“I always begin my prayer in silence, for it is in the silence of the heart that God speaks. God is the friend of silence – we need to listen to God because it’s not what we say but he says to us and through us that matters.

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“Prayer is not asking. Prayer is putting oneself in the hands of God, at this disposition, and listening to his voice in the depths of our hearts.”

A quick search of the internet found to two recordings of St. Teresa reciting the Rosary – the sorrowful and joyful mysteries:

Sorrowful mysteries: [YOUTU.BE/uNw3NjUWR50?si=RMDr1m7ZHP61XMvQ](https://youtu.be/uNw3NjUWR50?si=RMDr1m7ZHP61XMvQ)

Joyful mysteries: [YOUTU.BE/8WXQYyLRG0s?si=HZeJZPoPxMJKCGDP](https://youtu.be/8WXQYyLRG0s?si=HZeJZPoPxMJKCGDP)

These recordings are not sanctioned or vetted by her congregation but by laity called Pray with Bishop Sheen on YouTube.

For the official Year of Prayer, a new guide “Teach us to Pray” is now available online and a digital version can be downloaded free. The title is taken from the 11th chapter of the Gospel of Luke (Lk 11.1).

The booklet, inspired by the teachings of Pope Francis, is written as an invitation to intensify prayer, understood as a personal dialogue with God, and to lead readers to reflect on their faith, and their commitment in today’s world, in the various contexts in which they are called to live.

The aim is to offer reflections, ideas, and advice to help people to live with the Lord more fully in their relationships with others. The guide is made up of sections dedicated to prayer in the parish community, and in the family, with other sections dedicated to young people, cloistered communities, catechesis, and spiritual retreats. For the online copy [CLICK HERE](#).

MORE THAN \$368,000 RAISED FOR WV CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

Thank you to each of our *One Mission One Day to Make a Difference* donors!

We applaud our school advancement directors and principals for their fun and creative online fundraising antics on May 7th that generated a lot of buzz and more than \$368,000 by the end of the day.

“One Mission One Day to Make a Difference isn’t only about raising money, it’s about bringing our school families, alumni, supporters and friends together and highlighting the excellence in our Catholic schools while we have some fun and make a real difference,” said Assistant Director of Stewardship and Development Heidi Sforza.

Each school can choose how they will utilize their funding. This year we saw a wide variety of projects including building enhancements, playground equipment, staff bonuses, curriculum enhancements, and even a new school bus.

“One of my favorite things about One Mission One Day is seeing all of the pictures and videos of students and faculty across the state, things like students dancing during donation drop offs, and student council members participating in pie contests, or the various art projects being auctioned off,” Sforza said.

The online giving day is run by our individual school advancement directors and principals with the help of the diocesan stewardship and development and communications offices.

The idea was initially organized by the northern panhandle Catholic schools in 2019, after a regional community event - the Ohio Valley Amazing Raise/Giving Tuesday - event

was canceled. In May of 2020 the first diocesan wide One Mission One Day Event was held and raised \$245,000. Since then, students, principals, pastors, and alumni have had fun getting involved with various contests, sharing pictures and videos, and donating to their favorite Catholic schools.

This year St. Vincent de Paul Parish School in Wheeling raised the most money during the event with more than \$50,700, followed by St. Mary’s Grade School in Clarksburg with \$44,585 and Central Catholic High School in Wheeling with \$40,958.

St. Paul Parish School in Weirton had the most donors (458) for the fifth year in a row and the most Peer Fundraisers. They will receive a an additional \$1,000 from the West Virginia Catholic Foundation and St. Vincent’s will receive \$500 for raising the most money.

Since launching the statewide giving day 5 years ago, we’ve raised more than \$2 million for Catholic schools across the state.



SMALL BUT MIGHTY

SHARING GOD'S MERCY AND LOVE

His tiny parish on 'Catholic Hill' in Braxton County, and his even smaller mission church in rural Clay County are proof that even if you are small in number with Christ fully alive in your heart YOU ARE MIGHTY.



Father Thien Duc Nguyen, S.V.D. (Society of the Divine Word), said his communities are “rich in kindness and love.”

Both St. Thomas Parish, Gassaway, and Risen Lord Mission, Maysel, are tucked away in scenic rural areas of central West Virginia. On a “good” Sunday, St. Thomas Parish’s pews are filled with 60 people; and at the mission church, 20.

While other parishes two, three, and four or more times that size are struggling to breathe life into their social ministries and community outreach projects, Father Thien’s faithful are putting all their trust in God.

Both the parish and mission run food pantries feeding hundreds each month, and both are part of a backpack program that provides weekend snacks and staples for children in the local elementary schools.

The Mission church sits in what is considered a food desert with nothing more than a convenient store in a reasonable distance for families. Needless to say, the foot traffic to the food pantry there is heavy, but what is also packed is the prayer box on the property. After every distribution day, Fr. Thien and his volunteers empty the box and add the heartfelt notes to the prayers of the faithful.

The kindness and love of the faithful in these two communities doesn’t stop there.

Last month, on Divine Mercy Sunday, the Catholic families of Gassaway officially began another significant ministry – Walking with Moms in Need.

Walking with Moms in Need is a nationwide, parish-based initiative to increase support for pregnant and parenting mothers in need. Everyone who is prolife and part of a Catholic parish should know where to refer a pregnant woman in need. Walking with Moms in Need is an opportunity for Catholic parish families to “walk in the shoes” of local pregnant and parenting women in need, accompanying them in friendship and helping to connect moms with local resources.

Bishop Mark Brennan has repeatedly said, “our Church is both pro-child and pro-woman. As the prolife movement long ago realized, seeking only to limit or eliminate abortions is not enough. We must also provide support to mothers



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Q&A WITH FR. THIEN

Where are you from, and when did you come to WV?

I was ordained on May 28, 2016, at our motherhouse at Techny (Chicago), Illinois, when I was 33 years old. I am a member of the Society of the Divine Word. Our society is the 6th largest congregation and largest to focus on missionary work. I came to West Virginia in October 2016; my first assignment was St. Thomas in Gassaway.

I grew up in the Central Highlands of Vietnam. My hometown is very much like Gassaway with many mountains. My family planted coffee and black peppers to earn a living.

My home parish was founded 68 years ago. Our village is 100% Catholic. My great grand uncle was a priest. He founded the village in 1956 after we moved from the north. We would celebrate daily Mass at 4:30 a.m. Thousands of people would attend. About 60 men from my hometown parish have become priests, and we count more than 200 religious among us. I have two uncles who are priests, and my aunt and my sister are nuns. One of my uncles has 11 children, seven of whom have become nuns. Another cousin has 5 priest and a nun in one family.

You have such a merciful and giving heart. What is the inspiration behind that?

I was born not long after the war ended in Vietnam (1975). My mom and dad worked very hard to have enough food for their four children, so I understand how it is to be poor. Also, I learned from my father, who often reminded us to care for the poor. I still remember when the beggar came to our door to ask for a bowl of rice. If they came during the meal, my dad always told us to go out and invite them to join us. If they hesitated to join us, he would bring the food out for them and always give them an extra bowl of rice or corn even when we didn’t have much.

Later, when I became an SVD, I learned

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before and after they give birth and to their families.”

Father Thien wholeheartedly believes Walking with Moms in Need is one way we can put our words into action.

So, after Mass on April 7th, just like after every Sunday Mass, the congregation at St. Thomas Parish prayed the Chaplet of Divine Mercy. Then he brought six parishioners before the altar, blessed them, and installed them as officers of this new ministry, reminding all that Divine Mercy is a call for us to show “God’s mercy - God’s love to other.”

“We are called to be the Divine Mercy’s disciples - the devotion for Divine Mercy Sunday is not something to be celebrated just once a year, nor is it simply a chaplet or modified rosary of prayers sung or recited,” he said. “Divine Mercy is meant to fill our lives and flow through us into the lives of others.”

After the blessing there was even more to celebrate. Father Thien and parishioners gathered for a baptism and a baby shower to benefit two young mothers. Mothers that have benefited from the pantries and will now have the extended love and support from the Walking with Moms in Need.

Oh wait! That’s not all! Those who lingered that busy Sunday also attended Father’s blessing of the new baby pantry stocked with baby diapers and supplies that was opening the next day.

“We have been helping many moms with utilities, diapers...” Fr. Thien said. “We never turn anyone away,” adding, Walking with Moms in Need is just a natural next step.

The new program for the Braxton County parish will also be helping grandparents. Father said that as many as 80% of grandparents in the county are taking care of their grandchildren.

“At Risen Lord Church we have been helping 106 students from Clay Elementary School weekly during the school year, and around 250-300 families who come to the food pantry every month,” he noted. “At St Thomas, we have been helping 23 students at Burnsville Elementary School weekly during school year, and around 100-120 families who come for food at food pantry every month.”

Ordained eight years ago on May 28th, Fr. Thien has learned it just takes one person to make a difference, just like St. Teresa of Calcutta taught, don’t sell yourself short - “If you can’t feed a hundred people then feed just one.” That slogan is printed on the side of the pantries’ box truck.

“The word mission means ‘to be sent’,” Father said. “Jesus’s mission on earth was to bring the Good News of salvation, and today the Church Universal continues that work. We, as the Church, are part of that mission. We form one people- bishops, priests, religious, and laity. We are bound together in communion of faith; called to a commitment of love



that our founder’s motto was “Jesus’s Mission is Our Mission.”

The Bible verses that I chose for my ordination was “The love of Christ compels us (me).” (2Cr 5;14) The words of Jesus always reminds me that “whatever you do to the least of my brothers and sisters, you do it to me.”

Your churches are so small in numbers, how on earth do you do it?

I think we all are “call to serve not to be served (Mt 20:28).” I believe that God calls my parishioners and me to be missionaries. He put me in one of the poorest areas of WV for a reason. I always remind my parishioners that there’s a reason for everything! We have a sign that reads: “Signs of the times” (Vatican II). It reminds us that we are called to find that reason and respond to it.

We’re unable to do it without the help of benefactors. We have so many benefactors to thank: SVD; Catholic Sharing Appeal; Greater Kanawha Valley Foundation; Knights of Columbus (Charleston); St. James the Greater, Charles Town; WVU; and many individuals.

Without their help, we’d be unable to help as many people in Braxton, Clay, and neighboring counties. We are God’s instrument, and benefactors are the channels to the poor and needy. In addition to benefactors’ donations parishioners hold fundraising events. We are always mindful that if we are generous to others, God will be generous to us as well. We still need more hands to work with us.

I also thank the many SVD priests and brothers who came before me and have served the diocese since 1972. They established these ministries to reach out to the poor; and many of my brother priests in other parts of West Virginia (today) also have these ministries in their parishes. We’re continuing the legacy of love and response to the call to care for the poor, the needy and the marginalized.

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with Jesus as our center and the Holy Spirit as our source of life and power. We are called to be Divine Mercy Disciples.”

Father Thien shared a quote from Pope Francis:

“Rivers do not drink their own water; trees do not eat their own fruit; the sun does not shine on itself; and flowers do not spread their fragrance for themselves.

Living for others is a rule of nature. We are all born to help each other. No matter how difficult it is...life is good when you are happy; but much better when others are happy because of you.”

To donate to St. Thomas and Risen Lord’s social ministries, please make check payable to: Saint Thomas Food Pantry or Risen Lord Food Pantry and mail to:

Saint Thomas Catholic Church
624 Kanawha St. • Gassaway, WV 26624

Final words?

As a pastor, I’m so glad parishioners of St. Thomas and Risen Lord have, as Divine Word Missionaries say, “One heart, many faces!”

During the past six years, one to five people have joined our church each year. In the past three weeks, there have been 10 people who want to start RCIA at St. Thomas. We hope that our ministries sow the “mustard seed” of love and that God will make them grow.

SMALL BUT MIGHTY

Father Thien Duc Nguyen, S.V.D., and his Catholic communities are sharing God’s mercy and love.



Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston | www.dwc.org
f i t

#FaithInWV

PLAN AHEAD May 25-26

A Special collection will be held for:
Catholic Relief Services
- a pro-life organization dedicated to preserving human life from conception to natural death. Resolute in commitment to the Church and its teaching. Guided by the Principles of Catholic Social Teaching; governed by the USCCB bishops, religious, and laity; CRS works in over 100 countries to assist people of all backgrounds, working side by side with others so they can lift themselves out of poverty, assisting during emergencies and enabling people to build the resiliency they need to stand on their own.



 www.reallygreatsite.com

OUR LADY OF CHINA

On the second Sunday of May each year the Church celebrates the Feast of Our Lady of China. At the turn of the 20th century, in April 1900, a rebellion was taking place in China. Known as the “Boxer Rebellion” as many as 10,000 peasants were trying to attack the Christian village of Donglü. According to history records, four times they tried to attack and four times the Christian villagers - about 1,000 in number - were able to drive them away. The attackers would not give up.

The village priest was Fr. Wu, who prayed intently to Jesus through the Blessed Mother Mary, calling on her to intercede and protection be given to the village. It was documented that a woman in white surrounded by a great light appeared in the sky at Donglü. The attackers fired their weapons into the sky at the vision, but to no avail. Then a “fiery horseman” Chinese believed to be St. Michael the Archangel appeared and charged towards the rioters, who then fled. Father Wu and the villagers believed it was indeed divine intervention and Mary saved them.

Father Wu commissioned a painting of Mary wearing a golden robe - a color of Chinese royalty. She beautifully reflects Chinese ethnicity - for Marian apparitions like Our Lady of Guadalupe, Mary appears of familiar appearance to the seers.

There are many images today of Our Lady of China. One painted by Mr. John Lu Hung Nien (1914-1989) is familiar to many in the US, because it was turned into a mosaic at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C.

Lu Hung Nien was a convert. Cardinal Thomas Tien Keng-Hsin, S.V.D., the first Chinese Cardinal, used this Madonna and Child image for the prayer card for the persecuted in China. On the back he put this prayer:

Hail, Holy Mary, Mother of Our Lord Jesus Christ, Mother of all nations and all people. You are the special heavenly Mother of the Chinese people.

Teach us your way of total obedience to God's will. Help us to live our lives true to our faith. Fill our hearts with burning love for God and each other. Stir up in our youth an unconditional giving of self to the service of God.

We call on your powerful intercession for peace, reconciliation, and unity among the believers, and conversion of the unbelievers in China and throughout the world, for God's mercy is our only hope.

Our Lady of China, Mother of Jesus, hear our petitions and pray for us. Amen.

Editor's note: The art with this article is a mosaic at the Basilica of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C., based on the John Lu Hung-nien painting.



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OUR LADY OF CHINA, PRAY FOR US

THE FEAST OF OUR LADY OF FATIMA IS MONDAY, MAY 13

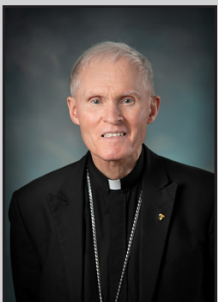
On this day in 1917, the Blessed Mother chose to appear to Lúcia Santos, a young Portuguese girl, and her two younger cousins, Jacinta and Francisco Marto, as they were out tending their sheep outside their village in Fatima, Portugal. Lucia, who was 10 but the eldest of the trio would often kneel in the open fields and pray the Rosary.

History has recorded it was about noon when a flash of light caught the children's attention. They said they saw a "brilliant" figure over the trees. The vision told them to pray for the conversion of sinners and an end to the war (World War I), and she would come back every month, on the 13th. As foretold apparitions happened again on June 13 and July 13. However, the children were prohibited to return to the Cova da Iria, where the previous appearances were, but when they returned on August 19, again the image appeared. Famously on September 13, the vision requested recitation of the Rosary for an end to the world war. It was on October 13, the "Lady" identified herself as "Our Lady of the Rosary" and again called for prayer and penance.

Take time to pray the rosary to the Blessed Mother with requests for the world and the conversion of sinners. Whether you are a dedicated soul who prays this beautiful meditative prayer routinely or one who stumbles through it or hesitates for whatever the reason you can pray along with rosary audio and video presentations while sitting in silence or on a prayerful walk.

The Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston created **FaithInWV** as an e-bulletin and website to help us all grow stronger in faith and be fully alive in Christ. Find great resources for how to pray the Rosary, printables, Catholic apps, websites, how to make a Rosary, and more. Check it out at: FAITHINWV.ORG/RESOURCES/

Editor's note: The art featured with this article is a sticker made from a painting of Our Lady of Fatima with the three young shepherds by Natalie Haydel of New Orleans. Her art and Catholic gifts are available at Colors by Natalie on Etsy. WWW.ETSY.COM/SHOP/COLORSBYNATALIE



FROM THE DESK OF BISHOP MARK E. BRENNAN

Bishop Mark has released a Pastoral Letter on the Transgender Phenomenon.

Click the link below to read the letter.

WWW.DWC.ORG

ASCENSION OF OUR LORD

First Reading: Acts 1:1-11

The Apostles watched Jesus lifted up into the clouds.

Responsorial: Psalm 47

“God mounts his throne to shouts of joy: a blare of trumpets for the Lord.”

Second Reading: Ephesians 1:17-23

Christ is seated at God’s right hand in the heavens.

Gospel: Mark 16:15-20

Jesus was taken up and took his seat at the right hand of God.

[CLICK HERE FOR FULL SCRIPTURE TEXT](#)

PRAYER INTENTIONS

For the Church, that all members are able to share the Good News of Jesus Christ with inviting faith, a great sense of hope, and genuine love, let us pray to the Lord. . .

For missionaries abroad and in our own communities, may the work they do clearly express and extend the God’s love and mercy, let us pray to the Lord. . .

For mothers, grandmothers, godmothers, and all women who are motherly, may God bless and keep them in his loving care so they may do His will, let us pray to the Lord. . .

For our habitual and special intentions, let us pray to the Lord. . .

Lord hear our prayer

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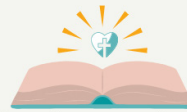
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Dunbar - Charleston	AM	1450
Eastern Panhandle - coming soon	FM	88.5
Grafton - Clarksburg	AM	1190
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Liturgy of the Hours

LITURGY OF THE HOURS

Pray the prayer for this day, this hour!

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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.