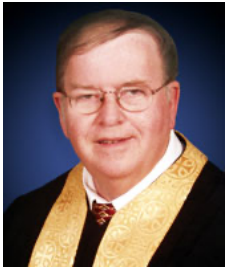


Saint Matthew Today



Max's Corner

Ash Wednesday—THIS Wednesday

Tonight!—if you're reading this on Wednesday. Begin Lent at the beginning. If we ever needed the encouragement of

the Gospel, it is now.

Sandwich supper at 6:00. (No, I'm not bringing my tuna sandwiches. My sister is bringing her chicken salad sandwiches.) Desserts are coming, too. But worship is the main event, and it will start at 6:30.

This is a contemplative service. Blake will sing the beautiful *Above All*. We will be reminded that we are loved and forgiven. Mary will impose the ashes of repentance. There will be a moment at the altar for prayer if you choose. Come.

Discovering God Class

I wish everyone could have been in my class last Sunday. We had a meaningful discussion about who we are—a soul temporarily assigned to a body. This week, we will learn that deathbed visions are just one element of God's loving welcome as we leave this place.

Class at 9:45. Breakfast after.

Breakfast This Sunday

This Sunday—it's up to us. We all bring. Help if you can.

Breakfast is at 10:30.

First Sunday of Lent

The paraments turn purple. We begin our journey to Easter. But the journey matters. The scripture will be the temptation in the wilderness.

The sermon: *Where the Power Lies*.

Everything Satan says in this passage is a lie. (Hmmm—who does that remind me of?)

We had 70 in attendance again last Sunday. Let's make a habit of it.

This is a time for commitment.

Jesus said we are "*the light of the world*." Let that light shine.

Let the world see and hear our witness.

See you Sunday.

God bless,

MB

REMEMBER!!!—ASH WEDNESDAY.

Mary's Corner

Greetings St. Matthew friends, family, and members,



Today is traditionally known as "Fat Tuesday" or *Mardi Gras*. From *The Britannica* (the online version of the *Encyclopedia Britannica*), "the French name *Mardi Gras* means Fat Tuesday, from the custom of using all the fats in the home before Lent in preparation for fasting and abstinence." The actual season of celebration is called Carnival, and in New Orleans, "citywide revelry and elaborate parades both day and night are celebrated. Beads of green, gold, and purple (representing power, faith, and justice) are commonly distributed, and the eating of king cake is an iconic part of the celebration."

Carnival is a traditional Roman Catholic observance of using up all of the meat (*carnem levare*) before a season of fasting and other ascetic practices. An ascetic practice is one of strict self-denial, serving as a form of personal and spiritual discipline. First-century Christians modeled this behavior, following the example of Jesus in the wilderness for forty days, as told in Matthew 4:1-11. The idea is to use up the "extravagant" food around the house to keep it from going bad during the season of Lent. As the celebration of excess ends, the season of reflection and sacrifice begins.

Lent is a time for preparation—a time to shift our focus away from the extravagances of life and instead focus on making ourselves ready for the events of Easter. You cannot get to the resurrection without going through those torturous days in the garden, in the upper room, at Calvary, and in the tomb. God, made flesh in the body of Jesus of Nazareth, battled sin and death for us because we are the beloved children of the Creator. This is a profoundly humbling time for me.

On Wednesday evening, I will stand at the front of the church, make the sign of the cross on your forehead with ashes and olive oil, and tell you that you are loved and forgiven. I am only able to do this because I am also loved and forgiven. It is not me that does the loving or the forgiving—it is the grace of God, poured out on us all, that draws us deeper into relationship. I am not the best at giving things up for Lent. I always begin the season with a promise that I will give up something that isn't good for me (candy, scotch, fried food, etc.), yet I have never made it the entire forty days. However, God has given me the strength to add something that is good for me (a Lenten study, walking one mile every day for forty days, writing in a journal, etc.).

(Continued on next page)

There are many ways to observe Lent, and none of them involve looking at our neighbors in judgment or condemnation. Lent is the time to turn our eyes upon Jesus. Look full in His wonderful face. And let the things of earth grow dim in the light of His glory and grace.

I hope you will join me in adding something to your life that is good—something holy and sacred. I'd love to hear what you choose and how it impacts your life—please share your experience with me!

My love to all,
Mary



Julian Rodriguez Stars as Shrek!

Our very own Julian Rodriguez, from the Saint Matthew choir, will be taking on the lead role of Shrek in **Upright Theatre Company's** production of **Shrek: The Musical!**

Julian has been having a fantastic time bringing the lovable green ogre to life, and he would love for you to come out and support local theater!

Upright Theatre Company
2501 N. Main Street, Suite 210
Euless, TX 76039

Julian's Performance Dates:

- Sat, March 1 – 7:30 PM
- Fri, March 7 – 7:30 PM
- Sun, March 9 – 3:00 PM
- Sat, March 15 – 7:30 PM
- Fri, March 21 – 7:30 PM
- Sat, March 22 – 7:30 PM

Don't miss this fun-filled production—come cheer on Julian and enjoy a fantastic night of music and laughter!

Friday's Word

"Evil Does Not Win"

Forgive me for playing the same note on my harp over and over again, but notice needs to be taken.

It is a big thing—the loss of our democracy. The disruption in thousands of lives.

The deaths of children in Africa. And in America, if the present agenda goes through.

I knew that people would show up sad last Sunday, two days after Mr. Zelensky was attacked in the Oval Office.

I did address our obvious sorrow in my sermon and lamented again that so many Christians had helped to bring us to the dark place we are in now.

My mind goes back to the '50s and '60s. (Yes, I am old enough to remember those days.)

Racism was the norm in the church. This means that most people in the pews and preaching from pulpits did not truly accept Jesus' teachings.

But surely, we are much better today. I think not.

Human nature has not changed. Many Christians today are as resistant to the teachings of Jesus as people were back then.

Matthew 5:28-48 is like lost scripture for many Christians. It seems not to exist. For many, the words of Jesus against vengeance and retribution carry no weight.

The unconditional love of God for all people is still not popular.

We know this because of where we are today.

No one who truly knows Jesus Christ would have chosen this.

Yet millions who claim the name of our Lord do, still, support this darkness.

But when it gets dark enough, all (or most) will see that the lights are out.

A change will come.

Evil does not win.

Lord, we trust in you.

God Bless—MB

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Kids' News

Fishing for People: Answering Jesus' Call

This week, we hear a story about Jesus calling His first disciples. As He walked along the shore, He saw two sets of brothers—Simon and Andrew, and James and John—fishing in the Sea of Galilee. Jesus called out to them, saying, “Come, follow me, and I will make you fishers of people.” Without hesitation, they dropped everything and followed Him.

Jesus didn't give them a long explanation. He didn't tell them exactly what they would be doing or where they were going. But the brothers trusted Him. They knew that following Jesus meant something special, even if they didn't understand it all right away.

Later, these brothers and others became Jesus' closest friends and disciples. They traveled with Him, listened to His teachings, and learned how to share God's love with others. Jesus was showing them that being a disciple isn't just about knowing things—it's about trusting, listening, and stepping out in faith.

We are all called to “fish for people” just like the disciples. That doesn't mean we need fishing nets. Instead, it means we should look for ways to invite others into God's love—by being kind, making friends, and sharing what we learn about Jesus. Wherever we go, we can be a light for others, just as the disciples were.

We hope to see you in church on Sunday so we can meet more of Jesus' friends.

What We Learned

Jesus calls each of us to follow Him, just as He called the fishermen on the Sea of Galilee. They left everything behind, trusting Him even though they didn't know what the future would hold. That same trust is what faith is all about—believing in God's plan even when we don't have all the answers.

Jesus' invitation to be “fishers of people” reminds us that we are meant to share His love with others. We don't need a fishing boat or nets to do this. Instead, we can be fishers of people by showing kindness, making new friends, and inviting others to learn more about Jesus. Every time we act with love, we help bring others closer to God's kingdom.

We hope to see you in church on Sunday so we can meet more of Jesus' friends.

Blessings,

Miss Vickie and Miss Sue



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