



Church of Santa Maria

40 Santa Maria Way | Orinda CA 94563 | 925-254-2426 | www.SantaMariaOrinda.com

Can skepticism be a gift?

The potentially good consequences of taking questions and doubts seriously

Pictured: An ambulance with flashing red and white lights speeds down the street



1st Sunday in Lent
February 21, 2021

I was driving down Treat the other day when I saw in my rearview mirror that one lane over, a Flashing Lights Vehicle (my own term) was behind a pickup truck. My first instinct: "Phew, I'm glad he's not behind me!" But on noticing that the pickup wasn't pulling over, I examined the FLV more closely: it didn't seem to have the regular blue and red lights of a police car and didn't appear to be the right shape... **and then my slumbering skeptic awakened.** I remembered reading once about shady scammers or maybe even kidnappers that would try to pull you over by pretending to be a police car, so I started suspiciously eyeing those now-alarming flashing lights, trying to remember the number to call dispatch to see if there really was a police vehicle here.

At that moment, the pickup decided to pull over, and the FLV passed all of us. As it flew by, I could see that it was not, as my skeptical side had deduced, a fake police vehicle, but instead a smaller fire ambulance with the Fire Department's signature red and white lights. "What a dope," I thought to myself. "That should have been obvious."

Then (since it is, after all, the beginning of Lent) I started lamenting how many other 'obvious' truths we can miss in our lives - especially capital-T Truths. **We generally live in a more or less constant state of wariness, skepticism, and even cynicism - all of which are touted as virtues in today's society.** They're the hallmarks of those who "don't fall for that" or who "question authority," or, more subtly, who are "spiritual but not religious."

The sad part is, when Truth literally comes to stand in front of them (on the altar, in the Word of God), the skepticism and questioning nature people are so proud of everywhere else just... falters. **Why not lean in**

to those questions, those doubts about faith? Why not research a real answer, or seek an experience of your own? Why brush religious experiences off as "the opiate of the masses" (no pun intended) without diving in to see if there really is truth offered here? That skepticism could be turned into a most powerful driving force to foster one's curiosity - and that's a good thing!

While my FLV skepticism was misguided, not all skepticism is. Just like that ambulance wasn't an evil kidnapping murderer but rather paramedics on their way to save someone's life, so too religion isn't a conniving brainwasher out to get you, but rather a salve for life's deepest discontent - showing us the path to the answer to all our longing.

If you've got a skeptical friend with those doubts and questions, maybe this is the time to invite and challenge them to seek real answers with you as we seek meaning and purpose in life together. If you suspect the cynic is you, consider joining us for our Virtual Lenten Retreat to seriously seek out some answers with others on life's journey. You might find out we're the ambulance in this whole thing, after all.

*Megan Arteaga
Youth Ministry Coordinator*

Weekend Worship Opportunities

1st Sunday in Lent

Sunday, February 21, 2021

8:30am | Mass in the Parking Lot; also [Livestreamed](#) (available all day)

10:30am | Mass in the Parking Lot

[Download and print the Worship Aid here](#)

Turn on your car's Accessory Mode and tune in at 87.9 KGOD!

Join us this Sunday in the Parking Lot at 8:30am or 10:30am for Mass!
We are blessed to be able to celebrate with you.

If you are unable to physically join us, we will continue to livestream the 8:30am Mass for you to participate from home.

We're moving inside! 8:30am Mass | Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays

In light of the recent Supreme Court decision, we are now able to have weekday Masses inside the church again! (Given the number of people attending Parking Lot Mass, we will continue Sunday Masses outside until further notice.)



Beginning the Friday after Ash Wednesday, morning Masses will be held

in the Church at 8:30am Monday, Wednesday, and Friday!

All are welcome to celebrate with us (up to 90 persons). Key practices required when attending in order to prevent the spread of COVID-19 include:

- Physical distancing to the maximum extent possible, at no less than 6'. Some pews will be blocked off to facilitate social distancing.
- Use of face coverings over nose and mouth
- Frequent hand washing (hand sanitizer will be available in the narthex)

Please note that the church will NOT be heated for Masses, so please dress warmly!

Lenten Opportunities

Join us for the second session of our Lenten Virtual Retreat: "Who are you?"

Mark your calendars:
Tuesdays through Mar 30
7:15pm Fellowship
7:30pm Prayer Starts



Join us on Zoom on Tuesday evenings for The Search, a 7-part series addressing life's great questions from a Catholic perspective. We'll gather to watch a video, break out for small group discussion, and share our stories.

Email us if you're interested in joining - and in the meantime, [watch the trailer here!](#)

Make it meaningful: weekly ideas to dive into the season of Lent

Our Social Justice Committee isn't just about service and outreach - they brainstormed all kinds of different ways to make Lent more effective in preparing ourselves for Easter!



We'll be providing two or three ideas in every bulletin, and challenge you to do at least one of them each week:

- [Read the Gospel and other Mass readings](#) before coming to church on Sunday
- Share two positive thoughts or something inspirational at dinner each night
- Attend a parish Virtual Retreat session (details below in the bulletin!)

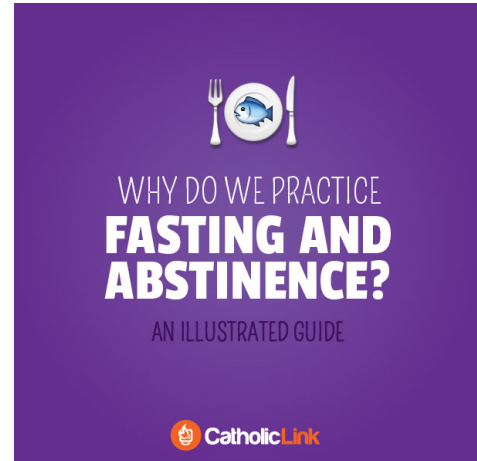
Let us know - which did you choose this week? What was your experience?

Lenten Fasting and Abstinence

Ash Wednesday and Good Friday are obligatory days of universal [fast and abstinence](#). Fasting is obligatory for all who have completed their 18th year until the beginning of their 60th year.

Fasting allows a person to eat one full meal. Two smaller meals may be taken, not to equal one full meal. Abstinence (from meat) is obligatory for all who have completed their 14th year of age. If possible, the fast on Good Friday is continued until the Easter Vigil (on Holy Saturday night) as the "paschal feast" to honor the suffering and death of the Lord Jesus and to prepare to share more fully and celebrate more readily his Resurrection.

Fridays in Lent are obligatory days of abstinence (from meat) for all who have completed their 14th year. As always, anyone for whom fasting or abstinence would post a health risk is excused.



Service and Outreach

Drive-thru Food/Sock Collection: Feb 28

We're collecting food for the families of St. Cornelius in Richmond and Jewish Family & Community Services, East Bay (with whom our parish co-sponsored the Amini family from Afghanistan a few years ago).



We're also asking for donations of NEW socks for the Dorothy Day House in Berkeley - the single most-needed article of clothing in homeless shelters. According to them, the most practical type to give is men's white, moisture-wicking ankle socks.

Email us if you can sign up for a shift collecting parishioners' donations on

Sunday, February 28 - details and time slots are available on [the Social Justice webpage](#).

If you have questions or want to sign up, contact [Janet Riley](#) or [Gail Gabriel](#).

Let's make lunch for Friendly Manor!

Would you like to make lunches for senior women in transitional housing in West Oakland? We need volunteers to make 5 lunches each for Friendly Manor on the following Fridays:

- March 5 (1 person)
- March 19 (3 people)
- April 2 (2 people)



Please fill the lunch bags with a sandwich, chips, fruit, and any other healthy snack. Drop off lunches at the church parking lot between 11-11:30am on the day you've signed up for!

If you have questions or want to sign up, contact [Janet Riley](#) or [Gail Gabriel](#).

Virtual Gala benefits Hope Solutions - save the date!

Santa Maria has supported Hope Solutions through Social Justice donations, Youth Ministry's Summer Sports Camp, after-school tutoring, and more!



Once again they are having their annual fundraiser, the Ruby Slippers Gala, on Saturday, February 27 from 5:30-7:00pm. They're asking our parish for support, so we invite you to participate in any way you can!

[Click here to learn more](#) about the February 27 event, benefitting homeless families and individuals in Contra Costa County.

Parish Life

January Collection Report

Our Finance Council has determined our monthly goal for the Sunday Plate. Here is our total for the month of January:

Goal: \$42,000
Total: \$45,241.00
Positive: \$3,241.00



How can I keep supporting Santa Maria?

Thank you so much for thinking about us and continuing to support our parish during these trying times! We are greatly appreciative of any help you can provide.

You may drop your collection in the offertory baskets at Parking Lot Masses, mail a check to the Parish Office (40 Santa Maria Way, Orinda CA 94563), or [make a one-time donation using Faith Direct](#), our eGiving service, to make your offering.

If you would like, you can also [sign up for recurring giving through Faith Direct](#) to continue to give to the Sunday plate even though you can't come to the church to drop it in the basket as usual. Again, we thank you for your planning and your generosity!



Mass Intentions

Sunday, Feb 21

8:30am: Parishioners of Santa Maria, Living and Deceased
10:30am: Brigitte Donner Daws (D)

Monday, Feb 22

8:30am: Father Jerrold Kennedy (D)

Wednesday, Feb 24

8:30am: Jose Luis (D)

Friday, Feb 26

8:30am: Si & Patti Seiwert (D)

Due to the restrictions imposed by the County and State officials related to the COVID-19 virus, public Masses celebrated in the church were forbidden up until recently. However, "private" Masses were said in both the convent and church. The following is a list of Masses recently celebrated for the following intentions:

Joseph Nguyen Pham (D)
Karl Rogina (D)
Louise Govednik Rogina (D)
John Rogina (D)
Frac Plut Govednik (D)
Dominic Vinh Hoang (D)
Holy Souls in Purgatory

Mass Intentions are a beautiful way of praying for your intentions or for the souls of our deceased loved ones. To request a Mass Intention, please contact Mirna in the Parish Office.

Pastoral Team

Reverend George Mockel
Pastor
gmockel@smparish.org

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Deacon Louie Hotop, SJ
x301

Deacon James Pearce
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Liturgy and Music
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Sister Mary Margaret Phan, LHC
Faith Formation (Grades K-5)
srmmphan@smparish.org x306

Megan Arteaga
Youth Ministry (Grades 6-12),
Communications, and CYO
megan@smparish.org x308

Sister Mary Magdalene Nguyen, LHC
Pastoral Care of the Sick
sisttermn@smparish.org x309

Prayer Intentions

For the Sick:

Sonny Acosta, Mary Beth Alban, Joan Artmann, Shoaib Aryan, Kristy Blackey-Taylor, Kathie Brady, Miguel Briseno, Maria Carmen, Fred Chavaria, Grace Parent DeBoot, Lorna Elliott, Anne Emery, Nora Enriquez, Al Ferreira, Emidio Fonseca, Liam Foley, Patricia Fox, Bridget Gallagher, Noreen Gillham, Jennifer Gray, Florentino Ibabao, Brian Kelly, Mason Kelly, Aileen Kelly, Michael Kelly, Jim Kennedy, Jerry Kirk, Lawrence Knapp, Carol Koupus, Judy Lazarus, Patricia McGuire, Rose Mary McPhee, Robert Nick, Arsi Orihuella, Deacon Jim Pearce, Kathleen Pelz, Ann Powell, Mark Ricci, Ben Richey, Brian Riley, Len Saputo, Vicki Saputo, Patrick Sheehy, Scott Treter, Jean Wells, Faye Young

Would you like to add yourself or someone else to the prayer list? Please ensure you have their permission, then contact Megan in the Parish Office at 925-254-2426 or at megan@smparish.org.

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Maria**

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