

# Immaculate Conception Parish



Please visit our website at  
[www.icworc.com](http://www.icworc.com) and Facebook

## RECTORY ADDRESS

353 Grove Street, Worcester, MA 01605

Phone: 508-754-8419

Fax: 508-306-9718

Religious Education Phone: 508-868-8119

Rectory Hours: M: 9:30am-1:30pm, T: 9:30am-1:30pm

W: 9:30am-1:30pm, F: 9:30am-1:30pm

**MOST REV. ROBERT J. MCMANUS, Bishop of Worcester**

**REV. WALTER RILEY, PASTOR**

**REV. ENOCH KYEREMATENG, IN RESIDENCE**

**KEVIN DEIGNAN, PERMANENT DEACON**

**FRANK MYSKA, PERMANENT DEACON**

**MARY SYCKS, ADMINISTRATOR OF RELIGIOUS  
EDUCATION AND YOUTH MINISTER**

**C. HENRY MASON, MUSIC DIRECTOR**

**BRIDGET KLOFFT, CANTOR**

**ROBERT NOBERINI, PARISH OFFICE MANAGER**

**MATTHEW FOSTER, PASTORAL COUNCIL CHAIRMAN**

**LYNDA MONAHAN, SAFE ENVIRONMENT COORDINATOR**

## SUNDAY MASSES

**SATURDAY VIGIL: 4:00 PM**

**SUNDAY: 7:30 AM, 10:00 AM**

## SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION

Saturday 2:45 - 3:45 PM

(or by appointment)

## WEEKDAY MASSES

**MONDAY, TUESDAY, WEDNESDAY 9:00 AM**

**THURSDAY 8:00 AM**

## NEW PARISHIONERS

Anyone is welcome to join the Parish Community.

Please contact the Rectory and introduce yourself.

## SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM

Parents and godparents of infants to be baptized are expected to participate in a preparation session. Call the Rectory to register for this process and set a date for the actual Baptism. For Baptism of adults please contact the Rectory.

## SACRAMENT OF MARRIAGE

Please contact the rectory one year prior to your desired wedding date

## SACRAMENT OF ANOINTING OF THE SICK

Father Walter can be called whenever someone can benefit from this sacrament of healing.

## PROTECTING OUR YOUTH AND CHILDREN

If you or someone you know has been sexually abused by a priest, religious or lay person working for the Church, and you want to share feelings of hurt or betrayal, call Cathaleen Peloquin, Victim Services Coordinator, Office of Healing and Prevention, 508-929-4363 (direct, confidential line).

**MASS INTENTIONS**

Sat.	Mar 17	4:00 PM	Richard Zereski, from Family
Sun.	Mar 18	7:30 AM	Jeannette T. Burns, Brian B. Colonies, and Chuck Burns, from Family
		10:00 AM	Frank Myska, Sr., Month Mind, from Family
Mon.	Mar 19	9:00 AM	Intentions of the Blessed Virgin Mary, ( <i>St. Joseph, Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary</i> )
Tues.	Mar 20	9:00 AM	Richard & Marie Riley, their Children, Grandchildren, and Great Grandchildren
Wed.	Mar 21	9:00 AM	Parishioners of Immaculate Conception
Thurs.	Mar 22	8:00 AM	Jim & Ruth Walker, and Jack Ethier
Sat.	Mar 24	4:00 PM	Charles Clarke, Memorial Mass, from Family
Sun.	Mar 25	7:30 AM	
		10:00 AM	Kathleen Cushing, Month Mind, from Family

**THIS WEEK** the text for The 5th Sunday of Lent, may be found at #915 in the *Journeysongs* hymnal.

**RELIGIOUS QUOTE OF THE WEEK**

**JESUS WEEPS FOR ALL HUMANITY:** John 11:36; “The Jews thought that Jesus wept on account of the death of Lazarus, but in fact he wept out of compassion for all humanity, not mourning Lazarus alone but all humanity, which is subject to death, having justly fallen under so great a penalty.”

*St. Cyril of Alexandria (376-444)*

**HOLY HOUR AND STATIONS OF THE CROSS FOR LENT**

Each Friday during the Season of Lent, our Parish will be holding our annual Holy Hour at 5:30 p.m., followed by Stations of the Cross at 6:30 p.m. All are invited to come and spend some time with the Lord in Eucharistic Adoration, and walk the way of the Cross in preparation for Holy Week and Easter Sunday. Holy Hour and the Stations will begin this Friday, February 16.

**LENTEN REGULATIONS AND GUIDELINES**

Lenten fast and regulations for the Diocese of Worcester are as follows: Abstinence from meat is to be observed by all Catholics 14 years of age and older on Ash Wednesday, Good Friday, and all the Fridays of Lent. Fasting is to be observed by all Catholics who are 18 years of age but not yet 59 years of age on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. Those who are bound to fast may take only one full meal. Two smaller meals are permitted if necessary to maintain strength according to one’s needs, but eating solid food between meals is not permitted. Catholics should not lightly excuse themselves from these prescribed Lenten penitential practices.

**TAX STATEMENTS FOR 2018**

Any parishioner who wishes to receive a statement of contributions for 2017 for tax purposes can do so by calling the rectory at 508-754-8419 during business hours found on the front of the bulletin, by emailing the rectory at [icworc@live.com](mailto:icworc@live.com), or stopping by the rectory during business hours.

**FRIDAY FASTING AND INTENTION**

We thank all our parishioners who continue to fast for one meal and abstain from meat each Friday as we commemorate our Lord’s saving act on that day. This wonderful Catholic tradition is reemerging, calling us to be mindful of our Lord’s crucifixion every Friday of the year. Such a particular awareness in our lives can only deepen our faith and love in Christ. As we fast and abstain, we do so each week for an intention that is to us on a local, national, or world level, always effecting our faith. Next Friday’s intention is *for those mourning the loss of a loved one, that God’s consolation and peace will be with them.*

**OPERATION RICE BOWL**

Cartons for Operation Rice Bowl can be found at each entrance to the Church. For those who participate in this Lenten program, we invite to place coins in the carton and we will collect them at the end of Lent, and forward the total to Catholic Relief Services. The money collected is used to serve the needs of the poor in America and throughout the world, and those who struggle through natural disasters. Funds will be collected beginning next week at with boxes at the side entrance to the Church on the rectory side. Thank you.

**HOLY WEEK SCHEDULE**

Our Parish schedule for Holy Week is as follows: there is no 8:00 a.m. Mass on Holy Thursday morning. The Mass of the Lord’s Supper will take place on Holy Thursday evening, March 29, at 7:00 p.m., with the doors of the Church left open for adoration until 11:00 p.m. Stations of the Cross will be held at Noon on Good Friday, March 30. Our Good Friday Service will be held at 3:00 p.m. in the afternoon. Our Easter Vigil Mass will begin at 7:15 p.m. on Saturday, March 31. Easter Sunday Masses, April 1, are the normal Sunday schedule with Masses at 7:30 & 10:00 a.m.

**ON THE EUCHARIST**

“I consider it my duty...to appeal urgently that the liturgical norms for the celebration of the Eucharist be observed with great fidelity. These norms are a concrete expression of the authentically ecclesial nature of the Eucharist: this is their deepest meaning. Liturgy is never anyone’s private property, be it of the celebrant or of the community in which the mysteries are celebrated.”

*St. John Paul II, from Ecclesia de Eucharistia (Encyclical)*

**FOOD PANTRY NEEDS**

Our food pantry is on the lesser side of goods at this time, so we ask any parishioners who wish to help out to consider purchasing items such as Spaghetti sauce, cereal, peanut butter, jelly, rice, canned tuna and all vegetables, and canned dry fruit. Thank you to all who assist our small but important food pantry that helps to serve the needs of those who come to our door each Monday.

**HOLY WEEK & EASTER SUNDAY SIGNUP SHEET IN SACRISTY FOR LECTORS AND EUCHARISTIC MINISTERS**

For Lectors and Eucharistic Ministers looking to assist at Masses throughout Holy Week and Easter Sunday, there is now a signup sheet in the sacristy. Thank you in advance for those who are willing and able to help at the upcoming celebrations.

**SPRING FUEL THANK YOU**

Thank you to all parishioners who have made a donation to our Spring Fuel Collection taken up last week at all Masses. For those who were not here, or unable to do so, please consider donating to this Parish collection that helps to offset the cost of heating the Church throughout the winter. Although February was warmer than usual, March has been colder than normal, and I’m sure we all remember the cold stretch from late December/early January that resulted in a hefty heating invoice for the Parish. Thank you for your generosity.

**WORDS OF POPE FRANCIS FROM *The Joy of Love***

**PASSING ON THE FAITH:** “Education in the faith has to adapt to each child, since older resources and recipes do not always work. Children need symbols, actions and stories. Since adolescents usually have issues with authority and rules, it is best to encourage their own experience of faith and to provide them with attractive testimonies that win them over by their sheer beauty. Parents desirous of nurturing the faith of their children are sensitive to their patterns of growth, for that know that spiritual experience is not imposed but freely proposed. It is essential that children actually see that, for their parents, prayer is something truly important.” Par. 288

**Religious Education** Religious Education classes take place Sunday, March 19th at 8:45AM-9:45AM for children in grades K-6, 7:00PM-8:00PM for children in grades 7-8 and 7:00PM-8:15PM for students in grades 9, 10 and Confirmation Class.

**Star Student of the Week** Our Student of the Week is Ryan Hermance! Ryan is a third grade student in our Religious Education Program. He is an attentive student with an inquisitive mind. Ryan shares how he lives his faith with his classmates and the other children in the Religious Education Program. He participates in the Children's Liturgy, Christmas Pageant and many family events at Immaculate Conception. Ryan enjoys presenting the Gifts at Mass and volunteers to help his teacher and classmates. Congratulation Ryan!

**Prayer Cards for Confirmation Candidates** Please visit our display of the Confirmation Candidates located near the entrance of the church. Please take a prayer card from the display and keep all of the candidates in your prayers as they begin at this time a more focused study and deeper meaning of their Catholic faith. As they prepare for their reception of the sacrament of Confirmation on Sunday, April 8th at St. Paul's Cathedral, may we rejoice in their dedication, devotion, and hard work as they prepare to receive the fullness of the Holy Spirit in their lives.

**HOPE FOR HOUSING FOOD CARDS**

Please consider purchasing food cards for the purpose of helping to stop homelessness here in Central Massachusetts. 5% of each card purchased will be donated by the participating grocery chain, while the purchase receives the full value of the card that is purchased. The money raised from this ministry has helped to prevent hundreds of families from being homeless, a situation that no one in our country should have to experience. Last week at Immaculate Conception our parishioners purchased \$265.00 in cards. **Thank you** to those who continue to participate in this very worthy program.

**PRAYER SHAWLS**

We have a few prayer shawls in our possession that we would like to give out to anyone who feels the need of having one. Or, if you know of someone who may be dealing with cancer or any other disease and would benefit from the comfort and peace of a prayer shawl, please speak with Fr. Riley. We thank the Prayer Shawl Group at Our Lady of Good Counsel in West Boylston for making and donating the beautiful work of their shawls to us.

**RETREAT FOR POTENTIAL PRIESTLY CANDIDATES**

Have you thought of a vocation to the Priesthood? Come and learn more. The Diocese of Worcester's annual discernment retreat, directed by Bishop McManus, will be held on March 23 & 24. This retreat begins at 6:00 p.m. on Friday and ends at 6:00 p.m. on Saturday. It is for men high school, college age, and older. The retreat center is only 30 minutes from Worcester at the Immaculate Conception Retreat Center in Putnam, CT. There is no cost, and transportation is provided if needed. Contact Fr. Jim Mazzone at [jmazzone@charter.net](mailto:jmazzone@charter.net), or by phone at 508-340-5788 to sign up.

**TRIP TO ITALY IN SEPTEMBER**

Fr. Donato Infante, Associate Pastor at St. Joseph in Charlton, is leading a pilgrimage to Fatima and Rome from September 21-30 with Deacon Steve Kohut of Our Lady of Czestochowa in Worcester. The trip coincides with the annual diaconate ordination in Rome, at which a Worcester Seminarian, Alfredo Porras, is on track to be ordained. If you are interested in joining or seeing the itinerary, go to the website <http://www.johnpaultours.com/sjcc>.

**OPEN HOUSE**

Notre Dame Academy is holding an Open House on Sunday, March 25, from 2:00-4:00 p.m., for grades 7-12. For more information, visit their website at [www.nda-worc.org](http://www.nda-worc.org).

*From the Pastor continued from the following page*

We know what we have in the joy of our Catholic belief and hope. We have God's truth. All we want is for others to enjoy the same, for God's invitation into his life is for all.

Instead of "The Swoon Theory," we carry within our hearts the incredible joy of "The Resurrection Theory," if you will, thanks to four dudes named Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. They're believable because John witnessed his death, and the rest of them witnessed his life after death. And for this we swoon to God and give thanks.

*Peace, Fr. Riley*

**SACRAMENT OF CONFESSION ON TUESDAY EVENINGS**

For the remainder of the Lenten season, Fr. Riley will offer the Sacrament of Reconciliation each of the next 4 Tuesdays ( March 6, 13, 20, and 27 ) in the Church from 6:30-7:30 p.m.

**PARTNERS IN CHARITY FOR 2018**

Our Parish has now begun the Partners in Charity campaign for 2018. Two weeks ago we kicked off Partners in Charity with our first week of envelope collections, as well as some who have already donated online. For 2018, our Parish goal remains at \$88,500, the same as last year. Ways to make a donation on behalf of Immaculate Conception are: 1) filling out an envelope that can be found in each pew, and either placing it into the collection basket any given Sunday, mailing it to the Parish, or mailing it directly to the Diocese of Worcester at 49 Elm St, Worcester, MA 01609 in care of Partners in Charity. Donations can be made either by check or credit card; 2) going online at [www.partners-charity.net](http://www.partners-charity.net), and follow the easy instructions thereafter, which more parishioners are opting to do for their donation. Donations can be spread out over the course of 10 months to make it easier for all families and individuals in our Parish to give. Please consider doing so. If you have any questions about this year's campaign, please speak with either Bill Stanton or Fr. Riley. Thus far, our Parish has had 59 donors totaling \$35,745.00 dollars, reaching 40% of our Parish goal. Thank you, and we hope to have another successful Partners in Charity campaign this year, as we have in each of the past years. Fr. Riley

**CATECHUMENS AND CANDIDATES**

As a community of faith, please keep in your prayers those who are preparing for the Sacraments of Initiation to be received at the Easter Vigil this year on March 31. We have two adults and four children and youth preparing to receive their respective sacraments on that night. Our responsibility as a community is to pray for the Spirit to continue to touch their hearts as they move closer to the joy of full communion into the Church. Last week we held the First Scrutiny at the 10:00 Mass for one adult (Christine) and two teens (Christabelle & Ramstin). The prayers offered that day were for the protection of their spirits and souls as they draw near to the joy of their Baptism. Please continue to pray for each of them.

**COLLECTION FOR CATHOLIC RELIEF SERVICES**

Envelopes for the Catholic Relief Services for this Sunday can be placed into the first collection basket. This national collection from the U.S. Bishops helps to alleviate child hunger, to help build areas that are war torn, assist refugees in their plight, as well as many other works of mercy.

**READINGS FOR NEXT SUNDAY, MARCH 25th, PASSION SUNDAY**

1st Reading: Isaiah 50:4-7  
 Psalm: 22  
 2nd Reading: Philippians 2:6-11  
 Gospel: Mark 11:1-10  
 Reading of the Passion: Mark 14:1-15:47

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT: 3/11/18**

Sunday Ordinary Income	\$ 3,837.00
Winter Fuel	\$ 1,555.00
Candles	\$ 161.00

## **FROM THE PASTOR**

Part of my Lenten reading has been an interesting book called *The Crucifixion of Jesus: A Forensic Inquiry*. It goes into depth concerning the day Jesus died, addressing scientifically the many factors that began the night before in the Garden that led to our Lord's death. I've come to learn that the condition of sweating blood is called hematidrosis, and is a real possibility for those whose are dealing with extreme anxiety. This tells me two things: first, that Jesus was carrying the weight of the world on his shoulders that evening as he prayed to his Father in the Garden of Gethsemane, and he knew it. His spiritual vision of what was happening in his life at this point was clear and vivid, more than we will ever know. And that, as recorded in Luke's Gospel, it led to "his sweat became like drops of blood" (Lk 22:44), prefiguring what was to come on the Cross.

And second, it tells me my anxiety level over my Pastorship at Immaculate Conception has been much less stressful than our Lord's condition in the Garden that Thursday evening/early Friday morning, since I've never sweat blood. There have been moments where the blood-sweating has been somewhat close, as it is with most Pastors. But reaching such a stage of anxiety hasn't been part of being here at 353 Grove Street. I'm hoping my parishioners do not decide to have a contest to see who can make Fr. Riley sweat blood first, with a free dinner on the line.

As I've gotten further into this book, which has been quite informative, I came across a process called "The Swoon Theory." The Swoon Theory basically says that Jesus really didn't die on the Cross for various reasons that doubters have expressed over the years. For example, one doubter, with no scientific evidence whatsoever to back it up, said that Jesus wasn't really dead on the Cross when he was taken down, but was instead in a coma. And after he was laid in the tomb, Jesus was resuscitated by prearranged friends who first scared the guards off and opened the tomb for him. This is someone's real point of view, even though it reads like a fairy tale, which it is.

Another challenge to the Gospel story of Jesus' death that was proposed by a scientist says that heavy fumes from an impending earthquake caused respiratory difficulties with Christ, rendering him unconscious, leaving others to presume that He was dead. And one more example, just in the last 25 years, postulates that Jesus was rendered unconscious on the Cross with snake poison, and that he managed to escape from the tomb. There are many more examples that fall into 'The Swoon Theory,' trying to swoon believers into the absurd belief that Jesus didn't die, wasn't raised by the glory of God the Father, and didn't ascend to heaven in the presence of his Apostles.

One thing The Swoon Theory teaches me is this; if you're not going to believe this amazing story of God's love for us, securing our redemption by opening our future graves, then don't come up with a story that goes beyond the ridiculous. At least make it sound believable rather than a fairy tale. Snake poison? C'mon!

As I've said before in a homily or two over the years, to be a Christian is to place our faith in some pretty incredible beliefs that are fundamental to our faith. The list is long, beginning with God becoming human, and moving on from there. And to believe that God died for us in a human body and was raised to life after death goes far beyond the world of human understanding. It comes down to pure faith, and trusting with our whole being that our loving God has the fullness of human life ready for us after we depart from this very short life of time and space. The Swoon Theory and all it entails is for those who have no or little faith, refusing the belief that God is not limited to human actions, for God is spirit. I truly feel sorrow for folks who marry themselves to such false testaments. Don't be swooned by the swooners.

*Continued on Previous Page*

**THIS WEEK AT IMMACULATE CONCEPTION**

Sat.	Mar 17	2:45 PM 4:00 PM	Confession Mass
Sun.	Mar 18	7:30 AM 10:00 AM	Mass Mass
Mon.	Mar 19	8:30 AM 9:00 AM	Rosary Mass
Tues.	Mar 20	8:30 AM 9:00 AM 6:30 PM	Rosary Mass <i>Confession</i>
Wed.	Mar 21	8:30 AM 9:00 AM	Rosary Mass
Thurs.	Mar 22	7:30 AM 8:00 AM	Rosary Mass
Fri.	Mar 23	5:30 PM 6:30 PM	<i>Holy Hour</i> <i>Stations of the Cross</i>
Sat.	Mar 24	2:45 PM 4:00 PM	Confession Mass
Sun.	Mar 25	7:30 AM 10:00 AM	Mass Mass

**HOMEMAKERS & HOME HEALTH AIDES NEEDED!**

Catholic Charities Worcester County's Homecare Services program is looking for individuals to provide services to our clients in the Blackstone Valley, Athol, Greenfield and Leominster areas. For more information, go to [ccworc.org/2018/03/position-available-homemaker-home-health-aide/](http://ccworc.org/2018/03/position-available-homemaker-home-health-aide/). An Open House / Job Fair will take place on Saturday, March 24 from 9am – Noon at 9 Spring Street in Whitinsville. Interested people will be able to fill out an application, drop off a resume and interview on the spot. Catholic Charities offers a flexible schedule, certification program, paid mileage and sick time for all employees.

**YES, WE WOULD LIKE TO REGISTER  
AT IMMACULATE CONCEPTION!!**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City  
& Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Envelopes yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_

Number of People in Household \_\_\_\_\_

**PLEASE, TEAR THIS OFF AND PLACE IN THE  
COLLECTION BASKET! THANK YOU!**