

HEART TO HEART

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N E W S L E T T E R

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SAINT JOSEPH AND SILENCE

A LOOK AT THE SILENT SAINT



Triumphal Arch. Saint Mary Major Basilica. Rome, Italy

We are now deep in the season of Lent, preparing for the day that Christ returns in triumphant splendor. For some, Lent is a dark season that focuses on oppressive tones. It is easy to forget that Lent exists to prepare us for the coming glory of God. While Lent is a time of reflection, it is also a time to remember, not only our sins, but the life we have in the Church. We are called to be great lovers of Christ and His Church, but so often we do not understand what that means or even how to become a saint. Every story of the great saints seems to be riddled with heroic deeds or piety that feels inaccessible to us. However, one saint who we often invoke, but little understand, provides a solid footing and example for us during Lent.

While the Gospels do not record any words Saint Joseph might have spoken, the vacuum of silence allows us a particular insight into his character. Contemplative and obedient, Saint Joseph was a man possessed of unwavering faith and utmost trust in God's providence. Sacred Scripture has left us with the most enduring traits of Saint Joseph. He was a "righteous and just" man (Matthew 1:18).

Upon learning that Mary, to whom he was betrothed, was pregnant, Saint Joseph sought a quiet and dignified divorce out of concern for her safety. It was not until the Angel of the Lord came to him and explained who Mary was carrying in her womb that Joseph immediately took her as his wife.

When the Angel again appeared to Joseph in a dream to warn him of impending danger to his wife and newly adopted son, he was quick to abandon family, friends, and his home for the sake of their safety. He fled west with his new family to Egypt. It was not until the Angel appeared to Joseph again that he knew it was safe to return.

Tradition tells us that Saint Joseph was a skilled carpenter and builder, but we know that he was not a wealthy man. When he took Jesus to the Temple to be circumcised and Mary to be purified, which we celebrate as Candlemas on February 2nd every year, Joseph offered only two turtledoves as a sacrifice. This sacrifice was usually reserved for those that could not afford the lamb. Tradition tells us, too, that Joseph taught Jesus his trade and raised him as a caring foster father.

While the Gospel has not preserved any of Saint Joseph's words, we can be sure of his unwavering devotion to his family and the word of God. Saint Joseph carried out his existence in silence - contemplating, we can be sure, the work and mysteries of the Lord he must have witnessed every day.

Pope Francis, in his Apostolic Letter *Patris Corde*, which celebrates the 150th anniversary of Saint Joseph as patron of the Universal Church, describes Saint Joseph as a "a shadow of the heavenly Father, who 'makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust' (Mt 5:45).'" While some saints implore us to "be imitators of me" or astound us with their eloquence, Saint Joseph entralls us in his simple, yet beautiful silence.

The foster-father of Jesus reminds us that our homes and parishes, and even our church, are not built on wealth and power, but on humble service. Faith, fidelity, and simplicity are at the root of Saint Joseph's faith and create a model worthy of imitation, not just for men, but for every member of the universal church.

St John Paul II's Apostolic Exhortation of 1989, *Redemptoris Custos* (Guardian of the Redeemer), says that Saint Joseph's "fatherhood is expressed concretely in 'his having made his life a service...a total gift of self.'"

As we delve deeper and deeper into the penitential season of Lent and prepare for the coming of Christ, what better of example of faith can we find than Saint Joseph? The saints help all the faithful "to strive for the holiness and the perfection of their particular state of life" (Second Vatican Council). Their lives are concrete proof that it is possible to put the Gospel into practice. Saint Joseph, in particular, helps us to traverse through these 40 days with a simple and bold faith, eagerly awaiting the coming of his Son during Easter.

The Feast of Saint Joseph is on March 19th this year. Please participate in this important feast day by attending Mass.





TOWARD THE HEAVENS

INCENSE AND THE MASS

On many feast days, holy days, or even our high mass on Sunday mornings at 9:00 AM, you may see an altar server carrying incense into the sanctuary. To some, this may seem like a strange practice. Why would we burn incense during a Mass and what purpose does it serve?

In the ancient world, incense was incredibly common. Herodotus, the Greek “Father of History,” wrote that it was common among cultures of the both the East and the West, being used in Assyria, Egypt, Greece, and religious practices of Judaism. In Exodus, the Lord instructed Moses to construct a magnificent altar for the express purpose of burning incense. This altar with burning incense was placed before the entrance to the tent which housed the Ark of the Covenant, which mirrors our use of incense during the Mass.

We do not know when exactly Christians began using incense, but we can safely assume that it was adopted early on from Judaism, Greeks, and Romans. As early as the 5th century, the liturgies called for its usage. As the Mass became more systematized through the centuries, we see incense mentioned more often. By the 12th and 13th century, the various styles and rites of the Mass began to use incense in much the same way that we do today.

The purpose of incensing and the symbolic value of the smoke is that of purification and sanctification. For example, in the Eastern Rites at the beginning of Mass, the altar and sanctuary area were incensed while Psalm 50, the "Miserere," was chanted invoking the mercy of God. The smoke symbolizes the prayers of the faithful drifting up to heaven: the Psalmist prays, "Let my prayer come like incense before you; the lifting up of my hands, like the evening sacrifice" (Psalm 141).

Incense helps us to envision heaven. The Book of Revelation describes incense in the following way: "Another angel came in holding a censer of gold. He took his place at the altar of incense and was given large amounts of incense to deposit on the altar of gold in front of the throne, together with the prayers of all God's holy ones. From the angel's hand, the smoke of the incense went up before God, and with it the prayers of God's people."



Seminarian Collins Hess during the consecration.



Father John incensing the Altar during Mass

In the General Instruction of the Roman Missal incense may be used during the entrance procession; at the beginning of Mass, to incense the altar; at the procession and proclamation of the Gospel; at the offertory, to incense the offerings, altar, priest and people; and at the elevation of the Sacred Host and chalice of Precious Blood after the consecration. The priest may also incense the Crucifix and the Paschal Candle. During funeral Masses, the priest at the final commendation may incense the coffin, both as a sign of honor to the body of the deceased which became the temple of the Holy Spirit at Baptism and as a sign of the faithful's prayers for the deceased rising to God.

The usage of incense adds a sense of solemnity and mystery to the Mass. The visual imagery of the smoke and the smell remind us of the transcendence of the Mass which links heaven with earth, and allow us to enter into the presence of God.

THE WORK OF BEES AND OF YOUR SERVANTS' HANDS

*THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND
THE HONEYBEE*



"The bee," says Ecclesiasticus (11:3), "is small among flying things, but her fruit hath the chiefest sweetness." Beekeeping is an ancient tradition, which predates the Catholic Church by centuries. It came to Greece as early as 1500 BC and Italy in the 700s BC, both cultures learning from Egyptians, who had been practicing beekeeping since at least 4500 BC.

Catholic patrons of the apiary include Sts. Benedict, Ambrose, Valentine, Abigail, Dominic, David, and Bernard of Clairvaux, as well as many others. During one of his Easter Vigil homilies, Pope Benedict XVI wrote, "The cooperation of the living community of believers in the Church in some way resembles the activity of bees. It builds up the community of light."

By the 600s AD, Beekeeping had become an integral part of monastic life. The honey could be used for medical purposes, as food, and most importantly, for the making of mead and wax.

Bees have been seen to symbolize both the Eucharist and the Christian life. In Psalm 81 we are told, "but you would be fed with the finest of wheat; with honey from the rock I would satisfy you." Our work as Christians is meant to resemble the work of bees in the hive. We each have our duties and tasks, and we are meant to carry out our work to the best of our ability. We will be nourished by the fruit of our labors and work, and that sweetest reward: the Eucharist.

As we approach Easter and the Vigil Mass, the most revered night of the liturgical year, it is necessary to note that we would not have crucial elements of the Mass were it not for the bees. The Paschal candle, which is blessed during the Easter Vigil, is made of beeswax. The lighting of this candle, the first light of the Vigil, symbolizes the coming light of Christ, the bringing of life and the dispelling of death. Bees are an integral part of the process and symbolism, inextricably linking themselves with our Christian traditions.

At Sacred Heart, we have tried to keep bees in the past. We began with one hive and sought to grow the apiary from there. This year, we are working towards building a larger apiary, beginning with three full nucleus hives and expanding from there.



At this point, you may be asking yourself, "why would we bother keeping bees?" Just as monks kept bees for their medicinal properties and link to the Christian life, so will we.

This is a new ministry and perhaps a little more "hands on" than many are willing to try. However, beekeeping is an extraordinarily rewarding practice and worthy of the time it is given.

If you, or anyone else in your family is interested in learning more about bees and beekeeping, please contact the church office to get involved.

In his address to beekeepers on World Bee Day, Pope Pius XII had this to say: "As for you, beloved sons, who while bending over your beehives perform with all care the most varied and delicate work for your bees, let your spirits rise in mystic flight to experience the kindness of God, to taste the sweetness of His word and His law (Ps. 18:11; 118: 103), to contemplate the divine light symbolized by the burning flame of the candle, product of the mother bee, as the Church sings in her admirable liturgy of Holy Saturday: *Alitur enim liquantibus ceris, quas in substantiam pretiosae hujus lampadis apis mater eduxit.*" (For it is nourished by the melting wax, which the mother bee produced for the substance of this precious light.)

THE TRIDUUM

THE REV. JOHN G. MCDONALD

The last three days of Holy Week make up what Catholics call the “Triduum.” The word is a Latin word signifying “three days” and is the most powerful and intense liturgical season of the Sacred Year. The three days that make up the Sacred Triduum are: Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday, culminating in the Great Vigil of Easter. These three days present to us anew the saving mystery of Our Lord’s passion, death, and resurrection. It is the extended moment in which Jesus accomplished our salvation and gave us every grace to live with Him in eternity.

On Holy Thursday night we celebrate the “Cena Domini” the Mass of the Lord’s Supper. It is the solemn memorial of Our Lord’s institution of the Eucharist and the memorial of His institution of the Priesthood. Those two concepts are intimately connected as the Lord celebrated the Last Supper in the company of His apostles and gave it to them as a perpetual sacrifice to be repeated “in memory of Him.” The Mass of the Lord’s Supper has three unique things that take place: 1. The reception of the Holy Oils from the Cathedral, 2. The Washing of the Feet, and 3. The solemn reposition of the Most Blessed Sacrament in a shrine until the Great Vigil of Easter.

Reception of Holy Oils marks our intimate connection with our bishop, and the three Holy Oils are: the oil of Catechumens, the Oil of the sick, and the Sacred Chrism. These oils are used in the sacraments of Baptism, Anointing of the Sick, and Confirmation. The Washing of the Feet recalls Christ’s command to “serve and not be served,” which he gave to his apostles immediately after the Last Supper. This moment is recounted for us in John’s Gospel. Then, at the end of the Mass, the Priest takes the Blessed Sacrament in procession around the interior of the church and reposes the Sacrament in a special Shrine to mark the beginning of the Passion of our Lord. We recall in Matthew’s Gospel the words of our Lord after the Last Supper in the Garden of Gethsemane: “Get up, Let us go, my betrayer is at hand.”

Good Friday is the Day we recall solemnly Our Lord’s Passion and Death on the Cross. It is the only day of the year when Mass is not celebrated. We enter the Church on Good Friday and see that the altar is stripped of all its decorations, there are no candles lit, and often, in many parishes, the statues and crucifixes are veiled. This day we focus on our Lord’s suffering for our salvation. It is a day of universal fast and abstinence from meat. It is common throughout the world for the faithful to gather in celebration of the “Via Crucis” or the “Way of the Cross.” Often this is celebrated with a live re-enacting of the fourteen Stations of the Cross, and often this is held at 3pm, the moment of Our Lord’s death on the Cross.



In the evening of Good Friday is celebrated the Liturgy of the Lord's Passion. This is not a Mass, but rather a Liturgy that includes the reading of the Passion narrative, the Veneration of the Holy Cross, and the reception of Holy Communion previously consecrated at the Holy Thursday Mass of the Lord's Supper. At the very beginning of the Liturgy the Priest makes a solemn prostration on the floor in atonement for his sins and for the sins of the whole community. At the end of the liturgy, everyone departs in silence to meditate on the Lord Passion and await the celebration of the Great Vigil of Easter.

The great Vigil of Easter occurs in the night of Holy Saturday. During the day, silence reigns as Our Lord laid in the tomb on the Sabbath day. Then in the darkness, the first action of the Mass is to consecrate a holy fire and bless the new Paschal Candle for that year. Then, that holy light is carried into the dark church where the faithful are waiting with their own unlit candles. Once the "Light of Christ" has come into the middle of the assembly, the Paschal Candle is lowered and the faithful take the Light of Christ from it and pass it along to others, as Christians are meant to do in their lives.

The Great Vigil of Easter is marked by the singing of the "Exultet" which is an ancient hymn in praise of the Light of Christ. Then, the Liturgy of the Word is characterized by tracing the love of God in preparing our salvation from the beginning of time to the moment of the Resurrection. Perhaps the most notable difference in the Great Vigil of Easter is the Baptism and Confirmation of those who are catechumens, who are typically adult converts to the Catholic faith. It can also happen that infants are also baptized at the Easter Vigil. In order to do that, the priest blesses the water of the baptismal font by placing the paschal candle in the water.

With that action, the Light of Christ consecrates the waters of baptism, just as when Jesus himself stepped into the Jordan river to be baptized by John. The holy water of the Easter vigil is known as "lustral water" because it is water that contains the "Light of Christ."

After the baptisms of the catechumens, the whole congregation is asked to renew their baptismal promises with a profession of faith and rejection of evil. Then, all are sprinkled with the Easter water, and the liturgy moves to the moment of confirmation of the newly baptized. Through the laying on of hands, invocation of the Holy Spirit, and anointing with the Sacred Chrism, the newly baptized are fully received into the Catholic faith and await their first Eucharist.

The Mass continues from that point in the normal way, and those newly baptized and confirmed approach the altar to receive the Holy Eucharist for the first time as a sign of their full communion.

The Sacred Triduum is a powerful time, and afterwards come fifty days of the Easter season so that we can unpack the graces and experiences we had during the celebration of the solemn liturgies. It is an important time of the year to meditate on the Christian mystery and determine how one will serve the Body of Christ in the Church. This aspect is of utmost importance because it is never enough just to receive sacramental grace, we must return to God with our own talents and gifts what he has bestowed on us with His love. We recall the words of scripture: "All things come from you O Lord, and of your own have we given you." (1 Chron. 29:14)





TOSSED AND FOUND: A NEW ANNUAL EVENT



Sacred Heart of Jesus Catholic Church hosted its first annual “Tossed and Found Yard sale” on February 2nd and 3rd this year. Signs and balloons greeted the many parishioners and community members who attended. The gym held a plethora of keepsakes, crystal, china, pictures, lines, golf clubs, snow skis, jewelry, furniture, and more. There was something for everyone, including food provided by the Spanish Bereavement Committee. We are happy to report that \$10,400 was made. The entirety has been deposited to the Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish Life Center Building Fund.

The success of the yard sale would not have been possible without the donations that were made by YOU, our parishioners. Thank you for your generosity. Many thanks, also, to those who helped set up, sort, and walked the aisles helping customers.

Next year’s yard sale is slated for January 31st and February 1st, 2025. It will be a full two day sale. Mark your calendars now!

Collections will be done a little differently for our 2025 sale. We will have a once a month drop-off at Mountain View Storage on HWY 78 East beginning April 18, 2024 through November. The drop off dates will be printed in the bulletin prior to the date. If you have any items you would like to drop off at the unit, please call Laura at the parish office (256-237-3011). Someone will meet you at the storage unit to help unload your treasures on the appointed day. There will be no drop off in December. Beginning January 16, 2025 items will be dropped off at the Parish Life Center. No items will be accepted after January 29th, 2025.

Unfortunately, we will be unable to accept the following items next year: Books, VHS tapes, cassette tapes, clothing, DVDs, 8 track tapes, analog TVs.

We are eagerly looking forward to next years sale!

FOR THEY WILL BE FED

KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS FISH FRYs

Each year, the Knights of Columbus (Council 3227, Anniston) go to work frying fish for Lent. Every Friday during this penitential season, the Knights arrive early and begin setting up tables and chairs, peeling potatoes, slicing cabbage, and battering fish for the dinner to come.

This is the second year that the Knights have served fish out of the gymnasium, but hardly a new endeavor. For years, the Knights worked out of their old building in downtown Anniston.

Last year, though, after the sell of their old building and relocating to the church campus, the number of fish plates sold more than doubled.

The Knights of Columbus are an active group at Sacred Heart. They participate in liturgies, fundraise for charitable causes, and are always willing to help out when they can.

Originally founded in 1882 by Father Michael McGivney, the Knights were created as a mutual benefit society for working class and immigrant catholic men in the United States. Aside from its insurance benefits, the Knights of Columbus Charter states that it exists to “promote such social and intellectual intercourse among its members as shall be desirable and proper.”

For more information about the Knights of Columbus at Sacred Heart (Council 3227), please speak to a Knight after Mass or call the church office. Fish Fry’s are every Friday during Lent beginning at 5:30. Parishioners are welcome to attend Stations of the Cross during that time as well, and help themselves to great dinner afterwards!



KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS
COUNCIL 3227

FISH FRY

FRIDAYS DURING LENT





WHY FISH ON FRIDAY?

Abstaining has long been a practice of many of the world's religion. Christians, in particular, have been fasting and abstaining from the outset of the faith, borrowing from other traditions of the Mediterranean. In Genesis, we are told that everything the Lord made is good. In Mark, Jesus told us that nothing we eat will make us good or evil. So, we do we abstain from meat on Fridays?

When tempted in the desert, the Lord Jesus Christ recalls the lessons from Deuteronomy: "One does not live by bread alone but by every word of the Lord." For Catholics, fasting is one that we are able to live this reality. By fasting, we are able to participate in a shared sacrifice with other members of the faith from all over the world.

Jesus asks us to fast, not simply as a penance, but as a way to be near to God. But, why only abstain from meat and eat fish?

Friday is a particularly important day for Christians. This is the day that Christ died, so abstaining from the sacrifice and consumption of warm-blooded creatures seems appropriate. Friday, the sixth day in the order of Creation found in Genesis, was also the day that God created animals, so abstaining from meat is a symbolic "stay of execution" for cows, pigs, and sheep—just as the cross saves us from eternal death.

Our fast from meat on Fridays is not only a way to share in a small sacrifice, but a way for all of us to share in the sacrifice of Christ on the cross.

MARRIAGE AND FAMILY MOVEMENT



Promoting Christ-centered marriage and family life; to help individuals and their families to live the Christian faith in everyday life; and to improve society through actions of love, service, education and example

The Christian Family Movement is a nationwide movement of parish small groups, along with their families, who meet in each other's homes or in the parish life center to strengthen Christian values and encourage one another to in their faith through community. CFM action groups contain five to seven families and the adults meet once or twice monthly.

At meetings, the members of the action groups practice the Observe-Judge-Act method, usually guided by the national standards set forth by the Christian Family Movement. The members discuss what they have observed in their family or neighborhood and then judge what they have observed by the standards of the life and teachings of Jesus. After these discussions, they commit to positively working in their communities, in either big or small ways. This method has led to action in such areas as "foster-parenting, prison ministry, refugee sponsorship, religious education, and couple counseling."

While currently available in the Hispanic community, the Christian Family Movement will soon be coming to the English community, as well. For more information, please contact the church office at 256-237-3011

*Jesus, Mary and Joseph,
in you we contemplate the splendor of true love; to you we turn with trust.
Holy Family of Nazareth, grant that our families too
may be places of communion and prayer, authentic schools of the Gospel
and small domestic churches. Holy Family of Nazareth,
may families never again experience violence, rejection and division;
may all who have been hurt or scandalized find ready comfort and healing.
Holy Family of Nazareth, make us once more mindful
of the sacredness and inviolability of the family, and its beauty in God's plan.
Jesus, Mary and Joseph, Graciously hear our prayer.*

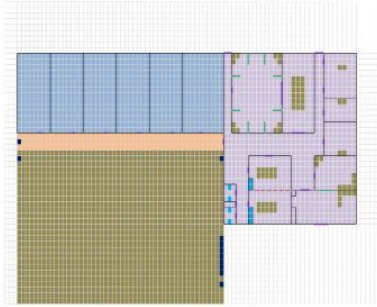
Amen.

Pope Francis, Amoris Laetitia, 325

IMMACULATE HEART OF MARY PARISH LIFE CENTER AND ADMINISTRATIVE WING

What a difference a year can make.

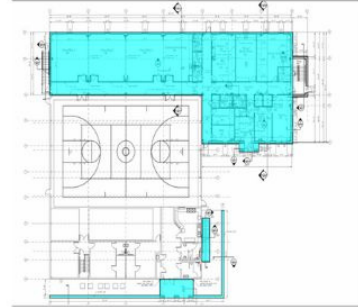
LAURA PRATT



March, 2022



March, 2023



January, 2023

Ground Breaking Blessing with Bishop Rica, May 10, 2023





Work began quickly on the building site. Our first hurdle to overcome was water. We encountered three under ground springs. Not a total surprise, as we are located on Golden Springs Rd.



The administrative wing has two safe rooms in case of tornados or severe weather



We began the process of moving into our new offices in January, 2024.





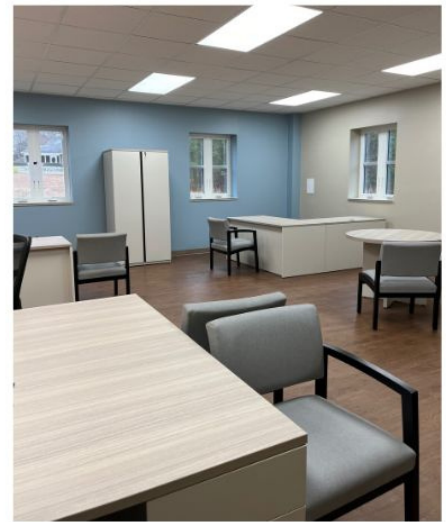
The new entrance to the activity center and new administrative wing and classrooms.



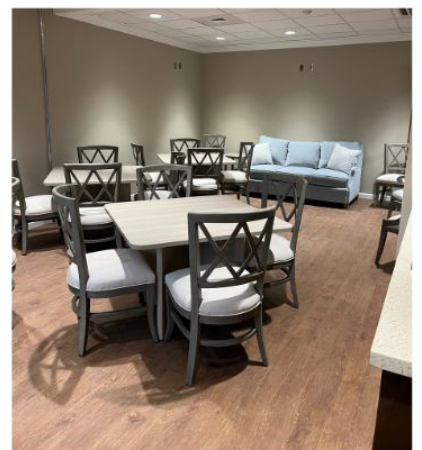
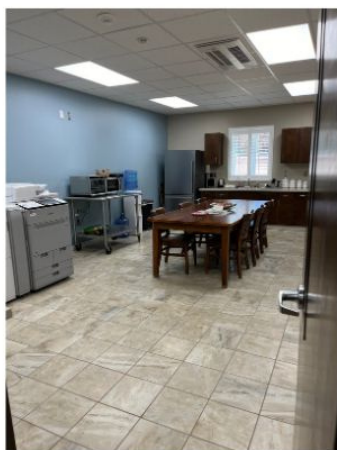
Reception area.



Office Manager



Staff Offices



We would like to give special thanks to all of our parishioners who helped make this undertaking possible!

Please remember that the work is not done: As work on the parish life center comes to a close, we are moving into a period of debt reduction. All pledges made toward the project and the building fund will now be directed toward the note on the building. Without the generous help of our parishioners, none of this work would have been achieved.

PARISH UPDATES AND DATES TO REMEMBER

- 7 Last Words of Christ - Choir Special
 - Sunday, March 24th @ 6:00 PM
- Holy Week
 - Holy Thursday (March 28th) @ 6:30 PM
 - Good Friday (March 29th) @ 6:30 PM
- Easter Vigil (March 30th)
 - Mass begins @ 8:30 PM
- Easter Sunday (March 31st)
 - Masses at 9:00 AM, 11:00 AM, and 1:00 PM
- Feast of the Sacred Heart
 - Mass (Friday, June 7th) at 6:30 PM
 - Parish Festival (Saturday, June 8th) at 9:00 AM
- The new Columbarium is currently being installed. If you or anyone you know is interested in purchasing a niche, please call or come by the church office to pick up an information packet.
- Remember to sign up for to be an adorer! The church is open during the day from 7:00 AM - 5:00 PM and evening adoration is possible with the use of a door code. If you are interested, please contact the church office.
- A new sign is currently being installed at the 431 bypass entrance.
- Please consider joining the grass cutting ministry and/or the garden guild! New members are always welcome and there is plenty of work to go around.

And Jesus raised his eyes and said,
"Father, I thank you for hearing me.
I know that you always hear me;
but because of the crowd here I have
said this,
that they may believe that you sent
me."

And when he had said this,
He cried out in a loud voice,
"Lazarus, come out!"
The dead man came out,
tied hand and foot with burial bands,
and his face was wrapped in a cloth.
So Jesus said to them,
"Untie him and let him go."

John 11: 41-44



THE RAISING OF LAZARUS.
1609. CARAVAGGIO.
MUSEO REGIONALE, MESSINA

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