



FEBRUARY 12, 2023



# SAINT MICHAEL

## ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

4 CHURCH STREET • NETCONG, NJ 07857

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### SCHEDULE OF MASSES

**Saturday:** 5:00 pm

**Sunday:** 7:00, 9:30, 11:30 am *(in English)*

**Misa en Español todos los Domingos:** 1:30 pm

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### WEEKDAYS

**Weekdays:** 10:00 am

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### SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION

**Saturday:** 4:00 - 4:30 pm

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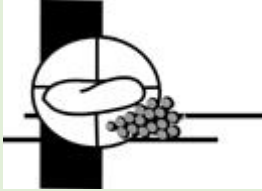
**Phone:** 973-347-0032

**Website:** [www.stmichaelnetcong.org](http://www.stmichaelnetcong.org)

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*Welcome to our Church*

**The Church of Saint Michael**  
**February 12, 2023**  
**The Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time**



Please remember in your prayers those who have died: Keith McHale

Please remember in your prayers the sick of our parish: May Lee, Special Intention, Lucy Pintos, Karlene Yapple, Joseph Conklin, Marysia Hancock, Bev Couter, Kathy Conklin, Charlie Raffay, Beth Couter, George Trapp, Special Intention

**Weekly Memorial**  
 Altar Bread & Wine: Marie G. Koert

**Readings for the week**

**Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time**

**Sunday**

Sir 15:15-20; 1 Cor 2:6-10; Mt 5:17-37 or  
 5:20-22a, 27-28, 33-34a, 37

**Monday**

Gn 4:1-15, 25; Mk 8:11-13

**Tuesday**

Gn 6:5-8, 7:1-5, 10; Mk 8:14-21

**Wednesday**

Gn 8:6-13, 20-22; Mk 8:22-26

**Thursday**

Gn 9:1-13; Mk 8:27-33

**Friday**

Gn 11:1-9; Mk 8:34—9:1

**Saturday**

Heb 11:1-7; Mk 9:2-13

**Mass Intentions for the Week**

**Saturday, February 11, 2023**

10am Special Intention

5pm Louis Castaldi, Emelio Rea Jr.

**Sunday, February 12, 2023**

7am Joyce Benvenuto

9:30am Ronald E. Costanzo

11:30am Dominic, Nunziatta & Chet Togno

1:30pm Special Intention

**Monday, February 13, 2023**

10am Carol Baranik, Andrew Baranik

**Tuesday, February 14, 2023**

10am Marie G. Koert

**Wednesday, February 15, 2023**

10am Sherry Lopez

**Thursday, February 16, 2023**

10am Gary Hoagland

**Friday, February 17, 2023**

10am Sheila Kelly, Special Intention

**Saturday, February 18, 2023**

10am Jennifer & Rich Szabo

5pm John Bauer, Edward Kern

**Sunday, February 19, 2023**

7am Richie DiRenzo

9:30am Special Intention

11:30am Terry Castaldi

1:30pm Intention of Sebastian Navarrete

**TITHING – GOD'S PLAN FOR GIVING ST. MICHAEL'S HAS BEEN A TITHING PARISH SINCE 1988.**

Sunday, February 5, 2023	\$5,538.00
WeShare	\$2,245.50
Repair & Renovation	\$2,192.00
WeShare R & R	\$2,245.50

## From Deacon John

Homily ~ Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time

### **Salt and light**

We are told that we are “salt and light” and we are then given our obligation to use the salt and light for its intended purpose. Salt without flavor is worthless, and the light needs to overcome the darkness. In our world today many people prefer to hide in the darkness, and reject the seasonings of truth and faith which we offer them. The prophet Isaiah tells us “if we remove from our midst oppression, false accusation and malicious speech...then light shall rise for you in the darkness and gloom shall become for you like midday.” Yet in our midst these days’ things seem to be a little off kilter. Truth has been blurred by relativism and many who prefer to dwell in the darkness are opposed to the light. The question we face today is, do I have the courage to be salt and light in a world that prefers gloom and darkness?

A major problem we face these days is freedom of religion, as opposed to freedom of worship. Freedom of worship means I am free to worship in church on Sunday, whereas freedom of religion enables me to live out my faith in my life and in the public square with the full protection of the law. I can allow my conscience to guide me in how I do my job and live my life. Unfortunately, freedom of religion is under attack by both the culture and the government. There are many laws and government policies that go against our core beliefs.

Am I willing to stand up for my faith in such a hostile culture?

One such man standing up for his faith was Mark Houck, a Catholic father of seven children. On the 13<sup>th</sup> of October, the F.B.I. raided his home with a SWAT team with guns drawn. His alleged crime, an altercation while he was praying outside planned-parenthood where an “escort” from the facility was verbally abusing his teenage son. He intervened and pushed the man away from his son. He was recently on trial in Federal court and was threatened with up to eleven years in prison! In my many years of praying in front of planned- parenthood, I have encountered many verbally and physically abusive people. However I would have never imagined that the F.B.I. would target someone like me. Thanks be to God the jury had more common sense than the justice department and he was acquitted earlier this week. It is a sad state of affairs when people are being forced to choose between following their conscience or losing

their job, or, like Mark Houck, possibly their freedom. Meanwhile, the multiple attacks on pro-life pregnancy centers and Catholic Churches, since the Dobbs decision, have gone unnoticed by the mainstream media and ignored by the justice department. This is certainly not the world I grew up in and I see the negative influence the current culture is having on my own grown children and grandchildren. We need to be counter cultural and remind them of the hope, joy and love that Jesus Christ offers us and not the empty promises of worldly things.

Jesus never said it was going to be easy to follow Him. In today’s Gospel He challenges us to be that salt and light in spite of the cost.

## From Deacon Russ

Salt of the Earth:

Homily on Matthew 5:13-16

5th Sunday of Ordinary Time: Cycle A

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Today's gospel reading reminds us of the calling that we, as followers of Jesus, have to be the "salt of the earth" and the "light of the world". These powerful words from Jesus invite us to reflect on what it means to live a life that honors and glorifies God, and how we can use our gifts and talents to bring goodness and hope to the world around us.

When Jesus says that we are the "salt of the earth", he is emphasizing the importance of having a positive influence in our communities.

Salt brings flavor and preserves food, we are called to do the same in the world around us. This means that our lives should be characterized by goodness, kindness, compassion, and love. By living this way, we are able to bring hope and light to others, and help make the world a better place. Be careful, salt can also bring bitterness. Our actions and words can have a negative impact on those around us. We must be mindful of the influence that we have, and strive to always bring positivity and hope to all.

Similarly, when Jesus says that we are the "light of the world", he is calling us to be a shining example of what it means to live a life dedicated to God. Just as a light illuminates the darkness, we are called to shine a light of truth and hope in the world, so that others

may see and be drawn to God's love and grace. However, like salt, light can also be blinding or even painful and have a negative impact on those around us if the light is not rooted in love and compassion.

As Christians, we have a unique and powerful calling to be the "salt of the earth" and the "light of the world". Let us use the gifts and talents that God has given us to bring hope, love, and light to the world, and let us live our lives in such a way that others may see the glory of God and be inspired to follow Him. May we always be mindful of the impact that our actions have and may we always strive to be a positive influence in the world. Amen.

So how was that homily? Please be honest. How many of you zoned out in the first minute and began to plan out next week's to-do list? That was not my homily. That was a homily written by an Artificial Intelligence program called openai chatGPT. You may or may not have heard about it. It is a free online application that has the academic world in a tizzy with anyone being able to enter a few key phrases and within one minute the Artificial Intelligence produces what you ask for. In this case, around 45 seconds, and that even included a request to further refine the homily to include how salt and light can both be good and bad. Why did I do this? To be honest, I wanted to see what all the fuss was about and while I was impressed at first, upon deeper reflection, the chatGPT homily while direct, easy to follow, and true to our faith, but it was essentially boring and very cliché, similar to how many of us might be living our lives as Catholic Christians, not fully sincere, lacking faith, and lacking a true purpose. We may think we are getting away with it, but the ultimate judge of our sincerity, God, knows differently. Are we just giving lip service to our faith and picking out what we want to follow or are we following all that Jesus wants and requires us to? This is very hard, but being a Catholic is hard and there are no true shortcuts. None!

We must be better at being the salt of the earth and the light of the world. If salt is needed then the world is rotten and decaying for salt is a preservative. Think of ways that we can do that. While there is a lot of rottenness in the world, there is more good, but just like a loaf of bread, all it takes is one bad spot, not preserved to show some mold, and the entire loaf gets thrown away. Our actions must overtake that one spot before it destroys the loaf.

During this past week, whether it was at work, at school, or out and about, can we think of a situation where our actions preserved the goodness of the

world, or are we more likely to recall that we helped spread the rottenness. Did we spread rumors, talk about someone in a bad way, or make our lives better at the expense of others? In our actions today, how can we make one person's life better?

Salt also makes one thirsty. We need to create a thirst in others for what we believe in and show others our faith through our actions and make them desire a thirst for Jesus. As Saint Francis of Assisi was purported to have said, "Preach the gospel at all times and if necessary, use words."

Moving on to light, we have to be a more honest and truthful light for the world. Light does not change a room: it enables us to see what is in it. It helps us appreciate what is good and beautiful, just as it facilitates avoiding the hazards and dangers that are hidden by darkness. We are all children of the light and our lives are illumined by Jesus, the light of the world (John 8:12) and we must act that way. Focus on guiding others by our light, but guide others in the true direction that God would desire. If we can think back to the Easter Vigil service, where the Church is in darkness, and the newly blessed Easter Candle enters the church, that one little flame dispels the darkness and exposes for all to see what is really in the room. Just as the world is decaying and in need of salt, the world is in darkness and in great need of light. This light must be the virtues of Christ, His teachings and it has to be a beacon for others to follow Him.

The salt and candle is now in our possession. We can cheat our way through and pretend to be the true salt and light, or we can really be that salt and light. I really think that a good number of you, after I finished that first homily, knew that I put little effort into the message. God sure knew, and God also knows if we are being honest and true to His Commands in all that we do. Jesus knows what is really in our hearts unlike Artificial Intelligence. There are a lot of sodium substitutes along with artificial lights out there. Many times they are hard to distinguish from the real ones. Do not add to those fake sources and just as important, do not think that you will fool God. Do not become an artificial christian but rather a true Christian who is a true inspiration. At some point, with Artificial Intelligence we have to draw the line of keeping the human in humanity and in the same way we have to keep Christ in Christianity.

Go and be the honest salt and the light. No cheating. Maybe Artificial Intelligence and chatGPT does serve a useful purpose, that first homily was only two



minutes. Sorry. I will program myself a bit better for the next time.

## **FAITH FORMATION**

### **Calendar Reminders:**

Sessions resume this week for Levels 1-6 and Confirmation I

**Confirmation I, II and NET:** signed Mass sheets are due at the end of every month! Please hand in your January sheets no later than this week.

**Confirmation II:** RETREAT is 2/18 at Sacred Heart Center in Newton. Please see email with details and directions. Please arrive by 9:45 am in Newton. Remember, class sessions start promptly at 10:15 am in the school. Arrive 5 min. early as the door will be closed for safety.

### **Confirmation II and NET:**

- Sponsor Paperwork must be returned! Please hand in blue info form AND signed Sponsor form **TOGETHER**. (NOTE- the Pastor of the prospective sponsor must sign and seal the Sponsor Commitment form! Sponsor is responsible for bringing it to their Pastor).



**“Souper-Bowl’ Food Pantry Project:** Our food pantry is in need of donations! Especially during winter time, soup is greatly appreciated.

Children are asked to bring in a can of soup on Super Bowl Sunday this year, Feb. 12. All donations will be greatly appreciated!



## **YOUTH MINISTRY**

Youth Ministry meetings are on Mondays at 7:00pm in the Youth Ministry room.

If you would like to join or if you have any questions, please email me at

youth.ministry@stmichaelnetcong.org

-Nicole

## **Tax Donation Information**

St. Michael Church will not be sending out 2022 tax statements.

If you need a copy of your donations, please email [office.admin@stmichaelnetcong.org](mailto:office.admin@stmichaelnetcong.org) with your name, address and envelope number.

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Please register for envelopes or WeShare if you would like credit for tax purposes.

## **Parish Appreciation Dinner**

**Tuesday, February 21<sup>st</sup>**

Doors open at 6:30pm

In Msgr. Trapasso Hall

Please bring your own beverages

Please call the office or email to sign up

973-347-0032 or

[office.admin@stmichaelnetcong.org](mailto:office.admin@stmichaelnetcong.org)

RSVP By February 14<sup>th</sup>.

## **No Greater Love - Lenten Program Begins week of February 27th**

Ascension Press

Filmed on location in the Holy Land, No Greater Love is a biblical pilgrimage that reveals Christ's amazing love for us. Best-selling author Edward Sri guides you through the last hours of Christ's life, from the garden of Gethsemane to Mount Calvary. Every step of the way, Old Testament prophecies, messianic expectations, biblical symbolism, and historical context shed light on the mystery of Christ's suffering and death.

Session 1: The prayer of the agony: Jesus in Gethsemane

Session 2: Are you the Christ? Jesus arrest and Trial by the Sanhedrin.

Session 3: The trial of Pilate. Jesus is condemned to death.

Session 4: The death of the Messiah: Jesus carries the cross is crucified and dies.

Session 5: The 7 last words: Jesus the Teacher of Calvary

Bonus DVD: The Resurrection

Please email Betty to register –

[epinsonault@gmail.com](mailto:epinsonault@gmail.com) or call 973-448-8847.

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