



Our Lady of Perpetual Help Retreat and Spirituality Center

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Newsletter

March 2024

Heading for the Homestretch of Lent

As I write these words, there are about three weeks remaining in Lent. And perhaps we find ourselves belonging to one of two groups.

The first are those who are more or less happy with how Lent has gone so far. Maybe there was one virtue that you wanted to grow in during Lent, and you're seeing some progress; perhaps there was one area where you wanted to practice self-denial, and by God's grace, it is working. Maybe you wanted to pray more or pray better, or to improve the way you relate to others, and you've noticed some positive changes. Or maybe you've finally made that sacramental Confession that you had been putting off for so long.

For others, Lent is starting to feel like an exercise in futility. You may have noticed some thoughts like the following: "I wanted to do some fasting from food, or from TV, or from gossip, but I'm exactly where I was on Ash Wednesday," or, "I gave up Dunkin' Donuts alright, but I've been eating Munchkins!"

I will tell you a secret about Lent: Sometimes we need to sink to that place of apparent failure before God can lift us by his grace. If you are unhappy thus far with your experience of Lent, you can pray, "Lord my plan to prepare for the death and Resurrection of Christ isn't working; what's *your* plan for these last 2-3 weeks?"

As yesterday's First Reading from the prophet Hosea put it:

*Israel, . . . you have stumbled because of your iniquity.
Return to the Lord, and take with you words.*

What are the "words" that God's people are to take with them?

*Assyria will not save us
nor will we mount horses;
We will never again say, 'Our god,'
to the work of our hands.*

Through Hosea, God is telling His people to give up on the things that they were doing to try to improve their own lot: making alliances with foreign powers (Assyria), banking on their own strength (horses), fashioning their own gods and relying on them.

Later in the same reading, after God has humbled His people, He says, "I have humbled him, but I will prosper him. I am like a verdant cypress tree—because of me you bear fruit!" The people are becoming fruitful again, because they have begun to follow God's plan for their salvation instead of their own.

So, if Lent is falling short of your expectations, you're in an enviable position. You can confess your sins and faults, acknowledge your complete dependence on God, and begin again. God can do more in a few weeks than we can do in a lifetime!

In Christ and Our Lady of Perpetual Help,
Rev. Mark Yavarone, OMV

Contact Us (941) 486-0233

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Evening and Night Prayers at OLPH . . .

Unless you have made an overnight retreat at OLPH, you may not be aware of how beautifully lit our campus is at night. Kudos to Chuck Hammerle and our dedicated crew of volunteers who replaced all of the path and post lights after the flood waters of Ian submerged and corroded the previous underground wiring. The pictures at right show our Chapel and our central shrine to Our Lady of Perpetual Help in the evening. The exterior Chapel lighting was also replaced with brighter fixtures, illuminating the area around the Chapel and increasing the ambient light within. This makes it easier for retreatants to come at any time of the night to pray in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament. That is the goal of all our improvements after all: to facilitate communion between our retreatants and the living God!



A Busy 2024 Thus Far!

As most of our readers know, we offer group retreats as well as individually directed retreats at OLPH. Our individual retreatants who have registered for January, February, or March include guests from New York, Massachusetts, Ohio, New Hampshire, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, Colorado, Georgia, Minnesota, North Dakota, Tennessee, Georgia, and of course Florida. It is especially the longer retreats (5-day, 7-day, or 30-day duration) that draw retreatants from other states, while the shorter (1-night to 3-night) retreats draw primarily from Florida. Fr. Mark gave the full Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius to several retreatants from January 21 to February 19. This 30-day retreat, offered twice a year, is always a special occasion of grace.



In addition to the group retreats open to the public that our own priests have given during these months, we have also hosted many groups who have booked the facility for their own events. In January we hosted the bishops from New York, Minnesota, South Dakota, and North Dakota, as well as the Incarnation Parish staff from Sarasota. In February and March we hosted the St. Maximilian Secular Franciscan Order, as well as women's Emmaus Groups from Sacred Heart Parish, San Antonio Parish, and Epiphany Cathedral. The St. Charles Borromeo Parish staff (Port Charlotte), the staff/catechists from Holy Cross Parish in Palmetto, and many others have also been aboard during these months. We are grateful for your presence!



Happy Birthday Volunteers!

Noreen Donnellan
Jill Poor
Pat Villafana
Irene Johnston

Do you celebrate a February or March birthday and we missed it? Happy Birthday!

Please send an email to

isabelle@olph-retreat.org

with your birthday month and day
so we can add it to our database!

New Volunteers Needed!

[Click here if you are
interested in volunteering.](#)

**Volunteers receive an OLPH uniform shirt,
name tag, and training!**

Just bring your helpful heart!

Not Finished Yet . . .

Although the vast majority of the reconstruction after Hurricane Ian had already been completed when our insurance money dried up in September, some projects remained. We are completing them as your generosity allows us to do so. From September (the month of our full reopening) to January, the lanai of the Dining/Office Building remained bare. Through the generosity of a recent benefactor, we were able to purchase furniture which has transformed the lanai into a place for outdoor dining, as well as a great spot for prayer and reflection between meals. Likewise, a donation from the women's group of our Our Lady Star of the Sea Parish enabled us to complete the exterior of the Chapel this past month. This included the placing of weed barrier and white rock that embellishes the Chapel beautifully, as well as replacement of the ixora shrubs destroyed by the hurricane. The Chapel project also included a new prayer space in back of the building facing the lake, and new exterior lighting (see p. 2). If you feel moved to sponsor any of the remaining small projects, please let us know!



Outdoor dining furniture on lanai



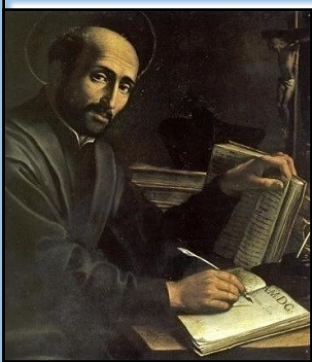
Rocking chairs and small tables on lanai



White rock and ixoras on Chapel walkway



Prayer space between Chapel and lake



Ignatian Preached Retreat May 10-13, 2024

An Ignatian Preached Retreat introduces you to the great themes of the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola in a group setting.

The schedule includes conferences each day, daily Mass, and an opportunity to meet at least once with the retreat director for Confession and/or spiritual direction. Conference topics center on Ignatian spirituality, prayer, and discernment. For more info or to register, click here:

<https://olph-retreat.org/group-retreat-registration>

Ways to Give: Legacy Gifts

One of the ways you can support OLPH for years to come is through a gift in your estate plan. As you plan for the future of your estate, please consider including OLPH. By designating OLPH as a recipient, you will make a lasting gift that will continue our mission for generations. If you prefer that your gift is applied to a specific area, such as our endowment fund or a capital improvement, and would like to speak to us about our needs, please contact Fr. Mark Yavarone, OMV at (941) 486-0233 ext. 3007. As a non-profit organization, your charitable bequest to OLPH can reduce, or even eliminate, the amount of estate or inheritance tax your beneficiaries may owe.

Upcoming Events



Triduum Retreat

Mar. 28-31, 2024

OLPH's annual Triduum Retreat is scheduled for March 28-31, 2024. It begins with supper on Holy Thursday and concludes after sunrise Liturgy and breakfast on Easter Sunday. There will be five conferences, led by both Fr. Mark Yavarone, OMV and Fr. Greg Cleveland, OMV, throughout the weekend. The cost is \$475 for a private room and \$325 for a shared room, inclusive of FL state tax and fees.

To register, click here: <https://www.olph-retreat.org/group-retreat-registration>

¿Puedes Verme? (*Can You See Me?* retreat in Spanish) Apr. 5-7, 2024

Este retiro te da la oportunidad de conocer el amor de de nuestro Señor en Su sacrificio, vas conocer el amor del Padre y del Hijo y poder crecer en tu relación en la Eucaristía. El retiro empieza Viernes entre 2:00-4:00pm y la comida a las 5:00pm. En este fin de semana encontrarás conferencias, oportunidades de meditación, misa. El retiro concluye el Domingo en la tarde. El costo es \$350pp por habitación privada, \$250pp por compartir con otra persona la habitación, \$150pp sin habitación.

To register, click here: <https://www.olph-retreat.org/group-retreat-registration>

Monthly Day of Prayer

April 10, April 14, and following months

The Monthly Day of Prayer is held on the second Sunday and Wednesday of each month. The next sessions are on Wednesday, April 10th and Sunday, April 14th. The day begins at 9:30 am with continental breakfast and includes two conferences, lunch, Eucharistic Adoration, and opportunities for the Sacrament of Reconciliation, private meditation and prayer. The day concludes with Mass, ending at 3:15 pm. The cost is \$40.00. (Note: the conference topics are the same for the Sunday and Wednesday sessions in each respective month, so please choose the day that is compatible with your schedule.)

To register, click here: www.olph-retreat.org/monthly-day-of-prayer

Ignatian Preached Retreat

May 10-13, 2024

This silent retreat will introduce you to the great themes of the Spiritual Exercises in a group setting. The schedule includes conferences each day, daily Mass, and an opportunity to meet at least once with the retreat director for Confession and/or spiritual direction. Conference topics center on Ignatian spirituality, prayer, and discernment. The cost is \$475.00 per person for a private room and \$325.00 per person for a shared room (retreatant to locate appropriate roommate where silence can be maintained).

To register, click here: <https://www.olph-retreat.org/group-retreat-registration>

Go to
www.olph-retreat.org/schedule-of-events
to view all our events.