

St. Joseph's of Stratford National Catholic Church

1300 Stratford Road, Stratford, CT 06615 / ☎ (203) 377-9901

www.saintjosephsofstratford.org / sjosparishpncc@outlook.com



Septuagesima
February 1, 2026 Year A

Sunday Mass at NOON

Parish Contacts:

ADMINISTRATOR *Fr. Paul Dudek*

CHAIRPERSON *Jeanine May*

VICE CHAIR *Rosalie Graczyk*

FINANCIAL SECRETARY *Barbara*

Chernesky

OFFICE ADMINISTRATOR *Lisa Vasas*

A Righteousness of the Heart

In today's Gospel Jesus calls His disciples to a righteousness that goes beyond external observance and reaches the heart. He teaches that sin begins not only in actions, but in thoughts, intentions, and desires. Anger wounds before violence occurs, lust corrupts before betrayal takes place, and dishonesty takes root long before a lie is spoken.

Christ is not placing heavier burdens upon us, but inviting us into deeper freedom. By calling us to truthfulness, "Let your 'Yes' mean yes and your 'No' mean no", He reminds us that integrity is a sign of a heart aligned with God. The law is not abolished, but fulfilled through love.

This Gospel is not meant to discourage us, but to awaken us. Jesus is inviting us into a deeper freedom, the freedom that comes when our inner life is healed. The law is not abolished; it is fulfilled in love. When the heart is converted, obedience follows naturally.

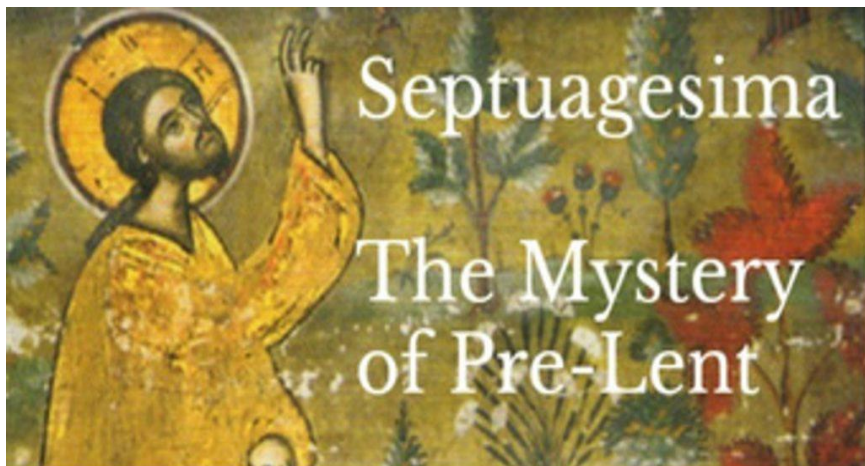
As we reflect on the Lord's words today, let us ask for the grace of interior conversion, so that our faith may be lived not only outwardly, but faithfully from the heart.

~ Fr. Paul

We are a Catholic community called to serve God and neighbors through the Eucharist, prayer, education, and daily living of the Gospel values.

Everyone is always welcome to worship with us in our beautiful church.

It is a house of prayer for all, who with sincere heart desire to praise God.



TODAY'S READINGS: SEE CENTER INSERT

PRAYER INTENTIONS

We remember in our prayers Fr. Bill, John (JR) Martikainen, Richard David, Bishop John Mack, Jane Pelland, Joe Pelland, Fr. Henry Smolinski & Margo, Ann Marie Egelski, Rich Lasecki, Edmond Bresh, Helen Reynolds, Helen Popp, Florence Rasmussen, Robin Lupinski, Mary DiMenna, Ray Morrison, Meghan Castelot, Mateo Cirioli, Renata Wos, Janice Daviault

For those new to our church (and even those who aren't!)



To follow along with the Mass, begin on **page 63** in the Mass booklet. Father will announce which page to turn to for the Canon at the appropriate time and where to pick up the service following the Canon. Rules on the reception of the Holy Eucharist are on the back page of this bulletin.

And please remember – no eating or drinking inside the church proper (small bottles of water excepted).

**Please silence your cell
phones before Mass.**

The Sacred Season of Pre-Lent: Preparing the Heart Before the Fast

Before the Church enters the holy season of Lent, our Old Catholic tradition - faithfully preserved in the Polish National Catholic Church - invites us into a quieter and often overlooked time known as Pre-Lent. This season is not accidental, nor is it merely a historical curiosity. It is a gift of spiritual wisdom, reminding us that deep conversion does not happen suddenly, but gradually, patiently, and with intention.

Pre-Lent unfolds over three Sundays: Septuagesima, Sexagesima, and Quinquagesima. The names themselves may sound unfamiliar to modern ears, yet their purpose is beautifully simple: to awaken the soul. Just as the body needs time to adjust before a fast, the heart needs time to turn itself toward God before the discipline of Lent begins.

During Pre-Lent, the Church begins to change her tone. The joyful Alleluia disappears from the liturgy. Violet or pink vestments remind us that a more serious journey is approaching. Scripture readings speak of sin, grace, repentance, and God's patient mercy. All of these gently asks us an important question: Are we ready to be changed?



In today's world, we are accustomed to immediacy. We want instant results, instant answers, instant holiness. But the Church, like a wise mother, teaches us that true spiritual growth

takes time. Pre-Lent slows us down. It encourages honest self-examination without yet demanding the full intensity of fasting and penance. It is a season of awareness. Pre-Lent reminds us that Lenten practices must flow from a converted heart. Without interior preparation, fasting becomes empty and penance becomes burdensome. With proper preparation, however, Lent becomes a path of healing and renewal.

(continued on next page)

For the faithful, Pre-Lent is an invitation to begin asking meaningful questions: What habits keep me from God? Where do I resist His grace? What needs to be surrendered? It is also a time to begin returning to prayer, to the Sacraments, and to works of charity - quietly, humbly, without pressure.

The Old Catholic tradition treasures this season because it reflects a deeply human understanding of the spiritual life. God does not rush us. He calls us gently. Pre-Lent is the whisper before the call, the dawn before the sunrise.

As we journey through this sacred time, let us embrace it fully. Let us allow Pre-Lent to prepare our hearts so that when Ash Wednesday arrives, we do not begin Lent unprepared, but ready, ready to repent, ready to fast, ready to walk more closely with Christ toward the joy of Easter. May this season be for us a true beginning of renewal.

Annual Parish Meeting today!

Time to sit down and recap the events of the past year for our parish. Today, after Mass, we will hold not only our monthly Fellowship Gathering, but also the annual Parish Meeting.



Because it's lunch time, we have a potluck meal waiting for you. Many thanks to all who brought/made food for the gathering! The next blankets are ready on a side table to be completed.

Please plan to join us. It is your right to know what is happening in your church and give your suggestions for its future direction. See you there!

Items for the bulletin

Deadline for submitting items for the bulletin is Thursday. Items turned in after Thursday are not guaranteed inclusion in the following Sunday's bulletin.

READINGS FOR SEPTUAGESIMA

First Reading

Sir. 15: 15-20

A Reading from the book of Sirach:

If you choose you can keep the commandments, they will save you; if you trust in God, you too shall live; he has set before you fire and water to whichever you choose, stretch forth your hand.

Before man are life and death, good and evil, whichever he chooses shall be given him. Immense is the wisdom of the Lord; he is mighty in power, and all-seeing. The eyes of God are on those who fear him; he understands man's every deed. No one does he command to act unjustly, to none does he give license to sin.

The Word of the Lord

R: Thanks be to God.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

PS. 119: 1-2, 4-5, 17-18,

33-34

R: Blessed are they who follow the law of the Lord!

Blessed are they whose way is blameless,
who walk in the law of the LORD.

Blessed are they who observe his decrees,
who seek him with all their heart.

R. Blessed are they who follow the law of the Lord!

You have commanded that your precepts
be diligently kept.

Oh, that I might be firm in the ways
of keeping your statutes!

R. Blessed are they who follow the law of the Lord!

Be good to your servant, that I may live
and keep your words.

Open my eyes, that I may consider
the wonders of your law.

R. Blessed are they who follow the law of the Lord!

Instruct me, O LORD, in the way of your statutes,
that I may exactly observe them.

Give me discernment, that I may observe your law
and keep it with all my heart.

R. Blessed are they who follow the law of the Lord!

Second Reading

1 Cor 2: 6-10

**A Reading from the first letter of St. Paul to the
Corinthians:**

Brothers and sisters:

We speak a wisdom to those who are mature, not a
wisdom of this age, nor of the rulers of this age who are
passing away. Rather, we speak God's wisdom,
mysterious, hidden, which God predetermined before
the ages for our glory, and which none of the rulers of
this age knew; for, if they had known it, they would not
have crucified the Lord of glory.

But as it is written:

*What eye has not seen, and ear has not heard,
and what has not entered the human heart,
what God has prepared for those who love him,*
this God has revealed to us through the Spirit.

For the Spirit scrutinizes everything, even the depths of God.

The Word of the Lord

R: Thanks be to God.

C: Praise to You, Lord Jesus Christ, King of endless glory!

R: Praise to You, Lord Jesus Christ, King of endless glory!

C: Jesus proclaimed the Gospel of the kingdom and cured every disease among the people.

R: Praise to You, Lord Jesus Christ, King of endless glory!

THE GOSPEL

Mt 5: 20-22a, 27-28, 33-34a, 37

C: The Lord be with you.

R: And also with you.

C: A Reading from the Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew

R: Glory be to You, Lord.

Jesus said to his disciples: “I tell you, unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.

“You have heard that it was said to your ancestors, You shall not kill; and whoever kills will be liable to judgment. But I say to you, whoever is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment.

“You have heard that it was said, You shall not commit adultery. But I say to you, everyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

“Again you have heard that it was said to your ancestors, Do not take a false oath, but make good to the Lord all that you vow. But I say to you, do not swear at all. Let your ‘Yes’ mean ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No’ mean ‘No.’ Anything more is from the evil one.”

The Gospel of the Lord.

R: Praise be to You, Lord Jesus Christ.

Response to Intercessions: **Lord, hear our prayer.**

Outreach Programs

For 2026, we have new opportunities to help our neighbors who aren't as fortunate as we are. *These are in addition to our ongoing collection of food for the food pantry.*

February – warm (new or GENTLY used) coats, sweatshirts, sweatpants, sweaters, socks, hats, gloves, and scarves. No holes or stains, please. New socks only. And only these items – this isn't the time for spring cleaning of your closets.



March – peanut butter. This is one of the most requested items at the food pantries. Let's help them stock up this month.

Donation bins will be in the foyer marked with the icon for the item being collected. Thank you in advance for your generosity. For such a small church, you show such large hearts! ❤️

Eastern Diocese prayer materials

The February prayer calendar and Wednesday prayer intention have been posted to the bulletin board and printed copies are available in the foyer. Please pick them up and join with your diocesan brothers and sisters in prayer.



Want to request a Mass?



If you would like to have a Mass said for the repose of a loved one or to commemorate a special event, you can contact the office via phone or email or fill in a slip on the foyer table and leave it in the basket. We will try to accommodate your first choice of date and let you know when it has been added to the calendar.

2026 Dues

Now is the time to pay your 2026 dues. The prices remain \$108 for an individual, \$216 for a family. Payment plans are available if needed. Please see Barb for details.

Contact Information

Update
your
Information!



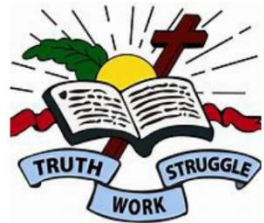
Is your contact information with the office correct? Now is the time to check. Or just fill in an update slip with the latest information. Please indicate the best way to reach you. With the snow changing the Mass schedule for the last two weeks

and the probability of more snow in the future (at least until Spring pokes its head up), it is imperative we have accurate information to reach you in case of a last-minute change.

Thank you in advance for taking the time to make sure we can reach you with important news!

Next Know & Grow session

The next offering in the 2026 Know & Grow series will be held on **Thursday, February 12, 2026, at 7:00 PM (EST)**. This is the second in a series of twelve, with this year's topics centering around the theme of **Christian Living**, allowing church members to better understand the faith they share and to feel comfortable sharing that faith with others.



This month, Father Christopher Rogalski from Divine Providence parish in Norwich, CT, will help us to explore the topic of:

Community - The Body of Christ

Each unit will have biblical texts as a starting point, with lecture, meditation, discussion, and practical life applications.

To join via Zoom, please contact revpauls@yahoo.com or ksobiechowski@yahoo.com

~ Eastern Diocese Mission and Evangelism Commission

WHAT'S HAPPENING AT YOUR CHURCH

Sunday, 1 February 2026 – **FULL PARISH** meeting after Mass. Potluck luncheon to accompany the meeting.

Wednesday, 4 February 2026 – LifeLine Screening Event

Wednesday, 18 February 2026 – Ash Wednesday

LifeLine Screening Event **this Wednesday!**



Reduced Price! The full set of screenings now costs only \$129 – down from the \$149 they were last year. And there are still openings available, especially between 11 a.m. and 2 p.m.!

There is a simple, convenient way for you to get preventive health screenings and learn your risk for stroke, heart disease and other chronic conditions. These painless screenings go beyond your regular checkup to identify dangerous plaque buildup or blockage, a major risk factor for stroke and heart disease. The screenings are accurate, affordable and will give you valuable information about your health that you can share with your doctor. They include screenings for: Carotid Artery Disease, Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm, Atrial Fibrillation, and Peripheral Artery Disease.



We are pleased to host Life Line Screening, who will be on site on **Wednesday, February 4, 2026** to conduct these valuable screenings which take 60-90 minutes to complete. Register by calling toll free 1-800-324-9458

with the promo code: HABC001, text the word "circle" to 216-279-1607, scan the QR code above, or online at <https://llsa.social/HABC>

Reception of the Holy Eucharist



Baptized Christians who believe in the Real Presence of Christ in the Holy Eucharist and are in a state of grace, free from mortal sin, are invited to partake of this Holy Sacrament. It is the practice of the PNCC to distribute the Holy Eucharist through the method of intinction. The Body of Christ is dipped into the Precious Blood and is placed on the tongue and not in the hand of the communicant. *If you are unable to receive the Precious Blood, please alert Father before Mass so that he is aware of the situation. If you would like to receive a blessing from Father instead of Communion, come to the altar rail with your arms crossed, palms on shoulders.* Come and let us be one with our Lord.

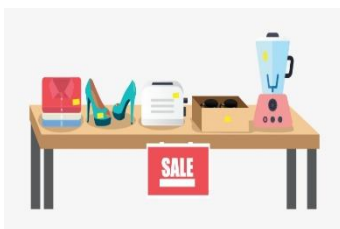
Not too early...

To be thinking about and planning for Lent. Because Father Paul has to administer to two parishes, there will be some changes to previous years' service schedule. Stations of the Cross will alternate on Fridays between here at St. Joseph's and up in Union City at Holy Saviour. The Holy Thursday evening service and Stripping of the Altars will be hosted by our friends in Union City and will be followed by a fellowship meal afterwards. Tenebrae will still be held here at St. Joseph's on Good Friday in the evening.

Stay tuned for more information as it becomes available.

Spring Tag Sale

The parish will be holding an outdoor tag sale sometime in May. All proceeds will benefit the church and any goods not sold on that date will go to a collection center like Goodwill or Savers. Anyone interested in donating items to the tag sale (spring cleaning, anyone?) can bring them in to classrooms starting today.



Help support our parish while you re-home your no-longer-needed items!