



# Saint Benedict the Moor Parish

*Personal Parish for Black Catholics in Pittsburgh*

*"Without a Vision, the People Perish" (Proverbs 29:18)*

**MARCH 16, 2025**

## Mass Schedule

Sunday 11:00 am

Livestream:

[facebook.com/SBTMPGH/live](https://facebook.com/SBTMPGH/live)

## Sacrament

### of Reconciliation

Sundays at 10:30am &

by appointment.

## Baptisms, Weddings, and Funerals

by appointment.



Our church is accessible.

## Staff

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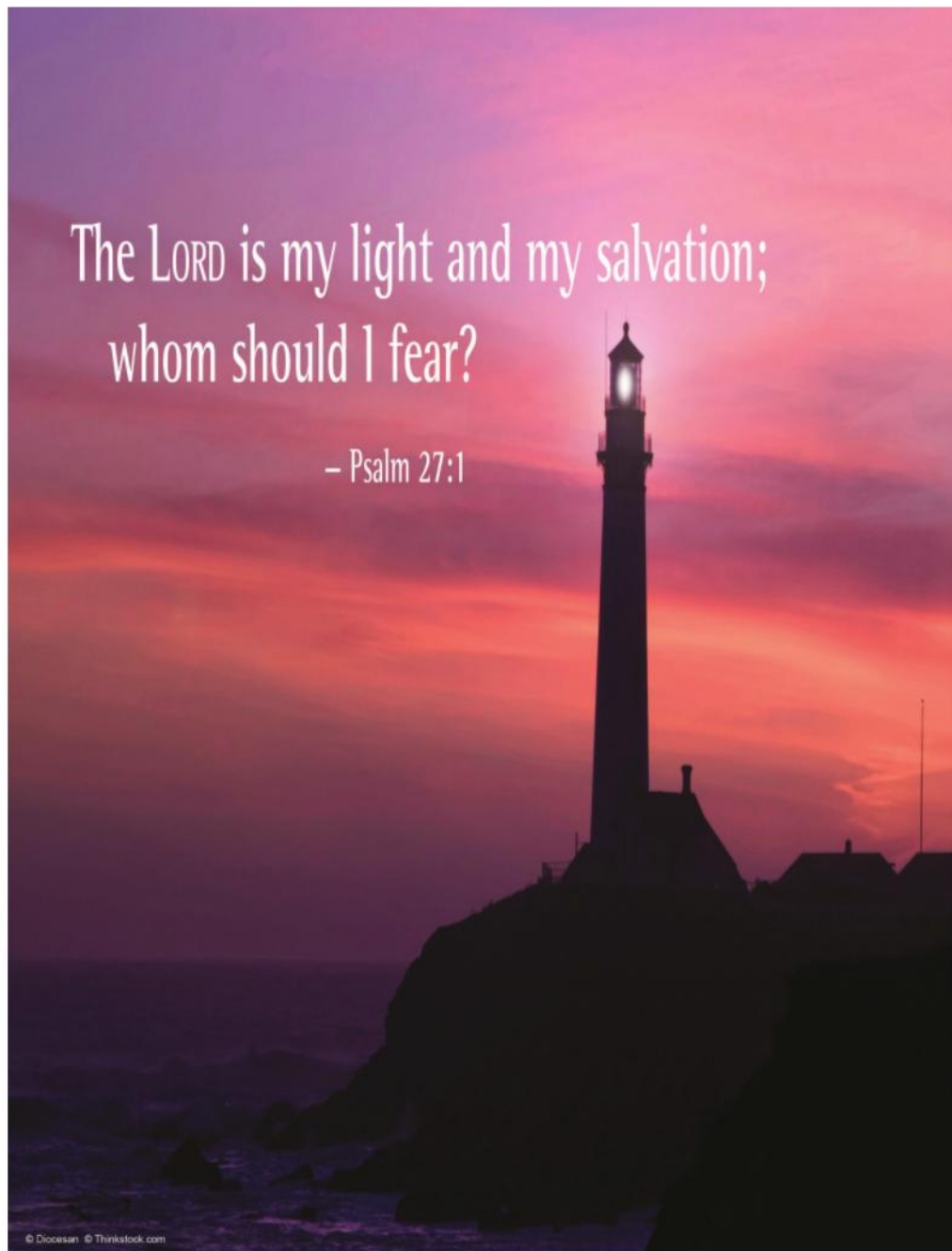
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St. Benedict the Moor Parish-PGH



[SBTMPARISHPGH](https://www.instagram.com/SBTMPARISHPGH)



[SBTMparishPGH](https://www.youtube.com/SBTMparishPGH)

## Mass Intentions

March 16 11:00 am  
2nd Sunday of Lent

Fr. Matthew Hawkins  
Vincent J Tucker  
(Greta Tucker)

March 23 11:00 am  
3rd Sunday of Lent

Fr. Matthew Hawkins  
Otis D Davis Jr.  
(Priscilla Davis)

### Stewardship March 9th

Offertory	Parish Appeal	Tech
\$4,898.00	\$930.00	\$80
Care for the Poor	Church Upkeep	Easter Flowers
\$300.00	\$81.00	\$50.00

### Weekly Mass Attendance

March 9th —132

#### Prayer Requests

Ann Betters  
Antoinette Peters  
Bonita Dsouza  
Claudia Harrison  
Christina Hall  
Chris Grayson  
Damitra Penny-Harris  
Delores Denton  
Duane Ashley  
Gail Jackson  
Jennifer Whitley  
Joan Moran  
Johari  
John Young  
Karen McDill  
Vincent Hall Jr

#### Protection of God's Children

Report suspected child abuse at  
the 24-Hour Child Abuse Hotline:  
**800.932.0313.**

If a child is in imminent danger,  
call 911.

To report church-related abuse to  
the Diocese of Pittsburgh call:  
**888-808-1235**

## The Classical Tradition and African American Spirituals

Fr. Matthew Hawkins



### The Classical Tradition of the Spirituals—Songs of Humanity and Dignity

One of the great treasures of the Christian tradition is the power of sacred song to express deep truths about the human experience. In the classical tradition of the arts and literature, themes of exile, suffering, and the struggle for dignity have always resonated across time and cultures. The Spirituals, which emerged from the crucible of enslavement and racial discrimination, are no exception. These songs do more than recount the suffering of Black Americans—they connect those experiences to the universal human longing for freedom, dignity, and

the recognition of our shared humanity.

Like other great works of literature, the Spirituals seek to break down barriers that deny human dignity, awaken the interior life of the individual and the life of the mind, and even confront the fear of death itself. For those who first sang these songs, the fear of death was not merely about physical mortality; it was the fear of living without meaning, without hope, without the assurance that they were seen and loved by God. The Spirituals, then, became a bold act of defiance—songs of survival, resistance, and divine hope.

Take, for example, the song “*I Got Shoes*.” The lyrics proclaim, “I got shoes, you got shoes, all God’s children got shoes.” To those unfamiliar with its context, it may seem like a simple song of celebration. But for enslaved people who were often forbidden from wearing shoes—a mark of status and equality—these words were radical. They declared that no matter what society said, their dignity came from God alone. Though their humanity was denied in the eyes of the world, they knew they were children of God, clothed in His grace and bound for the kingdom where their dignity would be fully revealed.

Similarly, “*Follow the Drinking Gourd*” was more than a coded map to freedom on the Underground Railroad. It carried profound spiritual meaning, much like the Israelites following the pillar of fire through the wilderness. It reminded those who sang it that God’s guidance was ever-present, that salvation was both a physical and spiritual journey and that faith required courage and perseverance that transcended life itself. Those who followed the “drinking gourd”—a reference to the North Star—understood that their journey was not just about escaping physical bondage but living for eternity.

These songs, and many others like them, do not reflect a theology of resignation or passive waiting for justice in the afterlife. Rather, they proclaim a faith that is alive and gives calmness, strength, and perseverance in the face of suffering. The Spirituals remind us that the world does not give us our dignity—it is inherent in every person because we are made in the image of God.

These songs call us to faith, hope, and perseverance, even when life presents us with many challenges. They proclaim that no matter what trials we endure, God’s promise remains, and His justice prevails through our inner strength, reason, and willingness to cooperate with God’s plan. We must carry this spirit of dignity in our lives, walking in faith with the courage and self-respect of those before us whom the Spirituals inspired.



**Fr. Matthew Hawkins**



### Faith Beyond Sight: Trusting in God's Promises

*"Look toward heaven and count the stars, if you are able to count them. Then he said to him, 'So shall your descendants be.'" (Genesis 15:5)*

*"And while he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became dazzling white." (Luke 9:29)*

These two passages—one from Genesis, the other from Luke's Gospel—at first seem like two very different moments. One is set in the deep darkness of night, where an aging, childless man struggles to believe in a promise that seems impossible. The other unfolds on a mountaintop, where three disciples witness Jesus in dazzling glory, standing with Moses and Elijah. And yet, when we reflect on them together, connections emerge.

Both passages are about **faith in God's promises**. Both reveal the **tension between fear and trust**. And both invite us to **see beyond what is in front of us**, to step into something greater.

### Abram's Journey of Faith

In Genesis 15, God leads Abram out of his tent and tells him to look at

the stars. The message is clear: **stop looking at your own limitations and start looking at My promises**. At this moment, Abram sees nothing but darkness, yet God asks him to believe in a **future beyond his sight**. And Abram does believe. *"And the Lord reckoned it to him as righteousness"* (Gen 15:6).

But belief does not mean understanding. Abram still asks for a sign. And what happens next is not instant clarity, but **deep, terrifying darkness**. This is the paradox of divine revelation—before the light, there is often shadow. Before faith deepens, it is often tested. Abram experiences awe and fear as he enters into covenant with God. **Faith is not simply about accepting a promise—it is about surrendering to it.**

### The Transfiguration: A Glimpse of Fulfillment

Centuries later, on another journey of faith, Peter, James, and John follow Jesus up a mountain. They are not yet prepared for what they will see. **Jesus, whom they thought they knew, is suddenly transfigured—radiant, divine**. Moses and Elijah appear, speaking with Him about **His coming "exodus"**—His departure through the Cross.

Like Abram under the stars, the disciples are being called to **see beyond the present moment**. But, like Abram, they are afraid. When a cloud overshadows them, they tremble. And then, a voice from the cloud declares:

*"This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!" (Luke 9:35)*

It is the same voice that once spoke to Abram, calling him to trust. But now, the promise has a face. The covenant is no longer written in the stars or sealed in the fire—it is revealed in **Christ Himself, the fulfillment of every promise**.

### Faith in the Face of Uncertainty

Abram had to trust in a promise he could not yet see. The disciples had to trust in a **Messiah who would suffer before He would reign**. Both were asked to believe before they understood. **And we are asked to do the same.**

Faith does not remove uncertainty. It does not eliminate fear. But it does teach us to trust that God's plan is unfolding, even when we cannot see how.

Like Abram, we ask for signs. Like Peter, we try to build tents to hold onto moments of clarity. Like the disciples, we want to stay on the mountaintop and avoid the road to the Cross.

### But faith calls us forward.

Abram had to step into the unknown, holding only a promise. The disciples had to come down from the mountain and walk toward **Jerusalem, toward suffering, toward the Resurrection**.

And we? We are called to trust that **even in the darkest nights, the stars are still shining**. Even in the overshadowing cloud, God is still speaking. Even when we do not understand, **God is leading us forward**.

Faith is not about having all the answers. It is about listening to Christ, even when we do not yet see the whole picture.

May we trust in His promises. May we follow Him down the mountain. May we learn to listen.

### This Week: Second Sunday of Lent

*"From the shining cloud the Father's voice is heard: This is my beloved Son, hear him (Matthew 17:5)."*

First Reading: Genesis 15:5-12, 17-18  
Responsorial Psalm 27:1, 7-8, 8-9, 13-14.

Second Reading: Philippians 3:17—4:1

Gospel: Luke 9:28b-36

### Next Week: Third Sunday of Lent

*"Repent, says the Lord; the kingdom of heaven is at hand (Matthew 4:17)."*

First Reading: Exodus 3:1-8a, 13-15  
Responsorial Psalm 103: 1-2, 3-4, 6-7, 8, 11.

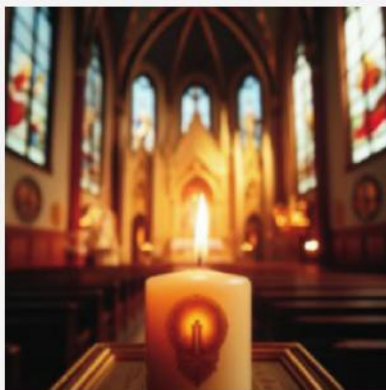
Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 10:1-6, 10-12

Gospel: Luke 9:28b-36



## Introduction to Christianity: Religion and Spirituality Are Two Aspects of the Same Reality

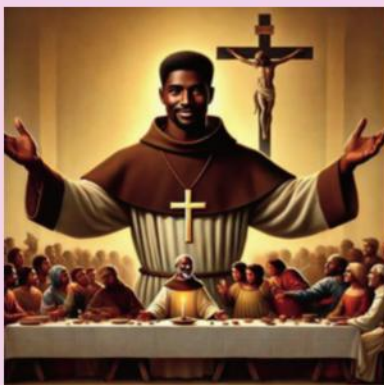
Fr. Matthew Hawkins



The disconnect between the sacraments, liturgical worship, and spirituality raises the important issue of the need for balance on our journey of faith. Religion and spirituality are not at odds but are two aspects of the same reality: we are journeying toward God. Emphasizing one of these realities at the expense of the other risks losing sight of the fullness of what it means to love God and be loved by Him.

In conversations with those who try to separate the two, it might be helpful to point out how the Church's rituals, community, and teachings deepen and enrich one's spiritual journey, providing direction and sustenance. Invite them to see love not just as an emotion but as a transformative encounter with God's self-giving love. It calls us to give of ourselves through our liturgical worship, the sacraments, and our works of charity. Religion and spirituality are not separate; they are two aspects of the same reality.

### Join Us in Celebrating the Feast of St. Benedict the Moor!



Dear Parish Family,

We invite you to join us on **Sunday, March 30th**, as we celebrate the **Feast of St. Benedict the Moor**, our beloved patron saint. This special day is an opportunity for us to come together in faith, honor our rich heritage, and strengthen our bonds as a community.

Following the **11:00 AM Mass**, we will continue the celebration with a **shared meal and fellowship**. Bring your **family, friends, and neighbors** as we gather in the spirit of joy, hospitality, and unity.

Let us come together to **give thanks, break bread, and celebrate the life and legacy of St. Benedict the Moor**. We look forward to seeing you there!

**St. Benedict the Moor, pray for us!**

In Christ,  
Fr. Matthew Hawkins

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<p>EITC/OSTC Scholarship credits are available! 90% State Tax Credit available to Business and Qualified Individuals! Make a difference in local kids' lives by redirecting 90% of your PA tax liability to Catholic schools.</p> <p>Contact Michael Freker @ <b>mfreker@diopitt.org</b> or call <b>412-456-3055</b></p>	<p>Find your path here. <b>www.sosf.org</b></p> <p><b>SISTERS of ST. FRANCIS</b> of the Neumann Communities House of Discernment</p>		

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