



Saint Benedict the Moor Parish

Personal Parish for Black Catholics in Pittsburgh

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

APRIL 6, 2025

Mass Schedule

Sunday 11:00 am

Livestream:

facebook.com/SBTMPGH/live

Sacrament of Reconciliation

Sundays at 10:30am &
by appointment.

Baptisms, Weddings, and Funerals

by appointment.



Our church is accessible.

Staff

Rev. C. Matthew Hawkins,
Administrator:
mhawkins@diopitt.org

Priscilla Davis, Office Manager:
office@sbtmparishpgh.com

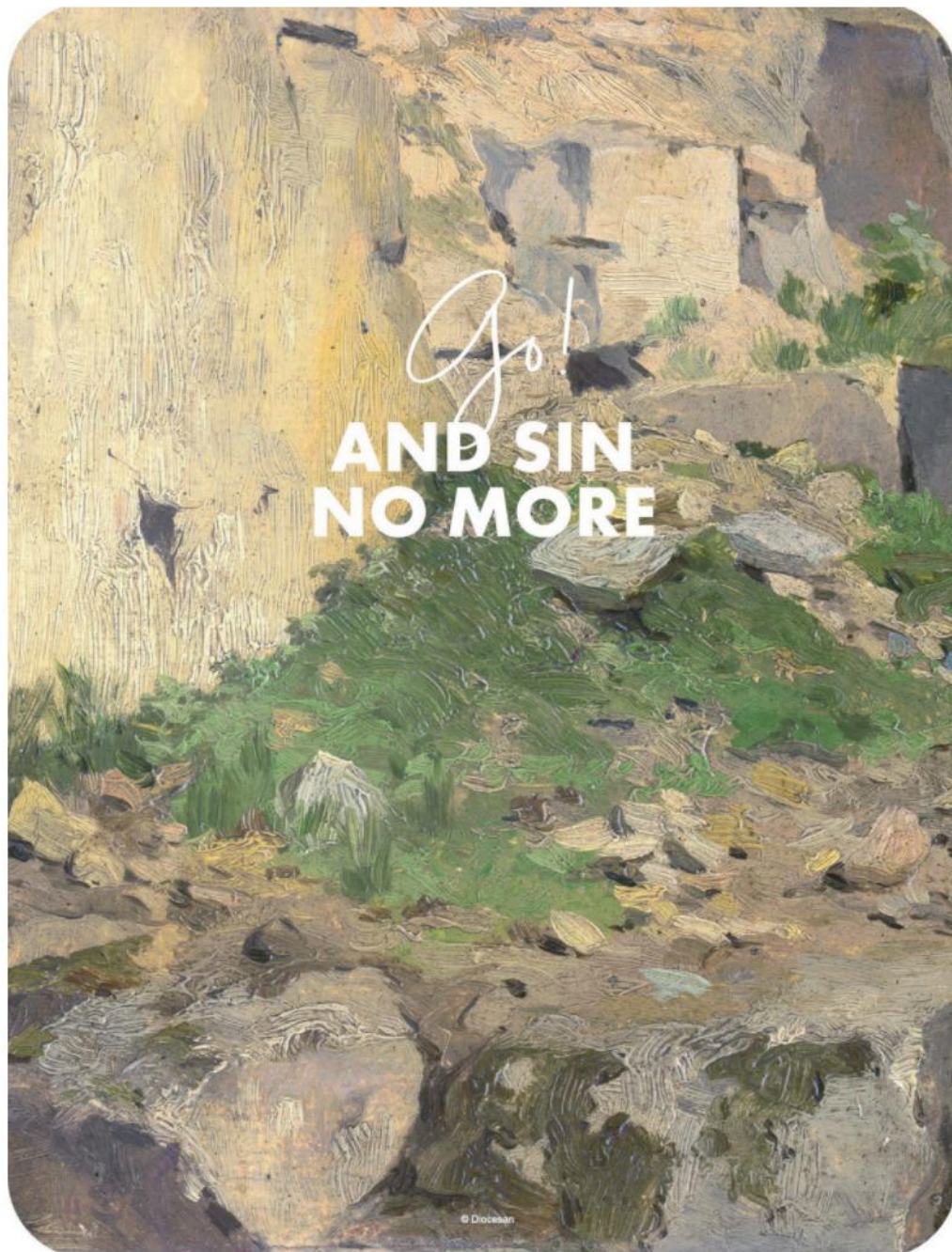
Jeannette Finch, Sacristan

Jennifer L. Whitley, Bulletin Editor:
bulletin@sbtmparishpgh.com

Lisa Joy Finch, Director of
Religious Education:
religiouseducation@sbtmparishpgh.com

Monte Reid, Director of Music

Henry Anyabuoke, Outreach
Minister:
henryanyabuoke@gmail.com



Saint Benedict the Moor Church • 91 Crawford Street • Pittsburgh PA 15219

office@sbtmparishpgh.com • 412.281.3141

Website:
sbtmparishpgh.com



St. Benedict the Moor Parish-PGH



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



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

Mass Intentions

April 6 11:00 am
5th Sunday of Lent

Fr. Matthew Hawkins
Richard & Carmella Zoucha
(Rick & Cecilia Zoucha)

April 13 11:00 am
Palm Sunday

Fr. Matthew Hawkins
Larry Connelly
(Gaye Velar)

Stewardship March 30th

Offertory	Parish Appeal	Tech
\$4,767.21	\$550.00	\$90.00
Care for the Poor	Church Upkeep	Easter Flowers
\$135.00	\$120.00	\$100.00

Weekly Mass Attendance

March 30th—248

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

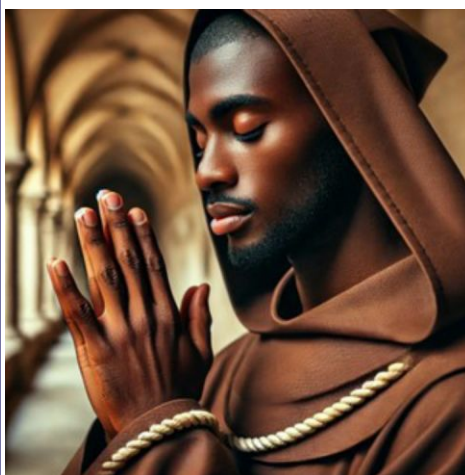
**Happy Birthday to Everyone
Celebrating a Birthday in April!**



Blessings for Many More!

The Spirituality of St Benedict the Moor: Mysticism and Asceticism

Fr. Matthew Hawkins



St. Benedict the Moor is often remembered for his humble work in the kitchen and fields, but behind the simplicity of his life was a profound spiritual depth that continues to inspire. Though he could neither read nor write, St. Benedict was widely regarded as a spiritual master, known for his mystical insight and theological wisdom. His life reminds us that holiness is not measured by academic degrees or eloquent words, but by the depth of one's union with God.

St. Benedict's spirituality was deeply rooted in a classical tradition of Christian mysticism shared by the Carmelite, Dominican, and Franciscan orders. These tradi-

tions teach that true knowledge of God does not come primarily through sudden emotional experiences or impulsive revelations. Rather, it arises from an ordered path of asceticism, contemplation, and inner purification—a journey of the soul that requires both discipline and desire. This is the very path St. Benedict walked with unwavering commitment.

He embraced fasting, silence, prayer, and service as tools for ordering the soul toward God. His ascetic practices were not about punishing the body but about training the heart to listen more clearly to the gentle voice of the Lord. His life was marked by rigorous self-denial, but also by radiant charity and joy. Those who encountered him—whether scholars, priests, or fellow monks—were drawn not to his intellect or education, but to his deep wisdom and serene presence.

One of the most remarkable aspects of St. Benedict's legacy is how many learned theologians came to him for advice and insight. They recognized in him a wisdom that transcended book learning. He engaged in theological conversations not by quoting texts but by embodying their truth. His life was a living testimony to the idea that contemplation and action, knowledge and love, are not opposites but companions on the path to holiness.

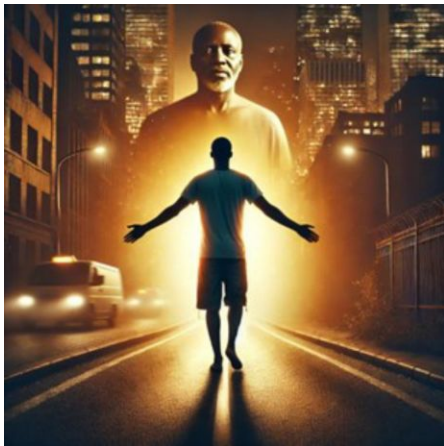
St. Benedict's example offers a powerful corrective to some modern distortions of the spiritual life. In a time when faith is often reduced to fleeting feelings or subjective experiences, his life reminds us of the importance of structure, discipline, and theological clarity. While our emotions are gifts from God, they are not the foundation of our faith. St. Benedict teaches us that stability, order, and daily fidelity to prayer and charity form the truest path to divine union.

His spirituality was one of simplicity—but not the simplicity of ignorance. It was the simplicity that comes from a life stripped of distractions, fully oriented toward the love of God and neighbor. His holiness was not dramatic or showy, but deeply rooted, steady, and fruitful.

As we reflect on the life of St. Benedict the Moor, may we be challenged and inspired to cultivate a spirituality that is disciplined, prayerful, and rooted in love. May we strive not just to feel close to God, but to be formed by God through prayer, sacrifice, and service. Like St. Benedict, may our lives become vessels of wisdom and grace, even in hidden and humble ways.



Fr. Matthew Hawkins



This is the Fifth Sunday of Lent, but my reflection will be on last week's readings because I accidentally posted this week's reflection last week.

The first reading, from **Joshua 5:9a, 10-12**, contains a striking line from God: *"Today I have removed the reproach of Egypt from you."* That word—*reproach*—lingers in the air. It means disgrace, shame, a heavy burden tied to one's past. The people of Israel have been set free from slavery, but their identity has not yet fully caught up with their freedom. They have wandered. They have struggled. They have doubted who they are. And now God brings them to the Promised Land, not just to feed them, but to restore their dignity. *This* is the moment when they stop surviving and begin *belonging* again.

I find this especially resonant within the African American story—marked by slavery, segregation, migration, and displacement, which has shaped not only our history but our identity. And yet, through faith, community, and resilience, we have also tasted the fruits of restoration. God is always leading us across thresholds—from shame to joy, from bondage to belonging.

So I ask: **What threshold are we standing at today?** Are we just surviving? Or are we beginning to taste

something deeper—something rooted in who God says we are?

That brings us to the Gospel—the familiar and beautiful **Parable of the Prodigal Son** in **Luke 15**. Here we see another journey, another arc of return. The younger son, ashamed and broken, comes to his senses in a pigsty. He decides to go home—not as a son, but as a servant. Like Israel in the desert, he doesn't yet understand that mercy is not earned. He expects a punishment—but the father runs. He embraces. He celebrates. No scolding. No conditions. Just welcome.

This is one of the most powerful images of God in all of Scripture: a father running with joy, ready to restore his child's identity.

But there's another son in the story—the older brother. He stayed home, did everything right. But when the celebration begins, he won't go in. He's angry. He feels overlooked, unrewarded. And I have to ask—how many people in our pews feel just like him? Faithful but joyless. Dutiful but distant. Close to the Church, but far from the heart of the Father.

This, too, is part of the spiritual life. Sometimes we obey all the rules but miss the party. Sometimes we serve but forget how to celebrate. God invites both sons into the feast—not just the wayward, but the weary.

Then we hear the words of **Psalm 34**: *"I sought the Lord and he answered me... This poor one cried out and the Lord heard."* This psalm gives voice to the soul that has been broken and is now being restored. This is the prayer of the Prodigal after the embrace. It is the song of Israel standing in the land of promise. It is the cry of every person who realizes: *I was not abandoned. I was heard.*

And the line we should linger on is this: *"Look to Him and be radiant, and your faces shall not be ashamed."* This is the reversal of shame. It's not just that our past is forgiven—it's that our future is transformed. Grace doesn't simply erase our sins. It *transfigures* us. It makes the face shine.

This is what ties all the readings to-

gether. They tell **one story in three voices**:

- In **Joshua**, God removes the shame of slavery and welcomes His people into the land.
- In **Luke**, the father removes the shame of rebellion and welcomes his son into the feast.
- In **Psalm 34**, the soul gives thanks, not just for rescue, but for *radiance*.

It's a movement:
From wilderness to home. From alienation to embrace. From fear to feast.

So, what should we take away from these readings?

Not just ideas, rules, or analysis. But an *image*: the father, running with arms open. A *feeling*: the moment shame lifts and the face begins to shine. A *hope*: that we might taste the fruit of the land, and know—deep down—that we are home.

This Week: Fifth Sunday of Lent

"Even now, says the Lord, return to me with your whole heart; for I am gracious and merciful. (Joel 2:12-13)."

First Reading: Isaiah 43:16-21

Responsorial Psalm 126:1-2, 2-3, 4-5, 6.

Second Reading: Philippians 3:8-14

Gospel: John 8:1-11

Next Week: Palm Sunday of the Passion of Our Lord

"Christ became obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Because of this, God greatly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name (Philippians 2:8-9)."

Gospel Reflection at the Procession with Palms: Luke 19:28-40

First Reading at Mass: Isaiah 50:4-7

Responsorial Psalm: 22:8-9, 17-18, 19-20, 23-24

Second Reading: Philippians 2:6-11

Gospel: Luke 23:1-49

Introduction to Christianity: The Mystery of Incarnation

Fr. Matthew Hawkins



The question "Who is God?" points us directly to the Incarnation, the ultimate way God reveals Himself in Jesus Christ. By becoming human, God shows us His desire for a personal relationship, sharing in our struggles and offering redemption through His love.

When we try to define God as just a "what," we overlook the deep mystery of the Incarnation. This perspective diminishes a core truth of Christianity: God is not just the Creator but also our Redeemer, the Shepherd who knows His followers and invites them into a relationship.

Viewing God as merely a cosmic force or energy, instead of as a personal Trinity, limits our ability to truly worship and connect with Him. God is not an abstract idea; He is a "Who" that inspires love and respect. While a "what" might spark curiosity or admiration, it doesn't foster the personal connection that draws us into worship.

True worship in Christianity is not just about recognizing God's greatness. It's a personal encounter with the living God. For instance, the Mass is a powerful expression of this relational worship, uniting us with Christ through His sacrifice and the Eucharist.

If we see God only as a "what," our worship can become dry and intellectual, focusing more on abstract ideas than on building a genuine relationship with Him. This perspective misses the true purpose of worship: to connect us with the Triune God. Christianity invites us into a loving relationship with God, rather than just asking us to contemplate a faceless concept.

Join Us for Confession and the Stations of the Cross



"The Light is On For You" for Confession, this Wednesday from 6:30-8:00. Drop the burden of sin and prepare for Easter by going to confession during this Holy Season of Lent.

Participate in the Stations of the Cross at St. Benedict the Moor Church every Friday at 6:30. Follow in Jesus's steps during this solemn journey.

The **Confraternity of Christian Mothers** invites everyone to pray the **Stations of the Cross** together via **Zoom on Monday at 7:00 PM** Contact **Priscilla Davis**, for more details – office@sbtmparishpgh.com | ☎ 412-281-3141, ext. 100

Our Schedule for Holy Week:

Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion: April 13, at 11:00 AM

Holy Thursday Evening Mass of the Lord's Supper: April 17 at 6:30

Good Friday Liturgy: April 18, 1:00 PM Stations of the Cross, 2:00 Liturgy

Easter Vigil Mass: April 19, 8:30 PM

Easter Sunday Mass: April 20, 11:00 AM

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

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