



Saint Benedict the Moor Parish

Personal Parish for Black Catholics in Pittsburgh

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

OCTOBER 26, 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.

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The prayer of the lowly pierces the clouds;
it does not rest until it reaches its goal,
nor will it withdraw till the Most High responds.

— Sirach 35:17–18a

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Website:
sbtmparishpgh.com



[St. Benedict the Moor Parish-PGH](https://www.facebook.com/St.BenedicttheMoorParish-PGH)



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

Mass Intentions

October 26 11:00 am
30th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Fr. Matthew Hawkins
Jemel Thomas
(Conrad & Carol Johnson)

November 2 11:00 am
All Souls Day

Fr. Matthew Hawkins
Martha "Doll" Mercer
(Greeters)

Stewardship Oct. 19th

Offertory	Parish Appeal	Building Fund
\$3,198.00	\$180.00	\$40.00
Care for the Poor	Tech	World Mission
\$15.00	\$30.00	\$548.00

Mass Attendance: Oct 19th—144

Prayer Requests

Antoinette Peters
Bonita Dsouza
Claudia Harrison
Damitra Penny-Harris
Delores Denton
Frances Tarkett
Gail Jackson
Genevieve Sanford
Hall Family
Irene Chong
Janice Simmons
John Young
Karen McDill
Ken Smith (Pizza)
Marie Alian
Nicole Orlando
Pat Ellis
Peggy Bullard
Reggie Jackson
Rita Costa
Shania Long

Protection of God's Children

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

To report church-related abuse
to the Diocese of Pittsburgh
call: **888.808.1235**

Christian Virtues in Conversation: Giving Others the Benefit of the Doubt and the Principle of Charity

Fr. Matthew Hawkins



We've all been there. Someone makes a statement that strikes us as wrong, puzzling, or even offensive. Our first instinct is often to dismiss it, to argue against the weakest interpretation of their words, or to assume the worst about their intentions. But what if we approached these moments differently?

The Principle of Charity, a cornerstone of philosophical discourse, invites us to do something counterintuitive: when someone's words are unclear or seem problematic, we should interpret them in the most reasonable, coherent, and sincere way possible. Rather than asking "What's wrong with what they said?" we ask "What's the best, most rational version of what they could mean?"

This isn't about being naive or abandoning critical thinking. It's about extending the same grace to others that we hope they'll extend to us. After all, we've all misspoken, failed to articulate a thought clearly, or had our words taken out of context. The Principle of Charity recognizes our shared humanity—that good people sometimes express themselves imperfectly, and that understanding requires effort from both speaker and listener.

In our current climate of polarized discourse and quick reactions, this principle feels both ancient and urgently needed. Social media has conditioned us to respond instantly, often to the worst possible reading of someone's statement. We've become experts at finding fault and tearing down arguments rather than building understanding. The Principle of Charity offers a different path.

Consider how this might work in everyday life. When a colleague makes a suggestion that seems impractical, instead of immediately explaining why it won't work, we might ask: "What problem are they trying to solve? What insight might they have that I'm missing?" When a family member expresses a political view we disagree with, rather than attacking a strawman version of their position, we could seek to understand the values and experiences that shaped their perspective.

This doesn't mean accepting every argument or abandoning our own convictions. Rather, it means engaging with the strongest version of someone else's thinking before we critique it. It means assuming, until proven otherwise, that the person we're talking with is sincere, thoughtful, and trying their best to communicate something meaningful.

The benefits of this approach extend beyond individual conversations. When we consistently apply the Principle of Charity, we create spaces where people feel safe expressing half-formed ideas, asking difficult questions, and thinking out loud. We reduce the fear of being misunderstood or attacked, which so often keeps us from saying anything at all. We build trust, and trust is the foundation of every meaningful relationship and community.

Perhaps most importantly, practicing charitable interpretation changes us. It cultivates patience, humility, and intellectual generosity. It reminds us that truth-seeking is a collaborative endeavor, not a competitive sport.

This week, I invite you to experiment with the Principle of Charity. When you encounter a confusing or provocative statement—whether online, at work, or around the dinner table—pause. Take a breath. Then ask yourself: "What's the most reasonable version of what this person might mean?" You might be surprised by what you discover, both about others and about yourself.



Fr. Matthew Hawkins



The God Who Hears: Prayer as Restored Relationship

Opening the Heart's Door

In today's readings, we encounter a profound truth that can transform our spiritual lives: God is not distant or indifferent, but rather a God who actively listens, especially to those who approach Him with humble, honest hearts. The theme woven through these scriptures reveals that prayer is far more than reciting words—it is the path by which we restore and deepen our relationship with the Divine.

The Posture of Authentic Prayer

The Gospel parable presents us with two men, both praying, yet worlds apart in their spiritual disposition. The Pharisee stands before God with a catalog of his achievements, essentially praying to himself about himself. The tax collector, by contrast, cannot even lift his eyes to heaven. His prayer is stark, vulnerable, almost painfully simple: "O God, be merciful to me, a sinner."

Here lies the heart of the matter: authentic prayer begins with truth. The tax collector doesn't pretend, doesn't posture, doesn't compare himself favorably to others. He simply stands in his need before the One who can meet that need. This is the kind of prayer that pierces heaven—not because of eloquence or length, but because of honesty.

The God Who Bends Down to Listen

Sirach beautifully assures us that "the prayer of the lowly pierces the clouds." What a remarkable image! Our God is not impressed by our résumés or our religious credentials. Rather, He inclines His ear toward the widow's cry, the orphan's plea, the humble heart that knows its dependence on divine mercy.

This is counter-cultural, both in the ancient world and today. We live in a society that celebrates self-sufficiency, that encourages us to project strength and hide vulnerability. Yet God's economy operates differently. The very posture we fear will disqualify us—our weakness, our need, our emptiness—becomes the very thing that draws His attention and compassion.

Prayer: The Bridge Back Home

The Responsorial Psalm echoes this theme: "The Lord is close to the brokenhearted." Prayer, then, becomes the bridge that reconnects us with God when we've drifted, when we've failed, when we've lost our way. It's not about performing for God or convincing Him of our worthiness. It's about coming home to the Father who has been waiting, listening, longing for us to turn back.

Paul's words in Timothy remind us that even in our most difficult moments when we feel abandoned, when our support has crumbled God stands by us. "The Lord stood by me and gave me strength." This is the fruit of a life rooted in prayerful relationship: the experiential knowledge that we are never truly alone.

From Self-Righteousness to Right Relationship

The Pharisee's prayer reveals a tragic irony: he went to the temple to pray but never actually connected with God. His words bounced off the ceiling because they never left his own ego. He was so full of himself that there was no room for God to enter. The tax collector, empty of pretense, created space for divine mercy to flood in.

This challenges us to examine our own prayer lives. Do we come to God with open hands or clenched fists? Do we approach Him with our needs or our achievements? Are we

willing to be transformed by the encounter, or do we just want divine validation of who we already think we are?

Conclusion

The God who hears is not waiting for perfect prayers from perfect people. He is waiting for real prayers from real people—people who know they need mercy, who hunger for relationship, who are willing to be vulnerable in His presence.

The tax collector went home justified not because he was better than the Pharisee, but because he was honest. His prayer restored what pride destroys: authentic relationship with God. May we learn to pray like him—simply, honestly, humbly—and discover afresh that we serve a God whose ear is always inclined toward the sincere heart, whose mercy is always ready to meet our need, whose love is always seeking to restore us to Himself.

In our poverty, we find His riches. In our honesty, we find His grace. In our humility, we find the very heart of God—and that makes all the difference.

This Week: Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time

God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, entrusting to us the message of salvation (2 Corinthians 5:19).

Reading: Sirach 35:12-14, 16-18

Responsorial Psalm 34:2-3, 17-18, 19, 23

Second Reading: 2 Timothy 4:6-8, 16-18

The Gospel: Luke 18:9-14

Next Week: The Commemoration of All the Faithful Departed (All Souls)

Come, you who are blessed by my Father;

inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world (Matthew 25:34).

Reading: Wisdom 3:1-9

Responsorial Psalm 23:1-3a, 3b-4, 5, 6

Second Reading: Romans 5:5-11

The Gospel: John 6:37-40

Understanding Pope Leo XIV's *Dilexi Te*: "I Have Loved You" Chapter One
Fr. Matthew Hawkins



In the opening chapter of his Apostolic Exhortation *Dilexi Te* ("I Have Loved You"), Pope Leo XIV establishes the fundamental connection between loving Christ and caring for the poor. He begins by reflecting

on the Gospel story of the woman who anointed Jesus with costly perfume. While the disciples criticized this as wasteful, Jesus defended her, recognizing her love for him as the suffering Messiah. This small gesture of affection, Jesus said, would be remembered forever.

The Holy Father emphasizes that Jesus' words "the poor you will always have with you" must be understood alongside his promise "I am with you always." These are not separate realities but one truth: encountering Christ means encountering him in the poor. As Jesus taught, "Just as you did it to one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did it to me."

Pope Leo XIV recalls how Pope Francis chose his name after being reminded by a cardinal friend to "not forget the poor"—the same appeal Saint Paul received from the early Church leaders. Saint Francis of Assisi exemplifies this call, as his encounter with a leper transformed his life completely. The Pope notes that Francis "changed history" through his radical embrace of poverty.

The chapter concludes by emphasizing that God hears the cry of the poor throughout salvation history. The Church must listen to this cry as well, for in the wounded faces of the poor, we encounter Christ himself. This preferential love for the poor represents a path to holiness that every Christian is called to walk.

Discover the Spiritual Roots of Our Parish



Have you ever wondered about the remarkable story behind St. Benedict the Moor Parish? How did we become the vibrant faith community standing at Freedom Corner? What lessons can our 150-year journey teach us about perseverance, identity, and God's faithfulness?

Fr. Matthew Hawkins has crafted a powerful new study guide, "Faith on Freedom Corner," that unveils the extraordinary history of our parish—from humble beginnings in 1844 through our pivotal role in Pittsburgh's civil rights movement to our restoration as a personal parish in 2020. But this isn't just a history book. It's a spiritual journey that connects our past to our present calling as disciples of Christ.

Discover how early missionaries planted seeds of faith that grew into our thriving community. Learn about St. Benedict the Moor himself—born into slavery in 16th-century Sicily, yet rising to become a beacon of humility and love. Explore how our parish has consistently demonstrated that the Catholic Church is strongest when it honors both its universal mission and the unique gifts of each community.

This engaging guide includes reflection questions, Scripture connections, and practical applications perfect for personal devotion, family discussions, or small group sharing. Whether you're a longtime parishioner or new to our community, these stories will deepen your understanding of how God works through ordinary people to create something extraordinary.

Visit our parish website today to download your free copy. Let our shared heritage strengthen your faith journey and inspire your witness in the world. Your story is part of this continuing legacy.

Website: <https://Sbthmparishpgh.com>



All Souls Mass

All Souls Day will be observed at the 11am Mass on Sunday, November 2. Parishioners with a family member who died since Nov. 1, 2024 may light and place a candle in their memory at the Mass. Participants **must register** for a candle **by Oct. 29** by calling the church office (412-281-3141).

All are invited to write the names of any deceased family and friends in the Book of the Deceased so that we may pray for them during the Mass. The book is located in the church's gathering area. Contact Toni Long or Greta Tucker for additional information.

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