

Saint Benedict the Moor Parish

Mission Parish for Black Catholics in Pittsburgh
“Without a Vision, the People Perish” (Proverbs 29:18)



91 Crawford Street • Pittsburgh PA 15219

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Mass Schedule

Sunday 11am
Livestream

facebook.com/SBTMPGH/live

Sacrament of Reconciliation

Sundays at 10:30 am
& by appointment.

Baptisms, Weddings, & Funerals

by appointment.



Our church is accessible.

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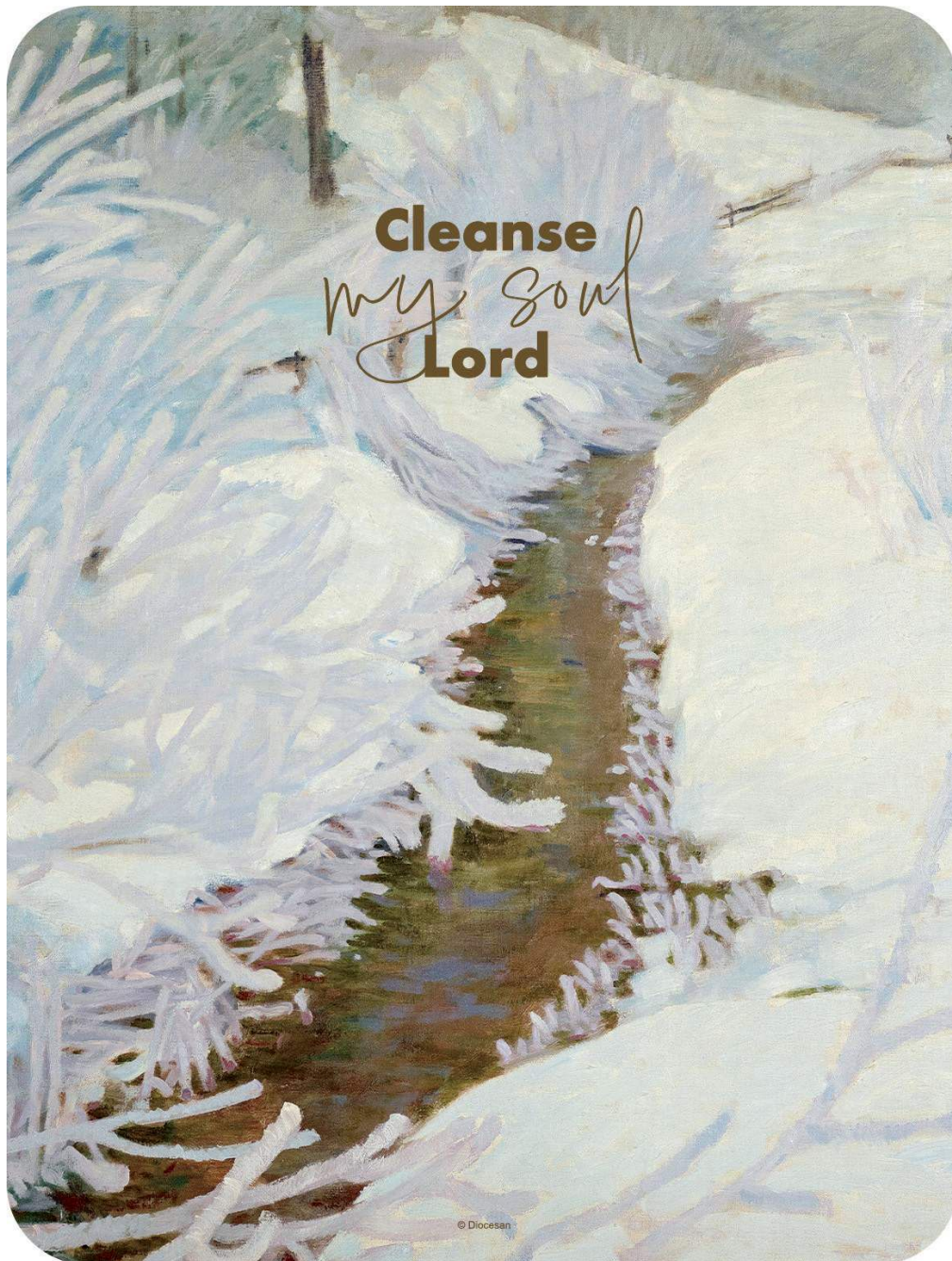
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 [St. Benedict the Moor Parish-PGH](https://facebook.com/St.BenedicttheMoorParish-PGH)

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The Baptism of the Lord | January 11, 2026

Mass Intentions

January 11, 11 am

The Baptism of the Lord

† Lisa Durrett (Cetrone Family)

Fr. Matthew Hawkins

January 18, 11 am

Second Sunday in Ordinary Time

† Mahalia Carter & Idella Davis

(YinkaWilliams)

Fr. Matthew Hawkins

Stewardship

Offertory Parish Appeal

December 8—Attendance: 45

\$157 \$0

December 14—Attendance: 47

\$1,490 \$280

December 21—Attendance: 163

\$2,928 \$505

December 24—Attendance: 119

\$630 \$42

December 25—Attendance: 83

\$1046 \$20

December 28—Attendance: 126

\$3,129 \$110



It is now easier than ever to support our parish through online giving. To learn more about online giving or to enroll for recurring donations or make a one-time gift:

sbtparishpqh.com/

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Bulletin

Announcements

Bulletin announcements are due on Friday by 4 pm for inclusion in the following Sunday's bulletin. Please direct all announcement requests to:

crffaele@sbtparishpqh.org

Christian Virtues in Conversation: Justice

by Fr. Matthew Hawkins



When we speak of justice, our minds often turn to courtrooms, legislation, or the great social movements that have bent history toward righteousness. Yet justice begins somewhere far more intimate: in the simple act of being heard. "You have a right to be heard" is not merely a democratic principle or a nicety of polite society. It is a claim rooted in the dignity of every person made in God's image. To listen well is not only kindness—it is justice rendered.

Consider what happens when someone is habitually ignored or talked over. They are being told, in effect, that their experience does not matter, that their voice contributes nothing to our common life. This is a wound to justice, because it denies what is rightfully theirs: participation in the discernment of truth and the building of community. The person who never gets a word in edgewise at the dinner table, the parishioner whose questions are brushed aside, the elderly member whose stories are met with impatience—each suffers a subtle but real injustice. Their voice belongs to the common good, and when we withhold space for it, we impoverish ourselves as much as we diminish them.

In one-on-one conversations, justice demands that we recognize the other person's experience not as mere opinion to be countered or curiosity to be satisfied, but as a moral reality we must reckon with. When my neighbor tells me of her struggle, she is not presenting a debate point; she is entrusting me with something sacred. To dismiss her account because it does not match my assumptions is to fail in justice before I have failed in charity.

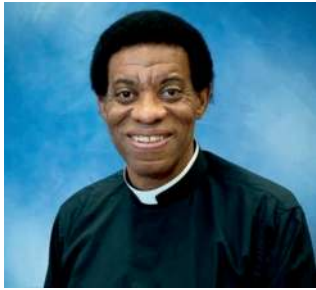
Small group settings present their own challenges. Without intention, certain voices naturally dominate: the confident, the educated, the articulate, those whose social position grants them an assumed authority. Justice requires that we make deliberate room for those typically sidelined—the young who lack experience, the elderly who are patronized, immigrants navigating unfamiliar cultural codes, the poor who have learned that their concerns rarely matter to those with power, and all who lack the confidence to compete for airtime. This is not tokenism; it is the recognition that the Holy Spirit speaks through the whole body, and we cannot hear God fully if we only listen to the same few voices.

At parish assemblies and community gatherings, the structural dimension of conversational justice becomes most apparent. When only the "usual suspects" speak—those who always volunteer, always opine, always take the microphone—the assembly hears only a fraction of its own wisdom. Justice demands structures that invite broader participation: small group discussions before plenary sessions, written submissions for those who think better on paper, and facilitators trained to draw out the reticent while gently limiting the verbose. We must refuse to confuse loudness with importance or fluency with truth.

Here lies the paradox that should unsettle every Christian community: a parish that will not hear its least powerful members cannot credibly claim to be "pro-justice" in the world. We cannot advocate for the voiceless in society while silencing the voiceless in our own assemblies. The practice of justice begins at home, in the small disciplines of making room, staying curious, and believing that every person has something to teach us. In this way, our conversations become not only exchanges of information but acts of justice—small but genuine offerings to the God who hears every cry.

Scripture Reflection for The Baptism of the Lord “The God Who Steps Into the Water”

by Fr. Matthew Hawkins



There is a moment at the Jordan River that should stop us cold. John the Baptist, wild-eyed and leather-clad, has been baptizing crowds of repentant sinners. The ritual is clear: you come to the water because you need washing. Then Jesus arrives—and He gets in line.

This is not theater. This is method.

We often imagine God's entrance into human history as something dramatic and distant: thunder from Sinai, fire from heaven, a voice that makes mountains tremble. Psalm 29 gives us this God—the voice over the waters that breaks cedars and shakes the wilderness. And yet when that same God takes on flesh, His first public act is not to shout from the heavens. He gets His feet wet. He wades into the same muddy Jordan where tax collectors and soldiers and ordinary sinners have been confessing their failures. The crowd that day would have seen just another figure moving through the water, indistinguishable from the rest of us.

Isaiah's prophecy illuminates what we're witnessing: "A bruised reed he shall not break, and a smoldering wick he shall not quench." The Servant of the Lord does not come crashing through our lives with force. He comes gently, entering the places of human weakness not to condemn but to inhabit. At the Jordan, Jesus does not stand on the riverbank calling sinners to come up to His level. He steps down into the water to meet us where we actually are.

The paradox here is sharp. The sinless one has no need of cleansing. John himself protests—"I need to be baptized by you, and yet you are coming to me?" But Jesus insists. Why? Because solidarity is His method. He will not save us from a distance. He will not shout instructions from heaven while we flounder below. The God revealed in Christ is a God who gets involved, who refuses the clean separation between the sacred and the profane, who enters the mess.

This matters enormously for how we understand Christianity itself. Our faith does not begin with escape from the world but with immersion in it. The Word became flesh—not appeared as flesh, not merely visited flesh, but became it. At the baptism, this incarnational logic reaches its public declaration. When Jesus rises from the water and the heavens open, when the Spirit descends and the Father speaks, God is not endorsing Jesus' departure from human experience. He is endorsing Jesus' entrance into it. "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased"—pleased with this one who has chosen to stand with sinners, pleased with this method of salvation that works from within rather than from above.

Peter grasped something of this years later, standing in Cornelius's house. "God shows no partiality," he proclaimed. "In every nation whoever fears him and acts uprightly is acceptable to him." The God who stepped into the Jordan is the same God who tears down walls

of division, who refuses to call anyone common or unclean, who sees dignity where others see mud. When Jesus entered that water, He was not simply fulfilling righteousness as an abstract requirement. He was declaring that every human being standing in that river—every broken, compromised, struggling person—is worth standing with.

This is the Gospel's offer to us: not that we might one day escape our humanity, but that our humanity has been joined to God forever. The muddy waters of our actual lives—our failures, our limitations, our ordinary struggles—have become the place of divine encounter. We cannot clean ourselves up before approaching the sacred. The transformation in our lives comes afterward. It comes as a response to our encounter with the Lord. The sacred has already approached us, wading through whatever waters we find ourselves in.

As we celebrate the Baptism of the Lord, we remember our own baptisms. We too have been plunged into these waters. We too have heard, in the voice that spoke over Jesus, a word spoken over us: beloved. The dignity Christ revealed at the Jordan is not His alone. It is the dignity He came to restore to every human being, especially those the world considers unworthy.

The God who stepped into the water invites us to do the same—to enter the mess of human life not as judges but as companions, to find holiness not by fleeing the world but by loving it as He did. This is the way of the Servant. This is the path of the Beloved Son. This is our way home.

This Week: The Baptism of the Lord

"The heavens were opened and the voice of the Father thundered: This is my beloved Son, listen to him." Cf. Mark 9:7

Reading: Isaiah 42:1-4, 6-7

Responsorial Psalm 29:1-2, 3-4, 3, 9-10

Second Reading: Acts 10:34-38

The Gospel: Matthew 3:13-17

Next Week: Second Sunday in Ordinary Time

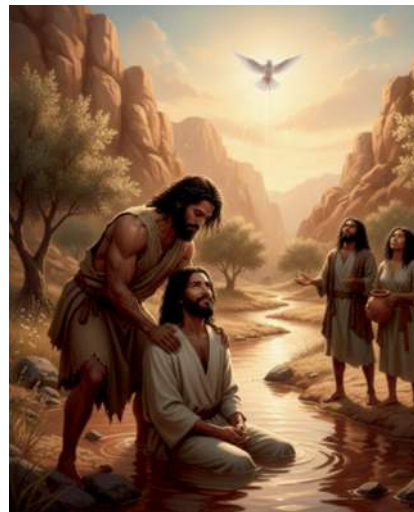
"The Word of God became flesh and dwelt among us. To those who accepted him, he gave power to become children of God." John 1:14a, 12a

Reading: Isaiah 49:3, 5-6

Responsorial Psalm 40:2, 4, 7-8, 8-9, 10

Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 1:1-3

The Gospel: John 1:29-34



Contemporary Christian Songs: Where Are We Really Headed?

Trip Lee's song "Homecoming" poses a question most of us would rather avoid: What happens when this life is over? For Lee, a Christian hip-hop artist who has spent years battling Chronic Fatigue Syndrome—a condition that has repeatedly forced him to step away from his career—this isn't an abstract theological question. It's deeply personal.

The song's central line cuts through all our usual anxieties about legacy and being remembered: "When I'm gone, who cares if I'm known / I'm just headed home." In a culture obsessed with leaving our mark, building our brand, and ensuring we're not forgotten, Lee offers something radically different: the freedom that comes from knowing our ultimate destination matters more than our earthly reputation.



This challenges the way we typically think about success. We measure our lives by accomplishments, recognition, and what we leave behind. But Lee suggests that true success is simpler and more profound: being welcomed home by the Father. Everything else—the accolades, the achievements, even being remembered—fades in importance when we grasp where we're actually going.

What strikes me most is how Lee frames death not as a tragedy but as a relocation, even instructing loved ones: "Don't cry this song, I'm where I belong." For someone whose body has often failed him, the promise of a resurrected body in a place of complete restoration carries particular weight. This echoes our Catholic hope in the resurrection of the body—not just survival of the soul, but the restoration of our whole selves, finally healed and made complete.

The song doesn't sound morbid; it sounds like celebration, like graduation day. Because that's what Christian death should be—a homecoming, not an ending. This is why the Church has historically called the anniversary of a saint's death their "birthday" into eternal life.

But here's the challenging question Lee leaves us with: If our true home is heaven, how does that change how we live now? What burdens can we set down? What anxieties about legacy or reputation or success can we release? What becomes truly important when we remember we're just passing through?

This post-Christmas season, where we celebrated Christ's coming, might be the perfect time to reflect: Where are we really headed, and does the way we're living reflect that destination?

—Fr. Matthew



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