

20th
Sunday
in Ordinary Time

St. Matthew the Evangelist Parish
August 17, 2025



"I have come to set the earth on fire,
and how I wish it were already blazing!

Luke 12:49



Dear Parishioners,

We read these words in the Letter to the Hebrews this weekend: *"Since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us rid ourselves of every burden and sin that clings to us and persevere in running the race that lies before us while keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus, the leader and perfecter of faith."* This great "cloud of witnesses" contains the saints who have gone before us. Many saints can be our inspiration to the life of holiness and service that each of us is called to as a disciple of Jesus Christ. Having been inspired then, we too become saints. That is the call for each of us... to be a saint. When our time on earth

is done, we look forward to the new life to come in the eternal joy of heaven. So, the saints not only motivate us to the mission we have on earth, but remind us of the greater joy to come, the glory of Heaven made possible for us because of what Jesus has done for us.

However, the first reading from the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah reminds us that witnessing to the faith often causes stress and division rather than bringing the peace one might hope for. Jeremiah was warning the Kingdom of Judah and the City of Jerusalem of impending doom; the Babylonian Empire would soon attack and topple the city and destroy the Temple. The people don't listen though, and in fact, as we hear today, want Jeremiah killed for all the aggravation he is causing them.

We hear Jesus say in the Gospel of Luke *"Do you think that I have come to establish peace on the earth? No, I tell you, but rather division."* In Luke 2:34 we heard Simeon prophesy that Jesus will be a "sign that will be contradicted", and Jesus is making clear that the Gospel will encounter the same kind of resistance that the Prophets encountered in their day. The Navarre Commentary on the Gospel of Luke has this... *"God has come into the world with a message of peace (cf. Lk 2:14) and reconciliation (cf. Rom 5:11). By resisting, through sin, the redeeming work of Christ, we become his opponents. Injustice and error lead to division and war. "Insofar as men are sinners, the threat of war hangs over them and will so continue until the coming of Christ; but insofar as they can vanquish sin by coming together in charity, violence itself will be vanquished" (Vatican II, Gaudium et spes, 78).*

Jesus is the Prince of Peace and came to establish the Kingdom of God in our midst. To accomplish this Jesus came into the world filled with sin (Romans 5:8 *"But God proves his love for us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us."*) Sin and the Life of Grace that Jesus calls us to are diametrically opposed to one another. The fact the Jesus is calling us out of sin and into grace will cause conflict. Remember that spiritual adage *"Where there is sin there is division, where there is division there is sin."* St. Paul wrote to the Galatians: *"Now the works of the flesh are plain: fornication, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, anger, selfishness, dissension, party spirit, envy, drunkenness, carousing, and the like. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God"* (Gal. 5:19-21).

Sin always has and always will divide us. The Life of Grace on the other hand brings us into closer union with God and with each other. The ones who have gone before us, the Saints in Heaven, form a great "Cloud of Witnesses" that can be a source of inspiration as we struggle to live the Life of Grace. But as the Church Militant we are the ones who are called today to live in this world in union with God and free from sin. Our lives will at times be a source of division for we are called to be *in the world and not of the world*; the Letter to the Hebrews encourages us in this way: *"Consider how he endured such opposition from sinners, in order that you may not grow weary and lose heart. In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood."* (Heb 12:3-4)

~Father Chris

Are you able to assist with Faith Formation?

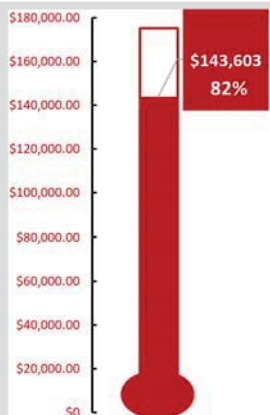
VOLUNTEER

Whether you are a student seeking service hours, a seasoned catechist, retiree, busy parent, first-time volunteer, or someone who is still on the fence about volunteering...**EVERYONE IS WELCOME!** Essential to the success of our Faith Formation ministry is having a dedicated group of adult and young adult volunteers willing to help and nurture our faith with our youth.

When does class take place? On Monday and Tuesday afternoons and Sundays. Do you have a few hours you can spare? Our team is ready for a fun-filled, faith-filled year. We're excited to share updates to our program for the upcoming year—after hearing your helpful feedback!

If you would like to learn more about volunteering opportunities in Faith Formation or other Parish Ministries, please reach out to the Parish Office at [978-663-8816](tel:978-663-8816) to discover how YOU can CHANGE the lives of children, young adults and families.

Let us connect you with other volunteers to discover how YOU can CHANGE the lives of children, young adults and families.



2025 Grand Annual Campaign WE ARE MOVING CLOSER TO OUR GOAL!

We have received just over \$143,500 – moving us closer to our goal of \$175,000! We are about 82% of the way there! THANK YOU! WE WOULD LIKE TO REACH OUR GOAL IN 2025!

The Grand Annual campaign supplements our weekly Offertory and is vital in keeping St. Matthew financially stable. We are grateful for and inspired by your significant offerings to St. Matthew the Evangelist and your self-sacrifice of making consistent contributions.

Many have stepped up to meet the request– THANK YOU! Others continue to contribute monthly, weekly, and in a way that is best for their family.

To make a contribution, you may place your Grand Annual donation envelope in the offertory basket, mail it to the parish office, use the monthly Grand Annual envelope in the weekly envelopes, or use the QR code provided to donate online at billericacatholic.org/givenow. Thank you for your generosity and the support of our parish !



St. Matthew Prayer Chain

Would you like to have prayers said for a special intention? Please contact the St. Matthew Prayer Chain by calling **Pat** at [978-667-0869](tel:978-667-0869) or send an email to **Charline** at admin@billericacatholic.org. If you would like to become a member of the St. Matthew Prayer Chain Group, please leave your information with either Pat or Charline. Thank you for your prayers.



Fr. Chris presents a Series on the Sacraments



Each week, we'll explore one of the Church's seven sacraments—what it is, where it comes from in Scripture, and how it brings God's grace into our lives. Whether you're Catholic, curious, or coming back to the faith—this series is for you! We will start with the sacrament of the anointing of a sick, by far the most requested of the seven!

The Healing Touch of Christ: Anointing of the Sick

The Anointing of the Sick is one of the most misunderstood yet beautiful sacraments of the Church. It is not “last rites” in the sense of something only for the dying—it’s a powerful gift of healing, strength, forgiveness, and peace for anyone facing serious illness or the burdens of aging...

What Is the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick?

The Anointing of the Sick is one of the seven sacraments of the Church. It is a powerful channel of grace, healing, peace, and spiritual strength given by Christ to those who are seriously ill, elderly, or facing major surgery.

This sacrament is not just for those at the point of death. It can be received more than once—whenever someone experiences serious illness or a significant decline in health. Jesus Himself instituted this sacrament. As Scripture says: “Is anyone among you sick? He should summon the presbyters of the Church, and they should pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord...” (James 5:14–15)

During the sacrament, the priest anoints the sick person with the Oil of the Sick, making the sign of the cross on the forehead and the palms of the hands, if possible. If the person receiving the sacrament is a priest, however, the anointing is done on the back of the hands—because a priest’s palms were already anointed at his ordination to signify his consecration for sacred ministry.

Through the priest’s anointing with blessed oil and prayers, the **sick person receives**:

- The grace of the Holy Spirit to endure suffering
- Forgiveness of sins (if unable to go to Confession)
- Possible physical healing, if it is God’s will
- Union with Christ’s own suffering
- Preparation for eternal life, if death is near

What is the Apostolic Pardon? When a Catholic is near death, the Church offers not only the Anointing of the Sick, but also a special blessing called the Apostolic Pardon (or Apostolic Blessing). This is a beautiful and powerful gift of the Church, granted by the authority of the Pope, to remove all temporal punishment due to sin—in other words, it remits all purgatory.

It is not a sacrament, but a plenary indulgence given at the hour of death, often in these words: *“Through the holy mysteries of our redemption, may almighty God release you from all punishments in this life and in the life to come. May He open to you the gates of paradise and welcome you to everlasting joy.”*

The Apostolic Pardon is normally given after Confession (if possible), Holy Communion, and Anointing, but it can be granted even if the person cannot speak or respond, provided they were properly disposed in life.

Don’t wait until the last minute. If you or a loved one is sick or nearing the end of life, contact a priest as soon as possible. The grace of these sacraments brings deep peace—and prepares the soul to meet Christ face-to-face.

*“Blessed are those who die in the Lord.” (Rev. 14:13)
Jesus, Divine Physician, have mercy on the sick and the dying.*

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Save the Date! Faith Formation Orientations



Grades 1 and 2

9/14/25

4:00 PM – 4:50 PM

Fr. McCormick Hall

Grades 3-8

9/28/25

4:00 PM – 4:50 PM

Fr. McCormick Hall

More details to follow.



Since your registration at this time may require no commitment to a specific day and time next fall, we ask that you sign up now in order for us to better serve your family. **See all the information below! Use the link or the QR code provided** <https://billericacatholic.org/2025-2026-faith-formation-registration>.

Highlights for next year include:

Play and Pray (Grade 1) will be offered once per month on Sunday mornings centered around the 9:30AM Mass at St. Theresa.

Mass and Class- First Sacrament Prep (Grade 2) will meet once per month on Sunday morning or Sunday afternoon. Options will be centered around the 9:30am or 5:00 pm Mass at St. Theresa. Choose the option that works best for your family.

Gatherings (Grades 3 – 7) meet monthly on either Monday or Tuesday at **4:00–5:15pm** or **5:45–7:00pm** in Fr. McCormick Hall at St. Theresa. Weekend Mass attendance is strongly encouraged for all participants.

Teen Ministries – Confirmation Prep (Grades 8 – 9) will meet once per month on Sunday evenings, centered around the 5:00pm Mass at St. Theresa.

The **online registration form** is intuitive, asking you only the questions that provide us the information we need and there are multiple options for making your offering - pay now, partial payments, mail offering, and asking for financial assistance.

Registration Offerings

1 child	\$160
2 children	\$260
3 + children	\$310

ADDITIONAL RETREAT FEE \$50.00 **(Required for all Confirmation students)**



Jubilee Year 2025: Pilgrims of Hope

Why is Jesus our hope? *Because God never gives up on us. He extends his love and mercy to those who want it, even at the eleventh hour.* "At times we have the impression that we cannot find meaning for our lives: we feel useless, inadequate, just like the laborers who wait in the marketplace, waiting for someone to hire them to work."

The parable of the laborers in the vineyard (Matthew 20) "is a parable that gives hope, because it tells us that this landowner goes out several times to go and look for those who are waiting to give meaning to their lives ... God wants to give his Kingdom, that is, full, eternal and happy life, to everyone. And this is what Jesus does with us: he does not establish rankings, he gives all of himself to those who open their hearts to him" (Pope Leo 6/4/25 Audience).



Serve at the Table of the Lord

Have you ever felt called to share your gifts as a **Lector** or an **Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion**? Lectors proclaim the Word of God at Mass, helping our parish community hear and reflect on Scripture. Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist assist in distributing the Body and Blood of Christ, helping to nourish our parish family with Jesus' true presence.

We warmly invite new and returning volunteers to join these beautiful ministries. Training is provided, and all ministers must have a current CORI form on file. If you are interested or wish to return to ministry, please contact the Parish Office at **978-663-8816** or admin@billericacatholic.org for more details. Thank you for considering this special way to serve our parish and the Lord!



We are launching our Social Justice Ministry!

Do you know the seven tenets or principles of Catholic Social Teaching? If not, now's the perfect time to learn! St. Matthew the Evangelist Parish is launching a new Social Justice Ministry rooted in the rich tradition of Catholic social teaching and its relevance for our world today.

This new ministry will take the form of a *monthly discussion group*, with each unit concluding in a meaningful service project. Our first gathering will begin a group study of *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis' groundbreaking encyclical (a pastoral letter written by the pope for the whole Roman Catholic Church) on care for our common home.

Join us on **Tuesday, September 16 at 7:00 PM** in **Father Wilson Hall at Saint Andrew Church**. Snacks will be provided. All are welcome!



House Blessing

Whether you have just moved into a new home or live in one that has been in your family for generations, it is always fitting to pray for God's blessing over your household — asking that your home be filled with peace, love, and faith.

When we bless our homes, we entrust them to God's protection, asking Him to watch over all who live there and to guard us from all harm, both bodily and spiritual. As Jesus said to His disciples: "*When you enter a house, first say, 'Peace to this house.'*" (Luke 10:5) If you would like to have your home blessed, please contact the parish office at **978-663-8816**. We would be honored to help you invite God's peace and protection into your home.

Reflection Question of the Week ~ 20th Sunday in Ordinary Time



Later today, pause for a few minutes to read again today's readings. Who comes to mind when you hear that you are surrounded by "so great a cloud of witnesses"? Is it people from your own life that are/were pillars of faith, or someone who strived to be "Christ-like" and persevered even when faced with hardships? St. Paul urges us to be like those witnesses who persevered in faith and ran the race to eternal life by "...keeping ... eyes fixed on Jesus." The baton has been passed on to us – let's fix our eyes on Jesus as we stay the course with the hope to be counted among that cloud of witnesses.

- The witnesses we think of affirmed God's greatness by living by the values Jesus taught us and putting Him first in their lives.
- How have you experienced challenges in living out your faith?
- What steps can you take to be more active in living out your faith daily?
- How can you support others who are facing challenges in their faith?



Intentions for the week of August 16th– August 22nd

Kevin McCarthy-Memorial
 Anne Avellani-Birthday Memorial
 Domenica Massaro-Birthday Memorial
 Danny Ceicere-Memorial
 Manuel and Gloria Simas-Memorial
 Valter Sousa-Memorial
 Daniel Horgan-Memorial
 Charles Bere-Memorial
 Brother Paul Feeney, CFX-Memorial
 Rafael and Luisa Rios and Dan and Carol McKenna-Memorial
 Tonie and Patrick Trainor-2nd and 20th Anniversary

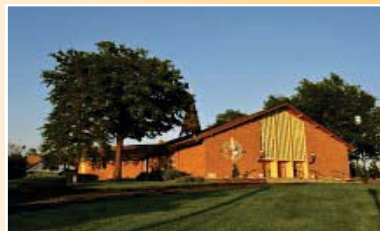
Intentions for the week of August 23rd– August 29th

Michael Dwyer-4th Anniversary
 Cynthia King-1st Anniversary
 David and Jeanette Byrnes-Memorial
 Joe Boisvert-Memorial
 Barbara and William Mercer-21st and 5th Anniversary
 Frank Harrington-8th Anniversary
 Maria Sousa-Memorial
 Mary Santo-Memorial
 T.J. O'Neill-20th Anniversary
 Tamie M. Abrahamson-Birthday Memorial
 Vincenzo Greco-Memorial
 Maria Angela Milazzo-Memorial



Online Giving QR Code

Use the QR code to the left, to make a secure, one-time or recurring contribution from your bank account to our parish. Online Giving provides many advantages to you and the parish. Thank you for your continued support. **St. Matthew the receives approximately 40% of contributions through online giving!**



St. Andrew Church

45 Talbot Avenue

N. Billerica, MA 01862

Sun. Mass 8:00am & 11:00am

Daily Mass Tues. & Fri. at 12:05pm

Rosary led by Legion of Mary: Friday at 11:30am

St. Theresa Church

466 Boston Road

Billerica, MA 01821

Sat. Mass 4:00pm

Sun. Mass 9:30am & 5:00pm

Daily Mass M, W, & Th at 9:00am

Confession Sat @ 2:00 pm

Pastoral Team

Rev. Christopher Casey, *Pastor*

Ext. 224

Fr. Jean Sassou, *Parochial Vicar*

Ext. 223

Deacon Al Shanahan, *Deacon*

Resident Clergy:

Fr. Romain Rurangirwa

Fr. Theophilus Okpara

St. Vincent de Paul Society: 978-408-8278

Office Team

Christine Kilburn, *Director of Finance & Operations*

Ext. 243

Karen Dubbs, *Office Manager*

Ext. 300

Heather Murphy, *Pastoral Ministry & Project Coordinator*

Ext. 200

Dino Bastianelli, *Facilities Manager*

Tom Mandile, *Maintenance Coordinator*

Youth Faith Formation Staff

Ann Carroll, *Director of Faith Formation*

Ext. 226

Karyn Moody, *Coordinator of Children's Ministries*

(First Sacraments)

Ext. 444

Alanna Fava, *Confirmation & Teen Ministries*

Ext. 445

Dustin Batista, *Pastoral Minister & Teen Ministries*

Ext. 448

Knights of Columbus

Dan Quattrocchi, *Membership Director*

kofc3963@yahoo.com

St. Matthew Parish Office

One Grace Avenue

Billerica, MA 01821

978.663.8816

Office Hours: Mon-Thurs 10am-3pm

Music Ministry

Mrs. Laura Rosa, *Music Director and Organist*

Maria Coughlan, *Cantor*

Rebecca Murphy, *Cantor*

Michelle Roy, *Cantor*



For questions about St. Matthew Parish or information on any of the following topics, please contact the person listed below:

New to the Parish, Mass Intentions, Baptisms, Adult Confirmation, RCIA or the CORI process?

Please Call the Parish Office at 978-663-8816, Mon-Wed. from 10am-1pm or email admin@billericacatholic.org

Funerals

If you have recently experienced the loss of a loved one, please contact the office at **978-663-8816** so that we can walk with you through this difficult journey.

Weddings

Congratulations on your engagement! Please call 978-663-8816 or email admin@billericacatholic.org to schedule an appointment at least 6 months before your wedding.

Homebound and Sick

Do you know of someone who is homebound and would appreciate a visit from a priest? If you know someone in the parish who would like a visit to receive the Eucharist, please call the office at **978-663-8816** to arrange a visit.

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