

St. Matthew the Evangelist Parish
March 29, 2026

Palm Sunday



Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Philippians 2:11



Dear Parishioners,

Palm Sunday always confronts us with a striking contrast. At the beginning of Mass, we hear the joyful Gospel of Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem—crowds waving palms and crying out, "Hosanna!" Yet only moments later, in the Passion, those same voices seem to echo with a very different cry: "Crucify Him!"

How quickly the scene changes. And if we are honest, we recognize something of ourselves in that movement. Our own relationship with the Lord can waver—we desire to follow Him with all our heart, mind, and strength, yet we also fall into sin. As difficult as it is to speak the words "Crucify Him," we must acknowledge that every sin is, in its own way, a rejection of Christ.

That realization can be unsettling. It reveals the power of sin within us. But it also opens us to something far greater—the mercy of God. From the Cross itself, in the midst of agony, Jesus prays, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Even there, especially there, mercy triumphs.

As Jesus enters Jerusalem, He does so with full awareness of what lies ahead. He tells His disciples, "Now my soul is troubled... Father, glorify your name." (John 12:27–28). This is not triumphalism; it is love freely embraced. The Cross is not suffering for its own sake—it is the price of our salvation.

Jesus explains this mystery with a powerful image: "Unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit" (John 12:24). To follow Him, then, is to enter into that same pattern—to die to ourselves so that we may truly live.

This is where the Sacrament of Reconciliation becomes such a gift. In what has often been called the "court of mercy," we encounter not judgment alone, but healing, restoration, and grace. It is not uncommon to hear someone say, "I can go directly to God for forgiveness; I don't need Confession." And it is true—we do pray directly to God, especially in urgent or extraordinary circumstances. But Jesus Himself has given us the Sacrament as the ordinary and sure way to receive His mercy.

Why would we deprive ourselves of such a gift?

As a priest, I admit there is one small relief on this day—I proclaim the words of Christ in the Passion, and I am spared from shouting, "Crucify Him!" Yet in truth, I know that I have spoken those words in another way whenever I have sinned. My sin reveals the distance between myself and God—but it also reveals just how far Christ has gone to bridge that distance.

That is the heart of Holy Week. That is the source of Easter joy. Despite our sin, Jesus has acted. He has taken upon Himself the burden of our guilt and, out of perfect love, has reconciled us to the Father.

And so, this Palm Sunday, we do not simply remember what once happened—we choose again how we will respond. With humble hearts, we take up our branches and welcome Him anew, not only into Jerusalem, but into our lives.

"Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!"

Sincerely Yours in Christ,

~ Fr. Chris



May these sacred days draw us closer to Christ and fill our hearts with the hope and joy of the Resurrection.

Triduum Schedule

Holy Thursday (4/2)

9am Morning Prayer ~ St. Theresa
7pm Mass of the Lord's Supper ~ St. Theresa
9pm Night Prayer ~ St. Theresa

Good Friday (4/3)

9am Morning Prayer ~ St. Theresa
3pm Passion Service ~ St. Andrew
7pm Passion Service ~ St. Theresa

Holy Saturday (4/4)

9am Morning Prayer ~ St. Theresa
8pm Easter Vigil ~ St. Andrew

Easter Sunday Masses (4/5)

8:00am	St. Andrew
9:30am	St. Theresa
11:00am	St. Andrew

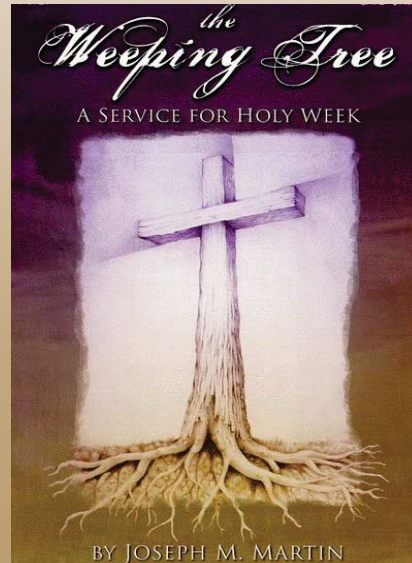
There is no 5:00pm St. Theresa Mass for Easter Sunday.

Use this QR Code to find the schedule for Holy Week on our Website as well



The Weeping Tree

To mark the start of Holy Week, the Courageous Catholic Women Group (CCW) will present The Weeping Tree for prayer and reflection on **Tuesday, March 31st at 7:00pm in St. Andrew Church.** The Weeping Tree is a "poignant portrait of the cross that uses beloved hymns, newly composed music, thoughtful narration and sacred symbols to create a touching testament of grace" to the events of Holy Week. All members of St. Matthew Parish are invited to join members of the CCW for this beautiful presentation.



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THIS EASTER



Easter Collection

At Easter, the parish collection supports the **Clergy Trust** which cares for the health, well-being, and retirement needs of all active and senior diocesan priests in good standing. Our priests have dedicated their lives to serving others, and through their ministry they create stronger and more compassionate communities. Please consider a donation to support the Clergy Trust. Thank you so much for your generosity!



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A Note from the Parish Nurses - Women's Health

This month the focus will be Women's Health. We should all take a moment to focus on our health, talk to your doctor about any concerns, and explore preventive care options. If we can take small steps every day it can make a big difference in maintaining our overall health and well-being. There are many unique health risks women face. To name a few as found in Brooks Hospital System:” **Heart Disease:** Heart disease is the leading cause of death for women in

the U.S. While heart disease is often associated with men, women are just as at risk. However, the symptoms in women may differ from those in men, which can lead to delayed diagnoses. Women are more likely to experience subtle symptoms like nausea, shortness of breath, and fatigue rather than the classic chest pain. It's important to recognize the risk factors such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes, smoking, and family history. **Breast Cancer:** Breast cancer remains one of the most common cancers among women. While genetics plays a role, environmental factors, lifestyle choices, and age are also contributors. Early detection through regular screenings, such as mammograms, is crucial. Women should consult their doctors about when to begin screenings and how often they should be done based on their personal and family medical history. **Osteoporosis:** Women are at a higher risk for osteoporosis, a condition where bones become fragile and more likely to break. The risk increases after menopause due to lower estrogen levels. Women over 50 should prioritize bone health by ensuring adequate calcium and vitamin D intake, weight-bearing exercises, and regular screenings as recommended by their healthcare providers. **Mental Health:** Women are more likely than men to experience conditions such as anxiety and depression. Hormonal fluctuations throughout life—such as during menstruation, pregnancy, and menopause—can affect mental health. Addressing emotional well-being and seeking help when needed is key to preventing long-term mental health challenges. Regular exercise, a balanced diet, and a strong social support system are vital for maintaining mental health. **Autoimmune Diseases:** Women are more likely to develop autoimmune diseases like lupus, rheumatoid arthritis, and multiple sclerosis. These conditions occur when the body's immune system attacks its own tissues. While the exact cause is unknown, genetics, hormonal factors, and environmental triggers are believed to play a role. Early diagnosis and treatment are crucial for managing symptoms and preventing long-term damage.”

The following are a few Prevention Strategies for Women's Health: Regular Screenings and Check-Ups Regular visits to your healthcare provider are essential for early detection and preventive care. Routine screenings for heart disease, breast cancer, cervical cancer, and bone health can help detect conditions before they become more serious. Make sure to schedule regular check-ups to discuss any new symptoms or concerns. **Exercise and Healthy Eating:** Physical activity is crucial in preventing many chronic conditions, including heart disease, diabetes, and osteoporosis. Women should aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity exercise or 75 minutes of vigorous activity each week. Additionally, a well-balanced diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean proteins provides the nutrients necessary for optimal health. **Mental Health Care:** Taking care of your mental health is just as important as caring for your physical health. Practicing stress-relieving activities such as yoga, meditation, or simply taking time to relax and unwind can have a positive impact on overall well-being. If you feel overwhelmed or anxious, don't hesitate to seek professional help. **Know Your Family History:** Many health risks, such as certain cancers and heart disease, can be influenced by genetics. Be proactive in understanding your family's health history and discuss any concerns with your healthcare provider. This information can help you and your doctor create a personalized prevention plan. **Avoid Harmful Habits:** Avoiding smoking, excessive alcohol consumption, and high-risk behaviors is key to maintaining long-term health. Smoking increases the risk of heart disease, cancer, and other chronic conditions, while excessive alcohol can negatively affect liver function and mental health.”

Please feel free to contact your Parish Nurses at admin@billericacatholic.org if we can be of assistance.

RETURN your Almsgiving Boxes NEXT Weekend

As we continue our Lenten journey, we invite those who have taken a **Lenten Almsgiving Box for the Church in Dobinga** to please return them next weekend in the bins set up at the main entrance of both churches. We are grateful for your kindness and support.



Parish Game Night

Friday, April 10th from 6:00-9:00 PM



Location: Fr. Wilson Hall 45 Talbot Ave. North Billerica

If you have not the chance to join us for our Parish Game Night yet, now is your opportunity. All



St. Matthew Women's Club Raffle

April 19, 2026

Fr. McCormick Hall
(behind Saint Theresa's Church)



Cash Raffle Prize: \$2,500.00

Raffle Tickets are \$10.00 each

Tickets for Basket Raffles: 1 sheet for \$10.00

Two sheets for \$15.00

If you are interested in purchasing raffle tickets,
or in donating a raffle basket or gift card,
please contact: Ann Doherty at 781-526-7341

Billerica Interfaith Group Spring Luncheon

St. Matthew the Evangelist Parish was blessed to host the Interfaith Spring Luncheon on Wednesday, March 18th at the First Congregational Church in Billerica. The gathering was a tremendous success, with a wonderful turnout and a spirit of joyful fellowship shared by all in attendance.

Guests enjoyed a delicious meal thoughtfully prepared by the St. Matthew Women's Club, whose generosity and care made the afternoon especially memorable. The luncheon was followed by a beautiful worship service led by Father Chris, enriched by uplifting music offered by our Music Director, Laura Rosa, and cantor Becca Murphy.

We are so grateful to all who helped make this event such a meaningful celebration of community, faith, and the blessings of the spring season.



Divine Mercy Sunday

April 12, 2025

Holy Hour 3-4pm

St. Theresa Church

All are invited to come for Eucharistic Adoration, Scripture, reflection and to pray the Chaplet of Divine Mercy. Information on Divine Mercy, including the nine-day novena leaflets (which begins on Good Friday), will be available at the church entrance or on <http://divinemercysunday.com/novena.htm>.

Easter Joy with the Knights of Columbus!

A heartfelt thank you to everyone who joined us for our 2nd Annual Easter Egg Hunt, hosted by the Knights of Columbus! It was a beautiful celebration of community and joy, with dozens of parish children racing to find eggs, decorating cookies, and enjoying a day full of laughter and spring-time fun.

Highlights included:

- A lively Easter Egg Hunt with plenty of sweet surprises
- Energetic, laughter-filled rounds of Musical Chairs
- Endless giggles in the bouncy house
- Delicious creativity at the cookie decorating table

We are so grateful for the volunteers, parents, the Women's Club, and the Knights of Columbus who helped bring this event to life, and to all the families who came out to celebrate the Easter season with us.

We missed those who were unable to join us this year and truly hope to see some new faces next year as we continue this joyful parish tradition!



Seasons of Hope Bereavement Group– RSVP by March 30th



Seasons of Hope

Bereavement Support Group

We will be holding our first **Seasons of Hope** session beginning on **Tuesday, April 7th, and continuing for six weeks through May 12th from 6:00-7:30**. This unique program is for anyone who has lost a loved one — whether recently or many years ago. Grief has no timetable, and no one should walk it alone.

Seasons of Hope is a faith- and Scripture-based program conducted in small groups. It gently focuses on the spiritual side of grieving and invites those who mourn to accompany one another in a supportive, prayerful setting. Together, participants encounter Christ through Scripture, reflection, shared experience, and prayer — discovering hope and healing along the way. If you or someone you know may benefit from this opportunity, please reach out to the Parish Office at **978-663-8816** for more information or to register.



He humbled himself, becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross. Because of this, God greatly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name. Philippians 2:8-9

Reflection Question of the Week ~ Palm Sunday

The challenge before us this weekend is to listen attentively to the message in our readings because we know well the end of the story. Believing, as we do that the word of God is ever new, try to listen as if hearing of these events for the first time. Notice how quickly the mood of the crowd changes from “Hosanna” to “Crucify him! Crucify him!” What words or actions linger in your heart as you walk with Jesus in his passion? As one of his disciples, with whom are you standing, with the frightened disciples or with Mary, Jesus’ mother? This week we come face to face with Jesus’ choice

to endure death for our sake and to save us from our selfishness and sin. What will you say to Jesus in response to his extraordinary act of love for you?

- The story of the Passion is not just about the past—it challenges people today. Reflect on your faith, your willingness to follow Jesus, and your response to suffering. Jesus presents to us an example to us all of selfless love
- What does Jesus’ suffering teach me about facing difficulties in my own life?
- How can I practice service and humility in my daily life?
- What steps can I take to follow Jesus more closely during Holy Week? (*Suggestions~ attend one or more of the Holy Week liturgies, spend time in prayer, read your Bible*)



Intentions for the week of March 28th-March 29th

Charles Fell-41st Anniversary
Mammen Varghese-Memorial
Bill and Mary Dyer-Anniversary
Philip and Janice Collins-Memorial
Patty Marshall Stine– Month’s Mind
Jim and Jackie McGinnis-Memorial
Richard Harrower-20th Anniversary
Francesco Cuccoli and Family-80th Anniversary and Memorial
Jeffrey Smay-Month’s Mind
Rose D’Abenigno and Family-50th Anniversary and Memorial
Lamberti Family-Memorial
Doris Maher-Memorial

Intentions for the week of March 30th-April 5th

Parishioners of St. Matthew Parish



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 978-663-8816

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

Sean Reynolds, 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, Director of Music 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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"Jesus Wept." John 11:35

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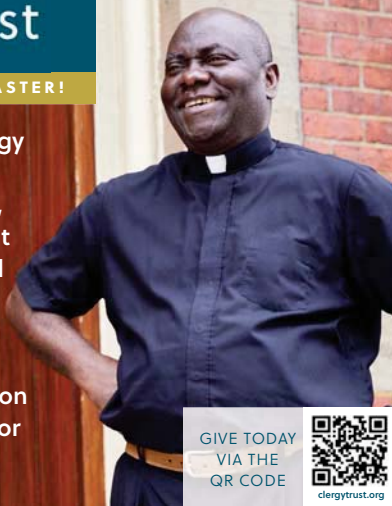
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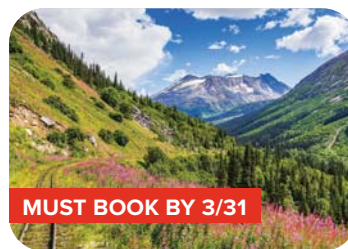


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