

Saint Cecilia Parish

90 Church Street
Rockaway, New Jersey 07866

Parish Office: 973-627-0313

Website: st-cecilia.org — Office: stcec@optonline.net

Fax: 973-627-4811

To Contact: Fr. Zig: Ext. 12 or speplowski@optonline.net

Fr. Matt: Ext 15 or frmateuszdarlak@gmail.com

School: 973-627-6003

CCD Office: 973-627-0313 Ext. 17

Rev. Sigmund Peplowski
PASTOR

Rev. Mateusz Darlak
PAROCHIAL VICAR

Mrs. Janet Maulbeck
BUSINESS ADMINISTRATOR
YOUTH PROTECTION &
SAFE ENVIRONMENT
COORDINATOR

Mr. James Clancy
DIRECTOR OF FAITH FORMATION

Mr. Nikolaos Brown
MUSIC DIRECTOR

Mrs. Diane Boykow
CEMETERY ADMINISTRATOR
STAFF ASSISTANT

Mrs. Kelly Cacella
PRINCIPAL



CERTIFICATE OF ELIGIBILITY

All Catholic Churches in the United States require from Catholics serving as a Godparent for Baptism or a sponsor for Confirmation a certificate of eligibility. This document certifies that the Godparent/sponsor is a registered member of the parish, attends Holy Mass, approaches the sacraments regularly and contributes to the support of the Church via the Sunday offering envelope program or "WeShare". It is the responsibility of the individual to meet these requirements as listed in the Code of Canon Law, #874.

SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM

Arrangements for the Sacrament of Baptism can be made by calling Fr. Matt at extension 15.

SACRAMENT OF MATRIMONY

Arrangements are to be made at least ONE YEAR in advance. The date should not be set until the priest has been consulted.

SACRAMENT OF THE SICK

Urgent calls will be attended to at any time of the day or night. If there is anyone at home or in the hospital who cannot get to Mass and the Sacraments because of illness or old age, please inform one of the priests or call the Parish Office @ 973-627-0313.

EMERGENCY PHONE:
862-251-3914

MASSES

Saturday: 4:30 pm, 7:00 pm
Sunday: 8:00 am, 9:15 am
10:45 am and 12:15 pm
5:00 pm (Vietnamese)

Holydays

Vigil 4:30 pm
6:30 am, 8:00 am & 7:00 pm

Weekday Schedule:

Monday - Friday
6:30 am & 8:00 am
Saturday
8:00 am followed by Novena

Confessions

Saturday @ 3:00—4:00 pm &
6:15-6:45 pm
Monday during Holy Hour
7:00—8:00 pm

Ms. Susan Brennan
TRUSTEE

Mr. James Gallagher
TRUSTEE

NOVENA: OUR LADY OF THE MIRACULOUS MEDAL AND OUR LADY OF FATIMA

Saturday morning after the 8:00 am Mass

HOLY HOUR : Monday @ 7:00 pm (Sept. to June)

OCIA—ORDER OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION— FOR

ADULTS:

Please contact Sr. Diane — sdmoughan@gmail.com

ROSARY PRAYER GROUP: Monday through Sat. @ 7:30 am

FEMININE GENIUS PROJECT: 1st & 3rd Saturday of the month at 8:00 pm in the parish office.

ST. JOSEPH MEN'S GROUP: 2nd & 4th Saturday of the month at 6:00 am in the parish office.

PADRE PIO PRAYER GROUP: 1st Wednesday of the month; 10:00 am in the church (Sept. to June)

ST. MONICA NOVENA: Last Saturday after 8:00 am Mass.

Parish Office Hours

Monday thru Thursday: 8:30 am to 4:00 pm
Friday: 8:30 am to 2:00 pm
Closed for lunch: 12:00 to 1:00

Monday, January 20, Saint Fabian, Pope and Martyr; Saint Sebastian, Martyr

6:30 am – For the sick listed in our bulletin and their caregivers

8:00 am – Alice & Walter Lech req. by Dianna & John Sullivan

Tuesday, January 21, Saint Agnes, Virgin and Martyr

6:30 am – Special Intention for Dominick

8:00 am – Irene Shucavage req. by Peggy McKinney

Wednesday, January 22, Day of Prayer for the Legal Protection of Unborn Children

6:30 am – Linda Borghi req. by Kathy Ziese

8:00 am – Terence Haran req. by Peggy McKinney

Thursday, January 23, Saint Vincent, Deacon and Martyr

6:30 am – For the Holy Souls in Purgatory

8:00 am – Christene McCarthy req. by Ed Jozwiak

Friday, January 24, Saint Francis de Sales, Bishop and Doctor of the Church

6:30 am – Nels Salvesen req. by Family

8:00 am – Pauline Brussell req. by McDonnell Family

Saturday, January 25, Conversion of Saint Paul, Apostle

8:00 am – Ernie Juretschke req. by Ed & Mary Merz

Sunday, January 26, Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

4:30 pm – Marion Testa req. by Barbara Hoffman

Patrick & Nancy Lodato, Sr., req. by Scott, Jennifer, Braden & Addison

7:00 pm – Jean Asti req. by Dianna & John Sullivan

8:00 am – Helen McCarthy req. by her daughter, Noreen

9:15 am – Sylvia Zaballero req. by Albert & Amy Lopez

Robert Reiderer req. by the Graner Family

10:45 am – Robert Duphiney req. by Jackie & Rich Kosciński

Pasquale Castagliuolo req. by Sean Connolly

12:15 pm – Patricia Willis req. by the McDonnell Family

ST. CECILIA CHURCH COLLECTION GOALSWeek Ending : January 12, 2025

Collection—Checks & Cash	\$ 14,511.22
WeShare Electronic Giving	\$ 6,806.00
<u>Total Weekly Collection</u>	\$ 21,317.22

Yearly Collection Goal (BUDGET)	\$ 785,000.00
Weekly Goal	\$ 14,313.73

Weekly Collection Surplus (Deficit)	\$ 7,003.49
Year To Date Surplus (Deficit)	\$ 13,560.20

*Christmas Collection \$26,460.24**We are thankful for your consistent stewardship. ©JPPC*

NO HOLY HOUR – As per our practice for a national holiday (Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.) Holy Hour and Bible Study will not take place on Monday, January 20th. Both will return next week, January 27th.

**PRAY FOR THE SICK AND THEIR CAREGIVERS**

Ethan Chandra, Dean Wayne Campbell, Doris Cusick, Jane Goricca, Sam Sessa, Karen Niles, Noel Wadleigh, David Cicchine, Teresa D'Atria, Derek Bascharow, Debbie Malc, Grace McDermott, Joe Horvath, Jr., Elvira Bugaoan, Owen Peter Byrne, Tia Maddaloni, Mason Walker Steussing, Susan Mejia, Derek Bascharow, Jim Rattay, Tom Hull, Kathleen Fazio, Kristin Wich, Kyle Johnson, Kate Darlington, Jake Michael Miraldi, Cheryl Anne Bornemann, Sean Nolan, Maryann Hughes, Peggy Eileen Miars, Ray Kennedy, Richard Corcoran, Madison Rose Leslie, Demetrius Barbee, Frances Finn, Dorothy Murray, Kimberly Dugan, Gale Sessa, Mike Murray, Michael Turner, Ruben Lorenzo, Michael Alvarez, Mina Simmons-Jones, Joe Maulbeck, Mary Merz, Patricia Smith Schulman, Vincent Fortunato, Joyce Turner, Tom Cumiskey, Dennis O'Brien, Steven Simmons, Ariel, James DiStaiso, Marty Mackin, Brian Bosworth, Dennis Dilger, Robyne LaGrotta, Christopher Darlak, Frieda Solow, Claudia Fontanella, Claire Wasacz, Emilio Viola, Martha Salvesen, Ramiro Hinojosa, Jimmy Buckley, Clare Desmond, Craig Huffman, George Stitik, Stephen Goordman, Cecilia Donofrio, Deidra Zink, Anthony Pane, Victoria Zuber, Keith Newman, Francis Sanchez, Raymond Fullam, John Sandelli, Alan Zenkert, Fran Gatzke, Bob Nielsen, Gert Taylor, Walter Zelinski, Clo Callahan, Michael McClain, David Saggioli, Michael Hafke, Tyler Bascharow, Kevin R. Bruno, II, Jeremiah O'Brien, Lanie Bruno, Joan Apgar, Richard Sala, Richard Cortese, Kira Woyce, Anthony D'Alessio, Colin Brown, Katherine Lynn, Sophie Boylan, Michael Gatzke, Philip Colombrito, Esperanza Vertucci, Molly Mack, Michele Murray, Jimmy Olgeluie, Mark Howarth, Logan Mattessich.



The people of St. Cecilia Parish are asked to pray for the following people serving our country in the armed services: **SmE3 Andrew Clifford,**

Joseph Giannetti US Navy, Lance Corporal Dennis Wuest, Capt. Kelley E. Robbins, Pvt USMC, Diego Usma, Major Glenn E. Martinez, Sgt. Brian Whalen, Capt. Anthony Odierno, Cpl. Kong V. Nguyen, Cpl. Jim Van Valen, LCPL Anthony Eresman, Sgt. Paul J. Willson, PFC Cano Janeth, Sgt. Bob Autrey, Col. William Paliwada, Sgt 1st Class (E7) Sam Colon, PFC Marylyn Rivera-Sachez, Cpl. Edward C. Thompson, Major Kevin M. Nash, Lt. Amy Cronin, Col. John L. Medeiros, Jr., Sgt. Daniel Healy, Marine Keith Leitner, Sgt. Spencer Lopez, PFC Taryn Kemp, Jeffrey Braunhausen, E7 Joseph Grimsey, Bill Maloney, Greg Bloete, Gian Carlo Bruzzese, Spc. Christopher Little, PFC Brittany Martindell, PO1 (E6) Matthew Fitzgerald, SA Justin C. White, Matthew & Daniel Rosica, Mark Leonard, Sr. Armn. Ashley Valetta, Sgt. John Wisnofsky, Cpl. T.J. Finn, Sgt. Kristopher Faber, Capt. Vincent Presto, Airman First Class William Kussler, Spc. Gregory Villaneuva. We ask God the Father of us all, through the intercession of St. Michael the Archangel, to protect all the men and women in our Armed Forces, to bless them in their efforts toward bringing peace and justice to our world. May they be brought back safely to those they love.

580-St. Cecilia

FAITH & REASON RELATIONSHIP RETREAT –

Relationships don't have to be in crisis before they are nurtured. This retreat is designed for couples who are seriously dating, engaged, or married and wish to deepen their connection with each other and with Christ, using sound psychology through a faithful, Catholic perspective. Join us at Saint Paul Inside the Walls Evangelization Center in Madison on February 8th. For information visit: inside-thewalls.org/relationship-retreat.

FOR HIGH SCHOOL & YOUNG MEN – Bishop

Sweeney is inviting young men, high school age and older to an evening of prayer and dinner on Friday evening, February 21st from 6:30 to 8:30 at Saint Lawrence Church in Chester. At the event vocation talks will be given by priests and seminarians. This is a great opportunity to ask questions about the life of a priest and allow for the meeting of other young men trying to discover God's call in their lives. The event is free of charge but registration must be made by contacting Father Charlie or Father Ed at 973.777.8818X715 or vocations@patersondiocese.org.

GOING TO WASHINGTON – The diocese is sponsoring bus transportation to Washington, DC on Friday, January 24th for the RIGHT TO LIFE MARCH. Busses will depart from the Saint Paul Inside the Walls Center in Madison at 6:45 a.m. (returning about 9 p.m.). The cost is \$65 per person. Registration is a must: 973.827.8030 or pilgrimage@patersondiocese.org.

FATHER AWAY – Father Zig will attend the Winter Priest Institute at Saint Vincent DePaul Seminary in Boynton Beach, Florida (Diocese of Palm Beach) from January 24-31. The theme is "Preaching Luke's Gospel" and will be presented by Father Kevin Walsh, a Scripture expert from the Diocese of Arlington, which will help priests prepare to preach on the Gospel of Luke throughout the Sundays in 2025.

HAPPY NEW YEAR – The Vietnamese Community of our parish will celebrate the lunar New Year next Sunday with Holy Mass at 4 o'clock followed by a dinner and program in Hayes Hall. To all of our parishioners who are celebrating the Lunar New Year I pray that the Lord will grant you many blessings in the year to come! – Father Zig



JUBILEE YEAR OF HOPE – His Excellency Bishop Sweeney has designated SAINT BERNARD CHURCH (22 St. Bernards Drive in Mount Hope) as a designated pilgrim site for the Diocese of Paterson. Pilgrims are welcome on Monday evenings for Holy Mass at 6:30, followed by Holy Hour and Confessions. A plenary indulgence is granted to pilgrims. Our Holy Father, Pope Francis, calls all Christians to become pilgrims of hope. This is a virtue which must be sourced above all in the grace of God and in the fullness of His mercy. A plenary indulgence is given to those who are: *truly repentant; free from any affection for sin; moved by a spirit of charity; receive the sacraments of Penance and Eucharist; and pray for the intentions of Pope Francis (1 Our Father, 1 Hail Mary and 1 Glory be...)*. A plenary indulgence is the full remission of the temporal punishment due to sins whose guilt has already been forgiven. This jubilee grace can be applied in suffrage to the souls in Purgatory through pilgrimage, whose works of mercy and penance, and visits to a Jubilee designated shrine or church, such as Saint Bernard's.

JUBILEE 2025 PRAYER FROM POPE FRANCIS

Father in Heaven, may the faith You have given us in Your Son, Jesus Christ, our Brother, and the flame of charity enkindled in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, reawaken in us the blessed hope for the coming of Your Kingdom. May Your grace transform us into tireless cultivators of the seeds of the Gospel. May those seeds transform from within both humanity and the whole cosmos in the sure expectation of a new heaven and a new earth, when, with the powers of Evil vanquished, Your glory will shine eternally. May the grace of the Jubilee reawaken in us, Pilgrims of Hope, a yearning for the treasures of heaven. May that same grace spread the joy and peace of our Redeemer throughout the earth. To You our God, eternally blessed, be glory and praise forever. Amen

JUBILEE BANNER – The 2025 Jubilee Year of Hope Banner will be displayed in the sanctuary of the church from Christmas Eve until the end of the Jubilee Year, January 6th, 2026. Our thanks to the Rosary Society for donating the jubilee banner.

Monday, January 20

Divine Mercy Academy & Parish Office are closed today

Tuesday, January 21

9:30 am—Bible Study (Hayes Hall)

12:00 pm—Seniors Meeting (Hayes Hall)

7:45 pm—Light of Christ Prayer Group (Hayes Hall)

Wednesday, January 22**Thursday, January 23**

7:00 pm—Anniversary Committee Meeting (Hayes Hall)

Friday, January 24**Saturday, January 25****Sunday, January 26**

4:00 pm—Vietnamese Community Lunar New Year Mass

8:00 pm—LTP (DMA)

SAVE THE DATE – On Friday evening, February 21st a WINE AND CHEESE RECEPTION will take place in Hayes Hall beginning at 7 o'clock to see and hear a presentation on the history of Saint Cecilia Parish. An exhibit of parish photographs and memorabilia will be on display. At the reception Monsignor Raymond Kupke, Church Historian and Archivist for the Diocese of Paterson, will speak to us regarding the formation of our parish and its life over these past 150 years. TICKETS for this event will go on sale beginning Sunday, January 26th. The donation is \$10 per person.

OUR CHILDREN – Children should be accompanied by a parent or adult when using the restrooms in the parish hall. We want to make sure that our children return to Mass promptly and safely. Your cooperation is appreciated.

Craft Fair at St. Cecilia Church on March 8, 2025

Spaces are filling up quickly

If you are interested, please contact

saintceciliarosarysociety@gmail.com

PARISH ANNIVERSARY PILGRIMAGE – In conjunction with our parish's 150th anniversary celebration next year I will be leading a pilgrimage to Italy. We leave from Newark International Airport on Monday, April 21 (2025) for our 11 day visit to Rome, Assisi, San Giovanni Rotondo (St. Padre Pio), Bari (Shrine of St. Nicholas) and many more stops. This 11 day pilgrimage coincides with the Holy Year Jubilee in which we will also visit and celebrate Mass in the Basilica of Saint Cecilia. The cost per person is \$5,384. Please visit the 206 TOURS website and enter tour #sp042125 for the itinerary, registration and other information. I hope you will join me on this faith-filled tour! We return on Thursday, May 1st thanking God for this wonderful experience. – Father Zig

Divine Mercy Academy News

Come to one of our Open Houses:
Sunday January 26th, from 10:15am to 12:30pm

OR

Monday, January 27th from 8:30am to 1:30pm
(Pre-registration is required for the 1/27 event—973-627-6003).

Come see the difference an academically excellent Catholic education makes! Divine Mercy Academy in Rockaway is a Catholic elementary school offering a comprehensive Pre-K through 8th grade faith-based education. We offer a safe, secure & compassionate environment with a high level of individualized attention; certified teachers; weekly liturgies & daily Religion class; academic curriculum with all core subjects; STEM; physical education; music; art; Spanish; Social Emotional Learning; and library, with technology integrated throughout the curriculum. Aftercare and extra-curricular activities available.

Full Day & Half Day Pre-K3 & Pre-K4 programs available. Full Day Kindergarten. We are located at 87 Halsey Avenue in Rockaway. Visit our website at www.dmarockaway.org or call 973-627-6003 for more information.

THANK YOU – My sincere thanks to all those who assisted me and Father Matt is taking down the crèche and the Christmas trees in the church last Tuesday evening. The outdoor crèche and Christmas lights will remain until February 2nd, the 40 day and leave-taking of Christmas.

Men's Cornerstone XXV Retreat

Friday, January 31 and Saturday, February 1, 2025

Notre Dame of Mount Carmel Church, 75 Ridgedale Avenue, Cedar Knolls, NJ

Come Holy Spirit, Come...

"Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them." Acts 2:2-4

Join us for 24 hours of Sharing, Prayer and Reflection. Listen to powerful testimonies of men that bring our faith to life. Reflect upon experiences that demonstrate how God is present in our lives, how He is calling you to be healed and how He is the Cornerstone. Join us in this great opportunity to meet other men who seek a conversion of the heart and strengthening through the Holy Spirit.

Dates: January 31 and February 1, 2025 (starts 5:30pm Friday evening and culminates at the Saturday 5pm Mass)

Location: Notre Dame of Mt. Carmel Church, 75 Ridgedale Avenue, Cedar Knolls, NJ **Registration online:** <https://ndcarmel.com> or contact our retreat leaders: Joe Casano: joe.casano13@gmail.com, ndmc.mens.cornerstone@gmail.com, (908) 403-4699 Tom Lord: tmlord@gmail.com, (973) 722-1889

WINTER POLICY - In the event of inclement weather and Divine Mercy Academy is closed, the parish office will be closed and the church will be open ONLY for the liturgical service scheduled. Also, all evening events will be cancelled.

NO MORE PRINT EDITION – His Excellency, Bishop Kevin Sweeney has announced that the printed version of the diocesan newspaper, The Beacon, will cease at the end of December. Mounting costs and a change in readership options has contributed to this decision by diocesan leadership. The Bishop is inviting us to read the on-line version of The Beacon at <https://beaconnj.org/>. Information is also at the site for a subscription to the “Beacon and Beyond” Newsletter.

ANNIVERSARY OUTERWEAR FOR SALE – After a successful commemorative Christmas ornament sale, the parish 150th Anniversary Committee is now making available a commemorative outer wear fleece and sweatshirt in adult sizes only. These items are on display in Hayes Hall so that you can check out the style which you desire. These items must be ordered in advance and will be delivered in a timely fashion. Order forms are available at the display table or by going to the parish website.

BEWARE OF SCAMS – Be on the alert of scams which say they are from me. THEY ARE NOT!!! Please call me at the office (973.627.0313x12) if you have **doubt** about a text, email, etc, which is supposedly from me asking for money, gift cards, favors, etc. PLEASE DO NOT BE FOOLED!!!

Fr. Zig

It's Safe, It's Simple & It's Convenient
Give online with WeShare

Support St. Cecilia Parish today using your debit or credit card or checking or savings account: Visit www.st-cecilia.org and click Donate Online. Select the collection or event of your choice. Set up your donation or payment. That's it! **OR SCAN HERE:**



PRACTICAL WAYS TO RECLAIM SUNDAY

Give God your best: Sunday is a day that reminds us of our dignity as children of God. So give your Sunday a special flair—like dressing up for Mass, eating special treats, or using nicer dishes.

Extra God-time: Let your heart and mind rest in God. For example: Pray a rosary or Lectio Divina or make a Holy Hour at church. Our hearts thirst to be with God, and He gives us a peace that nothing and no one else can.

Community Time: Step away from the screen and social media for quality face-to-face conversation. Cook up a new recipe and share a no-phones meal together! Take a picnic, water-color, or play board games. Invite those in need of community to join you.



Catholic Schools
United in Faith and Community

Join us in celebrating the beginning of Catholic School Week next Sunday, January 26th, at the 9:15 am Mass. We are so proud of our Catholic School, Divine Mercy Academy! We hope the information below will be of interest to all parents of our parish.

The Catholic Schools Week (CSW) 2023 – 2026 theme is “Catholic Schools: United in Faith and Community.” Catholic schools have an irreplaceable role in the Church’s evangelizing mission. Building on the central goal of Catholic schools to form saints, Catholic schools teach and embrace the whole person, body, mind and spirit. The fact that all members of a Catholic school community share the Christian vision of faith that Christ is the foundation of Catholic education is what unites the school as a faith-filled community.

While faith is the binding element in Catholic schools, the Church reiterates that parents are the first teachers of their children. Holding this tenet, Catholic school communities expand beyond the walls of school buildings to envelop the family as an integral part of the school community. Together teachers, administrators, staff, students and parents fuel the light of faith by integrating culture with faith and faith with living.

The CSW logo symbolizes the united community of Catholic schools – not a building or an institution, but people of faith serving God and others. No Catholic school can fulfill its educational role alone. As a community, Catholic schools are nourished and stimulated by the centrality of the word of Christ expressed through knowledge, service, scripture and sacramental tradition. Catholic Schools: United in Faith and Community is a theme on which to build a spirit of the gospel to benefit the human family.



My dear parishioners,

We assemble to participate in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass in our observance of the Lord's Day. This has been the way in which the followers of Jesus have celebrated the day on which He rose from the dead and opened the way for us to eternal life. Today we return to "Ordinary Time" as we commemorate the Second Sunday in Ordinary Time but with a "hang on" to Epiphany. The Gospel reading for this Sunday tells of the first miracle performed by Our Lord at the wedding in Cana of Galilee. This first miracle is one of the three manifestations which is celebrated on the Feast of Epiphany, the others being: the Visit of the Magi to the Child Jesus AND the Baptism of Our Lord in the Jordan River. So although we have returned to the use of green vestments and the crèche (and trees) have been removed from the church, our Christmas celebration continues. The leave-taking of Christmas takes place on February 2nd, the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord in the Temple, 40 days after Christmas. Therefore in many places the Christmas decorations remain until this day, such as we do with our outdoor crèche and lights.

The Wedding at Cana in Galilee has important theological meaning and should not be dismissed as some "minor" miracle performed by the Lord. The setting of a wedding feast is significant as the Scriptures speak of God's relationship with His people as a marriage covenant. The "new wine" produced by the Lord Jesus represents the new teaching He is proclaiming inviting all peoples into a covenant relationship with God, not just Israel.

Fascinating in this account is the Blessed Virgin Mary who makes known to her Son a problem and anticipates His assistance. Mary shows herself to be a powerful intercessor, launching Jesus into active ministry. We pause to reflect upon Our Lady's role and how we need to turn to her for assistance.

A closing thought should be directed to marriage, the sacrament which binds a man and a woman for life in mutual love. As Christ blessed the couple at the marriage feast in Cana so too does He bless the bride and groom coming to His Church with sacramental grace. Unfortunately many Catholic couples are being married outside the Church because they feel that it is "inconvenient." The wedding venue becomes much more desirable than the house of God and as a result of this invalid marriages are taking place because they are not being witnessed and blessed by a priest.

We call upon the Mother of God to direct all those seeking marriage to come to her Son, Christ the Lord. He unites and blesses all those united in the sacrament of marriage with the "new wine" of His grace.

GLORY TO JESUS CHRIST-GLORY FOREVER!

Father Zig

ST. AGNES, Virgin and Martyr
January 21 – Patroness of the Children of Mary

ST. AGNES suffered martyrdom during the bloody persecution of the Emperor Diocletian around 304 at the age of thirteen and became one of the best known and most highly regarded of the Roman martyrs. Her name is still retained in the First Eucharistic Prayer for Holy Mass.

The Acts of her Passion, which date back only to the 5th century, are considered to be not entirely reliable but they do tell us something about her. The young noblemen of Rome, attracted by her wealth and beauty, vied with one another in endeavoring to obtain her hand in marriage, but she refused them all, saying that she had chosen a Spouse who could not be seen with mortal eyes. Her suitors, in hope of shaking her constancy, accused her of being a Christian.

She was brought before a judge and remained unswayed by either his kindness or his threats. Fires were kindled, instruments of torture were placed before her eyes, but, immovable in her constancy, she surveyed them with heroic calmness. She was sent to a house of prostitution, but the sight of her inspired such awe that not one of the wicked youths of the city dared approach her. One, bolder than the others, was suddenly struck with blindness and he fell trembling.

The youthful Saint came forth from this den of infamy uncontaminated in mind and body, and still a pure spouse of Christ. Her most prominent suitor was so enraged that he incited the judge still more against her. The heroic Virgin was condemned to be beheaded. "She went to the place of execution," says St. Ambrose, "more cheerfully than others go to their wedding."

Amid the tears of the spectators the instrument of death fell, and she went to meet the Immortal Spouse whom she had loved better than her life. She was buried on the Via Nomentana, and Constantine erected a church in her honor.

PRAYER All-powerful and ever-living God, You choose the weak in this world to confound the powerful. As we celebrate the anniversary of the martyrdom of St. Agnes, may we like her remain constant in faith. Amen.

Saint Cecilia Parish

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