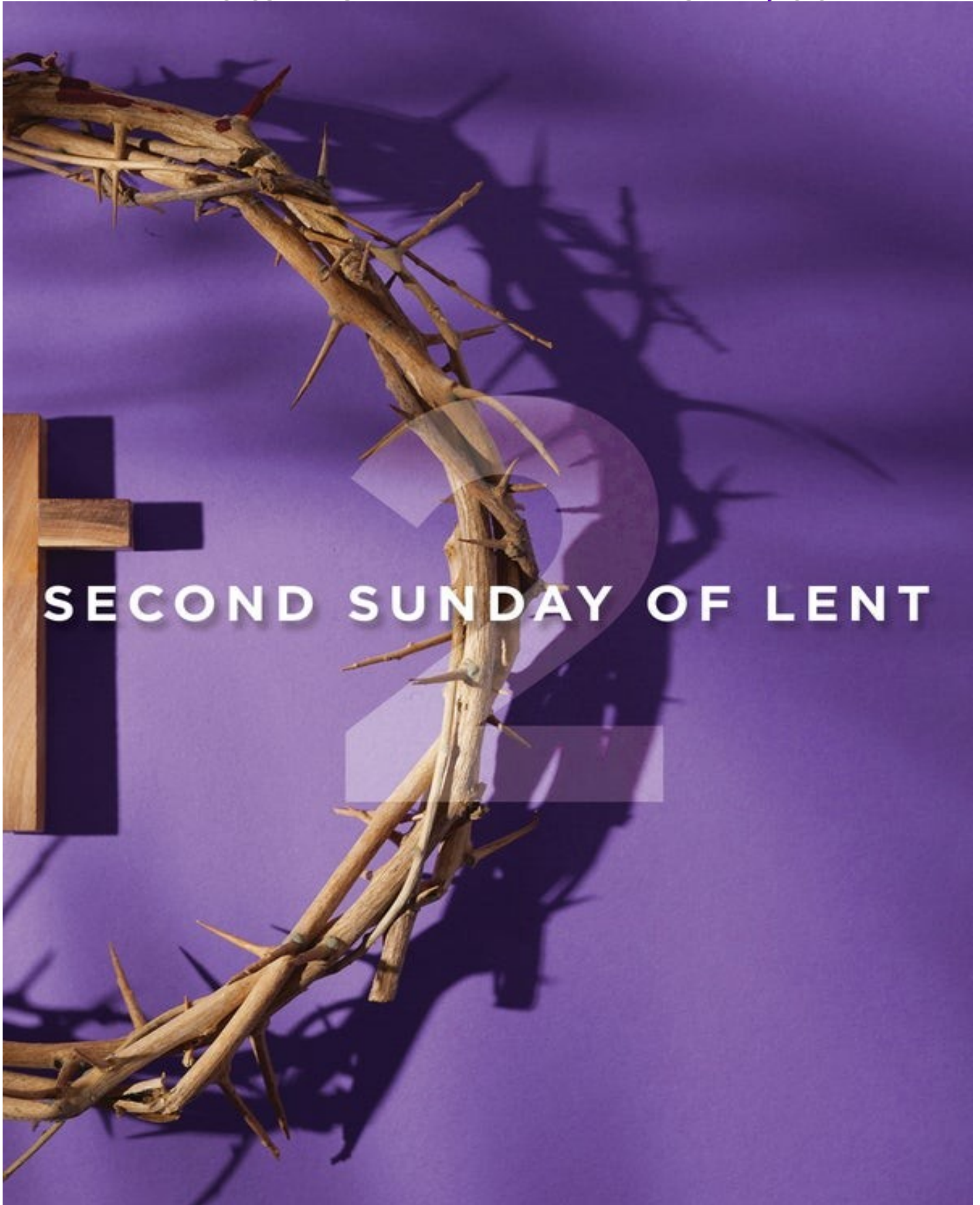


FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT

FEBRUARY 22, 2026



PARISH OFFICE 718 356-0294 * PARISH OFFICE FAX 718 948-3885 * RELIGIOUS EDUCATION 718-984-1156



FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

Dear Parishioners,

The season of Lent leads to the Easter Season, which culminates in Pentecost Sunday, the coming of the Holy Spirit. Peter Kreeft offers a brief philosophy of human history (*The Philosophy of Jesus*, 2007, pages 88-92). He points out that the main Protagonist is the Holy Ghost Himself. Dr. Kreeft begins his reflection with the dialogue between Jesus (blessed be His Name) and Nicodemus, one of the leading Pharisees of his time. The latter is dumbfounded after Christ tells him that in order to enter the Kingdom of God one must be born again of water and the Spirit, which refers, of course, to the holy Sacrament of Baptism. *Nicodemus answered and said to Him, "How can this happen?" Jesus answered and said to him, "You are the teacher of Israel and you do not understand this?"* (John 3:9-10). Kreeft explains,

"Jesus' reaction to Nicodemus' utterly non-ironic surprise is ironic surprise: 'What's this? You are a rabbi, a teacher of Israel, and you don't know this? This is what all of Israel and all of Judaism is for. All the laws and the prophets, all your scriptures, all your history, so full of prophets, providence, and miracles, all this 2,000-year-long-divine teaching program, starting with Abraham, in fact all the covenants, starting with Adam and Noah, was for this. This is the end My Father had in mind when He chose Israel. He chose her to be a womb within humanity for a second birth of humanity. This was His intention from the beginning, from the Creation of the universe. This is the point of everything, of stars and galaxies, of geological and biological evolution. The highest purpose of the material universe He created is to supply the dust He used to form mankind from (Genesis 2:7), to be the womb for mankind's first, physical birth. This was the womb that He designed to give birth to women's wombs, which in turn give birth to new men and women, new persons with immortal souls, made in His image. That was the first point of the universe: people. Did you think God cared about gases and galaxies? They were just the preparation, the preliminary, the placenta for people. People are the point of the universe. The universe 'peoples' as a flower bush flowers."

"And within this humanity, the point of Israel was to be a second womb, a womb within the womb of the world. And the ultimate point and product of this chosen womb is the Messiah, and He is speaking to you at this moment face to face. The whole meaning of Israel is Me, and you, the teacher of Israel, do not know Me. How ironic!"

"And within Israel there is a third womb, my mother. She is all Israel come to one single, sharp point, like a pen: a young virgin kneeling at her prayers, addressed by My Angel, who breathlessly waited to see whether My chosen door into humanity and its salvation would freely open or not. And it did. She said yes. I knew she would. I am the only man in history who chose his own mother. So the universe was a womb for humanity, and humanity was a womb for Israel, and Israel was a womb for Mary, and Mary was a womb for Me. Thus, Mary is the point of the universe, and I am the point of that point."

Dr. Kreeft continues, "At each step in this design of God, the role of the Spirit is essential. The Spirit breathed order into chaos (Genesis 1:2) and life into man (Genesis 2:7). We are made in God's image because we have God's breath (Spirit). And when we defaced the image of God in us by sin, God's response was to send the Spirit to call up the miracle of Israel and finally to conceive Mary in her mother Anna's womb without Original Sin, and then to conceive Christ in Mary's womb without a human father. The Spirit was Christ's food and strength and wisdom throughout His earthly life. And His gift of His and His Father's Spirit to us is the culminating point of His ministry (see John 16:7). The Spirit's work is this 'new birth' that Jesus speaks of to Nicodemus. The Spirit fulfills David's prophetic prayer in Psalm 51: *Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me.*"

"Only God can create, can make something out of nothing, can bridge the infinite gap between nonbeing and being. God creates a new human spirit (a soul) at conception every time physical love provides an open body, and He creates a new spirit, a real human participation in His own divine life, every time spiritual love and faith provide an open soul. The door for new natural human life (*bios*) to enter the world is a woman saying Yes to a man by sexual intercourse; the door for new supernatural, eternal life (*zoe*) to enter the world is a soul saying Yes to God by faith, as Mary did. The promise to her is also to us: *The Holy Spirit shall come upon you, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow you; therefore the holy thing that will be born of you will be called the Son of God* (Luke 1:35)."

"This is the real meaning and purpose of history; this is the true 'short history of time': our 'new birth' into eternal life, our becoming little Christs, children of God, with our divine Father's divine nature as well as our human parents' human nature—in a word, having two natures, human and divine, like Christ (though our divine nature is only by grace, by adoption, and by participation). For this is any parent's first and primary gift to the child: the very nature of the parent. This gift is the foundation of all others: love, time, education. And that is the point of religion that Nicodemus did not know. He knew everything except the one thing most worth knowing, the reason for everything else that has ever happened. And that reason is sitting right in front of him. And of us."

God bless you!

Father Eric



ST. JOSEPH'S CHURCH
16 POPLAR AVENUE
STATEN ISLAND, NEW YORK 10309

Saturday, February 28, 2026

5:00pm(Vigil) Richard Williamson

Sunday, March 1, 2026

8:00am Mary Anne Farrell

10:00am Lee Pisano

12Noon Clyde Mahony

WEEKDAYS

Monday: 9:00am People of the Parish

Tuesday: 9:00am Aquilino LaRocca

Wednesday: 9:00am Marion Claro

Thursday: 9:00am William Leonard

Friday: 9:00am Helen Ciccarelli

Saturday, March 7, 2026

9:00am John J. Marcello

5:00pm(Vigil) Pat Meehan

Sunday, March 8, 2026

8:00am Loretta & Fred Buckley

10:00am Antonio Emilio

12Noon Raymond Coyne



MARRIAGE BANNS

- 1st Banns** Vincent Frunzi & Kristina Arcaro
1st Banns Michael Reimann & Carlyann Coglian
2nd Banns Matthew Martin & Caitlin Hourican
2nd Banns Joseph Bellomo & Taylor Caridad
3rd Banns Michael Russell & Monica Fondacaro

MEMORIALS



Our Bread and Wine this week is offered :

At St. Thomas Church

***In Loving Memory of
 Larry Loporcaro***

requested by Jennie & Joe Fiechter

At St. Joseph's Church

***In Loving Memory of
 Mary Anne Farrell***

requested by Evelyn Howard

Lent

During Lent- Mass:

Every Friday at 7:00pm at St. Thomas Church.

Stations of the Cross:

Every Friday following the 9:00am Mass at St. Joseph, and St. Thomas Church at 12noon in Italian and after the 7:00pm Mass in the evening.



ST. THOMAS THE APOSTLE CHURCH
6123 AMBOY ROAD
STATEN ISLAND, NEW YORK 10309

Saturday, February 28, 2026

6:00pm(Vigil) Micky, Joanne, Kevin & Michael III Carr

Sunday, March 1, 2026

9:00am Anthony Sutter

10:00am(It) Antonio Saraniero

11:00am Annette Purpora

1:00pm Felisa & Ernesto Raval

4:00pm Polish Mass

6:00pm Matthew Stark

WEEKDAYS

Monday: 7:00 am Diane Paladino

8:00am Mariano Tartamella

Tuesday: 7:00am Andrea Sinisi

8:00am Zacarias Sabarre

Wednesday: 7:00am Claudia Barrera

8:00am Michael Abood

Thursday: 7:00am Mary & Joseph Speciale

8:00am Sylvia G. Bentley

Friday: 7:00am Jean Marino

8:00am Florence Vassallo

7:00pm Larry Loporcaro

Saturday, March 7, 2026

8:00am Aquilino & Angelina LaRocca

6:00pm(Vigil) Salvatore Tubiolo

Sunday, March 8, 2026

9:00am Catherine, Angelina, George, Demo & James Martinos

10:00am(It) Vincenzo & Bellina Demetrio

11:00am Giacinto Carbone

1:00pm Brian Rodrigo

2:30pm Special Needs—Anthony Tiano

6:00pm Mario, Maddalena & Concetta Cirillo



the CARDINAL'S
 ANNUAL STEWARDSHIP APPEAL
*Sharing God's Gifts Throughout
 the Archdiocese of New York*



This weekend is an important moment for our parish and archdiocese, as we are all called to consider contributing to the *Cardinal's Appeal*.

Thank you to those who have already participated this year. If you have not yet done so, please join your fellow parishioners in supporting the mission of the Church today. Together, we can reach our goal.

Thank you for making a difference.

To make a gift, scan the QR code, visit cardinalsappeal.org or call 646-794-3300 today.

Thank you for your consideration and for being loving and generous stewards of our archdiocese and its mission. God bless.



SICK & HOMEBOUND

If someone is homebound or in the hospital, please notify us. Arrangements can be easily made for the Sacrament of Anointing. Holy Communion is brought to the sick by the Priests weekly or monthly as requested. Please let us know your needs by calling the parish office.

Ethel Ducey, Joseph A. Pulizotto, Ellen Merli, Louis Amatrudo, Stacey Benvenuto, Gertrude Sokolowsky, John Michael Pasquale, Hope Vosilla, Helen Cole, Kristen Kress, Isla Albashara, Anthony Pelle, Christina Natale, Neil DeGennaro, Wesley Devita, Tina Bini, Patricia Conway, Tom Quercia, Linda DiSilvio, George Marino, Michael Archer, Michael Rokicki, Renee Bavero, Joseph Mangano.

In your sympathy, please pray for: Marie Cangemi.

BAPTISM SEMINAR SATURDAY, March 28, 2026

Immediately following the 6:00pm Mass at St. Thomas Church there will be a meeting for expectant parents and parents of newborn babies. Parents are expected to be at Mass as well as the meeting. We urge parents to attend before the baby is born. We also urge Godparents to participate by attending this meeting. This is a requirement for all parents prior to the Baptism of their child.



Easter Spiritual Bouquet Cards

Easter Mass Remembrance cards for the living and deceased are available at Church and in the Parish Office. The intentions will be placed on our altars throughout the Easter Season.



Memorial Easter Flower Offering

Memorial Easter Flower Offering envelopes are also available in the rear of our Churches and will be placed on our altars throughout the Easter Season.

•Thursday, March 19th is the Feast of Saint Joseph. There will be a Solemn High Mass at 6 PM at St. Thomas Church with the distribution of blessed bread. We will adorn the sanctuary with lilies, the flower traditionally employed to signify the purity and holiness of Saint Joseph. Lilies can be memorialized to honor a loved one and to ask our Patron Saint to pray for that person. Please call the parish office for more information.

SACRED HEART

REMEMBRANCE VIGIL CANDLES

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OF

ROBERT SCOTT KUNZ, JR. (BOBBY)
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MOM, DAD, KRISTINE & NICOLE
requested by Mr. & Mrs. R. Kunz

IN LOVING MEMORY
OF

OUR BELOVED
MARLON I. DELA CRUZ

"THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD,
THERE IS NOTHING I SHALL WANT."
requested by Carolyn Dela Cruz

IN LOVING MEMORY
OF

ROSEMARY & THOMAS LAVIN
"FOREVER IN OUR HEARTS"

requested by Nicholas & Annie Basso

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•ST JOSEPH ST PATRICK ANNUAL SUPPER

Our parish will host our fourth annual St. Joseph— St. Patrick Supper in Finn Hall. All are welcome, as we honor Joseph, the patron saint of the universal Church, and Patrick, the patron saint of our diocese. Irish and Italian culture will be celebrated in food and music. The supper takes place Saturday, March 14th from 7 PM to 9 PM. All are welcome. Admission is \$25 which includes beer and wine. Children under 12 are free. The proceeds will go to benefit the charitable works of our parish groups towards the needy. Reserve seats by calling the parish office.

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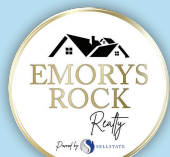
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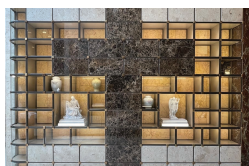
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