

Fr. Joseph's Corner

"St. Polycarp"

Imagine being able to sit at the feet of the apostles and hear their stories of life with Jesus from their own lips. Imagine walking with those who had walked with Jesus, seen him, and touched him. That was what Polycarp was able to do as a disciple of Saint John the Evangelist.

With the apostles gone, heresies sprang up pretending to be true teaching, persecution was strong, and controversies arose over how to celebrate liturgy that Jesus never laid down rules for.

Polycarp, as a holy man and bishop of Smyrna, found there was only one answer—to be true to the life of Jesus and imitate that life. Saint Ignatius of Antioch told Polycarp, "Your mind is grounded in God as on an immovable rock."

When faced with heresy, he showed the "candid face" that Ignatius admired and that imitated Jesus' response to the Pharisees. Marcion, the leader of the Marcionites who followed a dualistic heresy, confronted Polycarp and demanded respect by saying, "Recognize us, Polycarp." Polycarp responded, "I recognize you, yes, I recognize the son of Satan."

On the other hand, when faced with Christian disagreements, he was all forgiveness and respect. One of the controversies of the time concerned the celebration of Easter. The East, where Polycarp was from, celebrated the Passover as the Passion of Christ, followed by a Eucharist the following day. The West celebrated Easter on the Sunday of the week following Passover. When Polycarp went to Rome to discuss the difference with Pope Anicetus, they could not agree on this issue. But they found no difference in their Christian beliefs. Anicetus asked Polycarp to celebrate the Eucharist in his own chapel.

Polycarp faced persecution as Christ did. His own church admired him for following the "gospel model"—not chasing after martyrdom as some did but avoiding it until it was God's will as Jesus did. They considered it "a sign of love to desire not to save oneself alone, but to save also all the Christian brothers and sisters."

One day, during a bloody martyrdom in which Christians were attacked by wild animals in the arena, the crowd grew so enraged that they demanded more blood, crying, "Down with the atheists; let Polycarp be found." (They considered Christians "atheists" because they didn't believe in their pantheon of gods.) Since Polycarp was known not only as a leader but also as holy, "even before his grey hair appeared," this was a horrible demand.

Polycarp was calm, but others persuaded him to leave the city and hide at a nearby farm. He spent his time praying for people he knew and for the Church. During his prayer, he saw a vision of his pillow turning into fire and told his friends that the dream meant he would be burned alive.



As the search closed in, he moved to another farm, but the police discovered he was there by torturing two boys. He had a little warning because he was upstairs in the house, but he decided to stay, saying, "God's will be done." Then he went downstairs, spoke with his captors, and served them a meal. All he asked of them was an hour to pray. He spent two hours praying for everyone he had ever known and for the Church, "... remembering all who had at any time come his way—small folk and great folk, distinguished and undistinguished, and the whole Catholic Church throughout the world." Many of his captors began to wonder why they were arresting this holy, 86-year-old bishop.

But that didn't stop them from taking him into the arena on the Sabbath. As he entered the arena, the crowd roared like the animals they cheered. Those around Polycarp heard a voice from heaven above the crowd, "Be brave, Polycarp, and act like a man."

The proconsul begged the 86-year-old bishop to give in because of his age. "Say 'Away with the atheists,'" the proconsul urged. Polycarp calmly turned to face the crowd, looked straight at them, and said, "Away with the atheists." The proconsul continued to plead with him. When he asked Polycarp to swear by Caesar to save himself, Polycarp answered, "If you imagine that I will swear by Caesar, you do not know who I am. Let me tell you plainly, I am a Christian." Finally, when all else failed, the proconsul reminded Polycarp that he would be thrown to the wild animals unless he changed his mind. Polycarp answered, "Change of mind from better to worse is not a change allowed to us."

Because of Polycarp's lack of fear, the proconsul told him he would be burned alive, but Polycarp knew that an hour of fire was better than eternal fire.

The fire was lit, and the eyewitnesses who reported it said they saw a miracle. The fire burst into an arch around Polycarp, the flames surrounding him like sails, and instead of being burned, he seemed to glow like bread baking or gold being melted in a furnace. When the captors saw he wasn't being burned, they stabbed him. The blood that flowed put the fire out.

The proconsul wouldn't let the Christians have the body because he feared they would worship Polycarp. The witnesses reported this with scorn, noting the proconsul's lack of understanding of the Christian faith: "They did not know that we can never abandon the innocent Christ who suffered on behalf of sinners for the salvation of those in this world." After the body was burned, they stole the bones to celebrate the memory of his martyrdom and to prepare others for persecution. The date was about February 23, 156.

—Prayerful Wishes, Fr. Joseph

St. Joseph Catholic Church

150 E First St., P.O. Box 1315, Prineville OR 97754
February 15, 2026 † 6th Sunday of Ordinary Time

Vigil Mass Saturday 5:00 p.m.
Sunday Mass (English)* 9:00 a.m.
Sunday Mass (Spanish) 12:00 p.m.
Holy Days 8:00 a.m. & 6:00 p.m.
Mondays • Tuesdays • Thursdays 8:00 a.m.
Wednesdays • Fridays 12:00 p.m.
*Coffee and fellowship are served after the 9 a.m. Mass.

Pastor ♦ Very Rev. Fr. Joseph Kunnelaya T.
Secretary ♦ Darlene Counts

Parish Office Hours ♦ Monday – Thursday ♦ 9:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Parish Office Telephone: (541) 447-6475

Fr. Joseph: 9:00 a.m. – 9:00 p.m. ♦ (541) 420-4458

Parish Website: <https://stjosephsprineville.org>

Email: stjosephparish@bendbroadband.com

Pastor: fatherjoseph@bendbroadband.com / joekunel55@gmail.com

Facebook: St. Joseph Parish / Instagram: st_josephparish

Director of Religious Education ♦ Barbara Dalton

OCIA ♦ Jim Friese / OCIA (Spanish) ♦ Yurizet Villasana

Parish Bulletin Designer / Editor ♦ Tina Hill



Confessions

Wednesdays: 11:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Saturdays: 3:30 – 4:30 p.m.

(other times by appointment)

Anointing of the Sick

Contact Fr. Joseph for this Sacrament

♦ DIVINE MERCY CHAPLET AND CENACLE GROUP: Every Monday after the 8 a.m. Mass.
♦ FRIDAY ROSARY at 11:30 a.m., MASS at 12:00 p.m., EXPOSITION of the Blessed Sacrament immediately following Mass, EUCHARISTIC ADORATION 1–2 p.m., BENEDICTION AND REPOSITION



Baptisms

Baptisms will be held on Saturdays.

Parents of children to be baptized must be registered members of the parish 6 months prior to baptism.

A Baptismal Preparation Class is mandatory for both parents and godparents.

For more information, call the Parish Office.

Marriages

Couples need to make an appointment with Fr. Joseph 6 months before the proposed date.

A Marriage Preparation Course is mandatory.

MASS INTENTIONS / READINGS FOR THE WEEK

The practice of requesting a Mass to be offered for loved ones, living or deceased, is a beautiful and wonderful part of our Catholic tradition.

Please Call the Parish Office to Have a Mass Intention Reserved

Monday	02/16/2026	8:00 a.m.	Shirley Anderson (D)	Jas 1:1-11; Mk 8:11-13
Tuesday	02/17/2026	8:00 a.m.	Jim Friese (L)	Jas 1:12-18; Mk 8:14-21
Wednesday	02/18/2026	8:00 a.m.	St Joseph Parishioners (L)	Jl 2:12-18; 2 Cor 5:20-6:2; Mt 6:1-6, 16-18
Wednesday	02/18/2026	6:00 p.m.	LeFevre Family (L)	Jl 2:12-18; 2 Cor 5:20-6:2; Mt 6:1-6, 16-18
Thursday	02/19/2026	8:00 a.m.	Joan Husar (D)	Dt 30:15-20; Lk 9:22-25
Friday	02/20/2026	12:00 p.m.	Nikki Plumb (L)	Is 58:1-9a; Mt 9:14-15
Saturday	02/21/2026	5:00 p.m.	Mary Ellen Schiedler (L)	Gn 2:7-9, 3:1-7; Rom 5:12-19
Sunday	02/22/2026	9:00 a.m.	Zena Bassett (L)	Gn 2:7-9, 3:1-7; Rom 5:12-19
Sunday	02/22/2026	12:00 p.m.	St Joseph Parishioners (L)	Gn 2:7-9, 3:1-7; Rom 5:12-19

(L) = Living ♦ (D) = Deceased

Today's Homily

TODAY'S READINGS CHALLENGE us to choose freely and wisely to observe the laws given by a loving and caring God. He revealed His laws to His Chosen People through Moses and the prophets in the Old Testament, and through His own Son, Jesus, in the New Testament.

For the Israelites, the Torah was not a set of laws, but the instruction or teaching intended to promote the holiness and wholeness of each believer. It was the revealed will of a caring God for the people with whom He had His covenant.

In today's gospel, Jesus as a new lawgiver, reinterprets four Mosaic laws.

The first reading, taken from Sirach, contains the clearest statement in the Old Testament concerning the God-given freedom of the human will. It exonerates God from all responsibility for evil in the world. "If you choose, you can keep the commandments . . . before you are life and death, whichever you choose shall be given you."

In the second reading, Paul challenges his Corinthian believers to appreciate the wisdom of God's saving plan for His people—a plan hidden for ages but now revealed by the Spirit.

In the selection from the Sermon on the Mount in today's Gospel, while challenging his disciples to live a life of justice and righteousness, which should exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees, Jesus, as the new lawgiver, sets forth His own position with regard to the Law given through Moses, by providing new interpretation and meaning for the old laws.

In today's Gospel passage, Jesus explains the real meaning of three Mosaic laws concerning murder, adultery, divorce, and false oaths. Anger is murder, an impure



Matthew 5:17-18

look is adultery, and unlawful divorce is double violation of natural law and covenant with God, and false oaths are sacrilegious.

We need to obey God's Law, appreciating its basic principles: In obeying God's law and Church law, let us remember the two basic principles on which these laws are based; namely, the principle of reverence and the principle of respect.

In the first four of the Ten Commandments, we are asked to reverence God, reverence His holy Name, reverence His holy day, and reverence our father and mother.

The next six commandments instruct us to respect life, one's personal integrity and good name, the legal system, another's property, and another's spouse.

Our obedience to these laws must be prompted by love of God and gratitude to God for His blessings.

Jesus explains that anger is murder, evil thoughts, words, looks and behavior are adultery, unlawful divorce is sinful, and false oaths are sacrilegious.

We need to forgive, forget, and move toward reconciliation as soon as possible. St. Paul advises us: "Be angry (righteous anger) but do not sin" (Eph 4:26).

When we keep anger in our spirit, we are inviting physical illnesses, like hypertension, and mental illnesses, like depression.

Let us relax and keep silent when we are angry, wait before acting on our anger, giving it time to detoxify and cool off, pray for God's strength for self-control, and give the Holy Spirit time to help us to see the event through Jesus' eyes instead of through anger's eyes.

We need to be true to God, to ourselves, and to others. Let us allow God's word of truth to penetrate our minds and hearts and to form our consciences, making us men and women of integrity.

PLEASE PRAY FOR THOSE ON OUR PRAYER LIST:

David Leonard ♦ Steve Forrester ♦ Carl Johnson ♦ Dolores Koivisto ♦ Anita Marquez ♦ Ben Guyger
 Georgia Fitzgerald ♦ Chuck Renwick ♦ John Huthmacher ♦ Ed McNamara ♦ Brittany Duncan Osgood ♦ Julie Bither ♦ Mary Bither ♦ Lyn Rodgers ♦ Fred Vandehey ♦ Ralph Lee
 Mary Lee ♦ Jeanne Hackett ♦ Peggy Holtz ♦ Michael Kuenzi ♦ Mary Ellen Marquez ♦ Barbara Hopla
 Gilbert Marquez ♦ Sam LeFevre and the LeFevre family ♦ Joanie Holland ♦ Kerry Loving ♦ Tara Lamb
 Julian Gomez ♦ Vanessa Ortega ♦ Mary Ellen Schiedler ♦ Carolyn Ausborn

February—The Month of the Holy Family

Lenten Schedule



- ♦ Ash Wednesday, Wednesday, February 18th, Mass at 8 a.m. and 6 p.m.
- ♦ Stations of the Cross, Friday Nights at 6 p.m., from February 20th through March 27th.
- ♦ Lenten Penance, Wednesday, March 18th, at 6 p.m.
- ♦ Chrism Mass in Baker City, Thursday, March 26th, at 11 a.m.
- ♦ Palm Sunday, March 29th, Mass at 9 a.m.; Spanish Mass at 12 p.m.
- ♦ Holy Thursday, April 2nd, at 6 p.m.
- ♦ Good Friday, April 3rd, Stations of the Cross at 3 p.m., Passion Service and Veneration of the Cross at 6 p.m.
- ♦ Holy Saturday, April 4th, Easter Vigil Mass at 7 p.m.
- ♦ Easter Sunday, April 5th, Mass at 9 a.m.; Spanish Mass at 12 p.m.

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Soup Supper Schedule

Fridays in the Parish Hall, after Stations of the Cross, there will be a soup supper hosted by the following:

- February 20th—Lectors & Eucharistic Ministers
- February 27th—Hispanic Ministries
- March 6th—Acolytes
- March 13th—Pro-life
- March 20th—Religious Education
- March 27th—Knights of Columbus



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Message from Bishop Hennen

Bishop Hennen has begun a feasibility study throughout the tri-county area to assess the possibility of a new Catholic High School in Central Oregon. It would serve students from Deschutes, Crook, and Jefferson counties. Please click on the QR code to see the website for the proposed Catholic High School, Xavier Prep.



In the coming weeks, we will conduct surveys and focus groups, which will help complete the study. It is important that we get as many responses as possible, and the Bishop asks for your participation. Please share this with other families!

Thank you!

Guidelines for Lent

Lent prepares the faithful to celebrate the Paschal Mystery of Christ's suffering, death, and resurrection. It is a time for reflection and spiritual renewal—a time to examine one's relationship with God and with others. Lent is also the final period of preparation for catechumens seeking baptism at the Easter Vigil. As Catholics, the Church calls us to a spirit of repentance and conversion—"to turn away from sin, and to be faithful to the Gospel." Through our traditional practices of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving, we express our conversion and prepare to renew our Baptismal promises at Easter.

Below are the Church's definitions of abstinence and fasting—as well as the minimum requirements she obliges us to meet.

Abstinence: Meat and poultry are removed from our meals—fish is acceptable.

Fasting: Eat one (1) full meal and two (2) smaller meals—no snacking during the day.

All Catholics aged 18–59 should fast on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday.

All Catholics 14 years of age or older are to abstain from meat and poultry on Ash Wednesday, all Fridays of Lent, and Good Friday.

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Lenten Day Retreat

Join Catholic speaker **Dina Marie Hale** of Faith Moments for a Lenten Day Retreat at The Grotto on **Friday, March 20th, from 8:15 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.**, in the Grotto Conference Center. The retreat theme is "Companions of Jesus Carrying Our Cross." Together, we'll make a pilgrimage of the heart and mind to the Holy Cross that has redeemed the world. To celebrate the Franciscan Jubilee Year, we'll encounter St. Francis of Assisi and explore his love of the Cross. The day includes conferences, Mass, confession, lunch, and time to explore the Grotto's peaceful grounds.

Registration is required at dinamarie.org. The Grotto is located at 8840 NE Skidmore St., Portland, OR 97220.

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College Freshman Scholarship:

Bishop Hennen and The Legacy of Faith Foundation, on behalf of the **Canney Family**, are seeking a High School Senior with a GPA of 2.0 or higher who requires financial assistance to attend college or trade school. The approximate value is \$2,500 per year for up to two years. Applications are due by **Tuesday, March 31st!** The candidate must be a practicing Catholic in good standing with a Priest's reference. For more information and application, go to legacyoffaithccf.org/resources (under the CANNEY COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIP banner) or contact **Mark French** at: Mark@DioceseofBaker.org.

