

Father Eugene Grytner, SDS
Office hours Mon-Fri 9 am to 12 pm
1305 E. Mann Road Bartow, FL 33830

MASSES

**Daily at 8:30 am - No Mass on
Wednesday and Saturday morning.**

Saturday: Vigil Bartow: 5:00 pm

Sunday: Ft. Meade 8:00 am

Sunday: Bartow 10:30 am

Sacraments

Confessions: Half hour prior to masses.

Marriage preparation: Arrangements must be
made four months in advance.

Baptism: Last Sunday of the month.
Call Evelyn Rivera 863-370-4000
evecoulter@aol.com

Sick calls – Anytime
Communion for Sick and Home Bound
Call the Church Office

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament - Every
Sunday 1:30 pm to 2:30 pm
Monday 8:30 am to 10:30 am
Thursday 7:00 pm

Religious Education

Evelyn Rivera 863-370-4000

Religious Formation – Every Sunday
Sept thru May

Preschool thru 8th
Sun 9 am + **Mass**

Email: office@stthomasbartow.org
Phone 863-533-8578
Fax 863- 533-5090
www.stthomasbartow.org

NEW PARISHIONERS WELCOME!
Registration forms in church or office

Remember St. Thomas Church in your will

Saint Thomas Aquinas Catholic Church *2180 S. Kissingen Ave. Bartow FL, 33830* *Diocese of Orlando*



1st Sunday of Lent February 22, 2026

Mass Intentions

Sat Feb 21	5:00 pm	
Sun Feb 22	8:00 am	For All Parishioners
Sun Feb 22	10:30 am	+Charles Wiggins By Family
Mon Feb 23	8:30 am	Jose' Rafael Hernandez Lopez By Ivette Hernandez
Tue Feb 24	8:30 am	
Thu Feb 26	8:30 am	All Souls in Purgatory
Fri Feb 27	8:30 am	+Jack Kirkland By Ann Sowle
Sat Feb 28	5:00 pm	
Sun Mar 1	8:00 am	For All Parishioners
Sun Mar 1	10:30 am	

Please Pray For.....

Stuart Andrews, Terry Ayres, Kristin Bing, Pete Byrne, Melvin Casey, Debbie Coffman, Alan English, Rachel Gohlman, Dorothy Guptill, Delores Hart, Austin Heath, Zachary Heath, Ivette Hernandez, Jennifer Hoffer, Mark Jansen, Missy Jansen, Stuart Jones, Fr. Gabriel Kamienski, Bill Kjerrumgaard, Aaron Mills, Adam Mills, Zachary Mills, Scott Mize, Kathleen Morris, Lacey Pate, George Pizano, Karlee Severns, Richie Southwell, Chuck Spencer, Murphy Stidham, Rita Taylor, Laura Webb

Please pray for our deceased diocesan priests:

Feb. 1, 2006	Rev. Brendan C. Donnelly
Feb. 2, 2012	Rev. Anthony Palmese
Feb. 4, 1999	Rev. Michael Hanrahan
Feb. 9, 1981	Rev. Edward Condren
Feb. 11, 2016	Msgr. Edward Thompson
Feb. 15, 1999	Rev. Antonio Pons
Feb. 20, 1969	Rev. Patrick Malone
Feb. 21, 2013	Most Rev. Norbert Dorsey
Feb. 25, 2012	Rev. Larry Lossing
Feb. 26, 1989	Rev. Carlos Aizpun



Every Friday during Lent at 7:00 pm

LECTORS	EMHC
2/21-5:00 pm	
Luke Almanzan Angelika Almanzan	Angelika Almanzan Luke Almanzan
2/22-10:30 am	
Carolyn King Ryan Curtis	Martha Laurent Maureen Leckie
2/28-5:00 pm	
Mike DeNeve Victor Aguirre	Susan DeNeve Doug Van Orsdale
3/1-10:30 am	
Martha Laurent Rick Davila	Pattie Scott George Cherry

Saint Thomas Collection

2/8	Regular	\$2673.00
	Maintenance	326.00
	Diocesan	10.00

Saint Elizabeth Collection

2/1 &	Regular	1645.00
2/8	Maintenance	80.00

LONG-SLEEVE RELIEF DRIVE 2026

Clean and gently used light-colored, long-sleeve, button down shirts (men and women S, M & L sizes) are needed, and 100 percent cotton is preferred but not necessary. There is a drop box in the narthex.

Fine Art Exhibition and Original, Limited Edition Print Sale Fundraiser In the narthex on March 1

WHAT CHRIST TAUGHT US IN THE GARDEN OF GETHSEMANE

The message that Christ brings into the world at Gethsemane seems unrealistic, yet history bears out its truth.

"In this drama of Jesus' agony, of the anguish of death, of the opposition between the human will not to die and the divine will which offers itself to death, in this drama of Gethsemane the whole human drama is played out, the drama of our redemption."

Pope Benedict XVI

The Garden of Gethsemane, just east of Jerusalem's Temple Mount, is the site of several events of great importance — and a theater in

which intensely dramatic lessons have been taught to humanity.

The name “Gethsemane” (*gath shemani*), meaning “oil press” in Hebrew, suggests the presence of an olive grove. It is not unusual for modern trees to grow out of the stumps of old olive trees, which means the olive trees that have been venerated by pilgrims for centuries (and still stand on the site today) may be rooted in those that were alive during the time of Christ.

Under the canopy of these ancient trees, Jesus told his disciples to “watch and pray” that they may not “undergo the test,” “for the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak.” Turning to three apostles — Peter, James and John — who had accompanied him into the garden, he exclaimed, “My soul is sad, even unto death!” (Mt 26:38-39).

Here, Jesus seemed more vulnerable to his humanity than usual, thereby causing the three great distress. Then Jesus cried out, “Abba Father, all things are possible to you. Remove this cup from me, yet not what I will but what you will” (Mk 14:36).

Was this a conflict of two wills? Given his choice by himself, Christ would have rejected the cup of suffering. But there was a higher, more difficult choice that needed to be made, for the redemption of mankind was at stake.

We often find ourselves in a situation that requires the more difficult choice. During such times, we may take inspiration from Christ’s ordeal in the Garden of Gethsemane. Christ realized that the more difficult choice needed to be made. He could not disobey the will of the Father. He could not spurn the needs of humanity.

The sins of mankind flashed through his mind. “And falling down into an agony he prayed the more earnestly. And his sweat became as drops of blood running down upon the ground” (Luke 22:44). The agony was prolonged and of an intensity that no mere mortal can begin to fathom.

Jesus led his three tired witnesses back to where the other eight were resting. This time, he was in a different mood: “Rise, let us go. Behold, he who will betray me is at hand” (Mt 45:46). The betrayer, of course, was Judas,

accompanied by a large cohort with swords and clubs. They were sent from the chief priests and elders to capture Jesus. “Whomever I kiss,” said Judas, “that is he. Lay hold of him.”

Peter, in an impetuous act, drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest, slicing off his right ear. John identifies the victim as Malchus (J 18:10). Jesus healed the man’s wounded ear by a simple touch of the hand (Lk 22:51). It would be his final miracle. Venerable Fulton Sheen remarked that “as a swordsman, Peter proved to be an excellent fisherman” — suggesting that Peter aimed to slay the servant. But Jesus admonished the apostle who would become the “rock,” the Church’s first pope, by telling Peter to “put back thy sword into its place, for all those who take the sword will perish by the sword.”

“The Pope? And how many divisions has the Pope?” It was madness, in the mind of Joseph Stalin, to think that unarmed followers of the Pope could defeat an armed battalion of soldiers. But, as Christ reminded Peter, he could have summoned more than 12 legions of angels to fight on his behalf (Mt 26:53).

Therefore, the kind of victory Christ had in mind would be achieved not by power but by love. And Peter understood. In the words of St. John Paul II: “He understood up to his last breath that neither he nor his brothers could fight with the sword; because the kingdom to which he had been called had to be won with the power of love, and with the power of truth and only in this way.”

Indeed, to the practical mind, victory belongs to the most powerful. The message that Christ brings into the world seems unrealistic, yet history bears out its truth. We are hesitant, even skeptical, because we underestimate the power of love. God is all-powerful, and his motive for creation is love. The power of love is the instrument through which his love is expressed. And it is through love that Christians flourish.

In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus teaches the essential lessons of life: the importance of prayer, the need for sacrifice, the redeeming value of suffering, and love for others. If we enter with him spiritually into this garden, we will never be the same.

Donald DeMarco