

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  
evecoultter@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 8<sup>th</sup>

Sun 9 am + **Mass**

Email: [office@stthomasbartow.org](mailto:office@stthomasbartow.org)

Phone 863-533-8578

Fax 863- 533-5090

[www.stthomasbartow.org](http://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***



# 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Lent March 15, 2026



## Mass Intentions

Sat Mar 14	5:00 pm	
Sun Mar 15	8:00 am	For All Parishioners
Sun Mar 15	10:30 am	+Charles Wiggins By Family
Mon Mar 16	8:30 am	
Tue Mar 17	8:30 am	
Thu Mar 19	8:30 am	All Souls in Purgatory
Fri Mar 20	8:30 am	
Sat Mar 21	5:00 pm	
Sun Mar 22	8:00 am	For All Parishioners
Sun Mar 22	10:30 am	+Jason McCarter Olson By Susi Olson

### *Please Pray For.....*

Stuart Andrews, Terry Ayres, Kristin Bing, Pete Byrne, Melvin Casey, Debbie Coffman, Alan English, Rachel Gohman, 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*

Mar. 18, 1991 Rev. Paul Kajdan  
Mar. 20, 1982 Rev. Thomas Gross  
Mar. 22, 1972 Msgr. Martin Brendan Power  
Mar. 22, 2023 Rev. John J. Ryan  
Mar. 25, 1978 Rev. Sean Patrick Molloy



Every Friday during Lent at 7:00 pm

Volunteer needed to take pictures of First Communion on May 10<sup>th</sup>. Please call the office if you would like to volunteer.

LECTORS	EMHC
3/14-5:00 pm	
Ruth Palmer Ann Slocum	Ann Slocum Ruth Palmer
3/15-10:30 am	
Oziemar Woodard Barbara Woodard	Theresa Cherry Evelyn Rivera
3/21-5:00 pm	
Luke Almanzan Angelika Almanzan	Angelika Almanzan Luke Almanzan
3/22-10:30 am	
Alina Gutierrez Ryan Curtis	Martha Laurent Maureen Leckie

### *Saint Thomas Collection*

3/1	Regular	\$3323.00
	Maintenance	556.00
	Easter Flowers	254.00

### *Saint Elizabeth Collection*

3/1	Regular	1062.00
	Maintenance	30.00

### SECOND COLLECTION

Diocesan Collection for Catholic Relief Services/World Mission Sunday will take place this weekend.

### EASTER FLOWERS

If you would like to make a donation towards Easter Flowers for the Church, please place your envelopes in the second collection. Envelopes can be found in the pews.

### LONG-SLEEVE RELIEF DRIVE 2026

There is a drop box in the narthex for clean and gently used shirts.

### INTERNATIONAL DINNER

Saturday, March 21<sup>st</sup>

\$10 per person

If you would like to participate in this event and bring a dish that represents your culture or a country meaningful to you, please contact Maria Davila at 863-370-3441 by 3/14/26.



St. Thomas' Penance Service will take place on Thursday, March 26<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 pm.

## A SIMPLE TRUTH FOR LENT

What the Church seems to whisper through readings at the [Lent](#) is a simple message. God is with you is that simple message.

Nothing esoteric, nothing too dramatic, only the plain truth: it is God's ancient and contemporary and constant assurance. God is with you as you begin this season of Lent; he, of course, is always with you. But the Church seems to want to remind us of the fact as we begin the journey of this holy season. It is a good reminder.

As I said, it is a constant truth. It is found [throughout the Scripture](#). "I will be with him in distress," God says in the Psalm (Ps 91:15). It is the same thing he said to Jacob at Bethel while wrestling that stubborn patriarch: "Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go" (Gn 28:15). It is the same thing prophesied and fulfilled in Matthew: "I am with you always, to the close of the age," Jesus said (Mt 28:20). It is what God has always done — he has always stuck with us — since at least that time in Eden when he went looking for us in the cool of the day (Gn 3:9).

### God is still with you

Thus, it remains true even when you enter the desert, even when Satan draws near in the battle of temptation — God is still with you. That's how I've always interpreted the little detail Luke gives, that Jesus was "led by the Spirit" into the desert (Lk 4:1). The interior battle, the brutal moral battle for the soul: it is also a spiritual struggle. The darkness of it is not like the darkness of a horror story but more like the shadows of a quest. God allows the struggle; we can only mysteriously describe it that way. Somehow the battle is necessary. Between earth and heaven there are not just stars but a desert too. These, of course, are images of purification and redemption, images of the soul's return to God.

Which is the deeper purpose of Lent. It is, of course, primarily a season in which we prepare ourselves for the Easter celebration, purifying ourselves to celebrate the Paschal feast. But that ultimately is just a sign for the spiritual life generally, an image of each soul's journey to God. What the church says each Lent, reading us again the story of Jesus's temptation in the desert, is that there is a desert for each of us, a

place and season of testing we each must enter, a spiritual battle each of us must undertake.

We should, therefore, pay attention to the ways Jesus fought the devil. We should fight the devil just like he did. Akin to the Church's ancient Lenten practices of prayer, fasting and almsgiving, what we see in Jesus' testing in the desert are those practices figured as spiritual warfare. Lenten discipline is neither self-improvement nor therapy. It's a battle. It's a war with the devil himself, that evil lion that prowls about.

### What do we do when faced with temptation?

Tempted, then, by material desires or by gluttonous bodily wants, what should the Christian do? Remember the Scripture that we live not on bread alone but on the word of God, the promises of God that he would care for us as he cared for his people in the desert, if only we had faith the size of a mustard seed.

Tempted, too, by a lust for power and control, political or personal, what should the Christian do? This is an all too relevant temptation. Worship God alone — no man, no office. Serve the God who tells you to serve him in the poor and not the partisan who tells you otherwise. Your allegiance is to Christ. Do not give in or change or twist the truth! Remember it is Satan that offers you power in this world. Renounce that willfulness that makes a wreck of things, the willfulness that makes you want such power.

And, finally, tempted by the fear and impatience that makes us sometimes demand signs from God, or some answer to our prayers and pleading, Jesus reminds us not to put God to the test.

The way of faithfulness we're asked to imitate is that of Jesus. And he entered the darkness of Good Friday, that felt forsakenness which demanded of God nothing; we are called to be faithful like that, come what may. God's *hesed* is what that is — his steadfast loving kindness we're called to make our own.

Trusting in the word of God, renouncing Satan's power, insisting only upon faith and not any reward: that's the deep teaching of Jesus in the desert. That's how God is with us as we enter our own deserts; he is with us by means of his truth. If only we will keep close to his truth and heed not today's devils. *Father Joshua*