



SAINT ANTHONY MARONITE CHURCH

A Parish Family of the Eparchy of St. Maron of Brooklyn, NY

كنيسة مار أنطونيوس المارونية

February 4, 2018 2018 شباط 4

145 Amesbury St * Lawrence, MA 01841

Phone: 978.685.7233 * Fax: 978.688.4475

email: rectory@stanthonylawrence.org *Website: www.stanthonylawrence.org

OFFICE HOURS

M-TH: 9 AM - 4PM

Friday: Office is Closed

Saturdays: By Appointment

LITURGIES

Daily Liturgies:

M & W: 9 AM

T & TH: 7 PM

Weekend Liturgies:

Saturday

Vigil Liturgy @ 4 PM

Sunday Liturgies:

8:30 AM - Arabic

9:30 AM - English

11:30 AM - English & Arabic

HOLY DAYS OF OBLIGATION

Vigil Liturgy @ 7 PM

Feast Day @ 9 AM

Sacraments of

Baptism & Confirmation

1 month in advance with the Pastor

Sacrament of Matrimony

Couples should make arrangements six months prior to the wedding date

Sacrament of

Reconciliation

One hour Before Thursday &

Saturday Liturgies,

or by appointment

Anointing of the Sick

Please notify the Rectory if a

member of your family is ill,

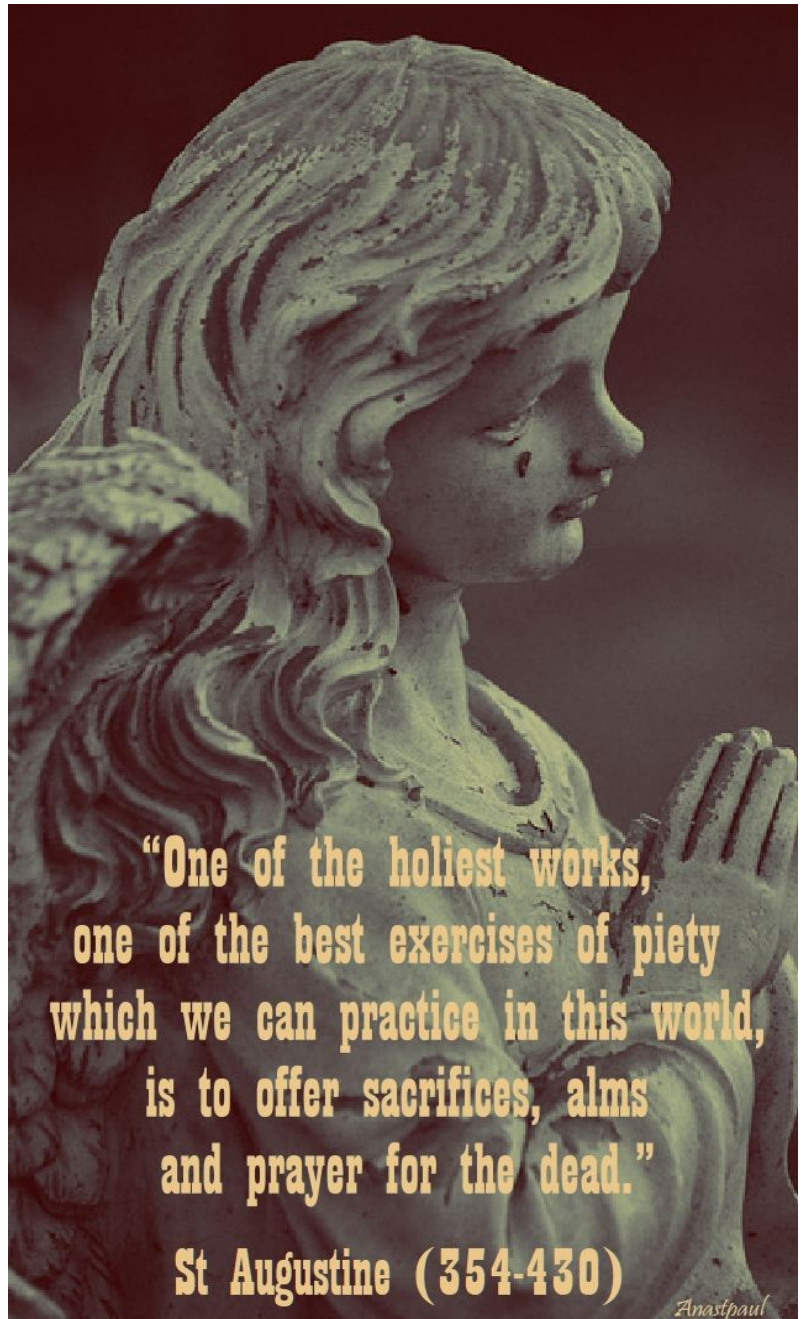
hospitalized, or unable to come to

Church and would like to receive

communion at home

*Please refer to our website for more
Sacrament Celebrations Guidelines*

Sunday of the Faithful Departed



**“One of the holiest works,
one of the best exercises of piety
which we can practice in this world,
is to offer sacrifices, alms
and prayer for the dead.”**

St Augustine (354-430)

Anastpaul

Facebook: Saint Anthony Maronite Church Lawrence, MA



Liturgies Intentions



Meet our staff:

Clergy

Father Elie Mikhael, Pastor
pastor@stanthonylawrence.org

Father Tony Youssef,
Parochial Vicar

Phone: 978-685-7233

Emergency Contact:

Fr. Elie Mikhael
 305.807.9087

Fr. Tony Youssef
 917.545.4955

Sub-Deacon James T. Demers
Sub-Deacon Nadim B. Daou

Secretary:

Mrs. Susan Fuccillo
 978.685-7233

rectory@stanthonylawrence.org

Parish Ministries

- ◆ Religious Education
ccd@stanthonylawrence.org
- ◆ Publishing: Bulletin
bulletin@stanthonylawrence.org
- ◆ Choirs (English, Arabic & Syriac)
 - ◆ Kids Choir
 - ◆ Knights of the Altar
 - ◆ Knights of Mary
 - ◆ Maronite Youth : MYO
 - ◆ Maronite Young Adults
 - ◆ Bereavement Ministry
 - ◆ Cenacle of the Rosary
 (Thursdays @ 6PM)
 - ◆ Cenacle of Divine Mercy
 (Sundays Before the Liturgies)
 - ◆ Sacristan (s)

Sunday of the Faithful Departed

أحد الموتى المؤمنين

Saturday, February 3	4:00 PM	For: + 40 Day Anniversary-Bomar Kramer, By His wife, Barbara Azzi Kramer, and Family.
Sunday February 4	8:30AM	For: Private Intentions
	9:30AM	For: + 40 Day Anniversary- Helen Blanchard By Her niece, Leslie Hassan, and Family.
	11:30 AM	For: + 40 Day Anniversary-Saadallah Azzi By His wife, Nabiha, daughter, Rita, grandchildren and family.

Week of the Faithful Departed

أسبوع الموتى المؤمنين

Monday, February 5 @ 9 AM <i>St. Agatha, M</i>	<i>Private Intentions.</i>
Tuesday, February 6 @ 7 PM	<i>Private Intentions.</i>
Wednesday, February 7 @ 9AM	<i>Private Intentions.</i>
Thursday, February 8 @ 7PM	<i>Vigil of the Feast of Saint Maron</i>
Friday, February 9 @ 9AM	<i>Saint Maron Feast Day</i>

Sunday of the Entrance into Lent:
 Miracle at Cana in Galilee

أحد مدخل الصوم الكبير
 أحد آية عرس قانا

Saturday, February 10	4:00 PM	Private Intentions.
Sunday, February 11	8:30AM	Private Intentions.
	9:30AM	For: +Mary George Eyssi and Suzanne Eyssi, By Mrs. John McDougall, Mr. and Mrs. Robert Witkiewicz, and family.
	11:30 AM	For: +Maroun and Leila Zaklit, By their daughter, Soline, wife of Ibrahim Geha, and family.



Ash Monday, February 12

إثنين الرماد - الإثنين، 12 شباط

Ash Monday Liturgies: 9AM and 7PM

Remember you are dust and unto dust you shall return

STATIONS OF THE CROSS EVERY FRIDAY @ 7PM DURING THE SEASON OF LENT

There will be no Adoration in March

Adoration
of the Blessed Sacrament

TITHES & OFFERINGS
WORSHIP THROUGH GIVING

January 28, 2018

Sunday Collection	\$ 2,296.00
Fuel	\$ 15.00
Candles	\$ 129.00
Donation	\$ 500.00
2nd Collection— Bishops' Charities	\$ 570.35
Total Deposit	\$ 3,510.35

Online Donation—Contribute to Our Parish Growth. Apply Online:
<http://stanthonylawrence.org/donate-now/>
Refer to Page 8 For more info

The Sanctuary Lamp
The Light that Symbolizes the Eternal Sacrifice

Left Sanctuary Lamp
*In Loving Memory of Joseph J. Faris
Offered by his loving wife and family.*

Right Sanctuary Lamp
*In Loving Memory of Joseph J. Faris
Offered by his loving wife and family.*

ALTAR SERVERS

<u>Date</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Altar Servers</u>
Saturday, February 3	4:00 PM	Elias Saab Sharbel Saab
Sunday, February 4	8:30 AM	Volunteers
Sunday, February 4	9:30 AM	Noah Hassan Caleb Hassan
Sunday, February 4 11:30 AM		Jonathan Merheb, Michael Merheb Rudy Bouraphael, Sebastian Ramey

<u>Date</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Altar Servers</u>
Saturday, February 10	4:00 PM	Jacob Godfrey Youssef Chahine
Sunday, February 11	8:30 AM	Volunteers
Sunday, February 11	9:30 AM	Antonio Hbaiter Joseph Safi
Sunday, February 11 11:30 AM		Elias Azzi, Elie Daou Christopher Bou Sadda, Joseph Mansour

 **Lectors**

<u>Date</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Lectors</u>
Saturday, February 3	4:00 PM	Fadi Chahine
Sunday, February 4	8:30 AM	Maroun Nassar
Sunday, February 4	9:30 AM	Michael Faris
Sunday, February 4 11:30 AM		English: Elias Azzi Arabic: Charbel Churfane

<u>Date</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Lectors</u>
Saturday, February 10	4:00 PM	Christine Ryan
Sunday, February 11	8:30 AM	Hitaf Nammour
Sunday, February 11	9:30 AM	Elaine Brousseau
Sunday, February 11 11:30 AM		English: Marie Charabati Arabic: Ajia Elia

PARISH MINISTRIES & NEWS

Religious Education - Sunday School

Students in grade 6 served the liturgy in January with the kindergarten, therefore, they will **not** be serving the liturgy on February 11, 2018.

Students making their First Communion need a Baptismal certificate on record at the church. If your child did not receive their baptism at St. Anthony Church, please provide us with a copy of their certificate.

GO PATS!!!!

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me. Susan Veilleux,
ccd@stanthonylawrence.org

Children's Choir

February 10th & 24th

Practices are held from 5:00PM - 6:30PM



Knights of Mary Schedule

Upcoming Meetings: February 3rd & 17th

All Events run from 5PM - 7PM After 4PM Liturgy

Dates are Subject to change

MYA -Maronite Young Adults

Stay Tuned for our 2018 Calendar of Events

Rosary Group Every Wednesday @ 6PM

صلاة المسبحة أوردية: الأربعاء من كل أسبوع الساعة السادسة مساء

Daughters' Meeting

The Daughters of St. Anthony are looking for new members to bring some fresh ideas to their monthly meetings. Membership is open to ALL women of the parish regardless of age.

New activities have been added to the monthly luncheon and social gatherings, which include community service, craft classes and games. Notification of meeting dates and activities will be announced in the weekly bulletins.

We are hoping you will join us for the next meeting on **February 5, 2018, 12:00 noon** in the Parish hall, where Valentine's Day cards will be crafted to send to our troops overseas. Cost of membership is \$5.00 and lunches run between \$5.00 and \$10.00.

Hope to see you there!

Contact Elaine Ferris at 978-682-2112 with any questions.

THE KNIGHTS OF THE ALTAR

Monthly Meeting:

Saturday, February 10th

@ 11 AM to 12 PM in the Church.

Contact: Sub-Deacon Jim Demers

@ 978-685-8423 for more info.



Next Meeting:
Tuesday,
February 13th

MYO Schedule of Events 2018

Friday, Feb. 2 nd – Saturday, Feb. 3 rd	Lock-In Retreat
Sunday, February 18 th	Community Service
Sunday, March 4 th	MYO Youth Liturgy Faith Formation
Saturday, March 17 th	Merrimack Valley Catholic Youth Conference*
Friday, April 13 th	MYO Youth Liturgy Faith Formation
Saturday, April 28 th	Regional MYO/MYA Retreat*
Friday, May 11 th	Faith Formation
Saturday, May 26 th	Social Outing

www.facebook.com/stanthonysmyo

Faith Formation	5:15pm-7:30pm
Community Service	5:00pm-7:30pm
Special Events	Details To Be Provided

*These events may involve additional cost not included in the Registration Fee

*Due to the Positive response to this Hafli,
we are extending the cost of \$50 (per person) until February 7th!
After February 7th, Tickets will be sold for \$75*

SAINT ANTHONY MARONITE CHURCH

PRESENTS

VALENTINE PARTY ST MARON CELEBRATION



FEATURING:
DORIS & ENSEMBLE

DATE:

SATURDAY

FEBRUARY 10, 2018

DOORS OPEN: 7PM

LOCATION:

ST ANTHONY BANQUET HALL

FOR RESERVATION:

Wissam Merheb@
978.853.5145

Mounira Daher@
603.235.0801

TICKETS are available FOR SALE:

Adults \$50 (\$75 after January 22)
Students: \$30 (\$50 after January 22)

Dinner Included - Cash Bar Only

ONLINE RESERVATION—SPECIAL EVENT DONATION: <http://stanthonylawrence.org/donate-now/>

Thessalonians 5:1-11

Sunday of the Faithful Departed

تسالونيقى 5:1-11

Concerning the times and the seasons, brothers and sisters, you do not need to have anything written to you. For you yourselves know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. When they say, 'There is peace and security', then sudden destruction will come upon them, as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and there will be no escape! But you, beloved, are not in darkness, for that day to surprise you like a thief; for you are all children of light and children of the day; we are not of the night or of darkness. So then, let us not fall asleep as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober; for those who sleep sleep at night, and those who are drunk get drunk at night. But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, and put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. For God has destined us not for wrath but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep we may live with him. Therefore encourage one another and build up each other, as indeed you are doing.

أَمَّا الْأَزْمَنَةُ وَالْأَوْقَاتُ، أَيُّهَا الْإِخْوَةَ، فَلَا حَاجَةَ بِكُمْ أَنْ يُكْتَبَ إِلَيْكُمْ فِي شَأْنِهَا؛ لِأَنَّكُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ جَيِّدًا أَنَّ يَوْمَ الرَّبِّ يَأْتِي كَالسَّارِقِ لَيْلًا. فَحِينَ يَقُولُونَ: سَلَامٌ وَأَمْنٌ! حِينَنِيذٍ يَدْهَمُهُمُ الْهَلَاكُ دَهْمُ الْمَخَاضِ لِلْحَبْلِى، وَلَا يُفْلِتُونَ. أَمَّا أَنْتُمْ، أَيُّهَا الْإِخْوَةَ، فَلَسْتُمْ فِي ظِلْمَةٍ لِيُفَاجِئَكُمْ ذَلِكَ الْيَوْمُ كَالسَّارِقِ. فَأَنْتُمْ كُلُّكُمْ أَبْنَاءُ الثُّورِ، وَأَبْنَاءُ النَّهَارِ؛ وَلَسْنَا أَبْنَاءَ اللَّيْلِ وَلَا أَبْنَاءَ الظُّلْمَةِ. إِذَا فَلَا نَنَمُ كَسَائِرِ النَّاسِ، بَلْ لِنَسْهَرُ وَنَصْحُ؛ لِأَنَّ الَّذِينَ يَنَامُونَ فِي اللَّيْلِ يَنَامُونَ، وَالَّذِينَ يَسْكُرُونَ فِي اللَّيْلِ يَسْكُرُونَ. أَمَّا نَحْنُ أَبْنَاءُ النَّهَارِ، فَلِنَصْحُ لِابْسِينِ دِرْعِ الْإِيمَانِ وَالْمَحَبَّةِ، وَوَأَضِعِينَ خُوذةَ رَجَاءِ الْخَلَاصِ. فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَمْ يَجْعَلْنَا لِلْغَضَبِ، بَلْ لِإِحْرَازِ الْخَلَاصِ بِرَبَّنَا يَسُوعَ الْمَسِيحِ، الَّذِي مَاتَ مِنْ أَجْلِنَا، لِنَحْيَا مَعَهُ سَاهِرِينَ كَمَا نَائِمِينَ. فَلِذَلِكَ شَجَعُوا بَعْضُكُمْ بَعْضًا، وَلَيَّبِينَ الْوَاحِدُ الْآخَرَ، كَمَا أَنْتُمْ فَاعِلُونَ.

Luke 16:19-31

أحد الموتى المؤمنين

لوقا 16:19-31

'There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. And at his gate lay a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, who longed to satisfy his hunger with what fell from the rich man's table; even the dogs would come and lick his sores. The poor man died and was carried away by the angels to be with Abraham. The rich man also died and was buried. In Hades, where he was being tormented, he looked up and saw Abraham far away with Lazarus by his side. He called out, "Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am in agony in these flames." But Abraham said, "Child, remember that during your lifetime you received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner evil things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in agony. Besides all this, between you and us a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who might want to pass from here to you cannot do so, and no one can cross from there to us." He said, "Then, father, I beg you to send him to my father's house for I have five brothers that he may warn them, so that they will not also come into this place of torment." Abraham replied, "They have Moses and the prophets; they should listen to them." He said, "No, father Abraham; but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent." He said to him, "If they do not listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced even if someone rises from the dead."

« كَانَ رَجُلٌ غَنِيٌّ يَلْبَسُ الْأَرْجُوَانَ وَالْكَتَانَ النَّاعِمَ، وَيَتَنَعَّمُ كُلَّ يَوْمٍ بِأَفْخَرِ الْوَلَائِمِ. وَكَانَ رَجُلٌ مَسْكِينٌ أَسْمُهُ لِعَازَرُ مَطْرُوحًا عِنْدَ بَابِهِ، تَكْسُوهُ الْفُرُوحُ. وَكَانَ يَشْتَهِي أَنْ يَشْبَعَ مِنَ الْفُتَاتِ الْمُنْسَاقِطِ مِنْ مَائِدَةِ الْغَنِيِّ، غَيْرَ أَنَّ الْكِلَابَ كَانَتْ تَأْتِي فَتَلْحَسُ فُرُوحَهُ. وَمَاتَ الْمَسْكِينُ فَحَمَلَتْهُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ إِلَى حِضْنِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ. ثُمَّ مَاتَ الْغَنِيُّ وَدُفِنَ. وَرَفَعَ الْغَنِيُّ عَيْنَيْهِ، وَهُوَ فِي الْحَجِيمِ يُقَاسِي الْعَذَابَ، فَرَأَى إِبْرَاهِيمَ مِنْ بَعِيدٍ، وَلِعَازَرَ فِي حِضْنِهِ. فَنَادَى وَقَالَ: يَا أَبَتِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ، ارْحَمْنِي وَأَرْسِلْ لِعَازَرَ لِيَبْلُغَ طَرْفَ إصْبَعِهِ بِمَاءٍ وَيَبْرِدَ لِسَانِي، لِأَنِّي مُتَوَجِّعٌ فِي هَذَا اللَّهْيَبِ. فَقَالَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ: يَا أَبْنِي، تَذَكَّرْ أَلَيْكَ نَيْلَتَ خَيْرَاتِكَ فِي حَيَاتِكَ، وَلِعَازَرُ نَالَ الْبَلَايَا. وَالآنَ هُوَ يَتَعَزَّى هُنَا، وَأَنْتَ تَتَوَجِّعُ. وَمَعَ هَذَا كُلِّهِ، فَإِنَّ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكُمْ هُوَّةٌ عَظِيمَةٌ تَابِتَةٌ، حَتَّى إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُرِيدُونَ أَنْ يَجْتَازُوا مِنْ هُنَا إِلَيْكُمْ لَا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ، وَلَا مِنْ هُنَاكَ أَنْ يَعْبرُوا إِلَيْنَا. فَقَالَ الْغَنِيُّ: أَسْأَلُكَ إِذَا، يَا أَبَتِ، أَنْ تُرْسِلَ لِعَازَرَ إِلَى بَيْتِ أَبِي، فَإِنَّ لِي خَمْسَةَ إِخْوَةَ، لِيَشْهَدَ لَهُمْ، كَيْ لَا يَأْتُوا هُمْ أَيْضًا إِلَى مَكَانِ الْعَذَابِ هَذَا. فَقَالَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ: عِنْدَهُمْ مُوسَى وَالْأَنْبِيَاءُ، فَلْيَسْمَعُوا لَهُمْ. فَقَالَ: لَا، يَا أَبَتِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ، وَلَكِنْ إِذَا مَضَى إِلَيْهِمْ وَاحِدٌ مِنَ الْأَمْوَاتِ يَتُوبُونَ. فَقَالَ لَهُ إِبْرَاهِيمُ: إِنْ كَانُوا لَا يَسْمَعُونَ لِمُوسَى وَالْأَنْبِيَاءِ، فَلَيْسَ لَهُمْ، وَلَوْ قَامَ وَاحِدٌ مِنَ الْأَمْوَاتِ، لَنْ يَقْنَعُوا! »

2017 Tax Statements

Those who would like a statement of their 2017 contributions, please call the office and we will be happy to forward it to you so you can claim it on your tax return. Keep in mind, if you have not used your weekly envelopes or have not contributed by checks, it is impossible for us to generate a record or statement with your donations and offerings.

Saint Anthony Burial Guidelines

Burial Charges and Fees:

<http://stanthonylawrence.org/charges-and-fees/>

The following charges for cemetery services are in effect January 1, 2017 at St. Anthony Cemetery and are subject to change without notice.

- Adult Opening – Graveside (Summer) \$875.00
- Adult Opening – Graveside (Winter) \$875.00
- Child Opening – (one to eight years) \$100.00
- Infant Opening – NO CHARGE
- Saturday & Holiday Overtime \$75.00
- Burial of Cremated Remains \$550.00
- Cremation Burial Unit \$350.00

ALAA Scholarships are now Available

www.americanlebaneseawarenessassociation.org/scholarships



Weekly offering envelopes for 2018

will be mailed to your home on a quarterly basis. You will receive envelopes every 3 months. For those who have signed up for online donations, you may disregard them or drop your empty envelope in the collection basket.

When arrangements are made with a family and they wish to purchase a lot, we ask that you call the cemetery office (978) 985-7233 and arrange an appointment for them. Financial arrangements for new lot sales will be handled directly with the family.

Cemetery charges for grave openings are due and payable to the cemetery the morning of the funeral, unless charged to the funeral director's account. Cemetery charges billed to the funeral director's account are due and payable to the cemetery in 10 days

Guidelines:

Baptismal Guidelines: *(Check our Website)*

- ◆ Guidelines & Registration Form

Marriage Guidelines: *(Check our Website)*

- ◆ Guidelines & Check List Forms

Banquet Hall Guidelines:

- ◆ Contract Form *(Check our Website)*
- ◆ Banquet Hall Usage Donations:
 1. \$500 (For 6 Hours)
 2. \$250 For Registered & Active parishioners *(with contribution history)*
 3. Security Deposit \$250 *(Returned after the event, if no Damages)*
 4. Cleaning Donations: \$100

Lot Sales

<http://stanthonylawrence.org/lots-sales/>

Saint Anthony Cemetery offers affordable payment plans to fit any family's budget. Please call us at 978-685-7233 or email rectory@stanthonylawrence.org for more information about availability.

Burial Pre-Arrangements

Making arrangements for a burial in advance should be no more difficult than providing insurance or having a will. It is a sensible thing to do. By pre-arranging your burial, you can avoid the unnecessary confusion plus the financial and emotional stress that death often brings.

Funeral pre-arrangements are available and recommended with guarantees of no increase in cemetery charges at the time of interment. Pre-Arrangement Funds are placed in a separate account and are withdrawn at the time of the interment. An interest free Time-Payment Plan is available for your convenience.

BE IN TOUCH!! STAY CONNECTED!!

Membership Registration:

<http://stanthonylawrence.org/member-information-form/>

Online Donation:

<http://stanthonylawrence.org/donate-now/>

Upcoming Events:

<http://stanthonylawrence.org/upcoming-events/>

Monthly Calendar:

<http://stanthonylawrence.org/upcoming-events/calendar/>



POPE PRAYER INTENTIONS -

FEBRUARY 2018:

Universal: Say "No" to Corruption

That those who have material, political or spiritual power may resist any lure of corruption.

Formed | Your Faith

Matters to Us!!

Parish Code: N3CCNK

<https://formed.org/watch/593ac0021ccf198c29ce3c21>



St. John teaches in 1 John 2:27 that we have no need of a man to teach us since we have the Holy Spirit. Is John denying the Catholic belief that Jesus gave us a magisterium (a living, teaching authority)? Karlo Broussard gives the reason why the answer is no, and explains what John means by this.

Please join us for a
Lowell Catholic
 Elementary School
 Open House

THURSDAY,
FEBRUARY 27th
6:00 PM - 7:30 PM

Visit www.lowellcatholic.org/LC4ME to register today or contact Ms. Kristina Hills, Director of Admissions at admissions@lowellcatholic.org with any questions.



Is now available in association with

myEoffering

www.stanthonylawrence.org

**Online Donation –
 Contribute to Our Parish Growth
 Apply Online:
<http://stanthonylawrence.org/donate-now/>
 Electronic Consent Form Or Print Form:**

Last Name		First Name	
Envelope #		Email	
Address			Phone
City		State	Zip
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PRAYING FOR THE DEAD

By: Ronald Rolheiser

Why pray for the dead? Does this make any sense? What possible difference can our prayers make to a person once he or she has died?

These are valid questions. A number of objections can be raised against the practice of praying for the dead: Do we need to call God to mercy? Does God need to be reminded that the person who died was in fact a decent, warm-hearted, person? God already knows this, is already as merciful as mercy allows, and needs no nudging from us to be understanding and forgiving. Cynically, the objection might be put this way: If the person is already in heaven he doesn't need our prayers and if he is in hell, our prayers won't help anyway! So why pray for the dead?

We pray for the dead for the same reason we pray for anything, we feel the need and that is reason enough. Moreover the objections raised against praying for the dead are just as easily raised against all prayer of petition. God already knows everyone one of our desires, everyone of our sins, and all of our good will. So why remind God of these? Because prayer builds us up, changes us, not God.

This is the first, though not foremost, reason why we pray for the dead. Prayer is meant to change and console us. We pray for the dead to comfort ourselves, to stir and celebrate our own faith, and assuage our own guilt about our less than perfect relationship to the one who has died. In praying for the dead we do two things: We highlight our faith in the power of God and we hold up the life of the person who has died so as to let God take care of things, let God wash things clean. That is one of the purposes of a funeral liturgy, to clearly put the dead person and our relationship to him or her into God's hands.

But this is not the most important reason why we have funeral liturgies and why we pray for the dead. We pray for the dead because we believe (and this a doctrine, the communion of saints) that we are still in vital communion with them. There is, death notwithstanding, still a vital flow of life between them and us. Love, presence, and communication reach even through death. We and they can still feel each other, know each other, love each other, console each other, and influence each other. Our lives are still joined. Hence we pray for the dead in order to remain in contact with them. Just as we can hold someone's hand as they are dying, and this can be an immense consolation to them and to us, so too, figuratively but really, we can hold that person's hand through and beyond death.

Perhaps the words and prayer forms we use seem to indicate something else, since they are addressed to God and not directly to the person for whom we are praying. Thus, for example, in praying for the dead we use words like: "Lord, have mercy on her soul!" "Lord, we place her in your hands!" "She loved you in life, radiated your gentleness, Lord, give her peace!" The words are addressed to God because it is in and through God that our communication with our loved one who is deceased now takes place: God's bosom is the venue for our communication, God's power is what is holding both of us in life, and God's mercy is what is washing things clean between us. We can of course also talk directly to the person who has died, that too is valid enough within the doctrine of the communion of saints, but given the critical place of God's love, power, and mercy in this situation, our prayer is generally addressed to God so as to highlight that it is within the heart of God that we have contact with our loved ones who are deceased. Hence, our prayers for the dead generally take this particular form.

And classically, within Roman Catholic theology at least, we have believed that our prayers help release this person from purgatory. What's to be said about this?

Purgatory, properly understood, is not a punishment for any imperfection nor indeed a place distinct from heaven. The pains of purgatory are the pains of adjusting to a new life (which includes the pain of letting go of this one) and the pains of being embraced by perfect love when we ourselves are far from perfect. By praying for the dead, we support them in their pain of adjustment, adjustment to a new life and to living in full light. Purgation eventually leads to ecstasy, but the birth that produces that ecstasy requires first a series of painful deaths. Thus, just as we tried to hold their hands as they died, so now, in praying for loved ones who have died, we continue to hold their hands, and they ours, beyond the chasm of death itself.