

Saint Cecilia

P A R I S H



Iris and Sparrow

by Utagawa Hiroshige (c.1832)

Twelfth Sunday in Ordinary Time

21 June 2026

Saint Cecilia

P A R I S H

21 JUNE 2026

THE TWELFTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

PRELUDE | *Wenn wir in Höchsten Nöten Sein*

Johann Sebastian Bach
(1685-1750)

ENTRANCE PROCESSION | *Amazing Grace!*

NEW BRITAIN



1. A - maz - ing grace! how sweet the sound, That
2. 'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear, And
3. The Lord has prom - ised good to me, His
4. Through man - y dan - gers, toils, and snares, I
5. When we've been there ten thou - sand years, Bright

saved a wretch like me! I once was lost, but
grace my fears re - lieved; How pre - cious did that
word my hope se - cures; He will my shield and
have al - read - y come; 'Tis grace has brought me
shin - ing as the sun, We've no less days to

now am found; Was blind, but now I see.
grace ap - pear The hour I first be - lieved!
por - tion be As long as life en - dures.
safe thus far, And grace will lead me home.
sing God's praise Than when we'd first be - gun.

CALL TO WORSHIP

✠ In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

All: Amen.

✠ The Lord be with you.

All: And with your spirit.

Refrain

Glo - ry to God, glo - ry to God, glo - ry to God in the
high - est, and on earth peace, on earth peace to
peo - ple of good will. A - men.

Verses

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>1. We praise you,
we bless you,
we adore you,
we glorify you,
we give you thanks for your great glory,
Lord God, heavenly King,
O God, almighty Father.</p> | <p>you take away the sins of the world,
receive our prayer;
you are seated at the right hand of the
Father,
have mercy on us.</p> |
| <p>2. Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son,
Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the
Father,
you take away the sins of the world,
have mercy on us;</p> | <p>3. For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High,
Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father.
Amen.</p> |

COLLECT

LITURGY OF THE WORD

FIRST READING | Jeremiah 20: 10-13



Lord, in your great love, an-swer me.



Lord, in your great love, an - swer me.

1. It is for you that I suffer taunts, that shame has covered my face. To my own kin I have become an outcast, a stranger to the children of my mother. Zeal for your house consumes me, and taunts against you fall on me.
2. But I pray to you, O Lord, for a time of your favor. In your great mercy, answer me, O God, with your salvation that never fails. Lord, answer, for your mercy is kind; in your great compassion, turn toward me.
3. The poor when they see it will be glad, and God-seeking hearts will revive; for the Lord listens to the needy, and does not spurn his own in their chains. Let the heavens and the earth give him praise, the seas and everything that moves in them.

SECOND READING | Romans 5: 12-15

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION | Mass of Joy and Peace

Tony E. Alonso



Al - le-lu - ia, al - le-lu - ia, al - le-lu - ia. Al-le -



lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le-lu - ia.

GOSPEL | Matthew 10: 26-33

HOMILY

NICENE CREED

I believe in one God,
the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all things visible and invisible.
I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the Only Begotten Son of God,
born of the Father before all ages.
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father;
through him all things were made.
For us men and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,
and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary,
and became man.
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate,
he suffered death and was buried,
and rose again on the third day
in accordance with the Scriptures.
He ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory
to judge the living and the dead
and his kingdom will have no end.
I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.
I believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.
I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins
and I look forward to the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.

UNIVERSAL PRAYER

THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROUS SUPPORT OF THE PARISH!

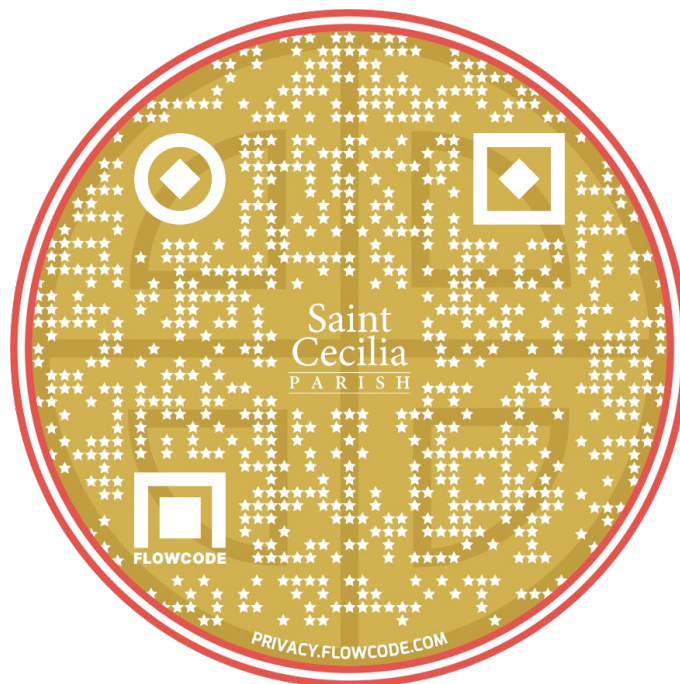
We are grateful for your ongoing support of Saint Cecilia. The easiest way to make a financial contribution to our parish is to use the parish Flowcode below.

Using the Flowcode with the camera on your smartphone is as easy as Aim & Tap. Aim your camera at the Flowcode image and tap the notification banner when it appears on your phone's screen. You may need to zoom in a bit to focus on the code.

If the Flowcode doesn't work for you, please visit www.flowcode.com/page/stceciliaboston.

You can also mail a check to:

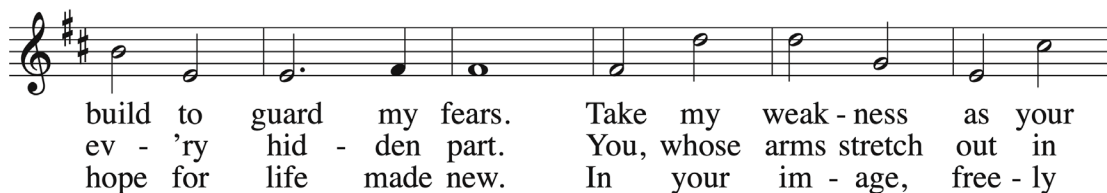
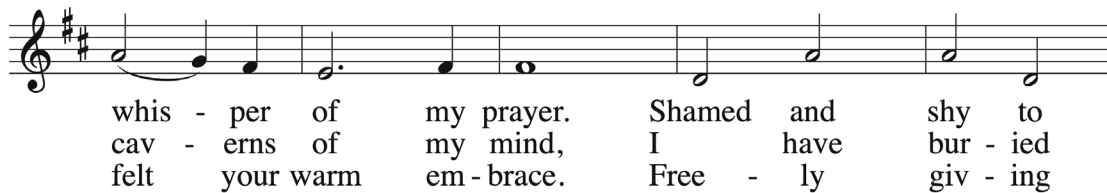
Saint Cecilia Parish
18 Belvidere Street
Boston, MA 02115



LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

PRESENTATION OF THE GIFTS | In the Stillness, God of Mercy

Mary Louise Bringle



EUCCHARISTIC PRAYER

✠ The Lord be with you.

All: And with your spirit.

✠ Lift up your hearts.

All: We lift them up to the Lord.

✠ Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

All: It is right and just.

SANCTUS | Mass of Joy and Peace

Tony E. Alonso

Ho - ly, Ho - ly, Ho - ly Lord God of hosts.

Heav-en and earth are full of your glo - ry. Ho -

san - na in the high - est, ho - san - na in the

high - est. Bless-ed is he, bless-ed is he who

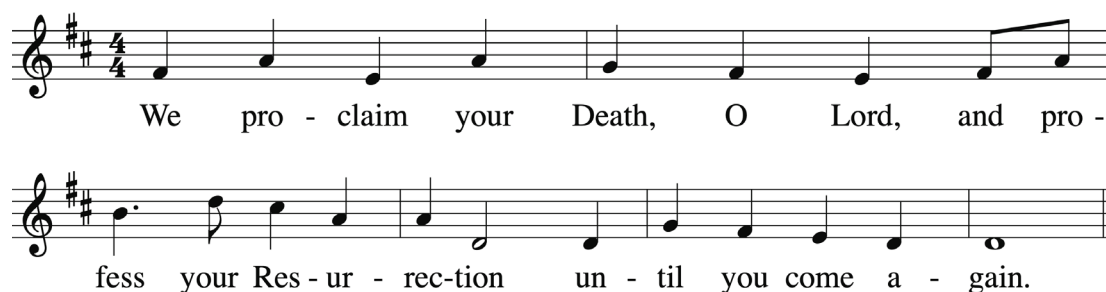
comes in the name of the Lord. Ho - san - na in the

high - est, ho - san - na in the high - est. Ho - san - na in the

high - est, ho - san - na in the high - est.

MEMORIAL ACCLAMATION | Mass of Joy and Peace

Tony E. Alonso



AMEN | Mass of Joy and Peace

Tony E. Alonso



THE LORD'S PRAYER

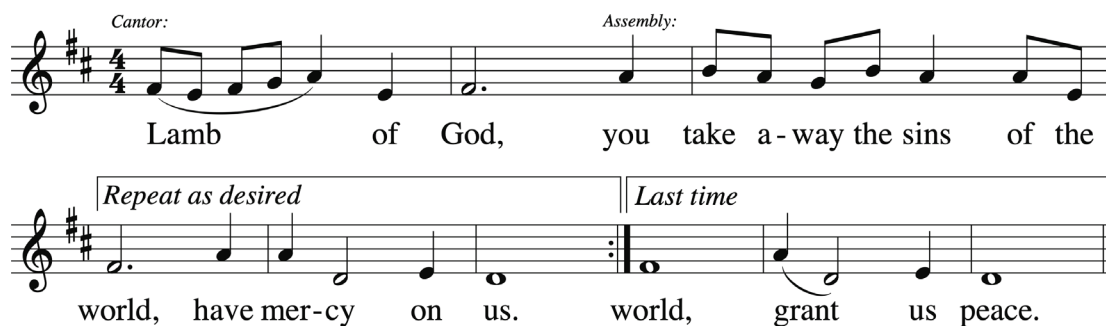
Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name;
 thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
 Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses
 as we forgive those who trespass against us;
 and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.
 For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and forever.
 Amen.

THE EXCHANGE OF PEACE

The peace of the Lord be with you always.
 All: And with your spirit.

AGNUS DEI | Mass of Joy and Peace

Tony E. Alonso



SPIRITUAL COMMUNION

It is a long-held Catholic belief that when circumstances prevent one from receiving Holy Communion, it is possible to make an "Act of Spiritual Communion." When we are unable to be physically present at the celebration of the Eucharist, Pope Francis invites Catholics to say this prayer as a source of grace. We can be assured that when we express our desire to receive Jesus in the Eucharist, God will be with us spiritually in a special way. Here is an Act of Spiritual Communion that we encourage you to pray as you participate in our live-streamed liturgies:

ACT OF SPIRITUAL COMMUNION

Loving Jesus,
I believe that you
are present in the Most Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist.
I love you above all things,
and I desire to receive you into my soul.
Since I cannot at this moment receive you sacramentally,
come at least spiritually into my heart.
I embrace you as if you were already there
and unite myself wholly to you.
Never permit me to be separated from you.

COMMUNION | Be Not Afraid

Bob Dufford

1. You shall cross the bar-ren des-ert, but you
shall not die of thirst. You shall wan-der far in
safe-ty though you do not know the way. You shall
speak your words in for-eign lands and all will un-der -
stand. You shall see the face of God and live.

 Refrain



Be not a - fraid. I go be - fore you al - ways.

Come, fol - low me, and I will give you rest.

Verse 2



2. If you pass through rag - ing wa - ters in the

sea, you shall not drown. If you walk a - mid the burn - ing flames,

you shall not be harmed. If you stand be - fore the

pow'r of hell and death is at your side,

know that I am with you through it all. **D.S.**

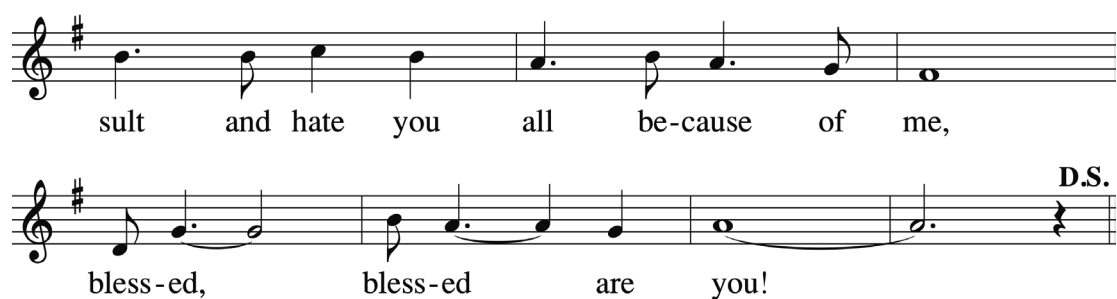
Verse 3



3. Bless - ed are your poor, for the king - dom shall be

theirs. Blest are you that weep and mourn, for

one day you shall laugh. And if wick - ed tongues in -



CONCLUDING RITE

✠ The Lord be with you.

All: And with your spirit.

✠ May almighty God bless you, the Father, (+) and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

All: Amen.

RECESSIONAL | Lift Every Voice and Sing

ANTHEM

1. Lift ev - 'ry voice and sing, Till earth and heav - en
 2. Ston - y the road we trod, Bit - ter the chas - t'ning
 3. God of our wea - ry years, God of our si - lent

ring, Ring with the har - mo - nies of lib - er -
 rod, Felt in the days when hope un - born had
 tears, Thou who hast brought us thus far on the

ty; Let our re - joic - ing rise High as the lis - t'ning
 died; Yet with a stead - y beat, Have not our wea - ry
 way; Thou who hast by thy might Led us in - to the



skies, Let it re-sound loud as the roll - ing sea.
feet Come to the place for which our peo - ple sighed?
light, Keep us for - ev - er in the path, we pray.



Sing a song full of the faith that the dark past has
We have come o - ver a way that with tears has been
Lest our feet stray from the plac - es, our God, where we



taught us; Sing a song full of the
wa - tered; We have come, tread - ing our
met thee; Lest our hearts, drunk with the



hope that the pres - ent has brought us; Fac - ing the
path through the blood of the slaugh - tered; Out from the
wine of the world, we for - get thee; Shad - owed be -



ris - ing sun Of our new day be - gun,
gloom - y past, Till now we stand at last
neath thy hand, May we for - ev - er stand,



Let us march on till vic - to - ry is won.
Where the bright gleam of our bright star is cast.
True to our God, true to our na - tive land.

POSTLUDE | Prelude in G
Brett Maguire, organ

Johann Sebastian Bach

Music in this worship aid is printed with permission under Onelicense.net #A700-137.

For information on becoming involved or supporting the music program at Saint Cecilia,
please contact Dr. Robert Duff at 617-536-4548 or email: RDuff@stceciliaboston.org.

WELCOME!

Welcome to Saint Cecilia Parish, a Roman Catholic community that gathers day by day, week by week, to know and make known the grace of God. By means of this abundant grace, we enjoy a diverse and close-knit parish family—young, old, rich, poor, of various ethnic origins and differing backgrounds. From our extraordinary music program to a growing children's faith formation program; from the various liturgical ministries to the many opportunities for social outreach that the parish provides, Saint Cecilia is a vibrant community of faith, centered on prayer and worship that tries to keep the Gospel close to heart and to live by Jesus' teachings.

Saint Cecilia Parish was established in 1888. At that time the Back Bay section of Boston along Commonwealth Avenue and Beacon Street was the residential section of the Yankee aristocracy. The maids ("Irish working out girls") and coachmen who served these residents had long requested a church of their own. When Archbishop Williams granted their request and carved the parish from the territory of the Cathedral, they built a magnificent church out of their meager earnings. Our church building resides on the ancestral homeland of the Pawtucket and Massachusetts tribal nations.

The church was dedicated on April 22, 1894. Its architecture is Romanesque, XII Century Norman. The main altar, notable for its massive simplicity, was carved from a single block of white Carrara marble. The painting in the center reredos is a reproduction of da Vinci's The Last Supper, and the dome above is an array of 24K gold rosettes.

For the sixtieth anniversary celebration in 1954, a massive renovation project was undertaken. During this renovation, a statue of Pope Saint Pius X (canonized that same year) was imported from Italy and placed on the right side of the sanctuary. Above the statue are paintings from Pius' life. On the left side is a statue of Saint Patrick, principal patron of the Archdiocese of Boston, and above it are three scenes from his life.

Fourteen circular and sixteen square panels adorn the nave and arches of the church. The square panels are decorated with the symbols of Our Lady taken from the Litany of Loreto and the circular ones with symbols taken from the lives of the apostles. The great window of the Assumption—framed by the two oak cases of the organ—was installed in 1954 (the Marian Year) in spaces originally designed for windows but not until then used.

The original organ of 24 stops was built in 1902 by the Hutchings-Votey Organ Company, Opus 1465, and was rebuilt in 1954 with 32 stops. In 1998, Timothy Smith and Theodore Gilbert began a massive reconstruction of the organ. The current Smith & Gilbert Organ of 4 manuals, 54 ranks, and 3,084 pipes was dedicated on the Feast of Saint Cecilia, November 22, 1999.

Today we are experiencing something of an awakening within these old walls. Our numbers are increasing by 350 new households each year, and we continue to grow in our commitment to issues of peace, justice, and service to our neighbors, both near and far.

We've been right here on Belvidere Street, in the same building for over 125 years, but that does not mean that life here is stale, stagnant, or even predictable. We are proud to be entrusted with the legacy of Saint Cecilia Parish, where everything is the same, yet always changing; where we honor tradition while embracing the future; where God's love makes all things new.

OUR COMMUNITY NEWS



MINISTERS OF THE LITURGY

Saturday, June 20 | 5:00 p.m.

Rev. Peter Grover, OMV, celebrant
Theresa Chaklos, lector

Sunday, June 21 | 8:00 a.m.

Rev. Shawn Monahan, OMV, celebrant
Clare Gillis, lector

Sunday, June 21 | 9:30 a.m.

Rev. John Unni, celebrant
Tim McGillicuddy, Kate McGillicuddy, Karen McMenamy,
lectors

Sunday, June 21 | 11:30 a.m.

Rev. John Unni, celebrant
Catherine Horsley, Rosaria Salerno, lectors

SPECIAL INTENTIONS

Sunday, June 21 | 9:30 a.m.

John Giordano, *1st Anniversary*
Regina Pasternack, *21st Anniversary*
Arthur F. Dunnett, *52nd Anniversary*
Raffaele Santoro, *Memorial*
Margot Cunnane, *Memorial*
Bruce Fagan Sr, *Memorial*
Alan Montemurro, *Memorial*
Glen McLaughlin, *Memorial*

Wednesday, June 24 | 8:00 a.m.

Rudy & Sylvia Garza, *Memorial*

Scan this code for
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Thank you for your generous
support of Saint Cecilia Parish!



TODAY'S READINGS

Jeremiah 20:10-13

Romans 5:12-15

Matthew 10:26-33

NEXT SUNDAY'S READINGS

2 Kings 4:8-11, 14-16a

Romans 6:3-4, 8-11

Matthew 10:37-42

PRAYERS & OCCASIONS

Welcome to Saint Cecilia!

We are pleased to welcome the following new members of our community: **Daniel Chapman, Mary Tallett, Mary DePond** and **Alejandro Velasquez, Stephen Mostek, and Michele Rolle**. If you have not previously registered, you can do so online at www.stceciliaboston.org.

Happy Father's Day!

Today is Father's Day—a good time to give thanks to God for our dads, living and deceased. We remember all fathers, stepfathers, foster fathers, grandfathers, godfathers, and all those men who have been like fathers to us. May St. Joseph pray for all of them. Some years ago, a study demonstrated that while spirituality is transmitted to children primarily through a mother's influence, religious "practice" was most effectively passed along through a father's example. Happy Father's Day to all who are celebrating!

What Makes Us Human?

As artificial intelligence becomes an increasingly powerful part of daily life, Pope Leo calls us to focus on what matters most: the dignity of the human person, the value of relationships, and our responsibility to care for one another and the common good. Join us on Thursday evening, July 9 for a panel discussion on Pope Leo XIV's landmark encyclical *Magnifica Humanitas* ("Magnificent Humanity") and explore how faith can help guide us through one of the most significant technological changes of our time. You don't have to be interested in artificial intelligence; you only need to be interested in being human. See page 8 for more details.

Attention, Graduates!

We want to acknowledge and celebrate all our graduates this spring. Please email the names of the parishoners who are graduating from high school or college to Anastassia Kolchanov at her parish email and use the word "graduate" in the subject line. Feel free to include the school's name and the degree awarded.

IN THIS WEEK'S BULLETIN TABLE OF CONTENTS

This Week's Liturgies.....	3
Prayers and Occasions.....	4
Coming Up At Saint Cecilia.....	5
What Makes Us Human?.....	8
I Dream of a Catholic Church That Celebrates and Embraces LGBTQ People By Bryan Massingale.....	9
Parish Resources.....	12



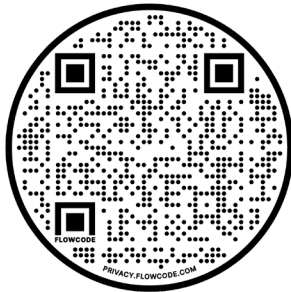
*The floral arrangement in front of the altar is given by the Dunnett girls for the glory of God and in loving memory of their father **Arthur F. Dunnett** and in honor of all fathers living and deceased.*



SUMMER CHORAL SESSIONS

SUNDAY, JUNE 21 | 2PM - 4PM | CLASSROOM 1

This summer, the parish will offer free Sunday afternoon sessions on singing and choral music from June 14-August 23 taught by Tyler Cesario and Kayleigh Bennett. Open to all parishioners, topics include sight-singing, vocal technique, diction, vocal anatomy, harmony and balance, choral stylization, and audition/performance preparation. To register, scan the Flowcode below or visit www.tinyurl.com/summer-choral-sessions.



DOCTORS AGAINST GENOCIDE: SUPPORT FOR GAZA

**SUNDAY, JUNE 21 | AFTER THE 9:30AM AND 11:30AM
MASSES | PARISH HALL**

The humanitarian crisis in Gaza continues, and Doctors Against Genocide remains committed to providing relief, advocacy, and support for those who are suffering. You are invited to learn more about this important work and to consider ways to get involved. This Sunday, June 21, after the 9:30 and 11:30 liturgies, members of Doctors Against Genocide will be in the parish hall with information about ongoing projects and opportunities to support relief efforts. In connection with the World Cup, the book *Daring to Hope: Witness from Gaza* will be available for purchase. This recently published book by authors Mohammed Balah and Anne Habiby tells the inspiring story of Mohammed Balah, one of Palestine's most promising football talents, whose life reflects both the challenges faced by his community and the enduring power of hope. In addition to the book, summer T-shirts and water bottles will also be available for sale. All proceeds will go to support the many food and healthcare projects in Gaza.

For more information about Doctors Against Genocide, to participate in its Sunday webinars, to learn about upcoming advocacy opportunities in Washington, D.C., or to make a donation, please visit doctorsagainstgenocide.org or email Martha Miller. Thank you for your continued compassion, prayers, and support for the people of Gaza.

COMING UP AT SAINT CECILIA

JUNE 20 - 25

SATURDAY, JUNE 20

Masterworks Concert | 6:15pm | Saint Cecilia Church

SUNDAY, JUNE 21

Wisdom & Mature Spirituality | 8:30am via Zoom

Doctors Against Genocide Table | After 9:30am &

11:30am Masses | Parish Hall

Small Groups | After 9:30am Mass | Classroom 3

Choral Workshop | 2pm | Classroom 1

TUESDAY, JUNE 23

Night of Worship | 7pm | Sanctuary

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 24

OCIA Info Session | 6pm via Zoom

Small Groups | 8pm via Zoom

THURSDAY, JUNE 25

Wisdom & Mature Spirituality | 7:30pm via Zoom

SMALL GROUP CONNECTIONS

IN PERSON:

Sunday, June 21st
After the 9:30 Mass
Classroom 3

ONLINE:

Wednesday, June 24th
8pm EST
via Zoom



Join the Parish Pastoral Council for prayerful conversation inspired by Sunday's Gospel in person and online. To sign up, please email the PPC at ppc@stceciliaboston.org. Walk-ins are always welcome!



MASTERSINGERS USA CONCERT

SATURDAY, JUNE 20 | 6:15PM | SAINT CECILIA CHURCH

Mastersingers USA, a renowned men's chorus celebrating its 30th year, will participate in the 5PM Mass on Saturday, 20 June. Following Mass, the group will perform a concert in the sanctuary.

Mastersingers USA draws its membership from all over the country and counts among its singers 50-80 men from different professions, age groups, and locations. Distinctively, the ensemble gets together only once a year on a long weekend for rehearsals and performances – typically in an American city. Every three years for ten days, the chorus tours throughout Europe. Last summer MUSA toured throughout Austria performing in country churches, distinguished concert halls, as well as in sacred spaces such as the Salzburger Dom in Salzburg, and Karlskirche and Stefansdom in Vienna. Over its 30 years, MUSA has performed in Notre Dame de Paris, St. Mark's Venice, Chartres Cathedral, Rouen Cathedral, St. Paul's London, Mont-Saint-Michel, La Madeleine Paris, West Roxbury's St. Theresa's Church, and at Fenway Park! Among its other laurels, MUSA earned first place honors in the male choir division of the International Eisteddfod held each year in Wales.

Mastersingers' repertoire includes Renaissance Masses and motets, international folk songs, American folksongs and spirituals, and contemporary pieces. Part of members' satisfaction comes from bringing pieces back to the settings for which they were composed as was done with the Josquin "Missa Mater Patris" at Notre Dame de Paris.

Mastersingers USA is directed by Kerry P. Brennan, a member of Saint Cecilia Parish. A distinguished educator and musician, Kerry retired in June 2024 after 20 years as Headmaster of The Roxbury Latin School. An Amherst College and Columbia graduate, he taught for 48 years and has been part of Mastersingers' musical and administrative leadership since its founding in 1996. Kerry lives in Boston and directs the men's a cappella group, The Sly Voxes.

NIGHT OF WORSHIP

TUESDAY, JUNE 23 | 7PM - 8PM | SANCTUARY

All parishioners, regardless of age, are invited to spend an hour with the Lord before the Blessed Sacrament. Praise and worship music led by the Young Adult Ministry will guide your meditation and enrich your prayer in adoration. Please enter from the side door on Saint Cecilia Street and ring the bell to be let in. Can't join us in person? We'll be live-streaming our worship service over Zoom. Register to receive a Zoom link each month here: www.tinyurl.com/stc-night-of-worship.

We will be taking a break for July after this one, but will look forward to worshipping with you again soon!

ARE YOU INTERESTED IN BECOMING CATHOLIC? OCIA INFO SESSION

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 24 | 6PM VIA ZOOM

If you or someone you know is interested in exploring becoming Catholic or is a baptized Catholic who would like to complete your Christian initiation by reception of the sacraments of reconciliation, confirmation, and Eucharist, perhaps this is the time to learn more about the Order of Christian Initiation of Adults (OCIA, formerly known as RCIA).

OCIA is a communal process of discernment and support where participants share their stories, witness to their faith, and help one another grow in their love of God and the Church. OCIA includes study, faith sharing, and prayer, marked by liturgical rites and accompanied by the support of the parish community. For more information or to obtain the Zoom link, please email Mary Wessel at her parish email.

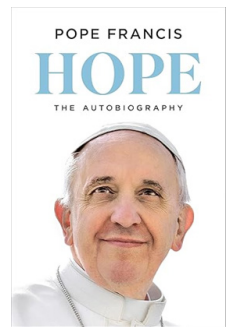
JOIN THE SAINT CECILIA CYO BASKETBALL TEAM FOR 2026/2027

Join the Saint Cecilia Parish CYO Basketball program as we build on a great first season and look ahead to 2026–27! We are now accepting registrations for players and team managers, with girls teams in grades 3–4, 5–6, and 7–8 and boys teams in grades 3–4, 5–6, 7–8, and 9–12.

Our program emphasizes teamwork, sportsmanship, and community, and we welcome athletes of all experience levels. We are also seeking dedicated volunteers to serve as head and assistant coaches, as well as help with scorekeeping during games—your involvement makes this program possible.

Please use the registration link below to sign up and be part of another exciting season: <https://forms.gle/D7sW31WRNyGdavWE9>.

Rainbow Ministry is the LGBTQ-supportive ministry of Saint Cecilia Parish. If you are interested in finding LGBTQ parishioners to sit with at Mass, or if you want to learn about the spiritual and community life activities we offer, please send an email to the ministry. We'd love to have you join us!



Saint Cecilia
P A R I S H

WHAT MAKES US HUMAN?

A parish conversation on Pope Leo XIV's
new encyclical on human dignity in the
age of artificial intelligence.

Artificial intelligence is changing how we work, communicate, learn, and make decisions. How can people of faith respond to these developments with wisdom, hope, and a commitment to human dignity?

Join Saint Cecilia Parish for an engaging conversation on Pope Leo XIV's landmark encyclical *Magnifica Humanitas*, which explores the promise and challenges of artificial intelligence in light of the Gospel and Catholic Social Teaching.

Date: July 9, 2026

Time: 6:00–8:00 p.m.

Location: Saint Cecilia Church, Boston

*This event is free and open to the public.
All are welcome.*

THE PANEL



BERIT REISENAUER GUIDOTTI

Doctoral candidate in theological ethics at Boston College



KRISTIN E. HEYER

Professor of theological ethics at Boston College



ANDREA VICINI, SJ

Jesuit priest, physician, and professor of theological ethics at Boston College

Together, the panelists will explore Pope Leo's vision for safeguarding human dignity, strengthening the common good, and discerning how emerging technologies can serve authentic human flourishing.

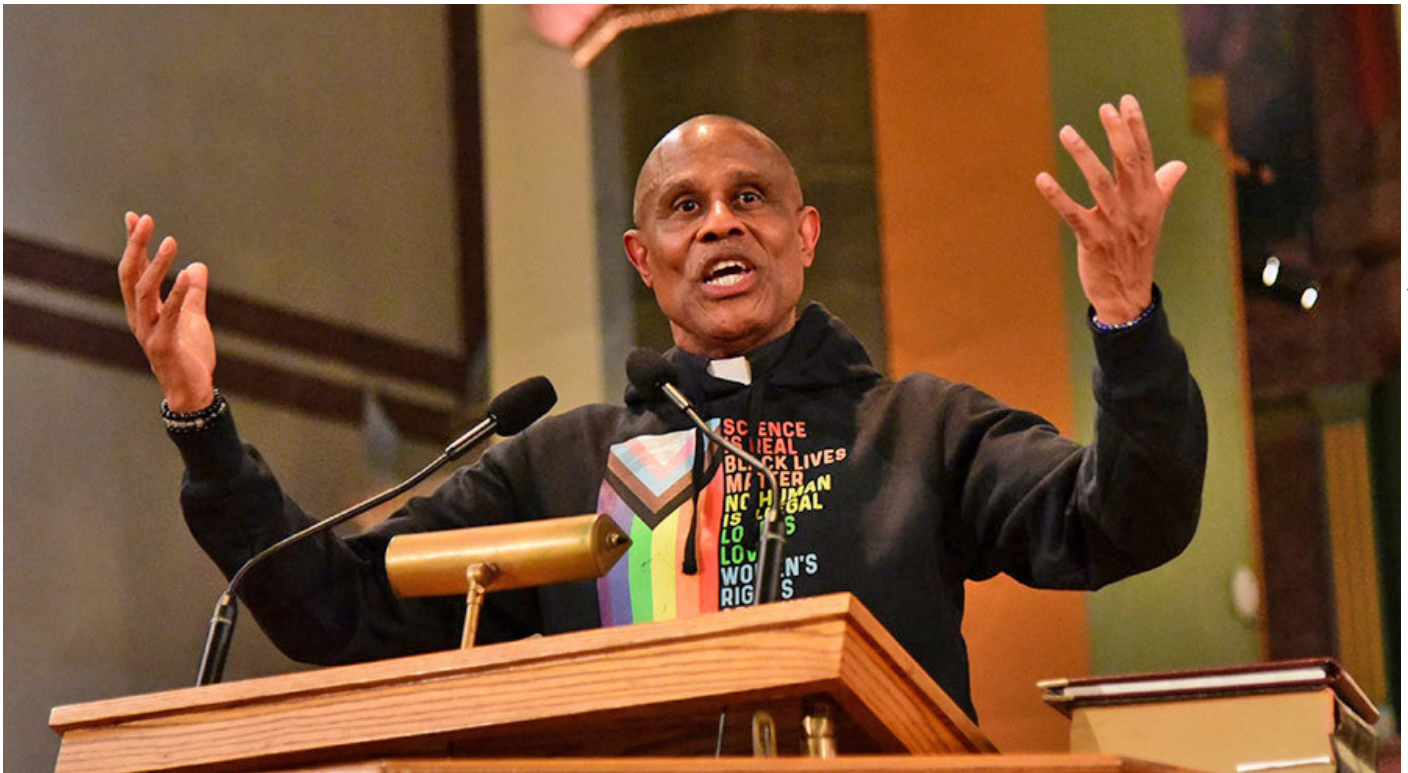
This event will be livestreamed. Copies of *Magnifica Humanitas* will be available.

You don't have to be interested in artificial intelligence; you only need to be interested in **being human**.

18 BELVIDERE STREET, BOSTON | STCECILIABOSTON.ORG

I DREAM OF A CATHOLIC CHURCH THAT CELEBRATES AND EMBRACES LGBTQ PEOPLE

BY BRYAN MASSINGALE



Credit: Dana Maxson and Chris Gosier/Outreach

Father Bryan N. Massingale speaks during the Ignatian Q conference on April 21, 2023.

Editor's Note: The following essay was adapted from an address delivered by the Rev. Bryan N. Massingale during the Ignatian Q Conference, a gathering of LGBTQ students from Jesuit colleges and universities, held at Fordham University in 2023.

I come to you as a Black, gay priest and theologian. I am informed not only by my sexuality, my faith and my study of the church's ethical beliefs, but also by the traditions of Black freedom struggles in the United States. These struggles, at their core, are matters of the soul and the spirit. And so, I will speak to you out of my whole self, for my sexuality, my faith, my vocation and my racial identity inform all of who I am.

But for my emotional and spiritual health I cannot, and for my moral and ethical integrity I will not, bracket my "Black" self in order to be "gay," so you can take what makes you comfortable. You have to take all of me or none of me. I don't want to spend my energies building

a church or a world where only part of me is welcomed, valued and loved. Because if you accept only part of me, then you are not accepting me!

As I thought about what I wanted to share with you, the phrase "dreaming while queer" came to me. I want to speak of about the power of dreams. Of dreaming while queer. Of dreaming as Black and queer person of faith.

Like most of you, I am Jesuit-educated: Marquette University, Class of 1979. When I was an undergrad, I could scarcely dream of a day like this. If anyone had told my 21-year-old undergrad self that someday if I would be addressing a gathering of LGBTQ students from Jesuit universities as a Black, publicly gay priest, I would have laughed and said, "In your dreams!"

When I was a professor at my alma mater, and wanted to teach a course on homosexuality and Christian ethics, I was told it couldn't be taught in the theology department

but only in the honors program. If you had said that ten years later I'd be here, I would have said, "Only in your dreams." Yet folks like us dreamed. And because they dreamed, we are here.

Langston Hughes—a Black, queer, sexually non-conforming poet of the Harlem Renaissance—spoke of the power of dreams in his classic poem, "Dreams."

Hold fast to dreams
for if dreams die,
Life is a broken-winged bird
that cannot fly.
Hold fast to dreams
for when dreams go,
life is a barren field,
frozen with snow.

I have long been taken with the power of the human imagination, especially the imagination of despised and disdained and stigmatized peoples. I am inspired by how, despite all that they, that we, have been through and still endure, yet people dream of new worlds. We persist in the hope that reality not only should—but will—be other than it is.

"Because someday he may need it."

Let me make this concrete by offering two vignettes:

1) One of my prized possessions is a huge gold-leafed, black leather-bound dictionary my grandmother gave me for my eighth-grade graduation. It was *The New Webster Encyclopedic Dictionary of the English Language*. It contains over 973 pages of definitions, with an additional 500 pages of reference material, including how to write a letter to the president of the United States.

Why would a grandmother give such a gift to a 14-year-old boy living in Milwaukee's inner city? Her response: "Because some day he may need it." "Because some day . . ." That is the essence of the Black imagination. My grandmother was not delusional. She did not live in denial of reality, of the fact that our neighborhood store was called derisively "rats and roaches incorporated" by my siblings and I.

Her gift was a vision, an act of hope. It was a dream, a hope, a reminder that the neighborhood, with its drugs, violence and rodent-infested corner store with overpriced goods, did not define or limit who I could be. Her gift was a conjuring of imagination. My grandmother dreamed while Black.

2) Sixty years ago, a young Black minister addressed what then was the largest assembly of civil rights protesters in the nation's history. He recounted the nation's legacy of broken promises, which he described as checks returned marked "insufficient funds."

He narrated the "great trials and tribulations" that so many had endured: harassment, beatings and the horrors of being crammed in dank, narrow jail cells for their convictions. Yet, he implored them to return and continue with their grinding, treacherous and dangerous work for justice:

Go back to Mississippi, go back to Alabama, go back to South Carolina, go back to Georgia, go back to Louisiana, go back to the slums and ghettos of our northern cities, knowing that somehow this situation can and will be changed.

- Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., "I Have a Dream,"
August 28, 1963

And then, at the urging of the gospel singer Mahalia Jackson, he shared a dream: an inspirational vision of what one day will be because of what they dared to do now. Martin Luther King dreamed while Black.

In our tech-centered Western culture, with our overly rational educational systems, we tend to disparage songs, poetry and dreams as being impractical and of little importance. We dismiss them as distractions, as illusions and even as derelictions of duty and abdications of responsibility.

But I want to say: No! Dreams are what propelled people to do outrageous and dangerous things for the sake of justice.

We gather this weekend to speak of queer activism rooted in love and justice. The Black historian and social critic Robin D.G. Kelley is correct when he observes, "The catalyst for political engagement has never been misery, poverty and oppression but the promise of constructing a new world."

Kelley continues, "Dreaming means creating spaces for collectively imagining alternatives . . . and then planning to bring them to fruition." Or, as he says more poetically, it is envisioning "somewhere in advance of no where." It is envisioning a world that does not yet exist, but must someday come to be.

Note how imagination and dreaming are born out of dissatisfaction with the status quo. Imagination and dreaming express subversive agency. Both terms are important. Social movement imagination, and particularly queer imagination, has an inherently subversive quality.

Queer imagination and dreaming expresses dissatisfaction with, and even alienation from, dehumanizing and oppressive circumstances. By dreaming alternatives to "the familiar," imaginative communities of the stigmatized expose and exceed the limits imposed upon them.

Indeed, the act of dreaming and imagining is already one that creates the alternative for which they long. Dreaming is a first essential step to creating a new and more just

social order. One of the three Black queer women founders of the Black Lives Matter movement, Alicia Garza, conveys the subversive agency of imagination when she writes:

When we create spaces that allow us to be our full selves, unapologetically, we are engaging in acts of resistance and liberation. . . . [We] defiantly [take] up more space than we are given. . . . We are choosing to live in the world that does not yet exist but one day will surely come.

Thus, one of the most essential tasks of any social movement is the “abolition of imaginative slavery” and the willingness to “take our imaginations seriously.”

Revolutions and social change are not singular events, “but long dreams, shared by aggrieved communities, nurtured in fugitive spaces, and enacted by social movements.” So, our work is to let this be a space for our dreaming, for queer dreams.

Because the dream of a place where all are welcomed, where people of every sexuality are valued, where all gender identities are respected and protected—that dream is not yet realized. And not only is it not yet realized, it is under attack in blatant, disturbing and even frightening ways that many of us thought and hoped were behind us.

In an ever-growing number of places, there are laws that seek to erase our existence. Transgender persons are being refused life-saving gender-affirming medical care. Books that speak of LGBTQ lives and history are being banned from school libraries. Teachers who mention the words “gay,” “lesbian,” or “queer” are being fired. At an unprecedented rate, states are passing laws that prohibit the discussion of LGBTQ topics in schools and even workplaces.

In many parts of the world, it is a capital crime even to be suspected of being same-sex oriented or gender nonconforming. This is not an overstatement: There are serious efforts underway to create a world in which we do not exist.

Moreover, while it is good for us to be here, we must also be honest and face that there are some, perhaps even many, who are not here. Not only because of the crush of school work. Not only because of a lack of funding. But there are those of us who are not among us now because they have been so hurt, so wounded, so traumatized, by their church, synagogue, temple or mosque that they cannot be here. Some are not here because they find nothing life-giving about this space.

Let’s be honest and acknowledge that there may be people in this room who have come bearing wounds and scars of exclusion, of hatred, of lack of understanding. All of this is here, in this space. (So we need to be gentle and loving of one another).

You might be saying, “That’s a downer! That’s heavy.” And that’s okay. Because remember: Dreams and dreaming are not a denial of reality. Queer dreams and dreaming are not fantasy or escape. They are not illusions or delusions. Yes, there are many in church and in society who do not understand us, who fear us, who seek to censure and erase us.

And yet, still, we dream. Still, we dream. We dream, like my grandmother, who said, “One day, you will need this,” despite all that is going on around you. We dream with the Black gay actor and activist, Billy Porter, who refused the lie that he was unworthy and lives for the sake of a dream. We dream, as Harvey Milk did, when he said, “You gotta give them hope.”

We dream, inspired by Silvia Rivera and Marsha P. Johnson, trans persons of color and gender-bending activists of Stonewall. We dream with the witness of John McNeil, a trail-blazing gay theologian and counselor who was dismissed from the Jesuits for his ministry and yet continued his work informed by the Ignatian spirituality that sustained him.

And we dream inspired by our faith. We dream in the words of Jesus: “Peace is my gift to you.” Peace. He most likely used the Hebrew word, *shalom*, which means so much more than “peace.” It means wholeness and fulfillment, a world where no one—no one—lacks for what they need for abundant life. A world where no one lacks because of their gender, gender identity, gender expression, or because of who they love, how they love and how they seek love.

Yet still, we dream. We dream. We dream that we will be, in Ignatian language, *hominis pro allis*—people for others. That we will engage in activism for justice rooted in love. We dream Ignatian-inspired visions.

God’s beloved

I was privileged to make the 30-day retreat. It’s a time of intense prayer over a four-week period. The title of the fourth week of Spiritual Exercises is “the contemplation to attain God’s way of knowing.”

After coming to know yourself as a loved sinner, as God’s Beloved, making a fundamental decision to follow Christ, accompanying Christ through his life and death and coming to a deeper understanding of the crucifying pains of one’s own life, you pray for the grace of knowing and loving the world (the cosmos/reality) with God/Christ’s love.

Ignatian spirituality summons us to see the world as Christ sees it. To love ourselves as God loves us. To love each other as God loves us. To see and love “the other” as Christ does.

Thus we need to assert, without apologies, the precious value of LGBTQ lives. Of our lives. We need to confidently and insistently proclaim that we are equally redeemed

by Christ and radically loved by God.

We are equally redeemed by Christ and radically loved by God. We can never say that often enough. We need to tell ourselves and one another over and over again: "You are loved. You are lovable. You are sacred. Because you are God's image."

We must refuse the lies put forth by white supremacy and heterosexism. We need to pray for the grace to see and love ourselves, our world and each other as Christ knows and loves us. The grace to dream God's dream for us.

So let us dream. To be *hominis pro aliis*. To be people for others. Working for justice. Working in love. Working in faith. To co-create with God a new future. To dream and then to "go forth and set the world on fire." To be people for and with others.

What keeps me dreaming while Black and queer, even when I'm tempted to accept a pessimistic interpretation of reality, is the memory of my grandmother. Once, during conversation with my spiritual director, I poured out my anger and frustration at the futility of working for racial and sexual justice in a Catholic Church that seems impervious to any appeal or change. "Why in the hell should I keep doing what I do when it makes no difference in this church?"

She listened patiently and compassionately. At the end of my tirade, she asked, "Where would you be if your grandparents thought as you do?"

That's why I hold onto that book, even though I seldom use it anymore for its intended purpose. Everything it contains I now can find more easily on Google or by asking Siri or Alexa. I hold onto it, and cherish it, because it is an ever-present reminder of those who dared to dream, and who through their dreams brought and bring something new into the world. It encourages me to continue to dream.

I still have dreams

And so, I still have dreams. I dream of a time when the LGBTQ community will see racism as their issue because it already is our issue. I dream of a day when two men and two women can stand before our church, proclaim their love and have it blessed in the sacrament of marriage. I dream of a church that enthusiastically celebrates same-sex loves as incarnations of God's love among us.

I dream of a church where gay priests and lesbian sisters are acknowledged as the holy and faithful leaders they already are. I dream of a world where queer young people in Honduras, El Salvador, Uganda, Kenya and Afghanistan can step out of hiding and live without fear. I dream of a church where LGBTQ employees and school teachers can teach our children, serve God's people, and have their vocations, sexuality and committed loves

affirmed.

I dream of a LGBTQ community committed not only to respect for sexual diversity, but also for immigration justice and equal voting rights. I dream of a LGBTQ community that is as passionate about justice for Black and Brown trans people as it is about justice for white cisgender men. I dream of a LGBTQ community that embraces its diverse palette of skin tones as a marvelous reflection of God's own interior life of diversity.

I dream of a church that reflects the joy of the wedding banquet at Cana, where people of all races, genders and sexualities rejoice at the presence of love and commit themselves to make a world where people of every gender and race live the fullness of life that God desires for all.

So hold fast to dreams this weekend. Let your heart and your spirit soar. Let your spirit be borne on the wings of the Spirit. And dream of that world where spiritual wounds will be healed, where faith-based violence will be no more, where fear and intolerance are relics of history. We are called to dream. To keep dreams alive. To hold fast to dreams!

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Rev. Bryan Massingale is the James and Nancy Buckman Professor of Theological and Social Ethics at Fordham University. A leading Catholic social ethicist investigating the intersections between race, ethnicity and LGBTQ identities, he is the author of Racial Justice and the Catholic Church.



PARISH RESOURCES

Parish Office & Mailing Address

18 Belvidere Street, Boston, MA 02115

Hours | Seven days a week, 8:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.

Phone | 617 536 4548; Fax | 617 536 1781

Website | www.stceciliaboston.org

Parish Staff

Rev. John J. Unni, Pastor

Rev. James Shaughnessy, SJ, Pastoral Support

Mark Donohoe, Pastoral Associate

Robert Duff, Director of Music

Anastassia Kolchanov, Digital and Print Media Coordinator

Scott MacDonald, Director of Faith Formation and Parish Visibility

Colleen Melaugh, Director of Finance and Development

Nicole Pascarelli O'Brien, Pastoral Director of Operations

Lisa Pickering, Director of Facilities Operations & Events

Mary Wessel, Pastoral Associate

Assisting Clergy

Rev. Peter Grover, OMV

Rev. John Predmore, SJ

Music Ministry

Tyler Cesario, Assistant Director of Music

Daniel Lamoureux, Vigil Organist

Brett Maguire, Parish Organist

Audiovisual Support

Maureen Deery, Parish Photographer & Creator of Weekly Slide Show

Geoffrey Edwards, Livestream Videographer

Schedule for Liturgy

Wednesday, Thursday, & Friday | 8:00 a.m.

Lord's Day | Sat 5:00 p.m.; Sun 8:00, 9:30*, and 11:30 a.m.

Holy Days | 8:00 a.m.

* Please note that the 9:30 Mass is both in person and livestreamed.

Sacrament of Reconciliation

Father Jim Shaughnessy, SJ is available by appointment for the Sacrament of Reconciliation. To schedule an appointment, please call the Parish Office.

Hearing Assistance in Church

The church is equipped with an assistive listening system. If you would like to use one of the small receivers, please ask one of our greeters.

For Those with Celiac Disease

If you have celiac disease, please let us know. We have a supply of low-gluten altar bread available for those who cannot tolerate gluten.

Building Accessibility

Both the church and Parish Hall Center are accessible by elevator.

Baptism for Infants

Infant baptism is celebrated on the first and third weekends of the month. For more information, please contact Mark Donohoe in the Parish Office.

Parking

There is discounted parking at The Hynes Auditorium Garage (located at 50 Dalton Street next to Bukowski's Tavern), for \$15, available on Sundays until 3:00 p.m., and \$15 after 4:00 every day of the week. To get this discount, ask a greeter for a chaser ticket at Mass or ask a staff person during the week. Chaser tickets must be used at the machine at the exit gate. To obtain the discount, place the ticket you received upon entering the garage into the machine, then follow it with the chaser ticket.

Faith Formation for Children

To register your child for Faith Formation, contact our Pastoral Director of Operations, Nicole Pascarelli O'Brien.

Child Abuse Prevention (CAP) Team

The CAP Team is responsible for training all parish staff and volunteers in mandated reporting laws and the Protecting God's Children program (VIRTUS). They provide consultation and support to anyone who has concerns about reporting child abuse and neglect. Please contact Maria Roche (maria.roche15@gmail.com), Letitia Howland (L_howland@hotmail.com), or Erin Young (erin.t.young@gmail.com) if you have any questions. The Archdiocese of Boston has in place a vigorous program to protect children from harm and to educate its ministers and faithful about the nature of abuse, with a goal of increasing knowledge, creating a safe environment for children, and recognizing and reporting potentially dangerous situations. The full policy is available in the narthex, Parish Office, and on our website.

Order of Christian Initiation of Adults (OCIA)

This is the communal process through which non-baptized men and women become members of the Catholic Church. It is also suitable for those baptized in different faith traditions who are interested in becoming Catholic, or, for those who were baptized Catholic, but have yet to receive the sacraments of Eucharist and confirmation. For more information, contact Mary Wessel in the Parish Office.

Marriage

Couples who wish to prepare for marriage should contact Mark Donohoe in the Parish Office at least six months in advance.

Care of the Sick

To arrange for the Sacrament of the Sick, for Holy Communion to be brought to those unable to attend the Sunday celebration, or for Viaticum for the Dying (Holy Communion for those in danger of death), please contact the Parish Office. It is always possible to anoint the sick during regularly scheduled liturgies.

Order of Christian Funerals

The parish is prepared to celebrate the Vigil (wake) in the church. Please contact the Parish Office for more information.

Joining Our Community

We're happy that you're with us! Our parish offers a warm, spiritual home for a diverse group of Catholics from many neighborhoods in and around Boston; we also have friends from around the country and the world. We invite local individuals and families to fill out a new parishioner form on our website. No matter your present status in the Catholic Church, current family or marital situation, gender or gender expression, sexual orientation, personal history, age, race, or self-image, you are invited and will be welcomed, accepted, loved, and respected here at Saint Cecilia. We are here to accompany and serve you.

Please note:

According to online safety guidelines released by the Archdiocese of Boston, we have removed email addresses from our online parish bulletin to avoid the danger of potential phishing scams. If you need a staff member's email address or a ministry email address, please call our reception desk (617-536-4548) and our receptionists will be happy to share the appropriate information. Thank you for helping us maintain our parish security online.