

Saint Cecilia

P A R I S H



The Disciples See Christ Walking on the Water

by Henry Ossawa Tanner (1907)

Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

9 August 2026

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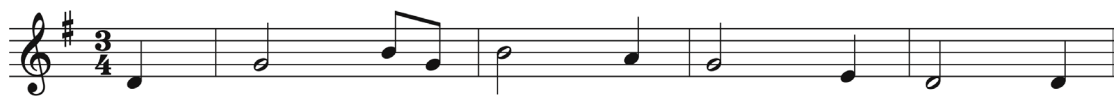
THE NINETEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

PRELUDE | *Récit de Tierce en Taille*

Nicolas de Grigny
(1672-1703)

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> |

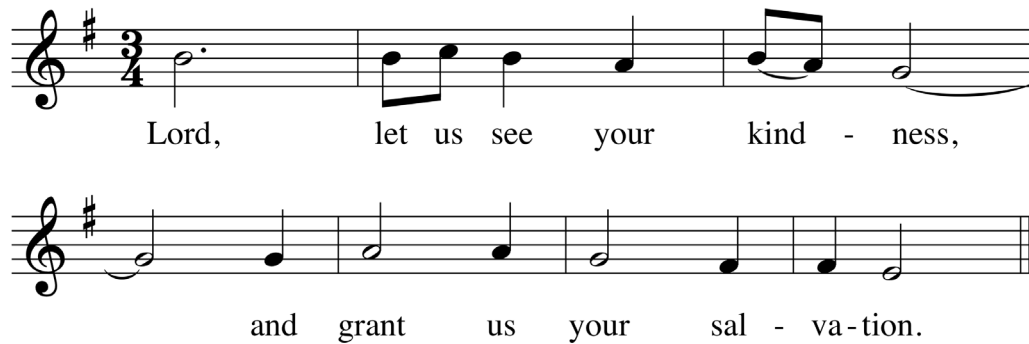
COLLECT

LITURGY OF THE WORD

FIRST READING | 1 Kings 19: 9a, 11-13a

RESPONSORIAL PSALM | Ps. 85: Lord, Let Us See Your Kindness

Marty Haugen



1. I will hear what the Lord God speaks; he speaks of peace for his people and his faithful. His salvation is near for those who fear him, and his glory will dwell in our land.
2. Merciful love and faithfulness have met; justice and peace have kissed. Faithfulness shall spring from the earth, and justice look down from the heaven.
3. Also the Lord will bestow his bounty, and our earth shall yield its increase. Justice will march before him, and guide his steps on the way.

SECOND READING | Romans 9: 1-5

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION | Mass of Joy and Peace

Tony E. Alonso



GOSPEL | Matthew 14: 22-33

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!

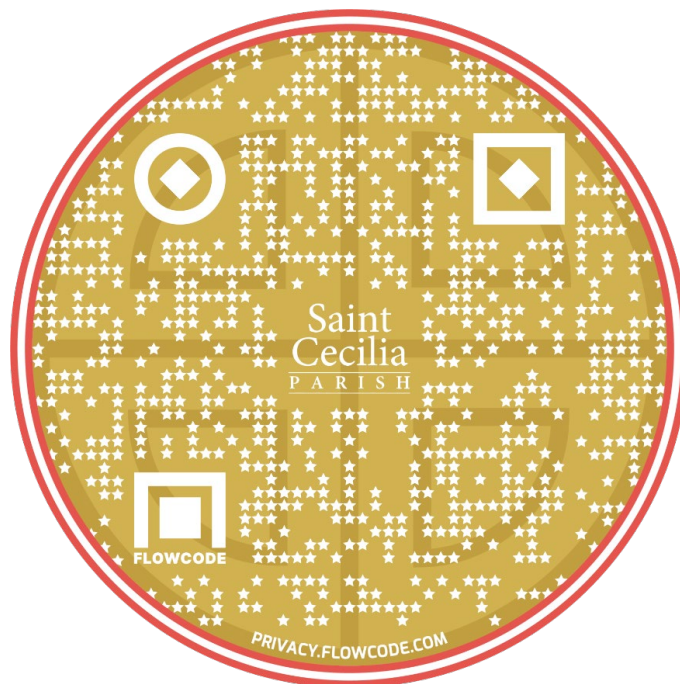
We are grateful for your ongoing support of Saint Cecilia. The easiest way to make a financial contribution to our parish is to use the parish Flowcode below.

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

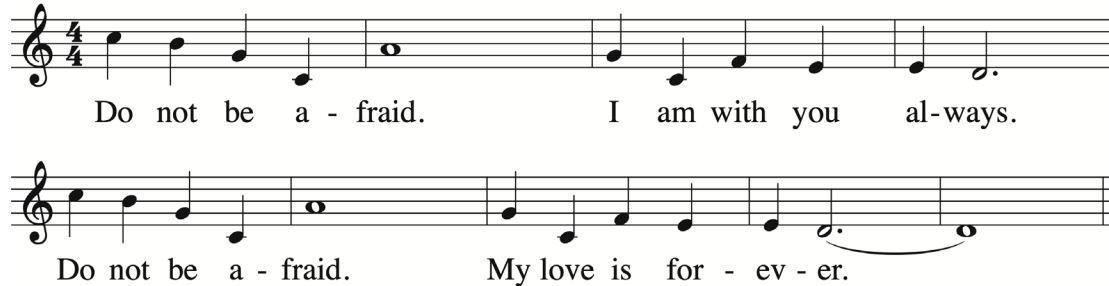


LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

PRESENTATION OF THE GIFTS | Do Not Be Afraid

Jeanne Cotter

Refrain



Verses

1. I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for peace and prosperity.
Trust in me as I live in you. I give you a future and a hope.
2. Search for me with all your heart. I will let myself be found by you.
I could never leave you orphaned. I will not abandon you!
3. Do not worry about tomorrow. Let go of all anxiety.
If I so care for the birds in the air, I'll provide for all you need.
4. Do not let your hearts be troubled. Have faith in God and faith in me.
I give you peace that passes understanding, peace to guard your heart and mind.

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.

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.

We pro - claim your Death, O Lord, and pro -

fess your Res - ur - rec-tion un - til you come a - gain.



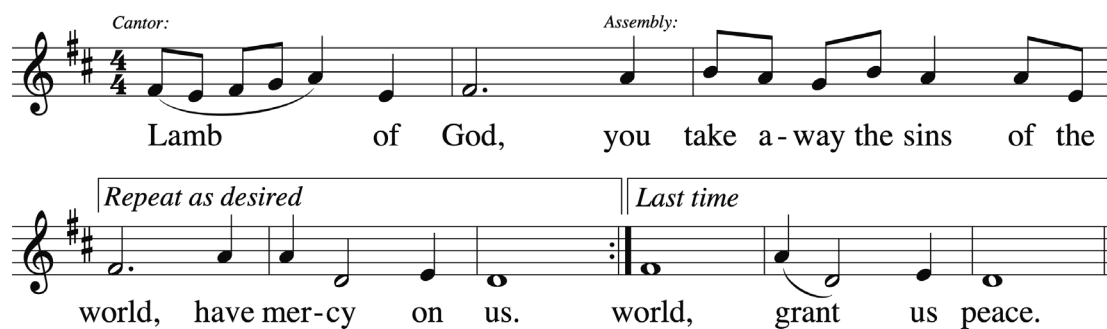
THE LORD'S PRAYER

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



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, SJ

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 -
 sult and hate you all be-cause of me,
 bless-ed, bless-ed are you! **D.S.**

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 | Precious Lord, Take My Hand

Thomas A. Dorsey

1. Pre - cious Lord, take my hand, Lead me on, let me
2. When my way grows drear, Pre - cious Lord, lin - ger
3. When the dark - ness ap - pears And the night draws

stand, I am tired, I am weak, I am
near, When my life is al - most
near, And the day is past and

worn.
gone,
gone,

Through the storm, through the
Hear my cry, hear my
At the riv - er I

night, Lead me on to the light. Take my
call, Hold my hand lest I fall. Take my
stand, Guide my feet, hold my hand. Take my

hand, pre - cious Lord, lead me home.
hand, pre - cious Lord, lead me home.
hand, pre - cious Lord, lead me home.

POSTLUDE | *Récit de Basse de Trompette* from *Verbum Supernum*
Brett Maguire, organ

Nicolas de Grigny

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, August 8 | 5:00 p.m.

Rev. Peter Grover, OMV, celebrant
Catherine Horsley, lector

Sunday, August 9 | 8:00 a.m.

Rev. John Predmore, SJ, celebrant
Linda Frayling, lector

Sunday, August 9 | 9:30 a.m.

Rev. John Unni, celebrant
Rosaria Salerno, Jerry McElroy, Virgen Palermo, lectors

Sunday, August 9 | 11:30 a.m.

Rev. John Unni, celebrant
Theresa Chaklos, Clare Gillis, lectors

SPECIAL INTENTIONS

Sunday, August 9 | 8:00 a.m.

John & Angelina Machado, *Memorial*

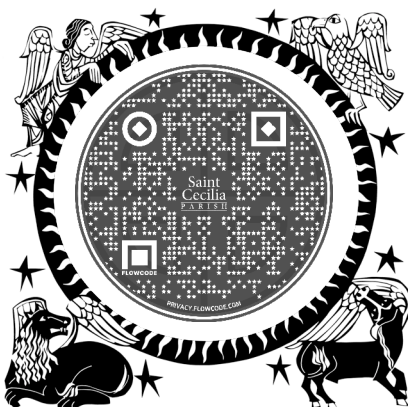
Sunday, August 9 | 9:30 a.m.

Rev. Peter Gyves, SJ, *2nd Anniversary*
Mary Jane Kinne, *Month's Mind*
George McGee, *Memorial*
James "Jimmy" Foster, *Memorial*

Sunday, August 9 | 11:30 a.m.

Lauryn Akey, *Memorial*

Scan this code for
offertory giving:



Thank you for your generous
support of Saint Cecilia Parish!



TODAY'S READINGS

1 Kings 19:9a, 11-13a
Romans 9:1-5
Matthew 14:13-21

NEXT SUNDAY'S READINGS

Isaiah 56:1, 6-7
Romans 11:13-15, 29-32
Matthew 15:21-28

PRAYERS & OCCASIONS

Our Deceased



Baby Eloise Josephine Mason died on August 3. In the words of her grandmother Cathy, Eloise was “19 months old and a brave warrior from day one.” Please pray for Eloise and for the consolation of her parents, Dan and Emily; her 3-year-old brother, James; and her grandparents, Fred and Cathy Mason and Dr. Herb and Mary Stith. May the God who knew Eloise before birth now receive her into the arms of his mercy and grant comfort, strength, and peace to all who mourn her loss.

The funeral Mass will be celebrated in Illinois. A Memorial Mass at Saint Cecilia will be announced at a later date. Fred and Cathy, together with their entire family, are profoundly grateful for the prayers, love, and support of the Saint Cecilia community. Throughout Eloise's journey, your prayers have been a source of strength, comfort, and hope, and they are grateful for the love with which you have accompanied them. May her soul and the souls of all the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace.

Welcome to Saint Cecilia Parish!

We are pleased to welcome the following new members of our community: **Lynn and Gary Holforthy, Maria Perry and John Stock, and Caitria Parsloe and Christopher McAuliffe.** If you have not previously registered, you can do so online at www.stceciliaboston.org.

Summer Choral Session: Canceled (8/9)

This Sunday's Summer Choral Session on August 9th has been canceled. Summer Choral Sessions will return on August 16th and August 23rd in Classroom 1 at 2pm.

Assumption Day—Mass

The Church celebrates the Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary on Saturday, August 15. Ordinarily, the Assumption is a holy day of obligation in the United States, but because it falls on a Saturday this year, Catholics are not obligated to attend Mass. Mass will not be celebrated at Saint Cecilia, but if you would like to observe this beautiful feast of Our Lady, nearby Masses include:

- **St. Clement Eucharistic Shrine** (1105 Boylston Street): 11:00 a.m.
- **St. Francis Chapel** (Prudential Center): 9:00 a.m. and Noon
- **Cathedral of the Holy Cross** (1400 Washington Street): A Vigil Mass will be celebrated at 5:30 p.m. on Friday, August 14; Mass will be celebrated on Saturday, August 15 at 9:00 a.m. in the Blessed Sacrament Chapel.

Children's Shroud Project—Thank You!

Thank you to everyone who participated in the Children's Shroud Project two Sundays ago. Together, in a moving witness of faith, compassion, and solidarity, we prayerfully inscribed the names of 500 children killed in Gaza. We had anticipated needing two Sundays to complete Saint Cecilia's portion of the project, but the response was so generous that all 500 names entrusted

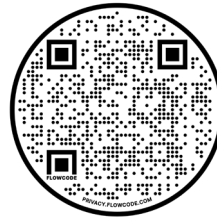
to the parish were inscribed in a single day. The section of the shroud created at Saint Cecilia will become part of a larger memorial honoring the thousands of children whose lives have been lost in Gaza. From September 20–25, the completed shroud will be displayed in New York City during the United Nations General Assembly as part of a week of prayer and public witness. In October, it will travel to Washington, D.C., for additional prayer services and public witness before continuing its journey to cities around the world. We hope to organize a group from Saint Cecilia and Saint Susanna Parish in Dedham to participate in some of these prayer services and events. To learn more about the Children's Shroud Project, visit: <https://www.gazachildrenshroud.com/>. Please continue to pray for peace, for all whose lives have been shattered by war, and especially for the children and families who continue to suffer its devastating consequences.

Save the Dates: Two Parish Retreats This Fall

This fall, we will once again offer two opportunities to step away from the routines of daily life, deepen our relationship with God, and share in the prayer and fellowship of our parish community. Whether you are looking for a single day of reflection or a quiet weekend of prayer, we hope you will consider joining us.

Fall Parish Retreat

Saturday, September 12 | 9:00 a.m.–3:00 p.m.

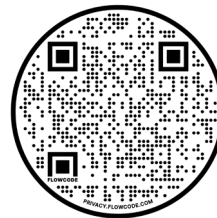


Our annual Fall Parish Retreat will offer a day of prayer, reflection, and conversation. The retreat theme and presenter will be announced soon. We are requesting a \$25 donation, which includes a continental breakfast and boxed lunch. Retreat participants are also invited to a reception on Friday evening, September 11, to welcome members of the Far-Flung Flock who will be joining us. Following the retreat

on Saturday, those who wish may participate in a brief parish service project in the Parish Hall before gathering for dinner at 5:00 p.m.

Retreat at Eastern Point Retreat House, Gloucester

Friday, October 30 – Sunday, November 1



Our annual weekend retreat at Eastern Point Retreat House offers the gift of silence in one of the most beautiful retreat settings in New England. The retreat begins at 5:00 p.m. on Friday, with check-in available after 3:00 p.m., and concludes after lunch on Sunday. The weekend will include presentations, ample time for personal prayer and reflection, and all meals. In keeping with the custom of Eastern Point,

this retreat will be conducted in silence, including during meals, fostering a spirit of prayer, reflection, and attentiveness to God's presence. We are requesting a \$350 donation for the weekend.

Registration for both retreats opens **Friday, August 14, at 9:00 a.m.** Because space is limited for each retreat, we encourage you to register as soon as possible if you plan to attend. We do not want the cost of the retreat to be a barrier to participation. If the cost presents a challenge, please contact Scott MacDonald confidentially; we would be happy to assist.

WOMEN'S MINISTRY BREAKFAST

**SATURDAY, AUGUST 8 | 9:30AM - COFFEE
10AM - DISCUSSION | PARISH HALL**

Join the Women's Ministry for a morning of faith, fellowship, and meaningful conversation as we gather for breakfast and reflect on the life and witness of Dorothy Day. A convert to Catholicism, journalist, social activist, and co-founder of the Catholic Worker Movement, Dorothy Day challenged the Church to live the Gospel through radical hospitality, compassion for those on the margins, and unwavering trust in God.

Together, we'll explore how her example continues to inspire us to love our neighbors, seek justice with mercy, and discover Christ in the ordinary moments of our lives. Whether you are familiar with Dorothy Day or encountering her story for the first time, all women are warmly welcome. For more information, contact Mary Wessel at her parish email.

SPACE TO SHARE

**WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 12 | 6:30PM
COMMUNITY ROOM**

Space to Share is a place for LGBTQ+ parishioners to speak freely about the challenges and joys of being LGBTQ+ and Catholic (or whatever else is on our minds). Whether it's your first visit or you're a biweekly regular, we'd love to have you join us! To learn more, please send an email to the ministry.

TEEN PROGRAMMING SURVEY

As we begin working on putting together teen programming in the parish, we want to include as many voices as possible. If you are a caregiver of a high school student, please take a few minutes to fill out the brief survey listed below about teen programming and ask them to do the same. Thank you!

- **Caregiver Survey:** <https://forms.gle/moh7LXCiRKR8sGDX8>
- **High School Student Survey:** <https://forms.gle/3ewrLwYLUfNnYqt28>



COMING UP AT SAINT CECILIA AUGUST 8 - 13

SATURDAY, AUGUST 8

Women's Ministry Breakfast | 9:30am | Parish Hall

SUNDAY, AUGUST 9

Wisdom & Mature Spirituality | 8:30am via Zoom

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 12

Space to Share | 6:30pm | Community Room

THURSDAY, AUGUST 13

Wisdom & Mature Spirituality | 7:30pm via Zoom

A REQUEST FROM CATHOLIC CHARITIES

For over 100 years, Sunset Point Camp in Hull has provided a dream vacation at the seashore to over 40,000 low-income, at-risk children aged 6-13 from Greater Boston without regard for their race, nationality, or religious affiliation. Nearly 450 city-based boys and girls travel to Hull, Massachusetts each summer for a one or two week overnight camp experience letting them enjoy the fresh air, learn new talents, receive academic summer support and simply have fun.

Sunset Point Camp is operated by our friends at Catholic Charities. **At the moment, there is a particular need for soap, deodorant, toothpaste, toothbrushes, & shampoo for kids at the camp.**

Catholic Charities has also requested donations of sunblock (the higher SPF number, the better) and bug spray. Next time you are shopping or on Amazon.com, please consider picking up a few items from the list above and dropping them in the plastic bin identified for this purpose in the narthex. Thank you!

BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT IN-PERSON

SUNDAY, AUGUST 16 | 1PM | COMMUNITY ROOM

The death of a loved one can feel confusing and isolating. No one should suffer alone. The bereavement group at Saint Cecilia supports anyone coping with loss. Feel free to grab some coffee and food and join us for an informal group discussion and prayer. If you'd like to learn more about bereavement at Saint Cecilia, please contact Mary Wessel at her parish email.

SUMMER CHORAL SESSIONS

SUNDAY, AUGUST 16 | 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.

OCIA INFORMATION SESSION

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 19 | 6PM VIA ZOOM

Interested in becoming Catholic? Order of Christian Initiation of Adults The Order of Christian Initiation of Adults (OCIA) the primary process for adults to become full members of the Catholic Church. OCIA welcomes inquirers at all levels of knowledge, faith, and intent.

The process culminates in the reception of one or more of the Sacraments of Initiation: Baptism, Confirmation, and the Holy Eucharist. OCIA could be for you if you are an adult who has never been baptized, if you were baptized in another Christian denomination, or if you are seeking First Holy Communion and Confirmation.

To learn more or get the Zoom link, please contact Mary Wessel at her parish email.

COME FOURTH SUNDAY!

SUNDAY, AUGUST 23 | AFTER 9:30 & 11:30 MASSES | PARISH HALL

Ministry work is the heartbeat of Saint Cecilia. Whether you're looking to become better connected to others or to provide outreach, we're introducing "Come Fourth Sunday" on the fourth Sunday of the month, a special opportunity to discover the many ministries that bring our parish to life.

In August, we're featuring the CARES, Bereavement, and Mental Health Ministries. Stop by after Mass to meet those who serve, learn about a ministry mission, ask questions, and explore how your unique gifts might find a place in our community. We look forward to seeing you!

If you'd like more information on ministries, please reach out to Mary Wessel at her parish email.

HELP US SEND A KID TO CAMP

As you may know, Saint Cecilia Parish has a long-standing relationship with the Huntington YMCA and many of the social service programs offered in that facility. Through our combined donations, we would like to see if we can collect enough (\$2,500) to send one inner-city kid, ages 8 to 16, to Y camp this summer. The YMCA overnight camp in New Hampshire is a life-changing experience for those fortunate enough to attend.

To make a donation by check -- in any amount -- please make it payable to "YMCA of Greater Boston" and indicate in the memo line: "Summer Camp." Checks should be mailed to:

Hunger & Homelessness Ministry
Saint Cecilia Parish
18 Belvidere Street
Boston, MA 02115

2026 SUMMER CHOIR SUNDAYS

SUNDAY, AUGUST 23 | 8:30AM | CLASSROOM 1

Join Robert Duff, Brett Maguire and members of the Saint Cecilia Choir at 8:30am to learn a piece of choral music and sing with the choir at the 9:30am Mass. Open to all singers of all ages and experience! We will meet in Classroom 1 at 8:30am.

A SYSTEMATIC READING OF THE ENCYCLICAL "MAGNIFICA HUMANITAS"

TUESDAYS | 8:00AM - 9:00AM VIA ZOOM

Join Fr. John Predmore, SJ, for a chapter-by-chapter reading of Pope Leo XIV's new encyclical, *Magnifica Humanitas* ("Magnificent Humanity"). Over the course of eight weeks, the group will read and discuss the encyclical together via Zoom on Tuesdays from 8:00 to 9:00 a.m. A brief study guide with chapter notes will be emailed to participants before each session. If you would like to join the group, please email Fr. Predmore, SJ.

JOIN THE COFFEE HOSPITALITY MINISTRY

Curious how our team creates a warm & welcoming environment in the parish hall every Sunday? Bring your gifts to the table and join the coffee hospitality ministry! Contact Lisa Pickering at her parish email to learn more.

TEACH ENGLISH THIS FALL

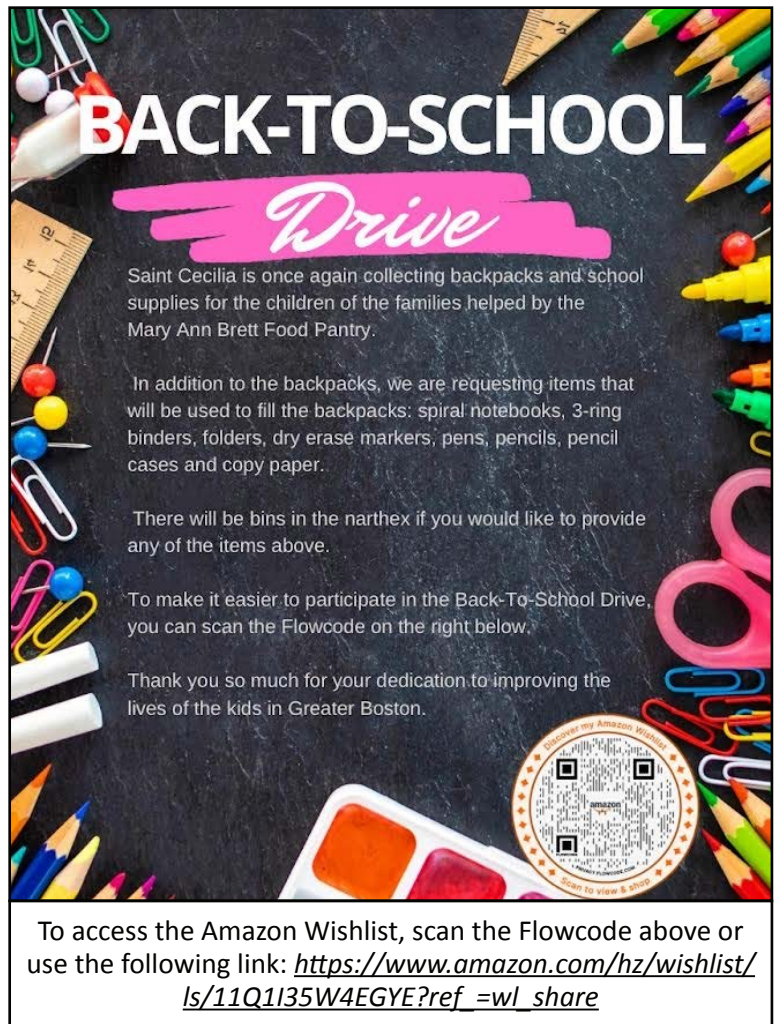
HELP IMMIGRANT NEIGHBORS BUILD A FUTURE

Every fall, adults across Greater Boston sit down in an ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) classroom because English stands between them and a job, a doctor's appointment, or a parent-teacher conference. A Faith That Does Justice is seeking volunteers to help bridge that gap. AFTDJ's ESOL program offers free English classes for adult immigrant learners, taught entirely by volunteers. No professional teaching experience or bilingual skills are required. Volunteers receive curriculum, training, and support. Members of all faiths and backgrounds are welcome as both students and teachers.

There are two ways to serve:

- **Teacher:** Lead a class of adult learners through the semester, teaching two 2-hour sessions each week.
- **Teacher Assistant:** Support teachers by working with individuals and small groups.

The Fall 2026 session runs September 21, 2026 through February 3, 2027. Classes are offered Monday and Wednesday evenings (6:30–8:30 p.m.) or Tuesday and Thursday mornings (9:30–11:30 a.m.), either online via Zoom or in person at Emmanuel Church in Back Bay. To learn more and apply by August 31, visit faith-justice.org/esol/.



BACK-TO-SCHOOL
Drive

Saint Cecilia is once again collecting backpacks and school supplies for the children of the families helped by the Mary Ann Brett Food Pantry.

In addition to the backpacks, we are requesting items that will be used to fill the backpacks: spiral notebooks, 3-ring binders, folders, dry erase markers, pens, pencils, pencil cases and copy paper.

There will be bins in the narthex if you would like to provide any of the items above.

To make it easier to participate in the Back-To-School Drive, you can scan the Flowcode on the right below.

Thank you so much for your dedication to improving the lives of the kids in Greater Boston.

To access the Amazon Wishlist, scan the Flowcode above or use the following link: https://www.amazon.com/hz/wishlist/?ls/11Q135W4EGYE?ref=wl_share

Rectory Tower Restoration and Repair Update



Over the past fifteen years, exposure to New England's harsh weather has taken a toll on the rectory tower. Moisture, freezing and thawing cycles, and years of exposure to the elements have caused deterioration of the masonry, including spalling (where brick or masonry begins to flake or break apart) and efflorescence (the white mineral deposits often seen on masonry surfaces). As a result, portions of the interior brickwork now require repair to preserve the tower's structural integrity and ensure its continued safety.

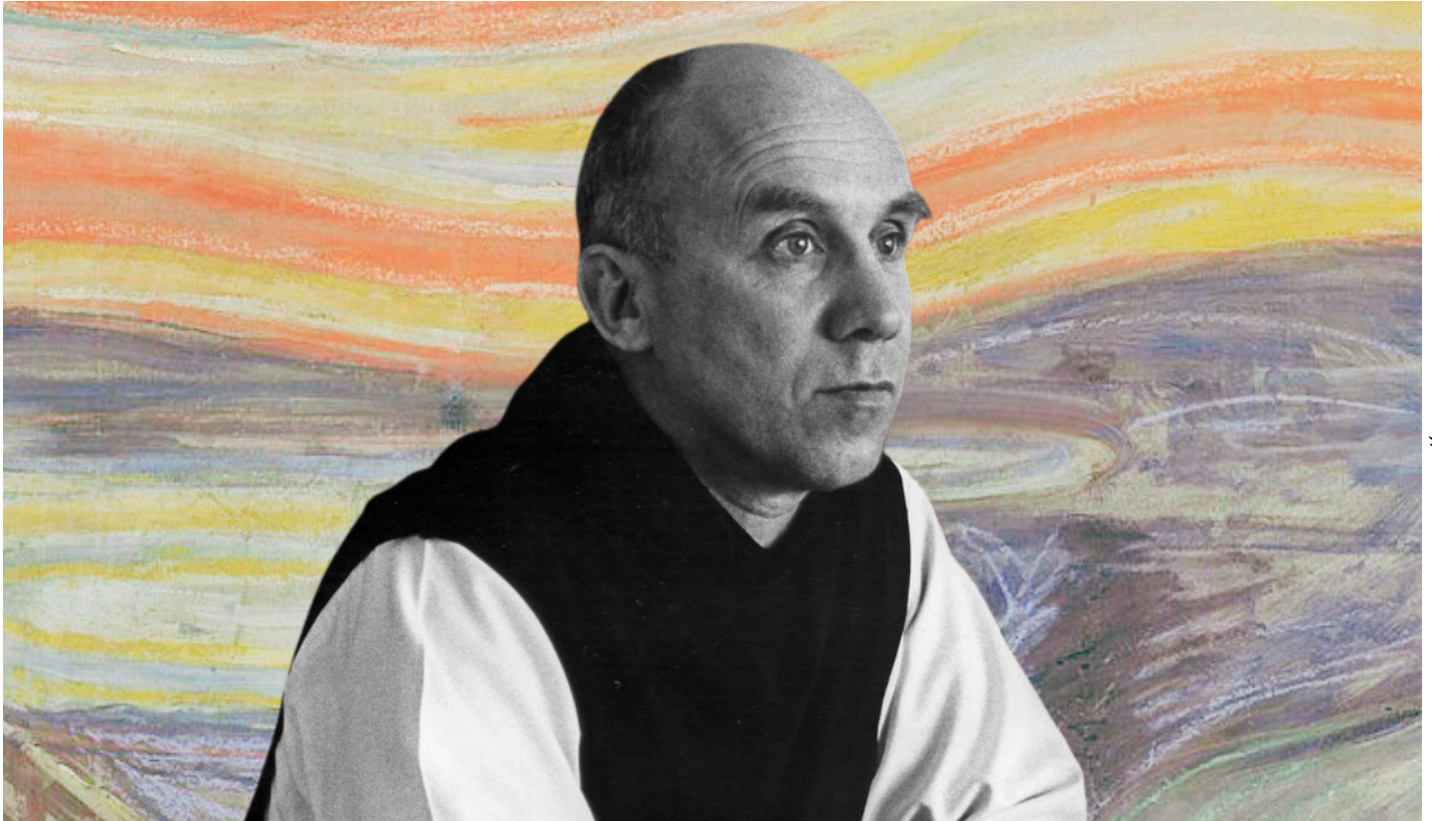
The project will repair and reinforce the interior masonry and reinstall protective louvers in the tower openings. These louvers will maintain proper ventilation while shielding the interior from rain, snow, wind, and other weather. Scaffolding will be installed along St. Cecilia Street around the rectory for the next few months. During this time, access to the parish offices will remain open, and all liturgies, meetings, and parish operations will **continue as usual**.

These repairs and improvements are needed to preserve and protect the tower's structural safety and integrity, extend its lifespan, and help ensure that this landmark remains a lasting symbol of our parish for years to come.

We are excited to see this restoration take shape and will share updates as the project progresses. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Lisa Pickering at her parish email.

THOMAS MERTON: MONK. MYSTIC. EXISTENTIALIST?

BY JAMES CECIL



Credit: CNS photo/Merton Legacy Trust and the Thomas Merton Center at Bellarmine University/Wikimedia Illustration: America Media

Trappist Father Thomas Merton in an undated photo/"The Scream," by Edvard Munch (1893)

...underlying all life is the ground of doubt and self-questioning which sooner or later must bring us face to face with the ultimate meaning of our life. This self-questioning can never be without a certain existential "dread"—a sense of insecurity, of "lostness," of exile, of sin.... It is the profound awareness that one is capable of ultimate bad faith with himself and with others: that one is living a lie.

—Thomas Merton, *Contemplative Prayer*

Monk. Writer. Convert. Peace activist. Spiritual mentor. Student of Zen. Bestselling author. Mystic. Bob Dylan fan.

These are just a few of the labels we associate with Thomas Merton. While "existentialist" is not high on any such list for most readers, a lifetime of re-reading Merton has convinced me that the existential note ringing through his body of work is key, not only to

making sense of his wide-ranging thought, but to any real understanding of the man himself. This is especially true of the last decade of his life, amid his increasing emphasis on the role of dread in a mature spiritual life.

Before any discussion of the existential character of Merton's work, we need to get a sense of what the notoriously slippery term *Existentialism* actually concerns itself with. Not only does a flat dictionary definition not get us very far down that road; it is not in keeping with the Existentialist spirit to begin with. It will prove more helpful to look at an instance of the existential point of view as it organically appears in an artistic context (as it frequently does).

The well-known and oft-quoted closing lines of "The Summer Day," by Mary Oliver, offer a good example of this kind of organic existential encounter:

Tell me, what is it you plan to do

with your one wild and precious life?

Both the initial exhilaration of being reminded you actually have a “wild and precious life” to spend and the subsequent sense of foreboding or regret at the risk implied capture the essence of the existential situation. It is worth noting that the rest of the poem addresses, among other things, the question of our creator, prayer and the place of attention in a life fully lived—all things the Existentialist theologian Paul Tillich refers to as matters of “ultimate concern.”

That shadowy undercurrent of narrowing possibility implied beneath the life-enchancement that the poem’s closing lines leave us with is a foretaste of the dread Merton refers to, what Søren Kierkegaard describes as “the dizziness of freedom” and Jean-Paul Sartre’s brand of Existentialism deems to be a “nausea.”

Another commonplace example of existential dread is captured in the popular notion of the “Sunday Scaries” or “Sunday Night Blues” that many workers and students feel as their weekend comes to an end, especially those who feel stuck with a sense of futility or deep alienation from the work they are about to shoulder for another week or those experiencing an acute sense of hopelessness that their wages will ever allow them to “catch up” and pursue a more aligned life. Those weeks all add up, we sense, to a lifetime that we do not get back.

Of course, these examples only hint at the phenomenon of dread examined by the mystics and philosophers Merton’s work draws on, like St. John of the Cross and Gabriel Marcel. The important thing to note is how even these everyday examples deal with the texture of one’s *existence*—thus existential—in both its exhilarating possibilities and the finite bounds of what exactly your one particular, precious and oftentimes scary life might amount to before it comes to an end.

For most of us, this dread is assiduously avoided, even as it nonetheless lingers just out of sight until some vulnerability exposes it and pulls it into consciousness. But for anyone seriously seeking an encounter with reality in all its fullness, including the presence, or pointed absence, of the living God, Merton states ever more clearly over the course of his life that this darkness will be an inescapable bridge to be crossed. In Merton’s view, this mystical brand of awe, full of aridity and shadow, is precisely the experience that exposes the ultimate nothingness of oneself-for-oneself, and makes the seeker painfully aware of the need for mercy and meaning beyond their own efforts.

Existential dread, then, is a pivot point in Merton’s spirituality, where the experience of the humanly finite “authentic self” points beyond itself to the mystical grace of the truly authentic self in the God of infinite possibility. Closely associated with this central encounter

with dread is the idea that one’s response to it, or to existential challenges like the one presented by Oliver’s poem, must never be “borrowed” or “off the shelf” from a given source or formula, but arrived at authentically from one’s own experience and a deeply honest discernment.

For Merton, as with all Existentialists, the real answers to life’s questions must be *lived*, not simply stated or formulated as concepts; they are intimately personal commitments, ever open to evolving, and to be amended as needed to be “true” in the flesh to who we continue to become. It is easy to see why courage and self-deception emerge as central themes not just for Merton, but for existential thinkers at large.

Existentialist roots

For most Merton readers this note of gravitas surrounding the issue of authenticity will be more than familiar and will probably strike many as self-evidently true. Still, many may wonder whether Merton actually embraced the “Existentialist” label outright. The clearest evidence that he did is in his essay “Learning to Live,” written in 1966 and published posthumously in *Love and Living*, where he finally states baldly: “Speaking as a Christian Existentialist” as he goes on to expound on his familiar notion of discarding the “masks” of our exterior selves to arrive at a “mature personal identity.”

A year earlier, in 1965, he published the essay “Notes on Christian Existentialism” in *The Critic*, later collected in *Mystics & Zen Masters* as “The Other Side of Despair” (a clear nod to Kierkegaard). The essay, a less personal and somewhat noncommittal survey of sorts, is notable for its debt to the Catholic Existential philosopher Gabriel Marcel, and includes a brilliant examination of Flannery O’Connor, highlighting what Merton deems her superior “existential intuition.”

In a letter to his editor, Robert Giroux, mentioning the essay, Merton expresses misgivings about the Trappist censors having issues with the topic of Existentialism, and one senses his caution around attempting to ally himself too closely with the label in public print.

During this same period, he was preparing the slim volume *Contemplative Prayer*, his final personally approved publication, where he examines the concept of dread in a decidedly existentialist light throughout, returning to the terms *dread* and *existential* some 50 times in a book of barely 100 pages. The book was published first as *The Climate of Monastic Prayer* in the same year as his death, 1968.

Much of this work turns out to have roots in manuscripts begun in the late 1950’s, a period that saw him nearly own up to the Existential stamp of his thought in the title of a major work, *Existential Communion*. Instead, in 1961, Merton came out with the oft-overlooked *The New Man*, which bore the previous title as early as 1954 before it was reconsidered and refashioned. Still, the published

result is heavily preoccupied with Existential themes and bookended by an examination of the Existential religious context as it explicitly relates to Christian mystical experience and the apophatic tradition (the spiritual approach that seeks God through recognizing ways in which the divine is beyond human understanding).

Unmediated encounter

If this all amounts to the mature culmination of the existential trajectory in Merton's work, where does it all begin?

Certainly, biographically speaking, the answer lies in the early death of his mother and his subsequent boyhood in the French provinces with his struggling artist father. But in terms of his adult spiritual conversion, the evidence lies in what many familiar readers might consider an unlikely event.

The episode in question will be recognizable to Merton fans as the "Imprimatur" episode of 1937, related in some detail in the book that began it all, his monumental 1948 spiritual autobiography, *The Seven Storey Mountain*. In it, the college-aged Merton excitedly purchases a book on medieval philosophy by Étienne Gilson before boarding a train for Long Island. Having settled into his seat, he sets about opening his prize—only to find an *imprimatur* on the copyright page, indicating that publication of the book has been authorized by a bishop who finds nothing in it contrary to Catholic morals. It smacks to the "pagan" Merton of intellectual dishonesty, if not outright censorship. He recalls being tempted to throw the book out the window of the train "at the houses of Woodside."

When he finally does pick it up again, he finds something far different from the officially-approved, pious "old man in the sky" idea of God he anticipated (then characterized by him as "a vague rather superstitious hangover from an unscientific age"). What he discovers instead is Gilson's rendering of the ancient concept of *aseitas*, in which God is recognized as "Being Itself" and existing "beyond all sensible images and all conceptual determinations."

With this, the intellectually and spiritually ripe Merton experiences an epiphany that would, in his own words, "revolutionize my whole life.... What a relief it was for me, now, to discover not only that no idea of ours, let alone any image, could adequately represent God."

It is a fair question to ask how this seemingly abstract notion might be considered "existential." The answer is not in the formulation on the page, but in the real-life effect of such a framing for the person, Merton, in the material world. Not unlike the reader of the Mary Oliver poem, Merton realizes he might directly encounter God anywhere now, not just in the pages of the Bible or in a church pew. God's unmediated presence is suddenly everywhere and in everything, including himself.

An unconstrained God

This unconstrained view of God would prove to be the only acceptable window into the church for Merton, the budding Existentialist, and the same secular, intellectual compunction that made him spurn the *imprimatur* in Gilson's book would go on to play a crucial role in the development of his pioneering thought—in tandem with the more usual moral compunction driven by his awareness of sin and subsequent reckoning with dread.

As I sometimes tell my students, the Christian Existentialist is much like a certain type of house cat that loves his home but takes any closed door encountered in his comings and goings as a personal affront—an impingement on his sacred autonomy! Thomas Merton was just such a cat, following an inner demand that insisted on his seeking the most authentic and intimate rapport possible with his God and his conscience.

Having entered the church through the window of Gilson's *aseitas* in the West, and peeked at new visions through the windows of Zen in the East, Merton's restless spirit seems to have settled somewhere under our front porch, so to speak, and become an unlikely part of the modern church's foundation. We would do well to engage more with this aspect of Merton going forward, as he appears to be just the type of hearty, resident stray our drafty 21st-century church needs today more than ever.



Originally published in *America Magazine* on August 4, 2026.

James Cecil is a former Jesuit Volunteer and lecturer at Cornell University and the University of Detroit-Mercy. He is currently writing a book about the intersection of Existentialism and spirituality.



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
Kate Burns, Director of Family and Youth Faith Formation
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
Christian Chanderdatt, Audio Engineer

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 Director of Family and Youth Faith Formation, Kate Burns.

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 (VIR-TUS). 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.

