

Ascension Catholic Church

12700 Lanham-Severn Rd. | Bowie, Maryland 20720 | Ph. (301) 262-2227

MASS SCHEDULE

ALL MASSES ARE IN THE CHURCH

Weekends

Saturday — Vigil 4:00 pm
Sunday — 8:00 am, 10:00 am, & 12:00 pm

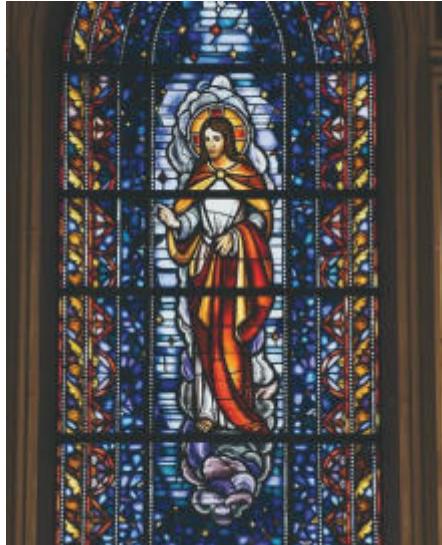
Weekdays

Mon -Wed, Fri -Sat — 9:00 am

CONFESION SCHEDULE

ALL CONFESSIONS ARE HEARD IN THE
CHURCH

Mon, Tues, Wed, Fri — 8:40-9:00 am
Tuesdays — 5:45-6:45 pm
Saturdays — 8:40-9:00 am; 3:00-3:30 pm



MASS INTENTIONS (JULY 5-11)

Monday (9:00 am) Angelica Visk

Tuesday (9:00 am) Fr. Larry Swink

Wednesday (9:00 am) Fr. Jack Berard

Friday (9:00 am) Fr. Larry Swink

Saturday (9:00 am) Special Intention

(4:00 pm) +Yvette Partington

Sunday (8:00 am) Parishioners

(10:00 am) Ladies Auxiliary

(12:00 pm) Special Intention

14th Sunday in Ordinary Time

When the sabbath came he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were astonished. They said, "Where did this man get all this? What kind of wisdom has been given him? What mighty deeds are wrought by his hands!"

Mark 6:2

Dear Parishioners,

—Greetings from Fr. Tim—

Happy 4th of July! Today we celebrate Independence Day, giving thanks for our many blessings as citizens of the United States of America. Although of course we cannot ignore the problems and sins in our nation's history, as any country must humbly admit, we should at the same time grow in the virtue of patriotism, honoring the many virtues and positive ideals upon which our nation was founded and by which it has shown itself exceptional in the history of the world. Indeed, such reasonable love for one's home leads to gratitude, and further improvement, and it also leads to prayer: as Scripture says, we should pray for our country's welfare, because in its welfare we will find our own (Jeremiah 29:7).

Now in light of this day I want to touch on a particular theme of central importance to us as Americans: freedom. What does freedom mean, and what kind of freedom do we strive for?

For some, freedom means the ability to do what we want, without external constraints. And to some degree this is right -- after all, those who have been deprived of freedoms, limited from exercising their basic rights, especially appreciate the ability to make choices and write their own life story. We all want and cherish this fundamental freedom to self-direct.

However, such a vision of freedom is limited. When it becomes absolutized, without any guidance at all, it can rebel against legitimate authority, and reason, leading to vice, conflict, and the degradation of society. "Who are you to tell me what to do?", we sometimes hear. Such "freedom of indifference," as it's been called -- indifferent to anything external to itself -- actually leads to moral slavery, habituation in doing only what we want, regardless of consequences, and often manifests itself in extreme individualism, viewing others' legitimate desires and needs as threats. This is not genuine freedom, but a kind of moral adolescence.

And so we need a fuller understanding of freedom: the freedom to flourish, "freedom for excellence." This is the freedom to act correctly, according to reason, respectful of my and others' true good. It thus enables growth in genuine moral character: prudence, justice, courage, and temperance, flourishing in all the ways a human being should.

So how can we grow in such freedom -- freedom "for" the good, rather than simply "from" constraint? And how, especially in a fallen world, when we find ourselves tempted, and morally "weak," as St. Paul says today?

Well first of all just laws can help. By serving as moral guides, basic rules for our choices, just laws distinguish actions which serve the common good from those which do not. Although they cannot cover every circumstance, and need to be applied by our reason, such laws help society avoid grave threats to its good and develop the basic virtues essential to its flourishing. Laws against theft, for example, help foster justice in ownership and respect for others' property; while laws against perjury, likewise, enable the truth to be told and respected in court.

But as we know, laws can often be unjust -- based on error and leading to societal corruption. One need only think of Roe vs. Wade, for example, which has led to over 60 million deaths in the U.S. since its passing: such a law, passed under the guise of "freedom to choose," is intrinsically evil by actually encouraging the choice to destroy innocent human life. This is good for no one. No wonder, then, we can never support such a law, either as Christians, or as people of good will, but instead might exert every reasonable effort to undo such injustice, and work for the common good.

Fortunately, faith and reason can come to our aid. The sincere search for wisdom, human and divine, shows the error of such laws, and calls for our serious engagement in civil policy, charitable organizations, and education. Faithful Catholic voters, lawyers, and pregnancy centers do such good work in these respects, but then we also need to take seriously what is taught in our Catholic and public systems of education. What are children learning in our schools? Do they study the classics, the greatest minds and authors, or are they learning mere fads and ideologies? Is the emphasis on what is new, simply because new, or on what is true, because true?

Continued at top of next page

But most importantly we have God's grace to help us grow in perfect freedom. As St. Paul says, God's grace "perfects" our moral "weakness," healing and strengthening us to actually do what is right. This supernatural source of renewal in our lives saves us from the discouragement that comes from trying to achieve perfection on our own -- a project that often ends only in settling for mediocrity. It is precisely in the midst of our weaknesses that find this power of God, He who alone can enable us to truly strive for perfection.

Paul uses the analogy of an athlete to speak of this graced process (1 Cor 9:24-26; Phil 2:16; etc.). Like an athlete who practices day in and day out, choosing to act again and again according to the rules of the game, and thus becomes more and more capable of playing the sport well, a person who acts upon reason and faith, doing what is right and just, becomes habituated to perceiving what is best in every moment, and more and more capable of doing it; he or she becomes free to act well. And as an athlete also needs to care for his or her body with proper nutrition, so a person who receives Christ's grace, through prayer and the sacraments, finds healing and strength to better accomplish what must be done. By contrast, an athlete who does not follow the rules, practice, or nourish his or her body appropriately, will ultimately find him or herself unable to do what he wants; he will not be free to excel.

And so Paul also calls this virtuous life "slavery": "slavery to Christ" (Romans 1:1; Romans 6:22, etc.). It sounds odd, but his point is this: when we become habituated in virtue, with the help of God's grace, we begin to want nothing else but to always do what is right and just, courageous, temperate, and prudent-- to always act and think with Christ. In this sense, we become "enslaved" to the good, to God Himself, living and dwelling within us, disposed to always do His will.

So what do we want? Which kind of freedom? Today, in the face of many challenges, only "freedom for excellence" will do. This is the freedom of Christ, the saints, and Our Lady -- she who always said "yes" to the Lord. May Our Immaculate Mother train us in true freedom, that we might as a country might always choose life.

God Bless,
Fr. Tim

Check out our website for this month's Share Food Menu (<https://ascensionbowie.org/share-food-menu>) and Registration for Vacation Bible School (ascensionbowie.org/vacation-bible-school-2021)!



**Congratulations to our raffle winner,
St. Vincent DePaul!**

PRAYERS FOR OUR SICK

Francis Barnes, Mary Ann Boyer, Mary Burton, Laura Chesnick, Rosita Dietrich, Cynthia Graham, Larry Hudson, James Kaufman Jr., Beverlee Lee, Ida Mullikin, Jean Mosby, Terrence O'Brien, Jr., Earl Perry, Norma Perry, Norma Raffaele, Geralyn Roberson, Mickey Ryan, Barbara Shipp, Doreen Darzinski, Bert Nemeth, Becky Goodman, Irene Lloyd, and Shirley Mackessy.

Fall Sports: Registration for CYO fall sports is now open! The official season will begin in August, but please register today to claim a spot on the team!

Soccer – early registration is \$120/player for 10U, 12U, and 14U; \$100/player for 7U and 8U (child's age as of Sep 1, 2020 determines level) – if you have questions please contact Candace Walls, Soccer Commissioner @ candace.walls@gmail.com

Cross Country – 8-14U (child's age as of Sep 1, 2020 determines level) – fees: \$85/runner for early registration– if you have questions please contact Megan Bogley, Cross Country Commissioner @ m_bogley@hotmail.com

Visit www.stpiusbowiecyo.com and click Sports Pilot to register.

CYO (Catholic Youth Organization) is a volunteer organization and we can't do it without you! Please consider coaching one of our many teams or contact us if you'd like to get involved! It's a great experience! Please note that all coaches and volunteers must be Virtus certified. Coaches should contact the designated commissioner regarding additional requirements. <https://stpiusbowiecyo.com/contact-us/>

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