

P.O. Box 1227  
580 Main Street  
Westhampton Beach, NY 11978

**Church of the  
IMMACULATE  
CONCEPTION**

Website: [iccwhb.org](http://iccwhb.org)  
Parish email: [parishoffice@iccwhb.org](mailto:parishoffice@iccwhb.org)  
FB: [www.facebook.com/iccwhb](https://www.facebook.com/iccwhb)  
YouTube: [www.youtube.com/@iccwhb](https://www.youtube.com/@iccwhb)

A background image of several pink orchids with yellow centers, arranged in a cluster. The flowers are in various stages of bloom, with some showing the intricate patterns on their petals.

*"Peace  
be with you.  
As the  
Father  
has sent me,  
so I send you."*

*John 20:19-31*

**SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER**  
**April 27, 2025**

## STAFF

**Rev. Kenneth Grooms, Pastor**

Deacon Joseph Byrne  
Deacon Mark Herrmann

Shawn Pinson, Sacristan  
Bobby Peterson, Music Director  
Donna Cosme, Director of Religious Education  
Anne Dean, Assistant to Director of Religious Ed  
Linda Geoghan, Parish Secretary  
Juan Vicente, Maintenance Manager

**Parish Office Hours:**

Monday through Thursday  
9:00am to 5:00pm

**CLOSED Friday, Saturday, Sunday, & Holidays**

**Parish Office** 631-288-1423  
**Fax** 631-288-5498  
**parishoffice@icewhb.org**

**Religious Education** 631-288-4188  
**Fax** 631-288-8215  
**religioused@iccwhb.org**

**Queen of Apostles, Regional School 631-878-1033**

# Celebration of the Eucharist

## Saturday

**5:00pm Vigil Mass**

## Sunday

8:00am, 9:30am, 11:00am  
6:00pm (Spanish Mass)

## Daily Mass

8:00am Monday through Thursday  
12:00pm Friday  
The Rosary is recited immediately after daily Mass

## Holy Days

**Vigil @ 7:00pm (Spanish Mass)**  
**Day @ 8:00am, 12:00pm, & 7:00pm**

## First Saturday Mass

Due to an issue with scheduling availability, we are no longer able to offer the First Saturday Mass each month.

## Eucharistic Adoration

**The FIRST FRIDAYS** (Novena & silent adoration to Sacred Heart) of each month at 12:30pm and the **LAST MONDAYS** of each month at 7:00pm in the Church.

## Confessions

**Every Saturday 4:00pm to 4:45pm**

## PARISH TRUSTEES

Beth Hard & Linda O'Brien

## PARISH COUNCIL

Michael Berdinka, Tom Day, Lori Francescani,  
Lisa Guzman, Tara Hudson, Verna Merkel,  
& Amabilia Estrada Ruiz

## PARISH FINANCE COMMITTEE

Kevin Dwyer, Beth Hard, Daily Hill,  
Christine Lennon, Linda O'Brien, Scott O'Brien,  
Joe Sala, & Michael Strebel

**MARRIAGES:** Arrangements should be made at least 1 year in advance. Marriage dates may be made only with the priest after he interviews the couple. Please call the Parish Office to set up an appointment. Pre- Cane classes are required.

**BAPTISMS:** Parents are required to attend one evening class before Baptism; and are encouraged to attend class during pregnancy. Baptismal class is held on the 1<sup>st</sup> Wednesday of January, March, May, July, September, and November. To register for Baptism, please contact the Parish Office.

## SACRAMENT OF ANOINTING THE SICK:

Emergency calls for the Sacraments for the seriously ill may be made any time of the day or night, every day of the year. The Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick will also be celebrated every second Friday of the month at the 12:00pm Mass. All those who are seriously ill, including those preparing for surgery or a hospital stay, are invited to receive the Sacrament.

## SCRIPTURE READINGS

**Monday:** Is 7:10-14, 8:10; Ps 40:7-11; Heb 10:4-10;  
Lk 1:26-38  
**Tuesday:** Acts 4:32-37; Ps 93:1-2, 5; Jn 3:7b-15  
**Wednesday:** Acts 5:17-26; Ps 34:2-9; Jn 3:16-21  
**Thursday:** Acts 5:27-33; Ps 34:2, 9, 17-20;  
Jn 3:31-36  
**Friday:** Acts 5:34-42; Ps 27:1, 4, 13-14; Jn 6:1-15  
**Saturday:** Acts 6:1-7; Ps 33:1-2, 4-5, 18-19;  
Jn 6:16-21  
**Sunday:** Acts 5:27-32, 40b-41; Ps 30:2, 4-6, 11-13;  
Rv 5:11-14; Jn 21:1-19 [1-14]

## TODAY'S READINGS

**Acts 5:12-16:** Peter's faith in Jesus enables him to work signs and wonders.  
**Psalms 118:** "Give thanks to the Lord for he is good, his love is everlasting."  
**Revelation 1:9-11a, 12-13, 17-19:** He is the first and the last, the one who lives.  
**John 20:19-31:** How blessed are those who have not seen but have believed.

Our readings challenge us to recognize the risen Lord's presence. In Acts, people from all around Jerusalem recognize the Lord's healing powers working through Peter, the disciple he left as head of the early church. John, the author of Revelation, recognizes the Lord in his visions. Thomas only recognizes the risen Lord when he sees him in the flesh but then believes at once. Let us marvel at the strong faith of these early Christians.

## MASS ATTENDANCE

DATE	5pm	8am	9:30am	11am	6pm	TOTAL
03/23/25	140	163	119	120	190	<b>732</b>
03/30/25	162	158	194	148	225	<b>887</b>
04/06/25	129	139	120	181	100	<b>669</b>
04/13/25	145	188	168	210	275	<b>986</b>

## WEEKLY COLLECTIONS

DATE	COLLECTION	AMOUNT
<b>04/06/2025</b>	<b>Weekly Collection</b>	<b>\$8,475.00</b>
04/07/2024	Weekly Collection	\$6,927.00
<b>04/13/2025</b>	<b>Weekly Collection</b>	<b>\$8,907.00</b>
04/14/2024	Weekly Collection	\$5,765.00
<b>04/20/2025</b>	<b>Easter Collection</b>	<b>\$24,751.00</b>
03/31/2024	Easter Collection	\$19,043.00

**Thank you for your continuous support!**

## MASSES FOR THE WEEK

**Saturday April 26**  
5:00pm The People of the Parish (Fr. Peter)  
**Sunday April 27**  
8:00am Erin Hines (Fr. Ken)  
9:30am Richard Hill (Msgr. Mirro)  
11:00am Peter Gambino (Fr. Ken)  
6:00pm Poor Souls in Purgatory (Fr. Jose)  
**Monday April 28**  
9:00am Christopher Arsenault  
**Tuesday April 29**  
9:00am Frank Joseph Tumminello  
**Wednesday April 30**  
9:00am (Guild Mass) Intentions of Fran Kasman  
**Thursday May 1**  
9:00am Intentions of the Dempsey & Geraghty Families  
**Friday May 2**  
12:00pm Kathleen Tolan  
**Saturday May 3**  
4:00pm **Confessions**  
5:00pm Louis & Mary Ansalone (Fr. Ken)  
**Sunday May 4**  
8:00am The People of the Parish (Msgr. Mirro)  
9:30am Deceased Members of the Franski Family (Fr. Peter)  
11:00am Anthony Miccio (Fr. Ken)  
6:00pm Poor Souls in Purgatory (Fr. Jose)

## CATHOLIC MINISTRIES APPEAL

### The 2025 Catholic Ministries Appeal

The 2025 Catholic Ministries Appeal is happening in our parish and in parishes across the Diocese. Please give prayerful consideration to help fund the essential ministries and services supported by this appeal.

Goal	\$ 62,100.00
Total Pledged	\$ 17,920.00
Payments Received	\$ 14,952.00

Donors: 46 % of Goal: 28.86%

The parish will receive 20% of the goal once all pledged payments are received. The parish will receive an additional 80% of monies pledged & received over goal.

## eGIVING OPPORTUNITIES

eGiving makes it easy to give, anytime, anywhere. To continue lifesaving ministries and outreach in our parish community, we depend on generous online donations from our church family. We prayerfully invite you to use eGiving from your computer, smartphone, or tablet to set up a recurring donation or make a one-time gift.



### FAITH DIRECT

Enrolling with Faith Direct will provide Immaculate Conception with consistent support and simplify your giving without the use of envelopes. Visit:

<https://membership.faithdirect.net/NY66>

Thank you for your continued support!





There is an urgent need to see once again that faith is a light, for once the flame of faith dies out, all other lights begin to dim. The light of faith is unique, since it is capable of illuminating every aspect of human existence. A light this powerful cannot come from ourselves but from a more primordial source: in a word, it must come from God.

Faith is born of an encounter with the living God who calls us and reveals his love, a love which precedes us and upon which we can lean for security and for building our lives. Transformed by this love, we gain fresh vision, new eyes to see; we realize that it contains a great promise of fulfillment, and that a vision of the future opens up before us.

Faith, received from God as a supernatural gift, becomes a light for our way, guiding our journey through time. On the one hand, it is a light coming from the past, the light of the foundational memory of the life of Jesus which revealed his perfectly trustworthy love, a love capable of triumphing over death. Yet since Christ has risen and draws us beyond death, faith is also a light coming from the future and opening before us vast horizons which guide us beyond our isolated selves towards the breadth of communion. We come to see that faith does not dwell in shadow and gloom; it is a light for our darkness.

~ Pope Francis  
From Lumen Fidei (2013),  
the first encyclical of his pontificate  
Photo credit © Alamy

***Eternal rest grant unto him, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon him.***

As we pray for the repose of his soul, we commend him to the mercy of the Lord,  
whom he loved and served, in the hope that he will see him face to face.

# Remembering POPE FRANCIS

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

As we mourn the death of our Pope Francis, let us celebrate his life by recalling his radical Christ-like poverty and humility and call to be merciful to all.

Our Church of the Immaculate Conception will celebrate a **Memorial Mass on Tuesday, April 29 at 7:00 PM in the Church.**

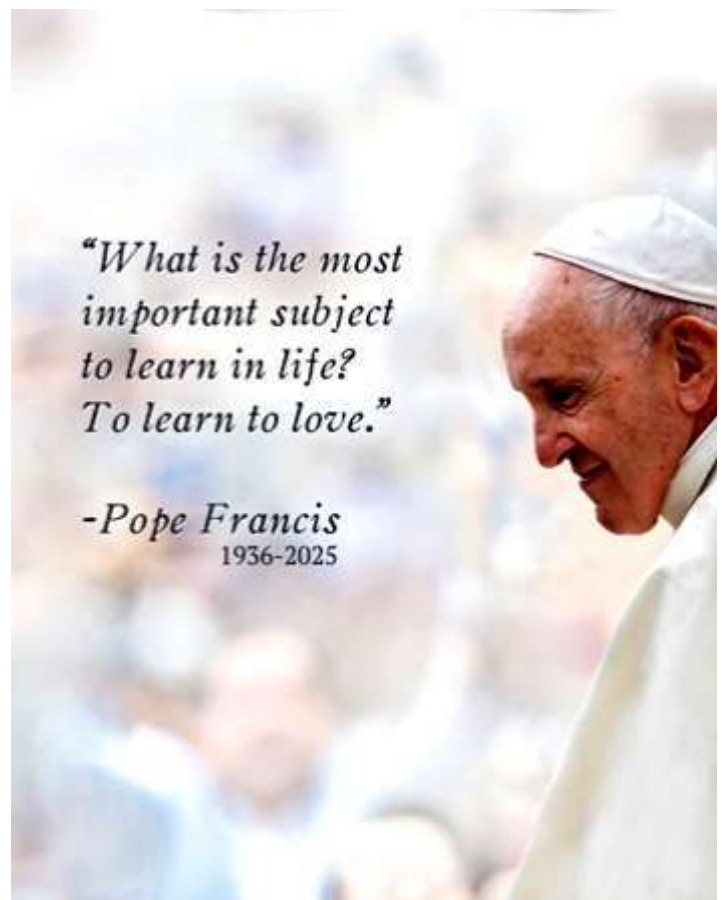
All are welcome...just as Pope Francis was open to everyone, including the poor, the homeless, homosexuals, illegal immigrants, etc.

**Eternal rest grant to him, O Lord,  
and let perpetual light shine upon him.  
May he rest in peace. Amen.**

God bless you,  
Fr. Ken

Tuesday,  
April 29<sup>th</sup>  
7:00pm

Immaculate  
Conception  
Church





DIOCESE OF ROCKVILLE CENTRE  
OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

Easter 2025

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Happy Easter to you and your families in this Jubilee Year of Hope!

Our celebration of Easter rekindles our hope each year.

The Tomb is empty! Jesus is Risen!

A wealthy man and a member of the Sanhedrin, St. Joseph of Arimathea is one of those Gospel characters with a very brief but very important role.

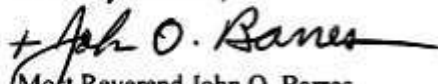
In John 19:38-42, we see that after Jesus' Crucifixion, Joseph of Arimathea asks Pilate for permission to take away Our Lord's Body. This was a bold and courageous act of faith from a man "seeking the Kingdom of God." (Mark 15:43)

Joseph and Nicodemus together place our Lord's Body reverently in linen cloths prepared with myrrh, aloes and spices: "Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden a new tomb where no one had ever been laid. So because of the Jewish day of Preparation, as the tomb was close at hand, they laid Jesus there."

In his commentary on the Gospel of Matthew, Fr. Simeon Leiva-Merikakis gives tribute to Joseph of Arimathea. He writes: "And how can we fail to do homage to Joseph of Arimathea? In performing a very humane corporal work of mercy by seeking out and burying the corpse of his beloved Teacher, Joseph becomes for all time a living icon of the eternal Father himself, stooping with compassion to enfold within his throbbing breast the mangled body of his beloved, Son, whom he himself handed over to sinners out of love for mankind. At long last, the Son of God on earth has fallen into the hands, not of a sinner, but of a just and compassionate man! Joseph of Arimathea enacts the justice and love of God himself."<sup>1</sup>

As we celebrate Easter Sunday, the Easter Octave, Divine Mercy Sunday and the Easter Season, let us remember and ask the intercession of the great Joseph of Arimathea who prepared the Tomb of Christ and the Body of Christ with such sensitive care and compassion, such faith, courage and reverence. The Tomb is Empty! He is Risen!

Sincerely in Christ,

  
Most Reverend John O. Barres  
Bishop of Rockville Centre

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<sup>1</sup> Erasmo Leiva-Merikakis, 564. *Fire of Mercy, Heart of the Word: Meditations on the Gospel According to St. Matthew.*





DIOCESE OF ROCKVILLE CENTRE  
OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

Pascua 2025

Queridos Hermanos y Hermanas en Cristo,

¡Feliz Pascua para ustedes y sus familias en este Año Jubilar de la Esperanza! Nuestra celebración de la Pascua reaviva cada año nuestra esperanza.

¡La Tumba está vacía! ¡Jesús ha resucitado!

Un hombre adinerado y miembro del Sanedrín, San José de Arimatea es uno de esos personajes del Evangelio con un papel muy breve pero muy importante.

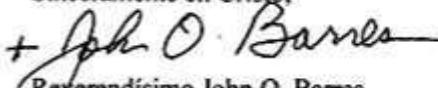
En Juan 19:38-42, vemos que después de la Crucifixión de Jesús, José de Arimatea pide permiso a Pilato para llevarse el Cuerpo de Nuestro Señor. Este fue un acto audaz y valiente de fe de parte de un hombre que “esperaba el Reino de Dios.” (Marcos 15:43)

José y Nicodemo juntos colocan el Cuerpo de nuestro Señor con reverencia en lienzos de lino preparados con mirra, áloe y especias: “En el lugar donde fue crucificado había un huerto, y en el huerto un sepulcro nuevo en el que aún no habían puesto a nadie. Como era el día de la Preparación de los judíos, y el sepulcro estaba cerca, pusieron allí a Jesús.”

En su comentario al Evangelio de Mateo, el P. Simeon Leiva-Merikakis rinde homenaje a José de Arimatea. Escribe: “¿Y cómo no rendir homenaje a José de Arimatea? Al realizar una obra de misericordia corporal muy humana, al buscar y enterrar el cadáver de su amado Maestro, José se convierte para siempre en un icono viviente del Padre eterno, inclinándose con compasión para acoger en su pecho palpitante el cuerpo destrozado de su amado Hijo, a quien él mismo entregó a los pecadores por amor a la humanidad. ¡Por fin, el Hijo de Dios en la tierra ha caído en manos, no de un pecador, sino de un hombre justo y compasivo! José de Arimatea representa la justicia y el amor del mismo Dios.”<sup>1</sup>

Al celebrar el Domingo de Pascua, la Octava de Pascua, el Domingo de la Divina Misericordia y el Tiempo Pascual, recordemos y pidamos la intercesión del gran José de Arimatea, quien preparó la Tumba de Cristo y el Cuerpo de Cristo con tan delicado cuidado y compasión, con tanta fe, valentía y reverencia. ¡La Tumba está vacía! ¡Él ha resucitado!

Sinceramente en Cristo,

  
Reverendísimo John O. Barres  
Obispo de Rockville Centre

1

Erasmó Leiva-Merikakis, 564. *Fuego de Misericordia, Corazón de la Palabra: Meditaciones sobre el Evangelio Según San Mateo.*

# EASTER BLESSINGS

at  
Immaculate Conception Church



Blessing of  
the Easter  
baskets and  
foods



Teddy with Alajandra on Easter



Easter was standing  
room only at all  
Masses!



## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

**Religious Education Office Hours are:**  
Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday  
9am to 5pm  
631-288-4188

Congratulations to the following parishioner students who received Honor Roll certificates for the Third Quarter at St. Anthony's High School:

Lily Connor  
Jaiel Lindo-Jean Louis  
Christian Pinto

## SAINTS AND SPECIAL OBSERVANCES

**Sunday:** Second Sunday of Easter (or Sunday of Divine Mercy)

**Monday:** St. Peter Chanel; St. Louis Grignon

**Tuesday:** St. Catherine of Sienna

**Wednesday:** St. Pius V

**Thursday:** St. Joseph the Worker

**Friday:** St. Athanasius

**Saturday:** Sts. Philip and James

## MEDITATION with Deacon Joe

Tuesdays at 2pm in the Parish Center  
Try this spiritual practice, it will surprise you!

## PRAY FOR OUR SICK

Aurora Antunes, Deacon Joseph Byrne,  
Kevin Chisholm, Rev. Simplicio D'Sousa,  
Alexa Dalton, Brian Dalton, Lisa Falcone,  
Blythe Fickenwirth, Richard Hewes,  
Young Katie Kennedy, Rosanna, Daniel Standing  
& Patricia Tolan.

Please call the Parish Office (631-288-1423) to add/delete a name to the sick list. This list will be cleared occasionally.

## PRAY FOR OUR MILITARY

Ethan Bentley (Navy)  
Julia Blake (Navy)  
Joseph Ferraro III (Air Force)  
Thomas Hellman (USSF)  
Lt. Col. William Robesch  
RJ Ruggiero (Navy)  
Lt. Cameron Worden  
Lt. Matthew Worden (Navy)

Please contact the Rectory @631-288-1423 to add a loved one to the military list

## PARISH SOCIAL MINISTRY



### FOOD PANTRY NEEDS

Toiletries (shampoo & soap), Juice Boxes, Cereal, Pasta, Tuna, Peanut Butter, Jelly, Hearty Soup, & Condiments.

**The Pantry is in DIRE NEED of:**  
Peanut Butter, Jelly, Soap, Shampoo, Toothpaste, Deodorant, & Size 6 Diapers.

## REFLECTIONS

### Living Stewardship

Today, on Divine Mercy Sunday, pray the Divine Mercy chaplet at 3pm. You can learn more about this beautiful, powerful devotion at <https://www.thedivinemercy.org/message/devotions/pray-the-chaplet>.



### Bulletin Reflection

The Sunday after Easter Sunday is known as Divine Mercy Sunday. On this day we remember, honor, and turn to Jesus' wonderful mercy.

## PRAYER REQUESTS

There is a great power in prayer. It is our lifeline to God. Through it we communicate with God, and people are strengthened, helped, and made whole.

Do you know of some concern, or of some person with a special need for whom we ought to pray? We have 29 prayer warriors praying, please call Charles Schmidt at 631-288-4243 and leave a message with your prayer request.

## QUESTION OF THE WEEK



Where and when do I recognize Christ's wounds in the body of Christ? What can I do to heal those wounds?

## TEDDY'S CORNER



## INTRODUCTION TO THE EUCHARISTIC PRAYER

Through this sacred meal, we once again remember the saving death and resurrection of Christ. With hearts filled with Easter joy, we offer our prayer of praise and thanksgiving.



## INTRODUCTION TO THE LITURGY OF THE DAY

In 1931, a young Polish nun named Faustina Kowalska saw Jesus appear with rays of mercy emanating from his heart. He asked that an image of his divine mercy be venerated on the Sunday after Easter Sunday, which had long been associated with the final day of the Octave of Easter. On April 28, 1935—nearly exactly ninety years ago—Divine Mercy Sunday was celebrated for the first time with a completed painting of her vision of the merciful Lord. In 2000, Saint John Paul II decreed that this feast be made official worldwide.

## HELPING YOUR NEIGHBOR

If you truly want to help the soul of your neighbor, you should approach God first with all your heart.

Ask God simply to fill you with charity . . . with it you can accomplish what you desire.

~ St. Vincent Ferrer

## SACRAMENTALS

### BREAD & WINE, SANCTUARY LAMP, & ALTAR FLOWERS

To arrange a sacramental in loving memory of or for the intentions of your loved one, please visit the Parish Office.

Available Dates:

**Sanctuary Lamp:** May 5, 12, 19, 26

**Bread & Wine:** May 5, 12, 19, 26

**Altar Flowers:** May 11, 18, 25, June 1, 8, 15, 22, 29

Please contact the Parish Office for more information.

## TREASURES FROM OUR TRADITION



We return to our reflections on the rites of marriage with a brief consideration of reforms from the Council of Trent. When the Protestant Reformation took hold, the fairly recent achievements of the Church in regard to the sacrament of marriage were reviewed with a critical, reforming eye. In general, Protestants returned to an earlier view that marriage was a civil matter, although some said that the civil society had to be in harmony with Christian teaching. In the Catholic Church, the Council of Trent took the question up in 1563, and decided to shore up its teaching on the sacramentality of marriage. They identified many threats to this, including secret marriages and easy divorce. So they enacted laws that still govern our practice today: to be valid, marriage consent must be exchanged in the presence of a priest and two witnesses. Ever since Trent, marriages must also be announced three weeks in advance to the community, and recorded in a register. In some places in the world, the “banns” are still posted in the public square. In the United States, parishes sometimes publish the “banns” in the bulletin.

Anyone who has ever watched a soap opera has seen the standard scene of a minister announcing gravely, “If there is anyone here present who sees any reason why these two should not be married . . .” This bit of drama has no place in the Catholic liturgy, but survives among Protestants who broke with us before Trent edited this cliff-hanger out of our public prayer.



## WORLDWIDE MARRIAGE ENCOUNTER

Marriage encounter couples present talks about God's desire, about healing and forgiveness, and other tools to help enrich your relationship. Check out a Worldwide Marriage Encounter (WWME.org). A weekend in Huntington is planned for June 27<sup>th</sup>-29<sup>th</sup>.

Worldwide Marriage Encounter sponsors a variety of in-person and virtual marriage experiences, some on weekends and some on seven weekdays. Couples explore their relationship with each other, God, and the Church. Registration is limited; there is a \$100 application fee. For more information or to apply, call Kevin & Regina Hickson at 516-554-3835 or <https://wwmenyli.org/>.



# Easter Flowers



Our beautiful Easter Flowers have been donated in  
loving memory of our deceased or  
for the intentions of our living loved ones.

(Envelopes can be found around the Church if you wish to make a donation)

Mary & John Barnett  
Intentions of the Bennett Family  
Mary & Anthony Bifulco  
Antonia & Thomas Bobrak  
Walter & Rosalie Chornoma  
Geralynn M. Cook  
Natalie Cosumano  
Pellegrino Cosumano  
Intentions of the Crayne Family Moms  
Crayne Family Dads  
John & Dorothy Cyrta  
Intentions of the Cyrta Family  
Nora, Peter Sr., & Peter Jr. Frano  
Col. Francis & Catherine Gabreski  
Vincenza Giardina  
Intentions of the Golfo Family  
Joseph Grosseto  
Pat & Donald Hefner  
Cody Hoyle  
Maria Ingrassia  
Andrew Jordan  
John & Sophia Karkut  
Intentions of the Karpovik Family  
Anne & Lawrence Kearney  
Intentions of the Keary Family  
William, Mary, & Billy Ketcham  
Chester Krasnopolski  
Sophie Krasnopolski

Intentions of J. Brent Lynch  
Deceased Family of M & I  
Rev. Thomas Maloney  
Intentions of Noel Markey  
Josefa, Benedot, Gerwazy,  
& Bernard Michno  
Intentions of the Montpetit Family  
Antonetta Morrone  
Francesco Morrone  
Intentions of the Parlato Family  
Jim Penrose  
Howard Petersen  
Virginia Petersen  
Joan Powers  
Goncalo Rego  
Intentions of M/M Martin Ryder  
Intentions of Mark & Delia Schulte  
Intentions of M/M Brian Sommer  
Karen & Roger Stevens  
Henriqueta Stoftil  
Intentions of the Tocko Family  
Kathleen Tolan  
Intentions of the Tolan Family  
Edward Truskolaski  
Carol Vera  
Intentions of the Verdon Family  
Intentions of M/M Trey Wilder  
Werayla Wilezek





# Is There Any Reason I Shouldn't Do Yoga?

By Rev. Tadeusz Pacholczyk, Ph.D.

In the United States, there are roughly 30 million practitioners of yoga, alongside an expanding industry providing yoga-related products and services, classes, workshops and equipment. But many Christians ask whether Christians should be practicing yoga. Are there any spiritual issues raised by the practice?

The concerns regarding yoga largely revolve around whether one has a partial or a full understanding of what yoga is. A partial understanding of yoga is likely to support the notion that yoga is merely a physical posturing and stretching regimen with deep breathing intended to relieve anxiety and stress. A fuller understanding of yoga, however, recognizes that it is a spirituality, extending beyond mere exercises to certain aspects of Eastern spirituality ranging from meditation, to mantras, to physical posturing and symbolic hand gestures designed to “awaken the power of the divine,” where “divine” is often construed and pursued in a self-referential way.

Yoga is a philosophical and spiritual practice developed in India and has its roots in Hinduism. It is often associated with Eastern spirituality, even if it is not always practiced in an explicitly religious way.

Certain yoga traditions still retain strongly spiritual or religious components. Some yoga teachers or studios, additionally, may incorporate elements of Hinduism or other Eastern spiritual traditions into their practice, which can make it difficult to separate yoga from religion.

Dave Fetcho, formerly of the Ananda Marga Yoga Society, has argued, “Physical yoga, according to its classical definitions, is inheritably and functionally incapable of being separated from Eastern religious metaphysics.”

It is precisely those metaphysical and spiritual beliefs that raise concerns for faithful Christians. The Christian faith differs in fundamental ways from Eastern religious beliefs; ultimately, the two perspectives make highly divergent claims about the nature of God, the human person, their relationship, and the person's ultimate destiny.

One example involves the notion of “kundalini.” Yoga scholar Hans Rieker declares, “Kundalini [is] the mainstay of all yoga practices.” Researcher John White describes a problematic “elevation” of man and an intense focus on man himself through the kundalini experience, which he describes as something akin to “divinizing” a person: “The word itself may not appear...but the concept is there...as a key to attaining godlike stature.”

A popular image of kundalini is of a serpent slithering as divine energy from the lower regions of the spine through all the subtle body centers and making its way to the crown. This Kundalini energy is portrayed as an awakening of a dormant spirit, said to be coiled at the base of the spine waiting to be released through yoga.

Swami Vivekananda summarizes the experience of kundalini as follows: “When awakened through the practice of spiritual disciplines, it rises through the spinal column, passes through the various centers, and at last reaches the brain, whereupon the yogi experiences samadhi, or total absorption in the Godhead.”

In describing this kundalini awakening of the coiled snake energy in himself, Gopi Krishna writes: “It was variable for many years, painful, obsessive.... I have passed through almost all the stages of...mediumistic, psychotic, and other types of mind; for some time I was hovering between sanity and insanity.”

For Christians this may call to mind the biblical and cunning serpent who flattered our first parents by assuring them that through their disobedience they would “be like God” (Gen 3:5). The pursuit of kundalini through yoga can be mentally and spiritually dangerous, as these practices induce altered states of consciousness that can render practitioners more susceptible or available to demonic deception.

Cont'd ...

Approaching the question from another angle, the meditative dimensions of yoga also do not appear to be compatible with authentic Christian belief and prayer, which is a personal, communitarian, and transcendent, seeking of the person of Christ.

Yoga embodies an impersonal approach which concentrates on the interior self. For example, a common mantra repeated in yoga is "So'ham," which roughly translates, "I am the universal self." As noted in a 1989 Vatican *Letter To The Bishops of The Catholic Church on Some Aspects of Christian Meditation*, there is the risk that such forms of meditation "can create a kind of rut, imprisoning the person in a spiritual privatism" that excludes or locks out any real openness to the transcendent God.

Catholics ought to avoid yoga because of these many significant spiritual concerns. Yet some say that yoga helps them physically and psychologically. Jenny Dubay, a fitness professional and former avid yoga practitioner, has pointed out how we can get the benefits of yoga-like physical activity without the risks or harms.

"Catholics," she said, "can and should stretch their bodies. There are many stretching techniques and movements that help enhance flexibility, release muscle tension after an intense workout, and promote relaxation. There's no need to engage in a yoga practice in order to gain these benefits."

Among the alternatives to yoga are ballet, water ballet, simple stretching, Pilates, Barre classes (which uses modified ballet and Pilates movements), or low-impact or water aerobics, as well as newer approaches which rely on explicitly Christian spiritual angles, such as PrayerMotion (developed by a Catholic Physician who claims its roots come from Benedictine monastic practices), PraiseMoves, Pietra Fitness, SoulCore, and Catholic Fit.

*Rev. Tadeusz Pacholczyk, Ph.D. earned his doctorate in neuroscience from Yale and did post-doctoral work at Harvard. He is a priest of the diocese of Fall River, MA, and serves as Senior Ethicist at The National Catholic Bioethics Center in Philadelphia. See [www.ncbcenter.org](http://www.ncbcenter.org) and [www.fathertad.com](http://www.fathertad.com).*

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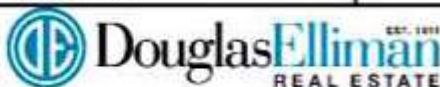
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