

The Roman Catholic Parishes of
St. Margaret Mary, Herscher
St. James the Apostle, Irwin
Sacred Heart, Goodrich

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

DECEMBER 9-10, 2023



Weekend Masses:

St. Margaret Mary	Sat. 5:00 pm	Sun. 10:30 am
Sacred Heart	Sun. 7:30 am	
St. James	Sun. 9:00 am	

Confessions:

St. Margaret Mary	Sat. 4:15 pm
Sacred Heart	Sun. 7:05-7:20 am
St. James	Sun. 8:35-8:50 am

Church Mailing Address: 207 E. 5th Street Herscher, IL 60941 **Phone:** 815-426-2550

Quotable: "Sin is the wound, repentance is the medicine."

—Saint John Chrysostom

December 16-17, 2023

Third Sunday of Advent

Liturgical Schedule	St. Margaret Mary Saturday, Dec. 16 5:00 pm	Sacred Heart Sunday, Dec. 17 7:30 am	St. James Sunday, Dec. 17 9:00 am	St. Margaret Mary Sunday, Dec. 17 10:30 am
Celebrant	Fr. Ron	Fr. Ron Deacon Ron	Fr. Ron	Fr. Ron
Ushers	Youth Mass	David Kirkpatrick Daryl Ferris	Youth Mass	Marko Smolkovich Brent Fulton Erik Wheeler Corinn Wheeler
Lector	Youth Mass	Darlene Cipcich	Youth Mass	Corinn Wheeler
Servers	Youth Mass		Youth Mass	Sydney Weldon
Greeters	Youth Mass		Greeter— C. Forsythe R. Leader—Peerboltes	Kim Smicker Mary McDonald

Mass Intentions for the Week

Monday, December 11 (SMM)

8:00 am +Bill Koerner (Sheila Koerner)

Tuesday, December 12 (SH)

8:00 am (SH) +Duane Denault (Jackie Cross)

Wednesday, December 13 (SJ)

8:00 am Intention of Rita Thiesen (Pam Cuchiara)

Friday, December 15

8:00 am (SMM) +Dolores Fitch (Bill/Betty Kelch)

Saturday, December 16 (SMM)

5:00 pm +Anna Hildebrand and George Schmidt
(Mariann Lane)
+Sondra Hertz (Dan/Melinda Hogan)

Sunday, December 17

7:30 am +Chris Pristach (Joe/Rhonda Berns)
9:00 am (SJ) +Howard Nelson (Steve/Dena Coy)
+ Monica Behrends (Gene/Tom/Kathy O'Connor)

10:30am (SMM) For All the Parish Family

A Look Ahead

December 9-10—2nd Collection for Retired Religious
Sunday, Dec. 17—RE Pageant at St. James
Sat., January 6—CCW Deanery Joy in January

This is the 2nd Sunday of Advent. The second candle on the wreath represents the theme of "Prepare". We are to prepare our hearts and homes to receive Jesus at Christmas. John the Baptist called on Israel to prepare themselves for the coming of the Messiah.

Pastor— Fr. Ron Neitzke- 815-426-2550
Deacon – Ron Gagnon— rjgckg@aol.com
Home—815-933-4077

Parish Email – smm_sja_sh@yahoo.com
TriParish web page – www.triparishcatholics.org
Like us on Facebook triparishcatholic communities
Tri Parish Church office –Barb Riker 426-2550
Julie Bisaillon 426-2550

Bulletin – Debbie Jensen - 426-2550
debjen04@gmail.com

Religious Education –

St. MM – Jill Fulton jfulton.stmm@gmail.com
St. James – Carolyn Levyclevystjames@gmail.com
Sacred Heart – Rhonda Berns – 426-5015
Parish Nurse – Jackie Eberle – 815-421-4048
Prayer Line— SMM—Pat Wagner 815-592-0773
SMM -Janice 815-426-2574 Jdstreefarms@aol.com
St. James— Mary Offerman—602-670-8888 (call or text)

Collections Week of Dec. 2-3, 2023

St. Margaret Mary—\$2,220

St. James—\$2,246

Sacred Heart—\$896

Thank you for your generosity!

Gospel Shorts The Challenging Prophet for Advent

The Season of Advent and its purpose is sometimes lost amidst all the pre-Christmas activities that absorb our time. There is no one better than John the Baptist to recall to our minds what we are supposed to be about during these days.

John does this not only by his challenging words, but also because these very words disturb our sense of comfort and contentment in the way we are living. His words are directed specifically to the good — the religious people of his day and our day. We can't avoid the obvious message of repentance and changing our lives around as the proper approach to prepare for Christ's Coming. Advent should be that kind of season, as well as a season of hope, getting ready for the one who ultimately will be our Pardoner, our Hound of Heaven, our Lamb of God.

SAVE THE DATE December 17th after the 9am Mass

You are invited to join our religious education students for our

Christmas Pageant

Breakfast and Basket Raffle to Follow!!!

CASH Donations can be made through:

Venmo@Theresa-Goudie

or sent to St. James REP Attn. Carolyn Levy

If interested in donating a raffle basket, please reach out.

Call or text Terri G, (815) 685-0931, Tanhya O, (815) 530-4406

or Carolyn L (815) 474-9851



Parish News:

St. Margaret Mary—

- ◆ Please have wrapped Gift of Warmth gifts to Jackie or call 815-421-4048 by Dec 14th. Thank you supporting this great giving opportunity!.

St. James—

- ◆ Don't forget our Christmas Pageant of Dec. 17th following the 9am mass. It's a wonderful way to kick off the week preceding Christmas!
- ◆ Joy in January is on Saturday, January 6 at the Kankakee Country Club. Cost is \$35 and will be split between the CCW and the attendee. Please sign up by 12/4 if interested on the back bulletin board
- ◆ St. James Church Christmas cleaning and decoration will be on Monday, December 11 at 6 pm. All are invited to help!

Sacred Heart—

All Parishes—

- ◆ Next week I invite you to bring the baby Jesus from your nativity set to church for the blessing of the Bambinelli. This is another tradition to unite the celebration of Christmas with your family and your home. Also, we will be distributing the Oplatki at Mass next week and any remaining on the 4th Sunday of Advent.
- ◆ Joy in January will be held at the Kankakee Country Club on January 6, 2024. Reservation deadline is December 14, 2023. If you wish to attend, please contact your CCW president to RSVP.
- ◆ All Ministries—as we are making the Christmas/New Year's ministry assignments, if you know a mass that you would be at and available to serve in a ministry position, please drop that information in the collection basket or call the office. We would like to accommodate your schedule and still have all of our needs met. Thank you!
- ◆ Don't forget to pick up your offertory envelopes in each parish. If you don't find yours, please call the office.



Reflection First Commandment—God Comes First

The first principle of the covenant is simple to state but subtle in practice: God comes first. God comes first in our decisions and choices, in our emotions, in our attitudes, in our prayers, in our relationships. It means that for us nothing is to rank with God (Exodus 20: 23).

How can we cooperate with the Spirit's action to fulfill this principle in our hearts?

In our choices: When choosing an action, we figure time, money, the effects the decision will have, our family, our feelings. But do we ask what God might say? Do we seek God's guidance? Are we willing to do what God wants us to do?

We may not know specifically what God wants us to choose, but we do know what values God wants us to live by: love, kindness, honesty, respect for God's gifts. Recall a recent decision. Was God first in your process of choice? Or last?

Saint of the week: St. Damasus I (Dec. 11) was raised in a pious family; his father was a priest in Rome, Italy. Damasus served for a time as deacon in his father's church, Saint Laurence. As a priest he became an assistant to Pope Liberius. Chosen 37th pope in a disputed election in which a minority chose the anti-pope Ursinus. The two reigned simultaneously in Rome which eventually led to violence between their supporters and false accusations of Damasus having committed a crime.



His pontificate suffered from the rise of Arianism, and from several schisms including break-away groups in Antioch, Constantinople, Sardinia, and Rome. However, it was during Damasus's reign that Christianity was declared the religion of the Roman state. He enforced the 370 edict of Emperor Valentinian controlling gifts to prelates and opposed Arianism and Apollinarianism. He supported the 374 councils of Rome which decreed the valid books of the Bible, and the *Grand Council of*

Constantinople in 381 which condemned Arianism.

Economic patron of his secretary, Saint Jerome, commissioned him to make the translation of scripture now known as the Vulgate. Damasus restored catacombs, shrines, and the tombs of martyrs, and wrote poetry and metrical inscriptions about and dedicated to martyrs. They state that he would like to be buried in the catacombs with the early martyrs, but that the presence of one of his lowly status would profane such an august place. Ten of his letters, personal and pontifical, have survived.

Obscure saint of the week: : St. Sabinus of Piacenza (Dec. 11) was the Bishop of Piacenza, Italy. He was a friend of Saint Ambrose of Milan, he regularly read and commented on the first draft of Ambrose's writings. He was dispatched by Pope Saint Damasus I to Antioch to suppress the *Meletian Schism*. He attended the *Council of Aquileia* in 381.



The Sunday Gospel in Everyday

The good news of Jesus Christ—the Message!—begins here, following to the letter the scroll of the prophet Isaiah.

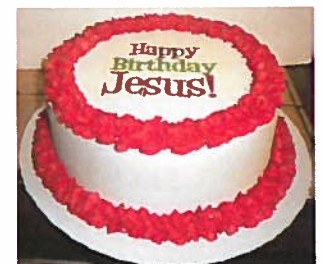
Watch closely: I'm sending my preacher ahead of you;
He'll make the road smooth for you.
Thunder in the desert!
Prepare for God's arrival!
Make the road smooth and straight!

John the Baptizer appeared in the wild, preaching a baptism of life-change that leads to forgiveness of sins. People thronged to him from Judea and Jerusalem and, as they confessed their sins, were baptized by him in the Jordan River into a changed life. John wore a camel-hair habit, tied at the waist with a leather belt. He ate locusts and wild field honey.

As he preached he said, "The real action comes next: The star in this drama, to whom I'm a mere stagehand, will change your life. I'm baptizing you here in the river, turning your old life in for a kingdom life. His baptism—a holy baptism by the Holy Spirit—will change you from the inside out" (*from Mark 1*).

Christmas Traditions

In asking you to consider having a Christmas centered on faith and family, I offer another activity for you to ponder. There is an old custom that may have begun in Germany where the family makes a birthday cake for Jesus. Recipes for this cake can be found at numerous sites online. This can be a great family activity to do with the kids or grandkids. In the early days of this tradition small toys, marbles, or coins were dropped into the cake batter before baking. In some traditions today a tiny baby Jesus is dropped into the batter. While baking the children are told the story of the birth of Jesus. Once the cake is finished baking and decorated a prayer is said and then it is cut into slices. In it considered good luck to have the slice with the tiny Jesus in it. While there are different versions of this cake, the white cake symbolizes the purity of Jesus, and the red frosting represents the blood Jesus would shed for the salvation of the world.



Catholic Snacks, Get fed
An Advent tradition that reveals Our Lord's humanity.
The Jesse Tree isn't just for kids.

Christ was a man.

Although we may know this, we often forget to consider the reality of it.

Christ was a man and He descended from a lineage of fallen, broken humans such as ourselves.

We are reminded of this profound reality each Christmas. At Mass on Christmas Eve, we read the genealogy of Jesus from the Gospel of Matthew. With each name and generation, we are reminded of the humanity of Our Lord, of His beautiful humility, and of our own roles in salvation history.



The beautiful truth of Our Lord's humanity is not something reserved for Christmas Mass. We should prayerfully consider it all throughout Advent. As we prepare for the coming of Our Lord, it is important to remember how God prepared for the coming of His Son through generations of men and women unknowingly aiding in His divine plan.

This is the beauty of a Jesse Tree! A traditional Advent practice, a Jesse Tree is a special tree (usually an actual tree or a paper tree) that visually recreates the genealogy of Jesus as presented in the Catholic Bible, beginning with Adam and Eve from Genesis through to the birth of the Baby Jesus in Bethlehem.

Each ancestor of Jesus featured on the Jesse Tree is represented by an easily-recognizable symbol. For example, Jacob is represented with a ladder ornament that recalls his vision of a ladder descending from heaven to earth. Each ornament is hung on the Jesse Tree.

The Jesse Tree is a great way for kids to learn their Bible stories and to help them understand how important every individual is and how they each have a role to play in salvation history.

However, it is also a beautiful reminder for Catholics of all ages to consider the gift of Our Lord's humanity.

If you don't have a Jesse Tree, it's not too late! Get creative and use a small Christmas tree, a sturdy branch from outside, or craft one out of paper or felt!

We also love these Salvation History Wooden Advent Blocks! An updated take on a classic Jesse Tree, these fun and interactive blocks tell the Biblical stories of salvation history while counting down the days till Christmas. This year, start a new beloved Advent tradition that will be sure to last generations!

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Mahalo from Catholic Charities Hawai'i Maui Relief Fund!

Each parish received a thank you letter for our donations sent to Catholic Charities in Maui after the devastating fires and loss of so many lives and livelihoods. The letter states:

Through your partnership, we are able to provide vital relief efforts in recovery through services such as financial assistance, mental health counseling, supporting those with the greatest need, and more.

On behalf of Catholic Charities Hawai'i and the people we serve, thank you for the impact your gift has allowed us to make. With your gift, we are able to help the people of Maui with the resources they need to overcome this tragedy and rebuild their lives.

A sincere mahalo for your thoughts, prayers, and kokua as we navigate through this challenging time together.

The letters will be posted on the bulletin boards in each church along with information about additional support for Hawai'i. Our Tri-Parish community definitely came through in doing God's work with our donations.

Think about adding something extra to your advent season this year...

ADVENT CALENDAR 2023						
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
10 The Second Sunday of Advent On this Second Sunday of Advent, light two violet candles on your Advent wreath and ask God for the strength to be like John the Baptist, preparing the way of the Lord."	11 "Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths." Mark 1:10	12 Today is the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe who appeared to Juan Diego as a pregnant indigenous woman. Pray for all pregnant women and mothers and look for ways that you can walk with moms in need: Walking with Moms in Need	13 In the bustle of the holiday season, spend some time this week in silence and prayer, possibly before the Blessed Sacrament, to prepare your heart to receive the Lord at Christmas.	14 According to custom, the Christmas tree is set up before Christmas and remains in place until the Solemnity of Epiphany. Share this blessing with your family and friends.	15 "For the believer, the Word of God is not simply a text to read. The Word of God is a living presence, it is a work of the Holy Spirit that comforts, instructs, gives light, strength, relief, and a zest for life. To read the Bible, to read a piece, one or two passages of the Bible, is like a short telegram from God that immediately goes to the heart." Pope Francis, Audience, December 21, 2022	16 Las Posadas , a reenactment of Mary and Joseph seeking shelter before the birth of Jesus, traditionally begins today. Pray for migrants seeking shelter around the world.

Questions Catholics Ask Why is it important to participate regularly in the Mass?

If you were to put this question to a church scholar, the weight of centuries of writings by popes and councils, saints and church doctors would fall on your head. Happily you're asking a humble catechist. So let me say the most persuasive argument for me comes by way of Saint Ephrem, a songwriter of 4th-century Syria, who penned a little tune about the Eucharist:

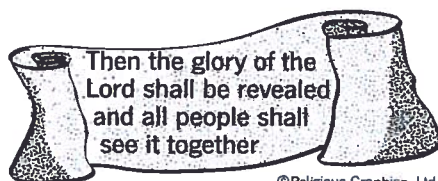
*"He called the bread his living body
and he filled it with himself and his Spirit.
He who eats it with faith,
eats Fire and Spirit."*

As we share in the Mass regularly we become "fire-eaters" by Ephrem's standards. When Jesus said "do this in memory of me," he didn't ask to be remembered in a sentimental way. The Eucharist isn't a locket to wear around our necks. We become what we eat. We participate in the life of Christ, Body and Blood, Spirit and Fire! In a cold, cruel world, why visit the fire now and then when you can become the fire and bring its warmth and light to everyone you meet?

But we don't become fire-eaters simply by showing up. The Second Vatican Council, in its document the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, states the matter with all due urgency: "Mother Church earnestly desires that all the faithful should be led to that *fully conscious and active participation* in liturgical celebrations which is demanded by the very nature of the liturgy. Such participation by the Christian people as 'a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a redeemed people' . . . is their right and duty by reason of their baptism" (no.14). Full, conscious, and active participation involves more than singing, praying responses, and receiving communion. It requires an ever-deepening understanding of the mystery we're entering. Like any relationship, you don't get that on the first date or by fading on and off the scene.

Our celebration fosters genuine relationship since "it is Christ who speaks" in the scripture proclaimed at Mass, Pope John Paul reminds us in his apostolic letter *Dies Domini* (no. 39). In his encyclical letter *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* he also writes: "The church was born of the Paschal Mystery. For this very reason the Eucharist . . . stands at the centre of the church's life" (no. 3). It also has a cosmic dimension: "Because even when it is celebrated on the humble altar of a country church, the Eucharist is always in some way celebrated on the altar of the world" (no. 8). Don't miss it.

Scripture • Matthew 26:26-30; Mark 14:22-26; Luke 22:14-20; John 6:34-35; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26; Hebrews 9:11-28; 1 Peter 2:9; cf. 2:4-5



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December 10, 2023

Written by
THE
FAITHFUL
DISCIPLE

Second Sunday of Advent

Is 40:1-5, 9-11 | 2 Pt 3:8-14 | Mk 1:1-8

GROW AS A DISCIPLE | PRAY, STUDY, ENGAGE, SERVE

Can you hear it? The voice crying out in the desert? While John the Baptist was the one literally proclaiming, from the desert, the coming of the Lord, we should listen for echoes of his message today. John foretold that Jesus – the Father's Incarnate Son – was on his way to redeem the world. Through Jesus' passion and death, the gates of heaven were flung open so all who believe in him would have eternal life. This is the Good News he proclaimed then, and the Church proclaims today: *Christ has come! Christ has died, Christ is risen, and Christ will come again.* This is what we prepare for in Advent – to celebrate, on Christmas day, Christ's coming into the world, and that he will one day return in glory. The Lord gives comfort to his people in his words, and in his presence to us in the Eucharist: "According to his promise we await new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells." So, trust in the Lord, remain vigilant, and take heed of the voices that remind us to "prepare the way of the Lord."

GO EVANGELIZE

PRAYER, INVITATION, WITNESS, ACCOMPANIMENT

Each year, we are given the gift of Advent. It is a season that invites us to slow down, reflect on the gift of Jesus and prepare to celebrate the Nativity of the Lord. Ironically, though, it happens at one of the most frenzied times of the year as we rush to keep up with cookie baking, tree decorating and merry-making. Advent is short – it includes four Sundays but can be three to four weeks long depending on the weekday upon which Christmas falls – and it sometimes doesn't seem long enough to truly prepare our hearts. This year Advent is three weeks and a day – so we are close to reaching the midway point, which is a good time to ask ourselves: How tuned in are we to John the Baptist's message? If we feel like we're being carried along in a wave of consumerism, it's not too late to make a course correction. We can step away from the fray and carve out time to enjoy the stillness of Advent and truly listen to the voice crying out in the desert.

SING *Furrows, be glad. Though earth is bare,
One more seed is planted there:
Give up your strength the seed to nourish,
That in course the flower may flourish.
People, look east and sing today:
Love, the rose, is on the way.*



The Preaching of St. John the Baptist by Giovanni Battista Tiepolo, c.1760

Sunday, Dec 10, 2023

A voice cries out

This year the Universal Declaration of Human Rights turns 75. The world could use a reminder that human rights belong to each of us and must be defended without exception. We live in an age marred by misinformation. Attacks on others grow more destructive online and in our common spaces. Climate change, hunger, and poverty are unequally borne by those whose rights are not recognized or protected. Advent is the perfect time to identify the rights that resonate most powerfully for you. Claim them. Discover ways to stand up for them. Create alliances with those whose rights are in jeopardy.

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

TODAY'S READINGS: Isaiah 40:1-5, 9-11; 2 Peter 3:8-14; Mark 1:1-8 (5). *"In the desert prepare the way of the LORD! Make straight in the wasteland a highway for our God!"*

Monday, Dec 11, 2023

Backstory on the Bible

The 73 books in the Catholic Bible were written hundreds, and in some cases thousands, of years before they were officially compiled. It wasn't until the late fourth century that the Catholic Church decided upon the list of sacred scripture to be included. Pope Damasus I presided over the Council of Rome of 382 that determined the scriptural canon, and he commissioned Saint Jerome to translate these texts from Greek into Latin. This collection of sacred books is the inspired word of God, reveals the truth of Revelation, and forms the core of Catholic beliefs. Pass on the Good News!

MEMORIAL OF DAMASUS I, POPE

TODAY'S READINGS: Isaiah 35:1-10; Luke 5:17-26 (181). *"We have seen incredible things today."*

Tuesday, Dec 12, 2023

Mysterious mother of the Americas

On a wall, under glass, is the life-sized image of Our Lady of Guadalupe—enshrined in the Basilica of Guadalupe, on Tepeyac Hill in Mexico City, where Our Lady appeared to Juan Diego in December 1591. As mysterious and symbolic as the Woman of the Apocalypse described in Revelation 12, it continues to defy human explanation, including analysis from a NASA scientist. The humble cactus fiber cloak it appears on hasn't deteriorated in more than 400 years, nor has the image, which experts from Kodak likened to a photograph though photography wasn't invented yet. Countless miracles are associated with Guadalupe, but the greatest is the conversion of an entire continent. Pray for the people of the Americas with the Center of Concern prayer to Our Lady of Guadalupe that begins: Hail Mary, Lady of Peace, We pray for the peace in our world; make us peacemakers.

FEAST OF OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE

TODAY'S READINGS: Zechariah 2:14-17 or Revelation 11:19a; 12:1-6a, 10ab; Luke 1:26-38 or Luke 1:39-47 (690A). *"A great sign appeared in the sky, a woman clothed with the sun."*

Wednesday, Dec 13, 2023

Keep your eye on the divine

Like many early Roman saints, little is known about Saint Lucy. Tradition says that her eyes were removed in an act of torture before her death for being a Christian. As such, she is the patron saint of the blind. We often take sight for granted, but Lucy should remind us, especially in hard times, to look beyond our own vision

—and see with God's eyes. The reward for our faithful acts is the beatific vision. Or as Saint Paul puts it: "We see now in a glass darkly, but then face to face" (1 Cor. 13:12). Work to improve your vision.

MEMORIAL OF LUCY, MARTYR

TODAY'S READINGS: Isaiah 40:25-31; Matthew 11:28-30 (183). *"Lift up your eyes on high and see who has created these things."*

Thursday, Dec 14, 2023

He wasn't afraid of the dark

Today is the memorial of Saint John of the Cross, a Spanish Carmelite mystic, poet, and reformer who died in 1591. He may be best known for *Dark Night of the Soul*, which develops the idea that suffering—including the sense of God's absence—can actually lead to unity with God. "The endurance of darkness is the preparation for great light," he wrote. John came to his insights through experience, having been maltreated and even imprisoned by his own religious community. If God ever seems far away, let John of the Cross guide you to the light.

MEMORIAL OF JOHN OF THE CROSS, PRIEST, DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH

TODAY'S READINGS: Isaiah 41:13-20; Matthew 11:11-15 (184). *"Whoever has ears ought to hear."*

Friday, Dec 15, 2023

The secret to our success

Damned if you do, damned if you don't. That is Jesus' complaint about public opinion. John the Baptist fasted and they called him crazy. Jesus feasted and they called him a glutton and drunkard. We've all been there. The best response to criticism is success. What is success in the spiritual life? "In God's will, there is great peace" is the answer Saint Josephine Bakhita offers. Wise words. Ignore your critics, and follow Jesus' path to peace.

ADVENT WEEKDAY

TODAY'S READINGS: Isaiah 48:17-19; Matthew 11:16-19 (185). *"Wisdom is vindicated by her works."*

Saturday, Dec 16, 2023

Modernism gets its say

Maude Petre, who died on this date in 1937, was a British writer and religious sister best known for her work on Catholic modernism. She was a prolific author, writing on a wide range of topics, including theology, philosophy, politics, and literature. She openly supported women's suffrage, which the church opposed at the time. Her 1907 book *Catholicism and Independence* got her kicked out of her order and she was refused the sacraments by her bishop. Her views were controversial, but they helped form Catholic thinking for the Second Vatican Council. Prayerfully consider that the Catholic controversies of today may lead to the church of tomorrow.

ADVENT WEEKDAY

TODAY'S READINGS: Sirach 48:1-4, 9-11; Matthew 17:9a, 10-13 (186). *"Elijah will indeed come and restore all things; but I tell you that Elijah has already come."*

Invest just five minutes a day, and your faith will deepen and grow—a day at a time



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