

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

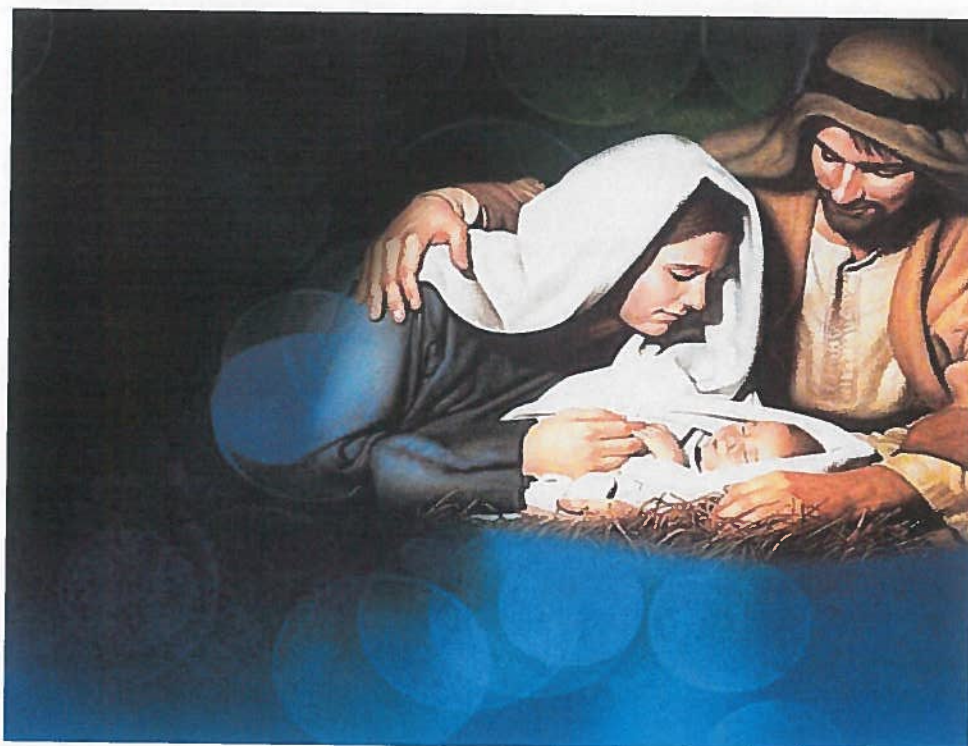
FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

DECEMBER 23-24, 2023



THE NATIVITY OF THE LORD

DECEMBER 24-25, 2023



Quotable: "A God who became so small could only be mercy and love."

—Saint Thérèse of Lisieux

December 30-31, 2023

The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph

Liturgical Schedule	St. Margaret Mary Saturday, Dec. 30 5:00 pm	Sacred Heart Sunday, Dec. 31 7:30 am	St. James Sunday, Dec. 31 9:00 am	St. Margaret Mary Sunday, Dec. 31 10:30 am
Celebrant	Fr. Ron Deacon Ron	Fr. Ron Deacon Ron	Fr. Ron Deacon Ron	Fr. Ron Deacon Ron
Ushers	Dave Emling Roger Jensen Bob Schultz Dan Hoffman	Dennia Pankey James Mallaney	Arlen Hansen Bob Buente Jeff Martin Jeff Steinke	Joe Smolkovich Marko Smolkovich Wayne Bisailon Brent Fulton
Lector	Rob Landeck	Alicia Kirkpatrick	Mary Peerbolte	Steve Jacob
Servers				
Greeters			Greeter— Donna Bernicky R. Leader—Peerboltes	Brent Fulton

Mass Intentions for the Week

Monday, December 25

7:30 am SH +Zeb Pfeiffer & Cecelia Monk (The Pfeiffer Family)

9:00 am SJ +Laurie Hansen (Jennifer Hansen)

10:30 am SMM +Jim Jepsen & Denise Blake (Kathy Jepsen)

Tuesday, December 26 (SH)

8:00 am (SH) +Lorraine Brennan (Lariann Bruer)

Wednesday, December 27 (SJ)

8:00 am +Rhea Suprenant (Mr/Mrs Nathan Gohlke)

Friday, December 29 (SMM)

8:00 am +Theresa & Oliver Fritz Family & Friends

Saturday, December 30 (SMM)

5:00 pm +John Evans Sr. (Nancy Evans)

Sunday, December 31

7:30 am +Leola Madison, Steven Riley, Dean Madison, Dale Pool (The Family)

9:00 am (SJ) +Jeffrey Cooley (Mary Ann Cooley)

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

A Look Ahead

Friday, Dec. 5—First Friday Adoration at SH

Sat., January 6—CCW Deanery Joy in January

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

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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)

Church Mailing Address: 207 E. 5th Street

Herscher, IL 60941

Phone: 815-426-2550

Collections Week of Dec. 16-17, 2023

St. Margaret Mary—\$1,676

St. James—\$2,973

Sacred Heart— \$1,126

Thank you for your generosity!

2024 NEW YEAR'S MASS SCHEDULE

NEW YEAR'S DAY

9:00 AM AT ST. JAMES

10:30 AM AT ST. MARGARET MARY

Gospel Shorts We Are Called to be Faithful

Mary answered the call of God in her life, and it changed her forever. The one she gave birth to answered God's call and was obedient to God even to the death.

You have also been called by God. It probably isn't to bear a child. Most likely it is not to die on a cross. But God is calling us to be faithful wherever that takes us.

God may not call us to give our lives in one noble act, but God does ask us to give our whole lives.



Eucharistic Adoration
Friday, January 5 at Sacred Heart 8:30am—
3:00 pm. It will conclude with
Benediction at 3:00 pm

*"There is no other food for the soul than
the Eucharist."*

-Blessed Jean Baptiste Fouque (1851-1926)

Reflection Christmas

God does not send us his word like a great torrent of water raging in tempest and flood sweeping us blindly along, but like a glimpse of the sun or a green branch in the winter, rain falling softly on earth: this is how God comes to us.

Stripped of all beauty and form God comes to us as a servant, suffering here in this world, dying that we may find life.

Stranger unknown in our midst, he is a name without power. Those who are open to peace welcome his name in their hearts.

He restores sight to the blind, those who are deaf now can hear him. This is the news that he brings: happy the man who believes.

God does not hide from our sight, we need not look up to heaven. He is with us here on earth, living as man among men.

Gently he asks for our faith, seeking consent to his message; here in our life and our death, we become people of God.

Parish News:

St. Margaret Mary—



St. James—

- ◆ Thank you to everyone that helped make our Pageant/Basket Raffle such a huge success.

Sacred Heart—

- ◆ The week of December 24th, the Blessed Virgin Mary candle burns for Lorrie Brennan - for her 84th heavenly birthday.



All Parishes—

- ◆ Thank you to everyone who contributed to the celebration of Jesus's birth by decorating our churches.
- ◆ Don't forget to pick up your offertory envelopes in each parish. If you don't find yours, please call the office.



I proclaim to you
good news of great joy.
LK.2:10

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



FROM FATHER AND THE OFFICE
STAFF OF THE TRI-PARISH
COMMUNITY

Merry
Christmas

Saint of the week: St. Stephen (Dec. 24) was the first martyr, deacon and preacher. All we know of him is related in the *Acts of the Apostles*. While preaching the Gospel in the streets, angry Jews who believed his message to be blasphemy dragged him outside the city, and stoned him to death. In the crowd, on the side of the mob, was a man who would later be known as Saint Paul the Apostle.



Obscure saint of the week: St. Adela of Pfalz was the daughter of Saint Dagobert II, King of the Franks, and the Anglo-Saxon princess Matilda. She was the sister of Saint Irmina of Oehren and the granddaughter of Saint Sigebert III, king of Austrasia. Adela was a princess and married to a man named Alberic. She became the mother of one son but was widowed in 700. Her wealth, position, and beauty brought her many suitors, but she turned them all down and became a nun. She founded the convent of Palatiolum of Pfalz near Trier, Germany and served as its first abbess. She was a spiritual student of Saint Boniface.



Christmas Traditions –

Why are some of our most common Christmas symbols associated with the season? Hundreds of years ago Christmas trees were decorated with ornaments made from cookies and bread. They were hung on the trees to show our appreciation for our daily bread. These ornaments made from cookies and bread were meant to be a treat for the children on Christmas morning. As time passed ornaments were made from glass or wood. Popcorn was often strung on the tree as a garland. Today Christmas cookies are often in the shape of a traditional Christmas symbol.

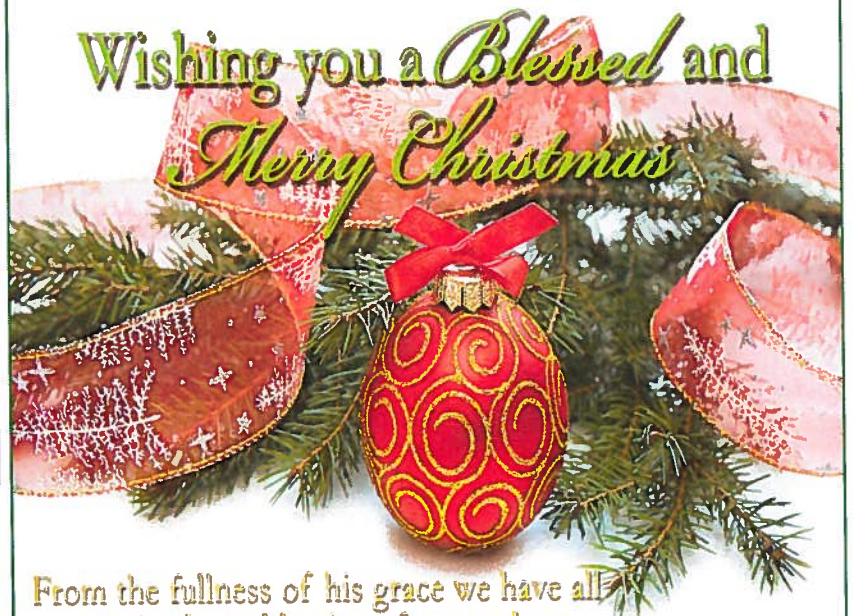


Advent Week 4

The fourth candle on the Advent wreath is lit today. It is a purple candle that symbolizes "love". As Advent ends and Christmas comes, we share the song of angels sing: Joy and glory; peace, sweet peace.



Wishing you a *Blessed and Merry Christmas*



From the fullness of his grace we have all received one blessing after another.

John 1:16

allerroff.com

Catholic Snacks, Get fed

What do the short winter days tell us about the Nativity?

This time of year illustrates something very import about Jesus and his cousin John.

Dec. 21st is the winter solstice.

"Okay," you may say, "That's nice. Why should I care?"

Well, the winter solstice isn't simply a matter of astronomy. It's spiritually illuminating.

Since the peak of summer, the days have been growing shorter. Night comes sooner. Some parts of the country have lost as many as six hours of daylight by now! The winter solstice, then, is a big event because it marks the beginning of longer days. Every year, it takes place right around Christmas.

This timing is significant.

John the Baptist's birthday is on June 24. Funny how close that is to the summer solstice, when days begin to shorten. After John's birthday, daylight shortens until Christmas comes, Christ's birthday, and the days lengthen again. This reflects what John says about Jesus:

"He must increase, while I must decrease."

Thus, the decline and increase of light is a visual illustration of John's metaphorical "decreasing" as he prepares the world for the coming of Christ—and of Jesus' light entering the world after the Nativity.

Jesus enters the world at the darkest time of year, just in time for the daylight to start growing in duration.

This uncanny physical and spiritual correlation shows how the calendar reflects the purpose of its Creator. The calendar is handy, too, for helping us keep track of upcoming events in our lives. Invite the saints to watch over your days with our Catholic Art Weekly Desk Calendar. Featuring gorgeous classic artwork for each week of the year, this calendar marks not only the days and weeks, but also the Church's feasts and holy days.

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The Sunday Gospel in Everyday

God sent the angel Gabriel to the Galilean village of Nazareth to a virgin engaged to be married to a man descended from David. His name was Joseph, and the virgin's name, Mary. Upon entering, Gabriel greeted her:

Good morning!
You're beautiful with God's beauty,
Beautiful inside and out!
God be with you.

She was thoroughly shaken, wondering what was behind a greeting like that. But the angel assured her, "Mary, you have nothing to fear. God has a surprise for you: You will become pregnant and give birth to a son and call his name Jesus.

He will be great,
be called 'Son of the Highest.'
The Lord God will give him
the throne of his father David;
He will rule Jacob's house forever—
no end, ever, to his kingdom."

Mary said to the angel, "But how? I've never slept with a man."

The angel answered,
The Holy Spirit will come upon you,
the power of the Highest hover over you;
Therefore, the child you bring to birth
will be called Holy, Son of God.

"And did you know that your cousin Elizabeth conceived a son, old as she is? Everyone called her barren, and here she is six months pregnant! Nothing, you see, is impossible with God."

And Mary said,

Yes, I see it all now:
I'm the Lord's maid, ready to serve.
Let it be with me
just as you say.

Then the angel left her (*from Luke 1*).

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

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ADVENT CALENDAR 2023

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
<div style="text-align: right; margin-bottom: 10px;">24</div> <p>The Fourth Sunday of Advent</p> <p>This year, the Fourth Week of Advent lasts only one day. Light all three violet candles and the rose candle on your Advent wreath and prepare to celebrate the birth of the Lord.</p>	<div style="text-align: right; margin-bottom: 10px;">25</div> <p>"Jesus is born in our midst; he is God with us. He comes to accompany our daily lives, to share with us in all things: our joys and sorrows, our hopes and fears. He comes as a helpless child. He is born in the cold night, poor among the poor. In need of everything, he knocks at the door of our heart to find warmth and shelter."</p> <p>Pope Francis, <i>Urbi et Orbi</i> Blessing, December 25, 2022</p>					

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Questions Catholics Ask

Why don't all Christians celebrate Christmas on the same day?

Jerusalem tradition had chosen January 6 for the celebration of this Theophany, Greek for "Divine Manifestation," and this custom was embraced throughout the Eastern churches.

We regard time linearly because we experience it this way: each day marching in a progression toward the future. We view the past similarly, only fixed as if set in amber. It's natural to imagine the birth of Jesus as we do our own birthdays: stamped on the calendar on December 25th and celebrated on its anniversary annually.



Except in the East, where Christ's coming is observed on January 6th. How can this be?

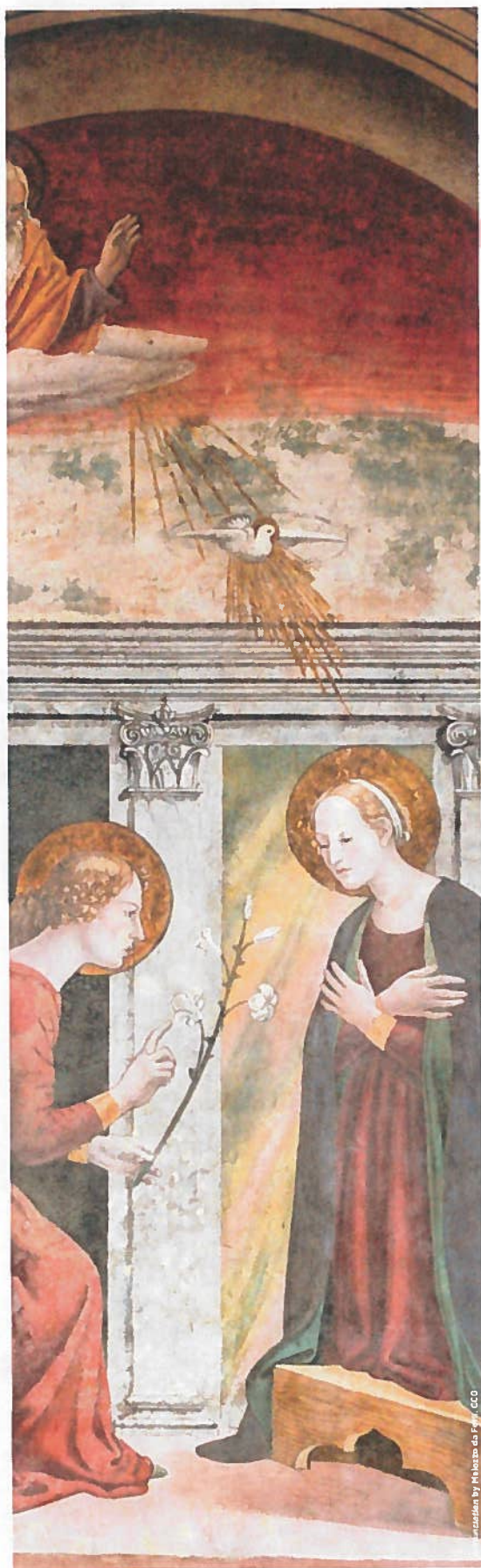
Consider that the ancients told time in terms of the great sky clocks, sun and moon. Seasons and occasions were established according to the heavenly orbs, not to mention patterns of rainfall. Calendars were shaped by familiar cycles so crops might be planted and harvested successfully.

Another significant factor in dating was the succession of rulers. So Matthew tells us about a new star in the heavens signaling a new king's arrival, but also that this occurred during the present reign of King Herod. Luke also acknowledges who held the reins of power during this event: Roman Caesar Tiberias, Palestinian procurator Pontius Pilate, and high priests Annas and Caiaphas. Details we might prefer—day of the week, date of the month, or month itself—weren't recorded. A study of celestial anomalies of this period hasn't produced an exact calendar date for the newborn king.

As the early church spread out across many cultures, news traveled slowly. Inevitably the church experienced natural divisions and differing customs. Churches of the East and West were both improvising. The winter solstice, the longest night of darkness around December 21, was already a significant observance. It seemed fitting to celebrate the arrival of the Light of the World as days grew longer beyond the solstice. Jerusalem tradition had chosen January 6 for the celebration of this Theophany, Greek for "Divine Manifestation," and this custom was embraced throughout the Eastern churches. Many of these churches observed a sequence of "epiphanies" leading up to the great one: annunciations to Zechariah and Mary, Mary and Elizabeth's visitation, John's birth, the annunciation to Joseph, and finally the birth of Jesus.

Meanwhile, Western Christians called this same divine manifestation by the name Epiphany, observing it in late December. In time, Eastern and Western traditions mingled to create a unified liturgical chain between Nativity and Epiphany. Choosing a precise date for a historically unknown event was less important than preparing to receive this manifestation with minds and hearts fully awake.

Scripture: Exodus 23:14-17; Leviticus 23:1-44; Deuteronomy 26:1-3; 1 Maccabees 4:56-59; Ecclesiastes 1:4-7, 9-10; 3:1-8; Hosea 2:13; Zechariah 14:6-9; Mark 1:14-15; Matthew 2:1-2; Luke 3:1-2; John 1:1-5, 14



December 24, 2023

Fourth Sunday of Advent

2 Sm 7:1-5, 8b-12, 14a, 16 | Rom 16:25-27 | Lk 1:26-38

Written by
THE
FAITHFUL
DISCIPLE

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

"Hail, full of grace! The Lord is with you." The angel Gabriel announces this in the Gospel today, and it is a phrase with which we are all familiar thanks to our recitation of the Hail Mary prayer. Although some may be comforted by such a message and its angelic messenger, it is troubling to Mary because the angel goes on to tell her she will conceive and bear the Son of God. Thinking practically, Mary is being told the impossible will happen – who wouldn't be troubled? And yet Mary offers herself: "I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word." Despite her fear and trepidation, Mary went on to answer God's call and do his will. Our Blessed Mother became a great example of fortitude at that moment, as she exemplified what it means to step outside of our own uncertainty and trust God completely. Although doing God's will can be difficult at times, St. Paul reminds us in his Letter to the Romans that we can ask God for the strength to say "yes" in spite of our fears.

GO EVANGELIZE

PRAYER, INVITATION, WITNESS, ACCOMPANIMENT

Up until today, December has probably been a whirlwind. Trees and lights, ornaments, parties and presents – all these things help to kick off "the most wonderful time of year" beginning soon after Thanksgiving. Come Dec. 26, however, for many, the decorations become a nuisance and Christmas trees are out on the curb for pickup. Thank goodness for our Catholic faith because for us, Christmas is just beginning! Mary didn't say "may it be done to me" only to forget about it the next day. No, in the coming months, the Blessed Mother nurtured the baby Jesus in her womb, anticipating the arrival of her firstborn and the Son of God. And on that blessed Christmas night, her work as the Mother of God was only just beginning. So, as we anticipate the arrival of the Christ Child, we are joyful that *our* Christmas season continues until we celebrate the Baptism of the Lord on January 8. Let us use this time to draw closer to God and make every effort in the new year to do his will.

SING *Angels, announce with shouts of mirth
Christ who brings new life to earth.
Set every peak and valley humming
With the word, the Lord is coming.
People, look east and sing today:
Love, the Lord, is on the way.*

2023 St. James Christmas Pageant

