

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

SOLEMNITY OF THE EPIPHANY OF THE LORD

JANUARY 6-7, 2024



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: "I always like those moments of epiphany, when you have the next destination. "

—Brad Pitt, actor

January 13-14, 2024

Second Sunday in Ordinary Time

Liturgical Schedule	St. Margaret Mary Saturday, Jan. 13 5:00 pm	Sacred Heart Sunday, Jan. 14 7:30 am	St. James Sunday, Jan. 14 9:00 am	St. Margaret Mary Sunday, Jan. 14 10:30 am
Celebrant	Fr. Ron		Fr. Ron Deacon Ron	Fr. Ron
Ushers	Todd Datweiler Gery Wright Dan Hoffman Bob Schultz	David Kirkpatrick Daryl Ferris	Jerry Ogrentz Arlen Hansen Bob Buente Jeff Martin	Brent Fulton Erik Wheeler Darren Lovell Corey Eich
Lector	Dave Emling	Darlene Cipcich	Carrie Abrassart	Diane Long
Servers				Caroline Fulton
Greeters			Greeter— C. Forsythe R. Leader—Reatta Gohlke	Erik Wheeler

Mass Intentions for the Week

Monday, January 8 (SMM)

8:00 am +Donna Ruder (Mary Ann Wagner)

Tuesday, January 9 (SH)

8:00 am (SH) +Duane Ferris (Knights of Columbus)

Wednesday, January 10 (SJ)

8:00 am +Virginia Fritz (Connie Sullivan)

Friday, January 12 (SMM)

8:00 am +Connie Dionne (The Family)

Saturday, January 13 (SMM)

5:00 pm +For All the Parish Family

Sunday, January 14

7:30 am +Walter Pieszka (Angie Kmetz)

9:00 am (SJ) +Darlene Peerbolte (Jim/Linda Booth)

10:30am (SMM) +Rita Deany (Dick/Sue Cotter)

+Jim Gray (Pat Gray)

A Look Ahead

Sun., Jan. 7—RE classes at SJ and SH

Wed., January 10—Adult Ed 7:00 SMM

Sun., Jan. 14—RE classes at SJ and SH

January 27/28—Second collection for Latin America

Accept our gifts also, Lord



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 Bisailon 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)

Question of the week: Have I had an epiphany, a sudden insight, after an experience where I've recognized an encounter with Christ? If I cannot recall one, can I imagine how it could happen?

Collections Week of Dec. 23-24, 2023

St. Margaret Mary—\$3,183 Sol. Of Mary— \$471
St. James—\$1,307 Sol. Of Mary—\$462
Sacred Heart— \$854

Thank you for your generosity!

Welcome Gregory Gray.

Gregory is a seminarian of the Diocese and will be speaking at all the Masses on the weekend of January 6th/7th.

Gregory Gray was born and raised in Bourbonnais, Illinois on April 4, 2005 as the youngest of eight children. The Catholic life and attending Sunday Mass, and sometimes daily Mass, throughout his childhood became his family's life.



It took Gregory some time to take the Catholic faith as his own faith. During his childhood, he began participating in the parish in 5th grade as an altar server and joined Camp events through Maternity of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish. He was not fully invested in seeking the priesthood until the summer after graduating from high school. He remembers hearing God speak to him at a 'One Bread One Cup' conference on more than one occasion. It was then he had the grace and peace within his soul to accept God's invitation.

He is presently at St. John Vianney College Seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota in the first year of his Propaedeutic stage. He is looking forward to exploring the priestly life more intently.

Reflections Be Faithful to Commitments

The gift of persistence is wonderful indeed. To persist in a state, enterprise, or undertaking, in spite of counter influences, (the dictionary definition) is the life of each and every disciple. We should be, and should spend our lives, as counter-cultural witnesses to the truth, never tiring in our struggles of faith — in our attempts to work for justice and peace. Even if the world rejects us we should work harder in bringing about the kingdom of God in our day.

And you Bethlehem of Judah,
are by no means least
among the princes
since from you shall come forth
a ruler to shepherd Israel

©Religious Graphics, Ltd.

Parish News:

St. Margaret Mary—

Sacred Heart—

St. James—

- ◆ The St. James Religious Education Christmas pageant, breakfast, and raffle were a wonderful success. A huge thank you to all who donated raffle baskets and items / cash for the baskets. Thank you to all who attended and enjoyed the breakfast and took part in the basket raffle. "It takes a village."
Carolyn Levy, DRE



All Parishes—

- ◆ Don't forget to pick up your offertory envelopes in each parish. If you don't find yours, please call the office.



©Religious Graphics, Ltd.

Gospel Shorts

Do We Know How to Seek Him ? (Epiphany)

The season is supposed to be one of the happiest in the year, but for some, this may not be the case because of the realization that the goals they set for themselves will not be met.

Perhaps with the awareness that the wisemen themselves had to allow themselves to be led by the star and that they had to learn as they went along, we can cut ourselves some slack. To help us even more, we may want to reflect on the fact that in some ways even Jesus himself had to allow himself to be led so as to fulfill God's plan.

Claimed by God (Baptism of the Lord Jan. 8)

As children, we learn people tend to identify us through our parents. We also learn that our parents are affected by what we do and that we are accountable to them for our behavior. Most of us want and strive for our parents' approval. Praise and love from a parent has great value.

When John baptized Jesus, he received love and praise from his heavenly Father. God identified Jesus as his Son, and called Jesus "the Beloved." Then that great heavenly voice concluded, "with whom I am well pleased." This identification and affirmation was a pivotal moment in the life of Jesus, which thrust him into his public ministry. But Jesus' baptism is also a life-changing event for all that believe in him. We are baptized with his baptism and claimed by God through our faith in Christ, which gives us the "power to become children of God."



Saint of the week: St. Antony Mary Pucci (Jan. 12) was the second of seven children from a peasant family. His father was a sacristan of the local church, but he opposed his son's interest in religious life. At age 18 Eustacchio joined the Servites, taking the religious name of *Antony Mary*. He studied the classics and theology and was ordained in 1843. He was assigned at age 28 as parish priest in the seaside town of Viareggio, Italy where he spent the rest of his life, working 45 years in service to his flock. He was called *il curatino*, "the little parish priest" by his parishioners. He had a special devotion to the sick, the aged, and the poor, serving with distinction during two epidemics in the town. Antony founded a seaside nursing home for children and served as Servite provincial from 1883 to 1890.



Obscure saint of the week: St. Arcadius of Mauretania (Jan. 12) was a wealthy and prominent citizen and a closet Christian. During a persecution in Mauritania, he withdrew to live as a hidden hermit, prayerful and out of harm's way. The authorities wanted to use him as an example and arrested a relative, threatening him with harm unless Arcadius turned himself in. Arcadius came in from the forests and went straight to court to trade himself for his kinsman. The judge said he would release the prisoners only if Arcadius would publicly sacrifice to a pagan god. Arcadius declined and became a martyr. As he was mutilated to death, he continued to preach Jesus to the watching pagans.

THE SUNDAY GOSPEL IN EVERYDAY ENGLISH

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem village, Judah territory—this was during Herod's kingship—a band of scholars arrived in Jerusalem from the East. They asked around, "Where can we find and pay homage to the newborn King of the Jews? We observed a star in the eastern sky that signaled his birth. We're on pilgrimage to worship him."

When word of their inquiry got to Herod, he was terrified—and not Herod alone, but most of Jerusalem as well. Herod lost no time. He gathered all the high priests and religion scholars in the city together and asked, "Where is the Messiah supposed to be born?"

They told him, "Bethlehem, Judah territory. The prophet Micah wrote it plainly:

It's you, Bethlehem, in Judah's land,
no longer bringing up the rear.
From you will come the leader
who will shepherd-rule my people, my Israel."

Herod then arranged a secret meeting with the scholars from the East. Pretending to be as devout as they were, he got them to tell him exactly when the birth-announcement star appeared. Then he told them the prophecy about Bethlehem, and said, "Go find this child. Leave no stone unturned. As soon as you find him, send word and I'll join you at once in your worship."

Instructed by the king, they set off. Then the star appeared again, the same star they had seen in the eastern skies. It led them on until it hovered over the place of the child. They could hardly contain themselves: They were in the right place! They had arrived at the right time!

They entered the house and saw the child in the arms of Mary, his mother. Overcome, they kneeled and worshiped him. Then they opened their luggage and presented gifts: gold, frankincense, myrrh.

In a dream, they were warned not to report back to Herod. So they worked out another route, left the territory without being seen, and returned to their own country (*from Matthew 2:1-12*).

What can the Epiphany teach us?

With its few simple traditions, the Epiphany is a beautiful and powerful feast.

Christmas is not over yet! In fact, one of the most glorious feasts of Christmastide is right around the corner. The Epiphany is one of the Church's major and spectacular feasts. It occurs on January 6th, the final day of the 12 days of Christmas.

This is the day the Church commemorates the Magi arriving to give homage to the newborn King of Kings with their gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

However, as we celebrate the Magi's arrival, we are not merely celebrating a past event.

Rather, we are celebrating a current reality: the coming of all the Gentile nations, those not initially a part of Our Lord's chosen people, into the Kingdom of God. On the Epiphany, we are celebrating God's invitation to us to come worship at the feet of Our Lord.

That is why the Epiphany is such a glorious feast and worth celebrating each year!

From our Eastern brothers and sisters, we can learn much about celebrating the Epiphany.

For the Eastern Church, Epiphany is the celebration of not one, not two, but three 'epiphanies,' or revelations of Christ: the arrival of the Magi with their kingly gifts, the Baptism of Jesus in the Jordan River, and Jesus' first miracle at the wedding feast of Cana. These three biblical events are theophanies, or visible manifestations of Who Jesus really is—God Incarnate.

The Eastern Church also has several beautiful traditions to help commemorate this wonderful day. Here is a helpful guide to a few of these traditions for your family to partake in this year:

Blessing of the Homes: The Epiphany is the traditional time to have your home blessed by a priest for the New Year. If it isn't possible for a priest to come, the head of the household can preside over the ceremony, which includes prayers and sprinkling the rooms with holy water specially blessed for Epiphany. After the ritual, mark the entryway of the home with chalk (see further explanation below). For suggested prayers for the blessing, see the USCCB's Blessing of the Home and Household on Epiphany.

Blessing of Chalk: In the blessing of the homes, you use blessed chalk to mark the doorways. (Your parish should be able to provide Epiphany water and blessed chalk to perform these blessings.) The long-standing Epiphany tradition of marking churches, homes, schools, and other buildings with a special "holy formula" over the entryway follows a formula similar to the blessing of the Paschal Candle at Easter. This formula for Epiphany includes the current year along with the initials C, M, and B in the order shown below.

20 + C + M + B + 24

The C, M, and B are placed in between the numbers of the current year, with crosses in between each symbol. The three letters have two significations: the invocation **Christus Mansionem Benedicat** ("Christ bless this house"), as well as the first initial of the names of the three Magi: **Caspar, Melchior, and Balthazar**.

You can use unblessed chalk if necessary for this aspect of the ritual. You can also use regular holy water for the blessing of the home if you can't obtain Epiphany water.

Blessing of Gold, Frankincense, and Myrrh: There is also a special Epiphany blessing in honor of the original Christmas gifts. The faithful can have their parish priest bless items of gold (such as wedding rings and rosaries), myrrh for medicinal use, and frankincense that can be used during the Epiphany home blessing and other liturgical feasts (such as Easter).

Along with this great feast, the Church in her wisdom has given us a liturgical year full of powerful feasts that help us bring our families together, deepen our understanding, and grow in our faith. In the beloved book *The Catholic All Year Compendium: Liturgical Living for Real Life*, author and mother Kendra Tierney shares how her family incorporates traditional Catholic practices into everyday life throughout the Church year.

-reprinted with permission. The Catholic Company www.thecatholiccompany.com

Questions Catholics Ask

Is Epiphany about giving gifts or getting them?

Gold symbolizes wealth and power. Frankincense, used in prayer, represents the divine Presence. Myrrh prepares bodies for burial.

"We three kings of Orient are/ bearing gifts we traverse afar."

Nowhere in Matthew does it claim there are three. And Matthew never calls them kings. They are *magi*, hereditary priests of the ancient Medes and Persians. From this talented crew we get the word *magic*. But you can't make a decent song out of "we unnumbered magi." At least the carol gets one thing right: This group of wise fellows *does* bear gifts.

So how did kings get into the picture? Lay this at Isaiah's door. He prophesies that kings will walk by the light of the Lord to Jerusalem. Their caravans will indeed bring gifts of gold and frankincense—but alas, no myrrh in Isaiah's vision of this scene. Gold symbolizes wealth and power. Frankincense, used in prayer, represents the divine Presence. Myrrh prepares bodies for burial. It's an ominous sign that would make a startling gift.

Matthew's gift-bearers are wise men for sure. There is something "magical" about their foresight. Power, divinity, and death are three sober elements that will accompany Jesus from Bethlehem to Jerusalem. These were strange birthday presents to be sure. But they were appropriate honors for the King of the Universe, the Divine Son, and the crucified Lord.

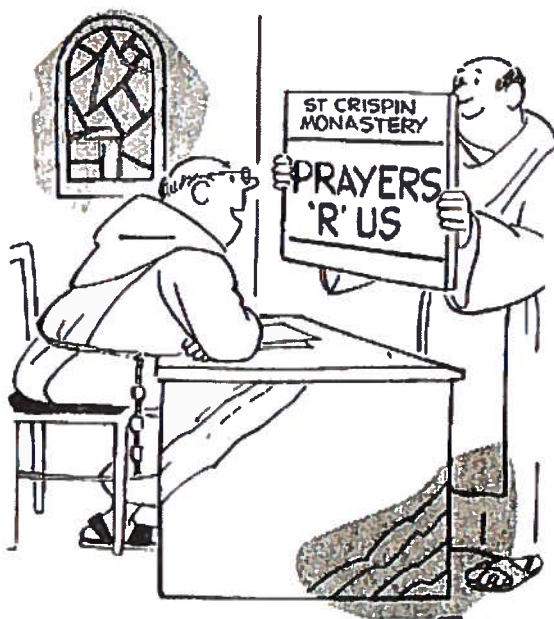
Gold. Frankincense. Myrrh. These were the gifts Jesus received long, long ago. But we also bear him gifts at every Eucharist: Bread. Wine. Our financial sacrifice. These are all "made by human hands" one way and another. And, as Jesuit Roc O'Connor suggests, these are gifts transformed and returned to us as Body and Blood of Christ, and redistributed resources for those in need.

More gifts come to us by way of this shared Table. Grace pours out on the assembly. But grace can seem like one of those white elephant gifts: Now that we have it, what do we do with it? Church teaching describes grace as internal sanctification. We're made holy, fit "temples of the Holy Spirit," as Paul assures us. This isn't about spiritually fumigating-your chest cavity. It's about becoming, like Mary, God-bearers: those who carry the divine presence wherever we go.

Grace moves at God's initiative. We can't muster it up by sheer force of moral living. Paul says we can try to save ourselves by obedience—but we will surely fail. Grace forgives sin, and rescues us from every evil. This is one gift you don't want to put at the bottom of a closet.

Scripture

Isaiah 60:1-6; Psalm 72; Ephesians 3:2-6; Matthew 2:1-12; 1 Corinthians 6:19



"I LIKE it!"

Help Us Enter the New Year

God of all time, help us enter the New Year quietly, thoughtful of who we are to ourselves and to others, mindful that our steps make an impact and our words carry power.

May we walk gently.

May we speak only after we have listened well.

Creator of all life,

help us enter the New Year reverently,

aware that you have endowed

every creature and plant, every person and habitat with beauty and purpose.

May we regard the world with tenderness.

May we honor rather than destroy.

Lower of all souls,

help us enter the New Year joyfully,

willing to laugh and dance and dream,

remembering our many gifts with thanks

and looking forward to blessings yet to come.

May we welcome your lavish love.

In this new year, may the grace and peace of Christ bless us now and in the days ahead.



- Vinita Hampton Wright; Offered by Douglas Ruschman

January 7, 2024

Written by
THE
FAITHFUL
DISCIPLE

The Epiphany of the Lord

Is 60:1-6 | Eph 3:2-3a, 5-6 | Mt 2:1-12

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

It's interesting how an event can be interpreted by different people. God's revelation of himself in the birth of the child Jesus is clearly one such event. The Magi, Gentiles from the east, had heard of this "newborn king of the Jews" and undertook a long and arduous journey to see him and offer him homage. They were edified and eager in their search. Herod, himself a king - of the Jews - did not have the same reaction. The very thought of this "newborn king" threatened him and filled him with rage and suspicion. In this moment in human history, the manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles (i.e., the Epiphany) unveils the truth of God's redemptive work for all of creation to be reconciled to himself. This truth has been accepted and rejected throughout time, and our celebration of this feast gives us an opportunity to give thanks in a focused and particular way for our acceptance of it - to give thanks for the gift of our faith. Perhaps it is even a moment for us to have our own, colloquial epiphany: an "aha moment," where we once again truly understand the depth of God's love for us.

GO EVANGELIZE

PRAYER, INVITATION, WITNESS, ACCOMPANIMENT

The Magi, the Gentiles from the east, were changed after their encounter with the Christ Child; they were warned not to return to Herod and they obeyed and took a different route home. In today's second reading, St. Paul says it has been revealed that Gentiles are "coheirs, members of the same body" - the body of Christ. Just as the magi were forever changed by their journey, so must we be. Their journey is a model for us, but we do not have to seek Christ in the world as they did; he is here with us, in Word and in the Eucharist. The Incarnation of Jesus is pure gift to our weary, troubled world. As we heard in Isaiah, "rise up! ... [our] light has come, the glory of the Lord shines upon [us]." As the Magi followed the light of the star, let us rise to the occasion and respond to God's light in our world by recognizing the good gifts God gives us each day. And then thank him for his enduring presence in our lives.

PRAY *Lord God of heaven and earth,
you revealed your only-begotten Son to every nation
by the guidance of a star ...
Fill us with the light of Christ,
that our concern for others may reflect your love.
We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen*
(from USCCB Epiphany prayer for blessing of home)



Invest time each week to expand your vocabulary and deepen your faith.

07 January 2024

WORD OF THE WEEK

Preparation of the Gifts

**pre-pə-'rā-shən | 'gifts\

The set of ceremonial actions at Mass preceding the Eucharistic Prayer and Holy Communion. Includes dressing of the altar; bringing forward the bread and wine; and the community's personal sacrifices taken up in the collection. Formerly called the Offertory. The community offers a song of praise for all these gifts as the priest washes his hands in a purification rite.

Pronunciation: <https://tinyurl.com/Take5-preparation-gifts>

CONTEXT

The **Preparation of the Gifts** allows time for the preparation of our hearts. Like the Magi bearing gifts and doing homage to Majesty, we bring our gifts and our praise to the Table.
—Father Paul Boudreau

God has first blessed us with the gift of creation. Humans take those gifts given, wheat and grapes, and, using our creativity, make bread and wine. Then, we bring those gifts we have received and labored over to present them at the Altar/Table that they might be transformed into the Body and Blood of Christ. Finally, we receive them back in Communion. The procession of the **Gifts** says, in essence, "Behold the gifts God has given us!"
—Father Roc O'Connor, S.J.

WHY IT MATTERS

We take great care preparing other festive tables for our most cherished gatherings. Could we do less for the table where the Real Presence of Christ will be made tangible for us?

From the General Instructions of the Roman Missal: The altar or Lord's table, which is the center of the whole Liturgy of the Eucharist, is made ready. . . . The offerings are then brought forward. It is a praiseworthy practice for the bread and wine to be presented by the faithful (73).

RELATED WORDS

Corporal | purificator | Missal | Chalice

QUESTION OF THE WEEK

Is Epiphany about giving or getting gifts?

"We three kings of Orient are/ bearing gifts we traverse afar." Nowhere in the gospels does it claim there are three kings. They are magi, hereditary priests of the ancient Medes and Persians. At least the carol gets one thing right: this wise group does bear gifts. Gold symbolizes wealth and power. Frankincense, used in prayer, represents the divine Presence. Myrrh prepares bodies for burial. It's an ominous sign that would make a startling gift. . . . But they were appropriate honors for the King of the Universe, the Divine Son, and the crucified Lord.

We also bear Jesus gifts at every Eucharist: bread, wine, and our financial sacrifice. "Made by human hands," these gifts are transformed and returned to us as the Body and Blood of Christ, and then redistributed for those in need.

More gifts come to us by way of this shared Table. Grace pours out on the assembly. Grace forgives sin, and rescues us from every evil. This is one gift you don't want to put at the bottom of a closet.

—Alice Camille, from *Questions Catholics Ask* <https://tinyurl.com/QCA-presentation-gifts>

REFLECTION OF THE WEEK

SOLEMNITY OF THE EPIPHANY OF THE LORD (JANUARY 7)

Remember our migrant roots

America was once renowned as the land where people could come to breathe freely. Scripture reminds us of the considerable gifts that migrant people bring with them. Whether king or commoner, each person offers what they have to make the community more dynamic.

READINGS: Isaiah 60:1-6; Ephesians 3:2-3a, 5-6; Matthew 2:1-12 (20 <https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/010724.cfm>). "Raise your eyes and look about; they all gather and come to you."

FAITH IN ACTION

Let's welcome the newcomer and remember that the infant Jesus was once a migrant, too.