

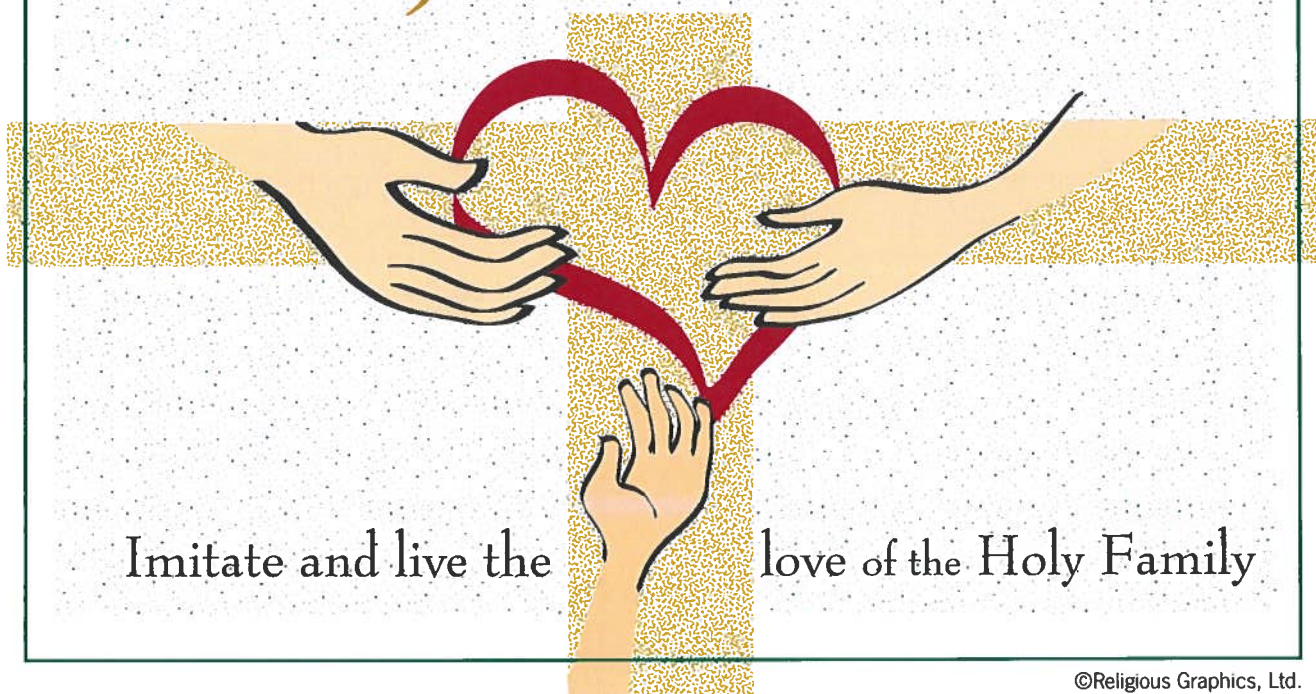
The Roman Catholic Parishes of
St. Margaret Mary, Herscher
St. James the Apostle, Irwin
Sacred Heart, Goodrich

THE HOLY FAMILY OF JESUS, MARY, AND JOSEPH

DECEMBER 27-28, 2025

The shepherds hastened to Bethlehem where they found
Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger.

JESUS
MARY
JOSEPH



Imitate and live the love of the Holy Family

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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: "How important it is ... that every child coming into the world be welcomed by the warmth of a family! ... The love of Mary and of Joseph made Him feel the tenderness and beauty of being loved. "
—Pope Benedict XVI

4th Sunday of Advent			January 3-4, 2025	
Liturgical Schedule	St. Margaret Mary Saturday, Jan. 3 5:00 pm	Sacred Heart Sunday, Jan. 4 7:30 am	St. James Sunday, Jan 4 9:00 am	St. Margaret Mary Sunday, Jan. 4 10:30 am
Celebrant	Fr. Ron Deacon Ron	Fr. Ron Deacon Ron	Fr. Ron Deacon Ron	Fr. Ron Deacon Ron
Ushers	Todd Datweiler Bob Schultz Dave Emling Brent Buza	Daryl Ferris Dennis Pankey	Cathy Jensen Mary Offerman Jerry Ogrentz Arlen Hansen	Kim Smicker Erik Wheeler Corinn Wheeler Dustin Truetner
Lector	Dave Emling	Alicia Kirkpatrick	Carrie Abrassart	Diane Long
Eucharistic Minister				
Servers				Sydney Weldon Avery Adams
Greeters			Greeter—Rita Thiesen R. Leader—Kathy Dumas	Kim Smicker

Mass Intentions for the Week

Monday, Dec. 29 (SMM)

8:00 am +Mary Lou Fosnaugh (Paul/Phyllis Peterson)

Tuesday, Dec. 30 (SH)

8:00 am +James Perry (Don/Marie Feller)

Wednesday, Dec. 31 New Year's Eve

5:00 pm (SMM) +Bob Eich (Jackie Eberle)

Thursday, Jan. 1 New Year's Day

10:00 am (SH) +Jack Klasey (Jackie Cross)

Friday, Jan. 2 First Friday

8:00 am (SJ) +Louise Devine (Dan/Cindy Borschnack)

Saturday, Jan. 3 (SMM)

5:00 pm +James Jepsen (Tom/Nancy Kneer)

Sunday, Jan. 4

7:30 am (SH) +Sondra Hertz (Michael/Nancy Larson)

9:00 am (SJ) +Pat Perreault (Maureen O'Connor)

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

A Look Ahead

Wed., December 31— New Year's Eve Mass 5 pm SMM

Thurs. Jan. 1—10 am—New Year's Day Mass 10 am SH

Fri., January 2 - First Friday at Sacred Heart

Sat., January 3—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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Sacred Heart – Rhonda Berns – 426-5015

St. James—Tanhya Osenga tosenga81@gmail.com

Parish Nurse – Jackie Eberle – 815-421-4048

Prayer Line—

SMM -Janice 815-426-2574 Jdstreefarms@aol.com

St. James— Mary Offerman—602-670-8888 (call or text)

Sacred Heart-Marilyn Pfeiffer 815-955-8246 (call or text)

Terri Weakley— 815-514-8171

Question of the week:

How have I communicated the "good news of great joy" over the last week with those I have seen? How can I do so over the year ahead in what I say and do?

Collections Weekend of Dec. 21-22, 2025

St. Margaret Mary—\$2,312

Sacred Heart—\$1,616

St. James—\$4,200

Thank you for your generosity!

Gospel Shorts Your Holy Family

We are often tempted to put the Holy Family up on an unreachable pedestal, precisely because of its membership: Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. But then as we read Sacred Scripture and use a little imagination, we begin to realize the many similarities between the Holy Family and our own families. When God became incarnate in the person of Jesus Christ, God chose to be born into a human family. And like all families of this world, it was a family of sleepless nights, fear of the future, frustration and helplessness, and fragile hopes and dreams.

The picture perfect family does not exist anymore today than it did in the time of Jesus. But a good, healthy and loving family (like the Holy Family) is very possible if each member is willing to work at it. And like the Holy Family, we have to live the same kind of faith and love in our families that Jesus, Mary, and Joseph lived.

Parish News:

All Parishes—

- ⇒ Adult Ed classes will resume in January.
- ⇒ Envelopes are in the back of the church, if you don't see yours please call the office and we will get them to you.
- ⇒ Prayer meetings on Monday at 7pm at SJ.
- ⇒ Tri-Parish Office Hours— Our office hours are Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday 9am—12 pm.

St. Margaret Mary-

St. James-Thank you to all who made our pageant and basket raffle so successful! Also thanks to everyone who has donated to the Kids Helping Kids project. We have raised almost \$88 so far!

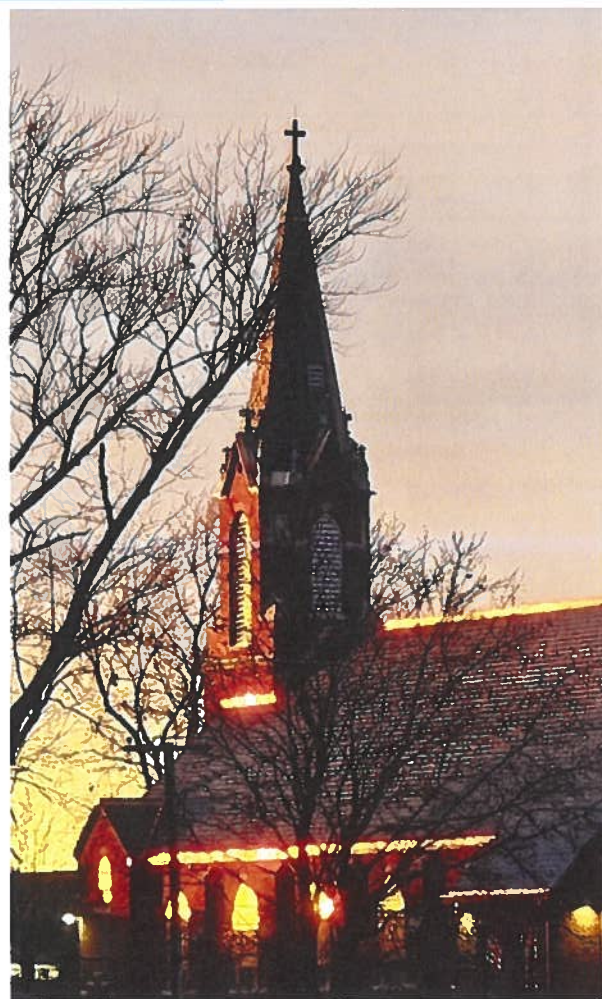
Sacred Heart—

- ⇒ The week of December 21st, the Blessed Virgin Mary candle burned in memory of Lorraine Brennan.
- ⇒ The week of December 28th, the Blessed Virgin Mary candle burns in memory of Fr. James Holup .



New Year Blessings

From Fr. Ron, Deacon Ron, and
the staff of the Tri-Parish
Community



St. Margaret Mary shining in her newly completed glory! Thanks Lauren Ruel for the photo.



Obscure saint of the week: St. Gregory Nazianzen (Jan. 2) was the son of Saint Gregory of Nazianzen the Elder and Saint Nonna, the brother of Saint Caesar Nazianzen, and Saint Gorgonius. He spent a wandering youth in search of learning. He was a friend of and fellow student with Saint Basil the Great. He became a monk at Basil's desert monastery.

Gregory was a reluctant priest; he believed that he was unworthy and that the responsibility would test his faith. He assisted his bishop father to prevent an Arian schism in the diocese. He opposed Arianism and brought its heretical followers back to the fold. Later Gregory became the bishop of Caesarea c.370, which put him in conflict with the Arian emperor Valens. The disputes led his friend Basil the Great, then archbishop, to reassign him to a small, out of the way posting at the edge of the archbishopric.

Gregory later became the bishop of Constantinople from 381 to 390, following the death of Valens. He hated the city, despised the violence and slander involved in these disputes, and feared being drawn into politics and corruption, but he worked to bring the Arians back to the faith; for his trouble he was slandered, insulted, beaten up, and a rival "bishop" tried to take over his diocese. Gregory was a noted preacher on the Trinity. When it seemed that orthodox Christianity had been restored in the city, Gregory retired to live the rest of his days as a hermit.

He wrote theological discourses and poetry, some of it religious, some of it autobiographical.



Other obscure saint of the week: St. Defendente the Theban (Jan. 2) was a Christian soldier in the Theban Legion of the imperial Roman army. He was martyred by emperor Maximian for refusing to sacrifice to pagan gods prior to a battle.

The Sunday Gospel in Everyday English

After the scholars were gone, God's angel showed up again in Joseph's dream and commanded, "Get up. Take the child and his mother and flee to Egypt. Stay until further notice. Herod is on the hunt for this child and wants to kill him."

Joseph obeyed. He got up, took the child and his mother under cover of darkness. They were out of town and well on their way by daylight. They lived in Egypt until Herod's death. This Egyptian exile fulfilled what Hosea had preached: "I called my son out of Egypt."

Later, when Herod died, God's angel appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt: "Up, take the child and his mother and return to Israel. All those out to murder the child are dead."

Joseph obeyed. He got up, took the child and his mother, and reentered Israel. When he heard, though, that Archelaus had succeeded his father, Herod, as king in Judea, he was afraid to go there. But then Joseph was directed in a dream to go to the hills of Galilee. On arrival, he settled in the village of Nazareth. This move was a fulfillment of the prophetic words, "He shall be called a Nazarene" (from Matthew 2).

Reflection—

In most churches the pews look alike. But they are really very different.

The critical pew: watches the minister of the church with an eagle eye. The singing is too soft or too loud. The building is always too hot or too cold. The critical pew finds everything but the blessing of God.

The irregular pew is full; sometimes it's empty. The problem is, you never know what to expect for this pew.

The cordial pew: is always radiant like the sunshine. This pew greets other pews and genuine cordiality, extends a handshake to every visitor, and listens with joy to the sermon.

The prayerful pew: spends a moment or two with bowed head in silent prayer on entering the church. This pew comes to worship and brings the spirit of worship with it into the church.

Which of these pews will you occupy?



Catholic Snacks, Get Fed

Why are green, red, and white the colors of Christmas, and what is the Catholic meaning behind them?

Seen together, these three colors tell the whole message of Christmas:

Green: Christ brings eternal life.

Red: Christ pours out His love to save us.

White: Christ is the divine Light entering our world

Every December, homes, churches, and city squares are wrapped in red, green, and white — colors so deeply tied to Christmas that we barely question why. But long before marketers and decorators adopted them, these colors carried rich Catholic symbolism rooted in Scripture, tradition, and the mystery of the Incarnation.

Green: The Sign of Eternal Life

Green has been associated with Christmas for centuries, especially through evergreens - the few plants that remain alive and vibrant through winter.

For Christians, this became a natural sign of Christ's eternal life, the One who enters a world of spiritual winter to bring never-ending life.

Evergreens reminded early believers of these truths:

Christ's life *cannot* wither

Hope endures even in the darkest season

The newborn Savior comes to give us life that "will never die"

So the color green whispers Advent's promise:

Life is coming.

Red: The Color of Love — and of the Cross Red is unmistakably the color of Christmas, but its meaning goes far deeper than holly berries or ribbons.

In Christian tradition, red symbolizes:

the blood of Christ, shed out of love for humanity

martyrdom, the witness of those who gave their lives for Him

sacrificial love, the heart of the Gospel

Even in the cave at Bethlehem, the Church has always kept the Cross in view.

The wood of the manger foreshadows the wood of Calvary.

The Child wrapped in swaddling clothes is the same Christ who will be wrapped again in burial cloths.

Red reminds us that Christ came not only to be born, but to die and rise for us. While the nativity is the focus, Christmas joy is inseparable from the redeeming love of the Cross

White: The Light That Shines in Darkness

White is the color of Christmastide itself — the liturgical color worn at every Christmas Mass.

It symbolizes:

Christ's purity

His divinity hidden in human flesh

the radiant glory of the Incarnation

the light the darkness cannot overcome

White proclaims that in the birth of Jesus, something utterly new has entered the world:

God Himself has stepped into time.

This is why Christmas is celebrated with white vestments — the same color used for Easter.

The joy of Christ's birth and the triumph of His resurrection are woven from the same thread.

A Story Written in Color

Seen together, these three colors tell the whole message of Christmas:

Green: Christ brings eternal life

Red: Christ pours out His love to save us.

White: Christ is the divine Light entering our world

No wonder the earliest Christians embraced them.

Every wreath, ribbon, and candle silently proclaims the Gospel.

Christmas is a feast of color — because Christmas is a feast of divine meaning.





Joseph...took the child
and his mother...to Egypt
MATTHEW 2:14



Gather us around
your table as your
family, O Lord

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1st Friday Adoration



"Every consecrated host is made to burn itself up with love in a human heart."

-St. John Vianney

First Friday Mass and Adoration will be held on Friday, January 2 at St. James. Adoration will conclude with Benediction at 3:00.

Reflection— Things Worth Remembering

The value of time,
The success of perseverance,
The pleasure of working,
The dignity of simplicity,
The worth of character,
The improvement of talent,
The influence of example,
The obligation of duty,
The wisdom of economy,
The virtue of patience,
The joy of originality,
The power of kindness.

St. Margaret Mary Fr. Ron

Dec 31-New Year's Eve 5 pm

Ushers – Roger Jensen, Kim Smicker, Sean Riordan, Larry Wolles

Lector – Steve Jacob

Sacred Heart Ministries

Jan 1 – New Year's Day 10am

Fr. Ron

Ushers – David Kirkpatrick, Kyle Ferris

Lector – Terri Weakley

Questions Catholics Ask

I'm a Eucharistic minister, and was corrected for saying cup instead of chalice. Why does it matter what you call it?

"A rose by any other name would smell as sweet." I'm not going to pick a fight with Shakespeare. But Romeo was incorrect in imagining that being a Montague was irrelevant in his quest to wed a Capulet. Names do matter. Precision in language matters. Not everything is a "thing." To learn the proper names implies we're invested, in the way professionals know the terms of their employment. Would you hire a doctor who couldn't be bothered to distinguish one bone from another? Or a plumber who couldn't name his tools?

So it's both useful and a matter of personal investment to know that the "bowl" you dip your hand in at the entrance to the church is a holy water font. It reminds us of the baptismal font—which these days may be a walk-in pool. Where the priest sits during Mass is the presider's chair. The table at which he stands is the altar, also known as the Table of the Lord. The readings at Mass are proclaimed from a special stand called the ambo. (Most Catholics call it a lectern, because the book the lector reads from is the lectionary.) The priest proclaims the gospel from the Book of Gospels. Then he gives a reflection on the Scriptures called the homily. The book the priest reads the rest of the prayers of the Mass from is the Roman Missal.

A plate called a paten holds the big host which the priest raises during the elevation at Mass. The elevation is part of the second part of the Mass known as the Liturgy of the Eucharist, in which we celebrate our communion with God and each other. The first part of the Mass is called the Liturgy of the Word, which celebrates the stories of our faith. The vessel holding the wine is called the chalice: however, cup is not incorrect. The bowl from which consecrated hosts are served is the ciborium (you get three points for knowing the plural is ciboria.) Once the hosts and wine are consecrated during the Eucharistic Prayer, believers recognize them as the Body and Blood of Christ. The little room where the priest and servers dress (or vest) is the sacristy. This is not to be confused with the sanctuary—once descriptive of the priest's side of the altar rail back when churches had railings. With the removal of the rail, we came to understand that we all stand in the sanctuary, that is, in the Holy Presence. The body of the church is more commonly distinguished as the nave, which is where the benches known as pews are. That's where we, the assembly, sit. If I had more room, we could do this all day. Suffice it to say, thoughtful Catholics know these terms and many more.

Scripture: The significance of naming persons, places, and things reflects the biblical belief that names participate in meaning in the most intimate way.



December 28, 2025

Feast of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph

Sir 3:2-6, 12-14 | Col 3:12-21 | Mt 2:13-15, 19-23

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

In his Angelus address on the Feast of the Holy Family in 2001, St. John Paul II shared this with those gathered: "If we aspire to a deeper understanding of Jesus' life and mission, we must draw close to the mystery of the Holy Family of Nazareth to observe and listen." Following in the footsteps of the Holy Family in today's Scripture, we find ourselves in quiet Bethlehem, just after the departure of the Magi. The angel of the Lord appears to Joseph in a dream, this time with a warning: "Rise, take the child and his mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I tell you. Herod is going to search for the child to destroy him." They trust in God and their response is immediate. It is easy for us to imagine the Holy Family as different from ourselves — holier and more spiritual. Certainly, that's true. They were holy but they were also fully human, which means that what they attained is possible for each of us. Let us try to imitate them in this holiness.

GO EVANGELIZE

PRAYER, INVITATION, WITNESS, ACCOMPANIMENT

It's easy to glamorize the life of Joseph, Mary, and Jesus, but in reality, the cross was with them long before the crucifixion. From the moment of the Annunciation, there would be trials, temptations, and sufferings. But each time, they respond with immediate obedience and deep trust. In doing so, they give us all a perfect example of what the Christian life should look like: a life motivated by love and always listening for the voice of God, ready to respond in an instant. As we accompany others on this journey of faith, we also must listen deeply to them in order to help them in discerning the Spirit's movement in their lives. As we hone the spiritual muscle of attentive listening, we grow in our ability to respond to God and to God's action in our lives, and to help others do the same.

REFLECT

Most of us will never hear from an angel in the middle of the night telling us to walk hundreds of miles with our baby in tow. But every single one of us will be — has been — called. Let us pray to the Holy Family for an increase in the virtues of obedience and trust, so that we can respond to God's call in our lives.



SPIRITUALITY

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Heb 1:1-2

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets;
in these last days, he has spoken to us through the Son.

R. Alleluia, alleluia.



Gospel Luke 2:16-21; L18ABC

The shepherds went in haste to
Bethlehem and found Mary
and Joseph,
and the infant lying in the manger.
When they saw this,
they made known the message
that had been told them about this
child.

All who heard it were amazed
by what had been told them by the
shepherds.

And Mary kept all these things,
reflecting on them in her heart.

Then the shepherds returned,
glorifying and praising God
for all they had heard and seen,
just as it had been told to them.

When eight days were completed for
his circumcision,
he was named Jesus, the name given
him by the angel
before he was conceived in the womb.

See Appendix A., p. 269, for the other readings.

Reflecting on the Gospel

The founder of Mothers Against War wears a button that reads, "War Undoes Mothers' Work." Our liturgical celebration today likewise juxtaposes Mary, the Mother of God, and prayer for world peace. Today's readings speak to us of God's motherly love and offer Jesus's mother as an example for how that maternal care becomes enfleshed in humankind. The feast today is not a sentimental exaltation of motherhood but offers guidance for how men and women alike can engage in maternal work that averts war and builds peace in the human family.

The gospel is the same as that of Christmas Day, but on this feast day, while we are still celebrating the birth of Christ, our attention is drawn to Mary. She receives the divine message from visiting shepherds, proclaiming glory to God and peace for all peoples on earth. Mary keeps in her heart all that she has heard, reflecting on it again and again. As at the annunciation (Luke 1:26-38), she does not fully understand what God is doing or asking of her, but the Spirit gives her the ability to say yes, trusting in the One who has always been faithful. She maintains this stance throughout her life, as also when she treasures everything in her heart after the disturbing episode of having found her twelve-year-old son among the teachers in the temple (Luke 2:51). A fundamental attitude for bringing to birth God's dream of peace for us is to live like Mary, in contemplative wonder, dwelling in mystery, trusting in the ways of the Holy One.

Another key ingredient in building peace is highlighted in the first reading and in the psalm response. They invite us to live in a stance of blessedness, accepting that we are blessed and beloved of God, which then enables us to extend blessing to all peoples. Mary exemplifies this stance, when at the visitation, she receives blessing through Elizabeth, who exclaims that Mary and the child she carries are blessed.

In the second reading, Paul, speaking to a community of Gentile Christians, uses the metaphor of adopted children to assure them of their equal stance as begotten of God and heirs to all the divine promises. In the context of today's feast, we might read this as an invitation to regard all people as children of God, our brothers and sisters, all embraced by God's boundless love. The Spirit not only helps us cry out to God as our own parent but also helps us to hear this same cry on the lips of our siblings throughout the globe.

In 1968, when Pope Paul VI first asked that January 1 be observed each year as a World Day of Peace, he noted that "the world must be educated to love Peace, to build it up and defend it." Peace building does not come as instinctively as maternal love, but both can be learned and taught. We can turn to Mary to show us the way to contemplate God's motherly love, to live in blessedness, and to teach others the ways of building peace.

Preparing to Proclaim

Key words and phrases: Mary kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart.

To the point: The image of Mary giving birth to the incarnate Word, Jesus Christ, is helpful as we approach the Scriptures, whether as one proclaiming during the liturgy or in our own private prayer. Luke tells us that the shepherds told Mary what they had heard from the angels, and she "kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart." God's revelation to us in the Scriptures is not something we can expect to unpack immediately—it is something that must be ruminated on over time, piece by piece. Each time we hear the Scriptures proclaimed at Mass—the lectionary cycle repeats every three years—or every time