

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

3RD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

DECEMBER 13-14, 2025



Third Sunday of Advent

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: "No believer in Christ, no institution of the church, can avoid this supreme duty: to proclaim Christ to all peoples."

—Saint John Paul II

4th Sunday of Advent				December 20-21, 2025
Liturgical Schedule	St. Margaret Mary Saturday, Dec. 20 5:00 pm	Sacred Heart Sunday, Dec. 21 7:30 am	St. James Sunday, Dec. 21 9:00 am	St. Margaret Mary Sunday, Dec. 21 10:30 am
Celebrant	Fr. Ron	Fr. Allam	Fr. Allam	Fr. Allam
Ushers	Todd Datweiler Bob Schultz Dave Emling Brett Buza	Kyle Ferris Dennis Pankey	Bob Buente Arlan Hansen Dallas Ferris Dan Forsythe	Brent Fulton Erik Wheeler Corinn Wheeler Dustin Truetner
Lector	Bobbi Buza	Mike Hertz	Dave Ladehoff	Steve Jacon
Eucharistic Minister			Todd Mesewicz	Susan Feller
Servers	Gavin Down			Sydney Weldon
Greeters			Greeter—Donna Bernicky	Julie Splear

Mass Intentions for the Week

Monday, Dec. 15 (SMM)

8:00 am +Geneva Koerner (Jackie Eberle)

Tuesday, Dec. 16 (SH)

8:00 am +Sondra Hertz (Marla Lindquist)

Wednesday, Dec. 17 (SJ)

8:00 am +Laurie Hansen (Patricia White)

Friday, Dec. 19 (SMM)

8:00 am +Anna Hildebrand & George Schmidt (Mariann Lane)

Saturday, Dec. 20 (SMM)

5:00 pm +For All the Parish Family

Sunday, Dec. 21

7:30 am (SH) Special intention of Shirley St. Germaine (Jackie Cross Family)

9:00 am (SJ) +Virginia Gadbois (Dallas/Joyce Ferris)
+Darlene Bertrand (Carson Cross Kids)

10:30 am (SMM) +Jim Webber (Madeline Bouchard Family)
+Rudy Splear (Marcia Johnston)

A Look Ahead

Sun., Dec. 14—SJ Christmas Pageant and Basket Raffle

Sun., Dec. 14—Youth Mass at SMM

Tues., Dec. 17—Advent Confessions 7—7:45 at SMM

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

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

Sacred Heart—Rhonda Berns — 426-5015

St. James—Tanya 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:

If I am honest with myself, what part of Jesus' message offends me?

Collections Weekend of Dec. 14-15, 2025

St. Margaret Mary—\$2,613	Immaculate Conception—\$384
Sacred Heart—\$8,311	Immaculate Conception—\$270
St. James—\$2,641	Immaculate Conception—\$182

Thank you for your generosity!

Gospel Shorts The Position of Savior is Filled

The Text: "John ... sent word by his disciples, 'Are you he who is to come, or shall we look for another?'" (Matt. 11:13) John the Baptist asked of Jesus: "Are you he who is to come, or shall we look for another?" In other words, "Are you the Messiah or not?" Jesus' answer spoke of his ministry then underway — his deeds of mercy, his proclamation of the Good News of God, the inauguration of God's kingdom on earth. "Yes," our Lord was saying. "The position of Savior is filled."

Christmas is about taking Christ at his word. We don't need anyone else to call Lord. Christ has come. Christ is God being with us person-to-person, face-to-face, heart-to-heart. When we realize the difference Christ makes and has made throughout the centuries, we understand the deeper meaning of Christmas: God with us.

2025 CHRISTMAS MASS SCHEDULE

CHRISTMAS EVE WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 24

3:00 PM AT ST. MARGARET MARY	FR. RON
5:00 PM AT ST. JAMES	FR. RON
9:00 PM AT SACRED HEART	FR. RON

CHRISTMAS DAY THURSDAY, DECEMBER 25

7:30 AM AT SACRED HEART	FR. RON
9:00 AM AT ST. JAMES	FR. RON
10:30 AM AT ST. MARGARET MARY	FR. RON



Sacred Heart Religious Ed "Kids Helping Kids" Fundraisers (benefitting Ronald McDonald House)



The Religious Ed students will be selling Christmas crafts after mass December 14th and 21st.

RMHC Please help our kids raise money for such a good cause. Thank you!

Father Allam will be with us this month. He will be saying Mass at St. Margaret Mary on Saturday, December 13. He will also be saying all the Sunday Masses on Sunday, December 21. We appreciate him returning to our Tri-Parishes each December.

Parish News:

All Parishes—

- ⇒ Advent confessions will be held on Tuesday, Dec. 16 from 7-7:45 pm at St. Margaret Mary
- ⇒ 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 meeting on December 15. 7 pm at SJ**
- ⇒ Tri-Parish Office Hours— Our office hours are Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday 9am—12 pm.
- ⇒ **Last Call for photography sittings to be scheduled for the parish directory.** It's not too late to be included in our parish directory. If we get 6 more sittings scheduled, the company will return to take pictures for those of you who were unable to attend the earlier picture days. Don't miss out on the new 2025 directory!



St. Margaret Mary-

- ⇒ SMM CCW thanks all who donated to our bakeless bake sale! We are able to help many chaitires because of your generosity!

St. James-

- ⇒ The CCW ladies would like to donate a basket for the Christmas pageant. We will be collecting gift cards to place on a Christmas tree. Give any cards to Reatta Gohlke or Mary Peerbolte before December 14. Thank you.
- ⇒ **Thank you to all who helped clean and decorate St. James. It looks beautiful and we couldn't have done it without you!** Sacred Heart-

Reflection— The Dawn of New Life

Father, God of all consolation, in your unending love and mercy for us you turn the darkness of death into the dawn of new life.

Show compassion to your people in their sorrow.

Be our refuge and strength to lift us from the darkness of this grief to the peace and light of your presence.

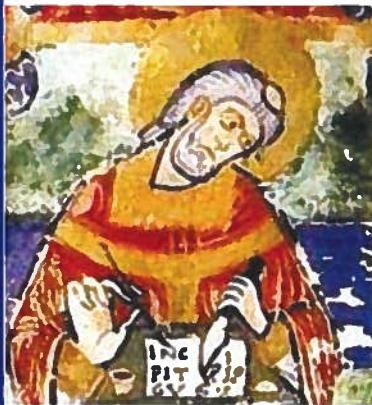
Your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, by dying for us, conquered death and by rising again, restored life.

May we then go forward eagerly to meet him, and after our life on earth be reunited with our brothers and sisters where every tear will be wiped away.



Obscure saint of the week: St. Agnellus of Naples (Dec. 14) was a hermit near Naples, Italy.

. Agnellus was a monk who later became the abbot of San Gaudioso monastery at Abtini, Italy. He was reported to be a miraculous protector of Naples during the Saracen invasions, turning aside invaders by showing the cross.



op of Poitiers c.600.

Other obscure saint of the week: St. Venantius Fortunatus (Dec. 14) was born to a pagan family. Venantius converted to Christianity when still quite young. He grew up in Aquileia, Italy, and studied grammar, rhetoric, and law at Ravenna, Italy. While a student he became nearly blind but recovered his sight by anointing his eyes with oil from a lamp that burned before the altar of Saint Martin of Tours. In gratitude to Saint Martin, he made a pilgrimage to Tours via the area of modern Germany, making the journey from about 565 to 567. In Tours he became a close friend of the bishop. Venantius lived in the Loire Valley for a while, then settled near Poitiers, France. During his travels he often paid for his supper by reciting poetry, singing, or making up rhymes on the spot. From 567 to 587 he counseled a local community of nuns on matters spiritual and financial. As a priest he became an advisor and secretary of Queen Saint Radegunde, wife of King Clotaire I. Later he became the bish-



A wanderer up to then, when Venantius became a bishop, he became a model of temperance and stability and was known for his love of food and friends and joy. He wrote hymns, essays, funeral elegies, homilies, and metrical lives of the saints including Saint Martin of Tours. His poetry and songs often concerned daily life, work, people and politics and have become a valuable resource for historians of the era. He is considered the last of the Gallic Latin poets, and one of the first Christian poets to write works devoted to Mary.

The Sunday Gospel in Everyday English

John, meanwhile, had been locked up in prison. When he got wind of what Jesus was doing, he sent his own disciples to ask, "Are you the One we've been expecting, or are we still waiting?"

Jesus told them, "Go back and tell John what's going on:

The blind see,
The lame walk,
Lepers are cleansed,
The deaf hear,
The dead are raised,
The wretched of the earth learn that God is on their side.

"Is this what you were expecting? Then count yourselves most blessed!"

When John's disciples left to report, Jesus started talking to the crowd about John. "What did you expect when you went out to see him in the wild? A weekend camper? Hardly. What then? A sheik in silk pajamas? Not in the wilderness, not by a long shot. What then? A prophet? That's right, a prophet! Probably the best prophet you'll ever hear. He is the prophet that Malachi announced when he wrote, 'I'm sending my prophet ahead of you, to make the road smooth for you.'

"Let me tell you what's going on here: No one in history surpasses John the Baptizer; but in the Kingdom he prepared you for, the lowliest person is ahead of him" (from Matthew 11).

Reflection— I Know Something Good About You

Wouldn't this old world be better if the folk we meet would say, "I know something good about you!"

Wouldn't it be fine and dandy if each handclasp warm and true carried with it this assurance, "I know something good about you!"

Wouldn't life be lots more happy, if the good that's in us all?

Were the only thing about us that folks bothered to recall? Wouldn't life be lots more happy, if we praised the good we see? For there's such a lot of goodness in the worst of you and me.

Wouldn't it be nice to practice that fine way of thinking, too? You know something good about me! I know something good about you!

Make your hearts firm because the coming of the LORD is at hand.



Catholic Snacks, Get Fed
Who created the first nativity scene?

A beloved saint brought us this most beloved Christmas tradition.

Every year, one of your favorite Advent traditions is probably setting up your Nativity set.

Perhaps your nativity is made of wood, or silver, or china, or simple plastic; maybe you put it on the mantelpiece, or in the center of the dining room table. Many of us have a large one that we place outdoors so that passers-by can enjoy it; we might also have a tiny one that we place by our bedside to remind ourselves of the reason for the Christmas season.

We keep the Baby Jesus hidden away, ready to place Him in the manger on Christmas morning.

The three Kings are placed in a different part of the house; they will arrive on Epiphany and not before.

Devout citizens place Nativity scenes in public places, at state capitols, in parks, to bring the light of Christmas to their fellow-men. They fight to keep Christ in the public square even as others try to remove Him. This year, after all the struggle, 40 states have a Nativity scene in or at their capitol building.

But who *invented* the Nativity scene?

It was a deacon in Italy in the 13th century, who had a special love for the Child Jesus. He hatched a plan to inspire this same love in the townspeople.

In a cave near the town, he set up a manger and brought a real ox and donkey to play their part. He invited the people to Midnight Mass at the cave, and they came, the forest ringing with song and bright with candlelight. After chanting the Gospel, the deacon preached a sermon about the Babe of Bethlehem, Whose Name he could not utter for sheer love.

He kept the manger empty, since the Child had not arrived yet. But one man—a holy citizen and former soldier who was a friend of the deacon—said that he saw, in the manger, a beautiful, radiant Child. He witnessed the deacon gathering this Child devoutly in his arms.

Of course, the deacon was none other than St. Francis of Assisi, and this is the story of the first Nativity scene, as related by St. Bonaventure in his biography of the saint. Bonaventure also relates that the hay from that first crèche was saved by the townspeople in attendance and that it miraculously cured ailing cattle.

When we put our Nativity sets out this Christmas, we are continuing a tradition that started nearly *800 years ago*, in 1223.

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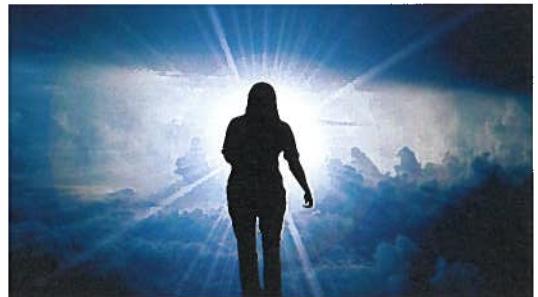
Sacred Heart Religious Ed students selling Christmas crafts after mass for the Kids Helping Kids project

Questions Catholics Ask
After we die, we "see God face to face." Then what?

You're quoting Saint Paul. In his passage on the nature of love in 1 Corinthians 13, Paul describes our present sense of what's going on as a dim reflection of the reality awaiting us. Even prophecy doesn't tell all, and knowledge is imperfect. Death's "big reveal" leads us "to know God fully," as we are fully known. At present, God has the advantage in knowing us comprehensively. In eternity, God returns the favor.

If this sounds like a big claim, Paul goes further in Philippians stating that, in the life to come, we'll share in the glorified nature of Christ. The First Letter of John confirms this, declaring that we'll not only see God, but we'll be like God in the upcoming realm.

From Genesis, of course, we already knew we bear God's likeness—but Paul and John's assertions sound like it's much more than a family resemblance.



What unites us with God, ultimately, is love, which is the very nature of God, according to Christian theology.

In reflecting on such passages full of celestial hints, theologians arrive at what they call the Beatific Vision. Some prefer to emphasize the beatific part: the very sight of God will be a blessing to us. Others lean into the vision part: the direct encounter with God will open our eyes so that we finally truly see. The goal isn't merely viewing God ("So that's what Divinity looks like!") or knowing God ("Pleased to make your acquaintance!") The eternal goal is union with God, which is what both Paul and John are driving at.

What unites us with God, ultimately, is love, which is the very nature of God, according to Christian theology. In John's words: "God is love, and whoever remains in love remains in God." Paul agrees when he declares that only three things persist for eternity—faith, hope, and love—and that love outshines the other two as the greatest virtue. John and Paul reaffirm what Jesus says in the Beatitudes: "Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God."

But your question is "Then what?" Beatific Vision unites us with God and allows us "full personal participation in the Trinitarian life of God," in the words of Jesuit theologian Paul Crowley. Does that sound like enough to keep you everlastingly occupied? The Sister who taught art at my high school used to say: "If God bores you, who in the world will entertain you?" I suspect the Beatific Vision will satisfy.

Scriptures: Genesis 1:26-27; Psalm 8:5-10; Wisdom 2:23; Matthew 5:8; John 17:25-26; 1 Corinthians 13:8-13; 2 Corinthians 3:18; 5:7; Ephesians 1:5; Philippians 3:21; Hebrews 11:1; 1 John 3:1-3; 4:7-21

Diocese of Joliet

Office of the Bishop



Blanchette Catholic Center
16555 Weber Rd.
Crest Hill, Illinois 60403
www.diojoliet.org

2025 Retirement Fund for Religious

retiredreligious.org

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Soon, our parishes will participate in the annual Retirement Fund for Religious collection. This important annual appeal benefits more than 21,000 senior sisters, brothers, and religious order priests who have dedicated their lives in service to the Church.

These faithful servants have long been a source of inspiration and support in our communities. I am personally grateful for the religious who helped shape my own faith journey. Perhaps you, too, have known an elderly sister, brother, or religious order priest whose quiet dedication, prayerful presence, or selfless acts left a lasting impression on your life.

Today, the challenges many of these senior religious and their communities face in meeting their retirement needs are greater than ever. Most received little to no pay for their service, and their communities struggle to cover rising health care expenses and the increasing cost of day-to-day eldercare. The financial burdens continue to grow, and the need is urgent.

Gifts to the Retirement Fund for Religious make a real, tangible difference to these many women and men religious. Contributions directly support their ongoing care today and help ensure that their communities can plan wisely for their future.

I know you are asked to support many worthy causes, and I thank you for the many ways you give. Please consider making a gift to this year's collection if you are able—and continue to pray for all our elderly religious. They also remember us daily in their prayers.

May God bless you and your loved ones abundantly with peace and health.

As I remain —

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Ronald A. Hicks

Most Reverend Ronald A. Hicks
Bishop of Joliet



Please give generously to
the upcoming collection.

Retirement Fund for Religious

Visit retiredreligious.org/2025photos to meet the religious pictured.
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December 14, 2025

Third Sunday of Advent

Is 35:1-6a, 10 | Jas 5:7-10 | Mt 11:2-11

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

One morning, I woke up feeling exhausted after a fitful night of sleep. I was achy and generally under the weather. Despite this, I made a to-do list because the day's work still needed to be accomplished. I was determined to not let this sickness interrupt my productivity, even though I knew I needed to rest. It occurred to me, then, that rest — and dependence on others and God — is sacred also. In today's psalm, we hear of the many ways the Lord provides: The Lord gives, the Lord raises, the Lord loves, the Lord protects, the Lord saves. We cannot accomplish our own salvation, but we can rest in the promise the Lord provides, and we can hope in the salvation offered in Christ. As we wait in joyful anticipation for the coming of Jesus at Christmas, let us find time to rest in his Word and his presence, trusting that our salvation does not depend on us and has already come to fruition in Christ.

GO EVANGELIZE

PRAYER, INVITATION, WITNESS, ACCOMPANIMENT

As we saw in our psalm, God is the one who takes initiative, who provides for our salvation. In our work to share the faith with others, sometimes our task is simply to help others become aware of the ways God is providing for them by pointing out the signs of his action in their lives. When the disciples of John came to Jesus asking if he was "the one who is to come" or whether they should "look for another," Jesus reminds them of the evidence all around them: the blind regain their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, and the dead are raised. As we help others to see God's work in their lives, we are also leading them to greater faith and trust in him.

REST

We are more able to see the signs of God's providence in our lives when we take time to reflect. Make time to rest in God's presence this week. This could mean stopping into a chapel for a couple minutes of quiet prayer, reflecting on Scripture using *Lectio Divina*, or reading the story of Christ's nativity in the Gospel. These simple practices will prepare our hearts to recognize Christ's presence and goodness at each moment of our lives.



SPIRITUALITY

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Isa 61:1 (cited in Luke 4:18)

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to bring glad tidings to the poor.

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel Matt 11:2-11; L7A

When John the Baptist heard in prison
of the works of the Christ,
he sent his disciples to Jesus with
this question,

"Are you the one who is to come,
or should we look for another?"

Jesus said to them in reply,

"Go and tell John what you hear
and see:
the blind regain their sight,
the lame walk,
lepers are cleansed,
the deaf hear,
the dead are raised,
and the poor have the good news
proclaimed to them."

And blessed is the one who takes no offense
at me."

As they were going off,

Jesus began to speak to the crowds about
John,

"What did you go out to the desert to see?

A reed swayed by the wind?

Then what did you go out to see?

Someone dressed in fine clothing?

Those who wear fine clothing are in royal
palaces.

Then why did you go out? To see a prophet?

Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet.

This is the one about whom it is written:

*Behold, I am sending my messenger
ahead of you;
he will prepare your way before you.*

Amen, I say to you,

among those born of women

there has been none greater than John

the Baptist;

yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is

greater than he."

Reflecting on the Gospel

There comes a time in most everyone's life when you wonder whether all the hard work and all the commitments are worth anything. Are you really making any difference in the world? Have you done with your life what you had hoped? Are you missing out on opportunities that may have passed by? That seems to be John the Baptist's frame of mind in today's gospel. He is in prison and his

days are numbered. He had taken up a radical prophetic lifestyle, fasting, praying, calling people to repentance, preparing the way, and watching for the Coming One. Was he right?

John sends his disciples to ask Jesus, who points to all the signs that John's preaching was right on target. Through Jesus's ministry, to which John pointed, people who could not previously do so are now seeing, walking, and hearing. Many are healed and restored to life. Poor people are heartened with good news. All the soil so carefully tilled and tended by John is bearing the long-awaited fruit. Was he expecting something else? Jesus says to the crowds that John was "more than a prophet," and that there has been "none greater than John the Baptist." Presumably, this assurance is also conveyed to John, giving him heart to be able to quell the doubts and to endure patiently to the end.

Jesus then poses a forthright question to the crowds. Three times he asks why they went out to the desert and what they were expecting to see there. If they were looking for a prophet, not only have they seen the greatest of prophets, but they themselves are now called to exceed what John accomplished. How are the "least in the kingdom of heaven" supposed to surpass the greatest prophet? The readings today set forth attitudes that are essential for this.

The first reading invites us to be filled with joy and gladness, and to express this in singing and rejoicing, even when all seems desolate. The exiles had yet to see the concrete signs of restoration. Even before experiencing the anticipated healing and rebuilding, they were to enter into the ruined city singing for joy. This is not a naive refusal to see things as they are, but an expression of hope that springs from a deep conviction that God's saving deeds in the past will be manifest in the present and future as well, for those who have eyes to see. The very expectation that the parched wasteland will yield fragrant blooms begins to bring it into being.

While awaiting the fulfillment of our expectations and longings, the letter of James exhorts us to be patient. Just as Jesus helped John's disciples to see the evidence of God's saving presence in their midst, so James urges us to look for the sprouts of hope that spring up even in the most parched desert. Expecting to see the desert bloom—or roses in December, as did Juan Diego, whom we remembered on the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe last Tuesday—we keep hope alive with patient endurance even in the midst of suffering and doubt.

