

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

4TH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

DECEMBER 20-21, 2025



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: "It is the beautiful task of Advent to awaken in all of us memories of goodness and thur to open doors of hope."

~Pope Benedict XVI

4th Sunday of Advent					December 27-28, 2025
Liturgical Schedule	St. Margaret Mary Saturday, Dec. 27 5:00 pm	Sacred Heart Sunday, Dec. 28 7:30 am	St. James Sunday, Dec. 28 9:00 am	St. Margaret Mary Sunday, Dec. 28 10:30 am	
Celebrant	Fr. Ron	Fr. Ron	Fr. Ron Deacon Ron	Fr. Ron	
Ushers	Roger Jensen Gery Wright Dave Emling Brett Buza	James Mallaney David Kirkpatrick	Jeff Martin Jeff Steinke Dave Ladehoff Dan Forsythe	Darren Lovell Larry Wolles Joe Smolkovich Brent Fulton	
Lector	Rob Landeck	Cindy Gagnon	Andy Hansen	Julie Splear	
Eucharistic Minister			Todd Mesewicz	Dana Masching	
Servers	Gavin Down			Caroline Fulton	
Greeters			Greeter—Mary Offerman R. Leader—Peerboltes	The Lovells	
Mass Intentions for the Week					

Monday, Dec. 22 (SMM)

8:00 am +Tom Buckley (Jerome, Martha, Jason Schneider)

Tuesday, Dec. 23 (SH)

8:00 am +Joseph Schafer (Don/Marie Feller)

Wednesday, Dec. 24

3:00 pm +Leo Giacometti (Julie Splear)
+Vicki Webber (David Lochner)

5:00 pm (SJ) +Noreen Saathoff (Dennis/Sue O'Connor)

9:00 pm (SH) +Tom Buckley (Tim Buckley)

Thursday, Dec. 25 Christmas Day

7:30 am +Inez Crawford (Terry Buckley)
9:00 am (SJ) +Ivan Denault (Dennis/Sue O'Connor)
+Virginia Fritz (Jerry/JoLynn Ogrentz)

10:30 am (SMM)+Marie Duval (Dave/Jen Riordan)

Friday, Dec. 26 (SMM)

8:00 am +Lorraine Brennan (Loriann Burer)

Saturday, Dec. 27 (SMM)

5:00 pm +Leo Giacometti (Jackie Eberle)

Sunday, Dec. 28

7:30 am (SH) +Sara Feller (Don/Marie Feller)
+Walter & Mary Pieszka (Aniela Kmetz)
9:00 am (SJ) +Bernadette Cimbalnik (Joan Forsythe)
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" 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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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

Collections Weekend of Dec. 14-15, 2025

St. Margaret Mary—\$1,994	Retired Religious—\$ 324
Sacred Heart—\$996	Retired Religious— \$582
St. James—\$2,959	Retired Religious—\$371

Thank you for your generosity!

Gospel Shorts Relax and Let Him Dwell

Signs of love and good cheer are abundantly clear for us throughout this holiday season. But how much are we actually attuned to the signs of love that God, our family, and friends are giving us? Although “it is better to give than to receive,” it is also good for us to be able to receive what others are giving to us.

And even more importantly, do we take time out of our busy schedules to ponder what God gave to us this Christmas season? What could be more precious than the gift of his Son? It was a gift of life — and not just a one-time gift that is shoved in the closet, but one that can grow and be passed on to others. Let the love of God multiply in your heart this Christmas season.

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



Oplatki

Oplatki packets are available at the back of church. This is a great tradition to introduce or re-introduce to your family. As your family gathers for Christmas Eve dinner or Christmas Day dinner, the senior member of the family takes the wafer, breaks off a piece and then passes it onto the rest of the family. Every member of the family breaks off a piece and once it is distributed to all around the table a prayer of blessing is said.

“May the blessing of Almighty God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit come down upon all who partake of this wafer. May He grant us peace in our lives, length of days and joy in all we do. Amen”



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 meeting on December 15. 7 pm 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—

Sacred Heart	Sacred Heart
Christmas Eve 9:00 pm	Christmas Day 7:30 am
Ushers: K. Ferris, D. Kirkpatrick	Ushers: D. Pankey, D. Ferris
Lector: Darlene Cipcich	Lector: Rhonda Berns
St. James	St. James
Christmas Eve 5:00 pm	Christmas Day 9:00 am
Ushers: D. Ladehoff, J. Steinke, J. Ogratz, M. Offerman	Ushers
Com. Min.: R. Gohlke	Com. Min.: Dallas Ferris
Lector: Jeff O'Connor	Lector: Mary Peerbolte
Greeter: Christine Forsythe	Greeter: Dallas Ferris

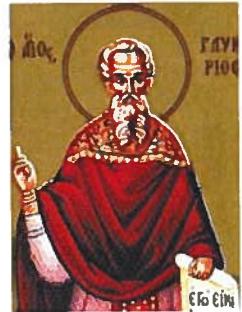
St. Margaret Mary	St. Margaret Mary
Christmas Eve 3:00 pm	Christmas Day 10:30 am
Ushers: T. Datweiler, L. Wolles, W. Bisaillon, E. Wheeler	Ushers: Dave Emling,, Kim Smicker, Joe Smolkovich, Sean Riordan
Lector: Diane Long	Lector: Mary Hope Pleckham
Com. Min. :Wayne Bisaillon	
Server: Caroline & Kate Fulton	Server: Sydney Weldon



Obscure saint of the week: St. Glycerius of Nicomedia (Dec. 21) was a priest at Nicomedia, Asia Minor (in modern Turkey). He was arrested and tortured in the persecutions of Diocletian. He was offered release if he denounced his faith; he declined.



Other obscure saint of the week: St. James of Valencia (Dec. 21) joined the Mercedarians at age 27 at El Puig, Spain. He was known for his austere personal life and ministry to the poor. James was sent to Algiers to ransom some prisoners; he decided to preach Christianity in a synagogue. He was a martyr.



The Sunday Gospel in Everyday English

The birth of Jesus took place like this. His mother, Mary, was engaged to be married to Joseph. Before they came to the marriage bed, Joseph discovered she was pregnant. (It was by the Holy Spirit, but he didn't know that.) Joseph, chagrined but noble, determined to take care of things quietly so Mary would not be disgraced.

While he was trying to figure a way out, he had a dream. God's angel spoke in the dream: "Joseph, son of David, don't hesitate to get married. Mary's pregnancy is Spirit-conceived. God's Holy Spirit has made her pregnant. She will bring a son to birth, and when she does, you, Joseph, will name him Jesus—'God saves'—because he will save his people from their sins." This would bring the prophet's embryonic sermon to full term: Watch for this—a virgin will get pregnant and bear a son; They will name him Immanuel (Hebrew for "God is with us").

Then Joseph woke up. He did exactly what God's angel commanded in the dream: He married Mary. But he did not consummate the marriage until she had the baby. He named the baby Jesus (*from Matthew 1*).



Joseph, son of David, have no fear about taking Mary as your wife

MT. 1:20

Reflection— Common Bonds

Hurt not others in ways that you yourself would find hurtful. *Buddhism*

This is the sum of duty: do naught unto others which would cause you pain if done to you *Hinduism*

No one of you is a believer until he desires for his brother that which he desires for himself. *Islam*

What is hateful to you, do not to your fellow man. This is the entire Law: all the rest is commentary. *Judaism*

Whatsoever you wish that men would do to you, do so to them; for this is the law and the prophets. *Christianity*



In the beginning was the word
JN.1:1

Catholic Snacks, Get Fed
Did you know there are three Christmas Masses?

There were three traditional Christmas Masses.

The Catholic tradition of celebrating three distinct Masses on Christmas Day is an ancient and profound custom, rooted in the history of the Church in Rome and steeped in theological symbolism. While Catholics are only required to attend one Mass to fulfill the holy day obligation, the three Masses beautifully symbolize the threefold birth of Christ: His eternal birth from the Father, His temporal birth from the Virgin Mary, and His spiritual birth in our hearts.



1. The Mass During the Night (The Angels' Mass)

Time: Midnight (or late Christmas Eve).

Symbolism: This Mass focuses on Christ's Eternal Birth from the Father, a hidden, mysterious, and miraculous event. Celebrated in the darkness of night, it mirrors the spiritual darkness of the world before Christ's coming. It emphasizes the immediate, hidden moment of the Nativity.

Key Scripture Theme: The Nativity Narrative itself, featuring the Gospel of Luke where the angels announce the birth to the shepherds.

2. The Mass at Dawn (The Shepherds' Mass)

Time: Daybreak.

Symbolism: As the natural light begins to return, this Mass focuses on Christ's Spiritual Birth in the hearts of the faithful. Christ is celebrated as the "Sun of Justice" bringing illumination to the world. The shift from the deep night to the first light of day symbolizes the dawning of grace in humanity. The Shepherds, the first to adore Christ, represent the simple faithful who are drawn to Him.

Key Scripture Theme: The Adoration of the Shepherds (Luke), focusing on the shepherds hastening to the crib and proclaiming the Good News.

3. The Mass During the Day (The King's Mass)

Time: Morning/Daytime.

Symbolism: Celebrated in the fullness of day, this Mass focuses on Christ's Temporal/Historical Birth and the full revelation of His Divinity and Incarnation to the whole world. It proclaims Christ as the Eternal Word made flesh and the undisputed King of Kings.

Key Scripture Theme: The Prologue of St. John's Gospel ("In the beginning was the Word..."), which provides the most theological reflection on the Incarnation: "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us." All of this comes from the Church's ancient historical practice, the texts of the Roman Missal, and authoritative theological teaching.

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Peace on Earth





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.

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

Our Diocese will be celebrating the Closing of the Jubilee Year of Hope with all Catholics throughout the world on Sunday December 28 at the 10:30 Mass at the Cathedral of St. Raymond in Joliet. Come and give thanks with people from throughout the Diocese for all the graces during this Jubilee Year



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— Wrought by Prayer

More things are wrought by prayer than the world dreams of. Wherefore, let thy voice rise like a fountain for me night and day. For what are men better than sheep or goats that nourish a blind life within the brain, if, knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer .

Sponsor an Individual or Family for Christmas

This Christmas season, Catholic Charities invites you to make a meaningful difference through our annual **Gift of Christmas** program. Your support helps fulfill wish lists for individuals and families served by Catholic Charities.

You may choose to support a specific individual or family by reading their story, or you can make a general gift that will be directed to someone still waiting to be sponsored.

Giving is easy:

- Visit catholiccharitiesjoliet.org and click *Donate*
- Call **815-724-1140** to give by phone
- Mail a check (please note "*Gift of Christmas*" in the memo) to: Catholic Charities
16555 Weber Rd.
Crest Hill, IL 60403

Questions? Call **815-724-1140** or email msnow@cc-doj.org.

Questions Catholics Ask

What's the difference between a psalm and a canticle

Our term psalm comes from a Greek word literally meaning the twanging of a harp or plucking of a stringed instrument. Canticle derives from the Latin word for a little song. As both definitions suggest, we're talking about sung material, particularly sacred songs. The main difference between the two is not style, but placement. Psalms are found entirely within the Book of Psalms. Canticles are songs located anywhere else in Scripture.

The psalm collection, known as psalmody or the Psalter, contains musical directions that indicate at least a third of the 150 poems within the book were intended for stringed, flute, or harp accompaniment. Some were apparently set to music everyone knew: read notations like "the hind of the dawn" the way our hymns might recommend "Finlandia" or "Pange Lingua". The word selah appears 71 times in the collection. We don't know what it means, but the choir certainly would have. Internally, some psalms also carry subtitles that distinguish them as songs, hymns, or prayers. This doesn't imply the others are not songs or prayers. It's just that these entered the collection with these titles, the way "The Lord's Prayer" is obviously not the only prayer of Jesus included in the gospels. In the Jewish Bible, the entire collection we call psalms is known by the Hebrew word for hymns. The bottom line is there's no indication any of these poems were intended merely for recitation, as we often do.

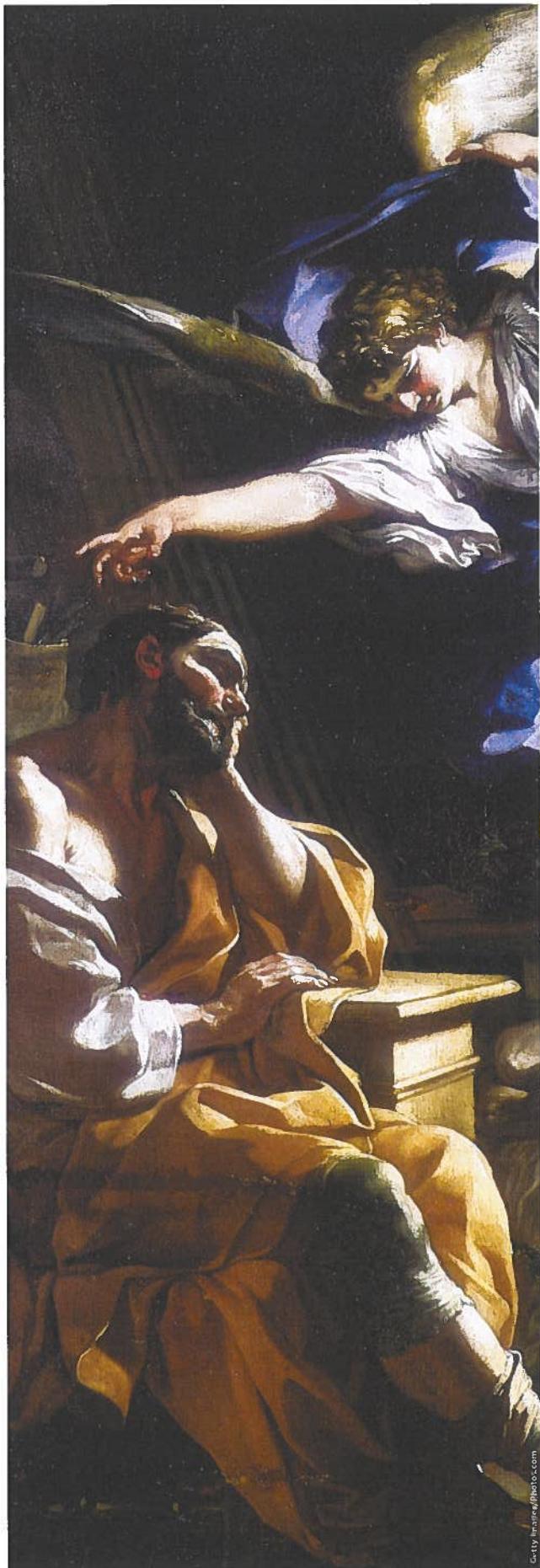
King David, traditionally considered the author of the whole book of psalms, is internally attributed with at least 73 of them. (Other manuscripts ascribe 84 to David). The others bear the names of other composers. Biblical evidence suggests David was a poet, composer, and musician, not to mention the organizer of the liturgical cult of the Temple. If he didn't actually compose half of the Psalmody, he was its primary original sponsor.

Canticles have a broad authorship. Song of Songs, AKA Canticle of Canticles, was traditionally ascribed to King Solomon. The subject matter is a series of love songs, which suited Solomon's reputation as a renowned lover. However, most scholars see multiple and later author involvement. Important Old Testament canticles include those attributed to Miriam, Moses, Deborah, Hannah, and Judith. New Testament canticles include the Benedictus of Zechariah, the Nunc Dimittis of Simeon, and of course the Magnificat of Mary. More recent canticles include those of Francis of Assisi and John of the Cross.

Scripture: Exodus 15:1-21; Deuteronomy 32:1-44; Judges 5:1-31; 1 Samuel 2:1-10; Judith 16:1-17; Song of Songs; Luke 1:46-55, 67-79; 2:29-32



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December 21, 2025

Written by
THE
FAITHFUL
DISCIPLE

Fourth Sunday of Advent

Is 7:10-14 | Rom 1:1-7 | Mt 1:18-24

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

Throughout my life, I have had a litany of requests for God. I have asked for mundane and ultimately inconsequential favors and also for guidance in much more important matters. But I have often hesitated to ask for the deepest desires of my heart. Those requests feel too big, too impossible, and possibly too selfish — as though asking these things would take away from God's ability to provide for others. But in thinking this way, I am putting limits on a limitless God. In today's first reading, the Lord speaks to Ahaz and tells him to ask for a sign — "let it be deep as the netherworld, or high as the sky!" When Ahaz refuses, God speaks through the prophet Isaiah to deliver the most impossible promise — that "the virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall name him Emmanuel." God wants to give us everything we need to be close to him, so much so that he sent his Son to open the pathway to eternal life with him. God wants us to ask for him to do the impossible because he longs to give generously to us.

GO EVANGELIZE

PRAYER, INVITATION, WITNESS, ACCOMPANIMENT

God brings about his plan of salvation in an extraordinary way: The virgin Mary conceives Jesus in her womb through the power of the Holy Spirit. Although God does all the spiritual heavy lifting here, notice that our Gospel tells us that he also desired and asked for Joseph's cooperation. "Do not be afraid to take Mary your wife into your home," the angel tells Joseph. The Gospel tells us that Joseph "did as the angel of the Lord commanded him." In our work of evangelization, God does the heavy lifting: it's God who moves the hearts of others to seek him. But the amazing thing is that God still wants us to be part of the way his plan unfolds. We, too, cooperate with God's work of sharing the faith and bringing salvation to others by our actions and obedience.

PRAY

As we begin this final week of Advent, the Church continues to pray with the O Antiphons, which we hear in the hymn, "O Come, O Come Emmanuel." Listen to the refrain, which speaks of Israel's immense longing to be set free and for her savior to appear. As you reflect on the first reading and upon this hymn, bring your own deepest desires to the Lord. Spend some time in prayer asking for what you need to draw closer to God.

SPIRITUALITY

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Matt 1:23

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

The virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel.

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel

Matt 1:18-24; L10A

This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about.

When his mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found with child through the Holy Spirit.

Joseph her husband, since he was a righteous man, yet unwilling to expose her to shame, decided to divorce her quietly.

Such was his intention when, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary your wife into your home.

For it is through the Holy Spirit that this child has been conceived in her.

She will bear a son and you are to name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."

All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: *Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel,* which means "God is with us."

When Joseph awoke, he did as the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took his wife into his home.

Reflecting on the Gospel

Today's young people are significantly more tolerant than their elders, according to a recent study. Young people think nothing of dating members of other races. On the other hand, studies of college students show that they are about 40 percent lower in empathy than students of the previous two or three decades. Schools find that they need to construct activities designed to enhance understanding and empathy, which go far beyond tolerance.

Today's gospel brings to the fore the situation of Joseph, whose culture had little tolerance for a formally betrothed woman who was found to be with child by someone other than her intended. Joseph is a righteous man, faithful to all the demands of the

Jewish law. The strictest interpretation of the law would call for the death of the apparently adulterous Mary (Deut 22:23-27). But Joseph is unwilling to denounce her publicly and searches for a way out. There cannot be a secret divorce; two witnesses are needed, and Mary's pregnancy cannot be hidden for long.

Joseph's first solution is to avoid a public trial and divorce Mary quietly, without declaring the reasons (see Deut

24:1). This solution would preserve Joseph's reputation, but Mary would still be exposed to public shame. The only way to preserve Mary's honor would be for Joseph to complete his marriage to her and adopt the child as his own. In order for Joseph to make this choice, he has to shift focus away from concern about his own righteousness and reputation and turn empathetically toward Mary. Only when he can make her the center of his attention, allowing himself to feel her distress, can he make the divinely directed choice that will uphold her honor at the price of his own.

In so doing, Joseph mirrors the divine action of empathy with humankind manifested in the incarnation. Just as the Holy One rectifies the broken relationship with humanity by becoming one with us, so Joseph rescues a dishonorable and potentially deadly situation by choosing to unite himself completely to Mary. Joseph exemplifies what their son Jesus will later teach his followers: one must go far beyond what the law requires in order to truly fulfill it.

This is what Saint Paul calls "the obedience of faith" in his letter to the Romans. For Paul, obedience is not blindly following commands, but comes from hearing, "and what is heard comes through the word of Christ" (Rom 10:17). In fact, the Greek word for *obedience* comes from the same root as does the verb "to hear." In the gospel, Joseph's ability to hear with his heart the cries of his beloved Mary as well as the voice of our empathetic God leads to his faithful obedience. As Christmas approaches, it can be difficult for us to hear God's voice above the din of the many demands. When we pause each day to listen attentively, our faithful obedience, like that of Joseph, can have world-changing power as it creates the space for the Holy One to be ever birthed anew in our midst as God-with-us.

