

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

2ND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

DECEMBER 6-7, 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: "If you lose faith, you lose all."

—Eleanor Roosevelt

**Third Sunday of Advent**

**December 13-14, 2025**

|                     |  |  |   |  |
|---------------------|--|--|---|--|
| Liturgical Schedule | St. Margaret Mary<br>Saturday, Dec. 13<br>5:00 pm        | Sacred Heart<br>Sunday, Dec. 14<br>7:30 am | St. James<br>Sunday, Dec. 14<br>9:00 am                       | St. Margaret Mary<br>Sunday, Dec. 14<br>10:30 am |
| Celebrant           | Fr. Ron<br>Deacon Ron                                    | Fr. Ron<br>Deacon Ron                      | Fr. Ron<br>Deacon Ron   | Fr. Ron<br>Deacon Ron                            |
| Ushers              | Roger Jensen<br>Gery Wright<br>Dave Emling<br>Brett Buza | Daryl Ferris<br>Kyle Ferris                | Dan Forsyth<br>Cathy Jensen<br>Jerry Ogrentz<br>Mary Offerman | Youth Mass                                       |
| Lector              | Hillary Smith  | Erica Parsons                              | Kelly Buente  | Youth Mass                                       |
| Eucharistic         |  |  | Donna Bernicky  |  |
| Servers             |  |  |   | Youth Mass                                       |
| Greeters            |  |  | Greeter—Jerry Ogrentz<br>R. Leader—Rita Thiesen               | Youth Mass                                       |

**Mass Intentions for the Week**

**Monday, Dec. 8 (SMM)**

8:00 am +Mary McDonald (Rita Werner)  
7:00 pm (SJ) +Gerald Bernicky (Bruce/Cathy Jensen)

**Tuesday, Dec. 9 (SH)**

8:00 am +Jerry Mescher (Dorothy Mescher)

**Wednesday, Dec. 10 (SJ)**

8:00 am +Louise Devine (Craig/Liz Frerichs)

**Friday, Dec. 12(SMM)**

8:00 am +Cindy Frerichs (Scott Natschke Family)

**Saturday, Dec. 13 (SMM)**

5:00 pm +Denise Jepsen Blake (Jackie Eberle)  
+Jim Jepsen (Jackie Eberle)

**Dec. 14**

7:30 am (SH) +Wayne, Pat, & Mike McCarty (Terry/Jerri Weakley)

+Don St. Germaine, Sr. ( St. James Parish)

9:00 am (SJ) +Howard Nelson (Steve/Dena Coy)

+Deceased members of Stevenson & Daly Families (Larry/Birdie Stevenson)

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

**A Look Ahead**

**Sun., Dec. 7—SJ CCW Christmas Party**  
**Mon., Dec. 8—Holy Day—Feast of Immaculate Conception**  
**Tues., Dec. 9—SH CCW Christmas Party**  
**Sun., Dec. 14—SJ Christmas Pageant and Basket Raffle**  
**Sun., Dec. 14—Youth Mass 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](http://www.triparishcatholics.org)

Like us on Facebook triparishcatholic communities

**Tri Parish Church office** –Barb Riker 426-2550

Julie Bisailon 426-2550

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debjen04@gmail.com

**Religious Education** –

St. MM – Jill Fulton [jfulton.stmm@gmail.com](mailto:jfulton.stmm@gmail.com)

Sacred Heart – Rhonda Berns – 426-5015

St. James—Tanhya Osenga [tosenga81@gmail.com](mailto:tosenga81@gmail.com)

**Parish Nurse** – Jackie Eberle – 815-421-4048

**Prayer Line—**

SMM -Janice 815-426-2574 [Jdstreefarms@aol.com](mailto: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. 7-8, 2025

St. Margaret Mary—\$1,185

Sacred Heart—\$520

St. James—\$420

Thank you for your generosity!

**Monday, December 8 7:00 pm**

**Holy Day -Feast of Immaculate Conception**

**Greeter** -Donna Bernicky

**Ushers** - Dennis O'Connor, Dallas Ferris, Cathy Jensen, Arlen Hansen

**Lector**- Mary Peerbolte

**Joy in January** will be held at the Kankakee Country Club on January 3, 2026. .

St.. Margaret Mary—Sign up by Dec. 7. Please make checks payable to SMM CCW for \$19.

St. James— Please sign up by Dec. 8. on the bulletin board. Cost is \$19 for lunch.

Sacred Heart—Please sign up by Dec. 7. Check the bulletin board for details.



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

The Religious Ed students will be selling Christmas crafts after mass December 7th, 14th, and 21st.

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

### Gospel Shorts Great Hope

On the second Sunday of Advent, just as people are anticipating the joyful season of Christmas, Matthew 3: 1–12 seems to speak more to judgment, gloom, and doom than joy and peace. If the story book character Scrooge could choose a reading for the Advent season, this Scripture passage would probably be on his list!

Although John the Baptist is very direct and demanding in his message, it is also a message of great hope; hope about what the future entails for those who enter into the process of repentance and conversion. John the Baptist is attempting to point the way to Christ — who is the great hope and great love given to us by God.

### Question of the week:

How can my family live together more harmoniously? What can I do to help make this happen?

### Reflection—One Person Can Make a Big Difference

Each one of us, by the grace of God, has the power to change the world for the better. Every act of care and concern for others has a ripple effect, touching many lives. Go into the marketplace, into a job of your own choosing, without fanfare or flag-waving. Where there is hate, bring love; where there is darkness, carry light. In other words, be a Christ-bearer.

### Parish News:

#### All Parishes—

- ⇒ Advent confessions will be held on Tuesday, Dec. 16 from 7-7:45 pm at St. Margaret Mary.
- ⇒ Adult Ed will be held on Wednesday, Dec. 10th at SJ. 7pm
- ⇒ 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 8 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 charities 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.
- ⇒ *Mark your calendars! We will be cleaning and decorating the church for Christmas on December 9th starting at 5 pm (cleaning) and 6 pm (decorating). Whatever time you could give is greatly appreciated.*
- ⇒ *The CCW Christmas party will be at the Herscher Restaurant on December 7th after mass. Please sign up by November 30th so a reservation can be made.*

#### Sacred Heart-

⇒



Blessing of the "baby Jesus" for your Nativity set will take place at all the Masses on the weekend of December 13-14. Please bring your "baby Jesus" for the blessing.



**Obscure saint of the week: St. Sabino of Spoleto (Dec. 7)** was a hermit in the Liba forest near Fusignano, Italy for many years. An angel appeared to Savinus to encourage him to evangelize the area between the Italian cities of Spoleto and Assisi. He became an evangelizing bishop in the late 3rd and early 4th centuries during the persecutions of Diocletian. He was imprisoned in Assisi and Spoleto, Italy. As punishment for continuing to spread Christianity in defiance of imperial decrees, Sabino had his hands amputated so he could live on as an example to others. While imprisoned, Sabino restored the sight of a blind fellow prisoner. The prison's executioner, who had chopped off the hands, suffered from an eye disease and went to see Sabino; the bishop healed the man, and talked to him about Christianity. The other guards were so angry at the continual defiance, and they beat Sabino to death. .



**Other obscure saint of the week: St. Mary Joseph Rosello (Dec. 7)** was one of nine children. Her father was a potter. Born in poverty, she suffered from poor health all her life. Pious from early youth she tried to enter a religious order but was refused admission due to her health and lack of dowry. The pious, childless couple she worked for could have given her a dowry but would not because they did not want to lose her as member of their family. Mary became a Franciscan tertiary at age 16.



Her bishop knew of her skill in teaching the faith to girls, and in 1837 he gave her a house which she and three other young women made into two classrooms. From this humble beginning came the *Institute of the Daughters of Mercy* in 1837 under the protection of Our Lady of Mercy and Saint Joseph. Her new religious community was devoted to teaching the young and caring for the sick. Any deserving girl would be accepted into the community, even without a dowry. Mary Joseph served as superior of this band of teachers for over 40 years. In 1875 they opened their first house in the Americas at Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Joseph's success and personal holiness were such that her bishop, over strong objection from many, allowed her to organize a group that encouraged vocations to the priesthood.

### The Sunday Gospel in Everyday English

While Jesus was living in the Galilean hills, John, called "the Baptizer," was preaching in the desert country of Judea. His message was simple and austere, like his desert surroundings: "Change your life. God's kingdom is here."

John and his message were authorized by Isaiah's prophecy:

Thunder in the desert!

Prepare for God's arrival!

Make the road smooth and straight!

John dressed in a camel-hair habit tied at the waist by a leather strap. He lived on a diet of locusts and wild field honey. People poured out of Jerusalem, Judea, and the Jordanian countryside to hear and see him in action. There at the Jordan River those who came to confess their sins were baptized into a changed life.

When John realized that a lot of Pharisees and Sadducees were showing up for a baptismal experience because it was becoming the popular thing to do, he exploded: "Brood of snakes! What do you think you're doing slithering down here to the river? Do you think a little water on your snakeskins is going to make any difference? It's your life that must change, not your skin! And don't think you can pull rank by claiming Abraham as father. Being a descendant of Abraham is neither here nor there. Descendants of Abraham are a dime a dozen. What counts is your life. Is it green and blossoming? Because if it's deadwood, it goes on the fire.

"I'm baptizing you here in the river, turning your old life in for a Kingdom life. The real action comes next: The main character in this drama—compared to him I'm a mere stagehand—will ignite the Kingdom life within you, a fire within you, the Holy Spirit within you, changing you from the inside out. He's going to clean house—make a clean sweep of your lives. He'll place everything true in its proper place before God; everything false he'll put out with the trash to be burned" (from *Matthew 3*).

### Reflection—In Praise of Mary

We must not just praise her word, we must follow her example. The greatest praise we can offer is when we recognize her as our teacher and become her pupils ... Realizing that God in his grace has looked on her, we wish to see in her, as in a mirror, the mercy of God.

Can God work through a messy family?

Just look at Jesus' genealogy. Across centuries, covenants, kingdoms, and failures, God was quietly guiding history to this moment in Bethlehem.

At the Christmas Vigil Mass, the Gospel begins not with angels or shepherds, but with something surprising: a long list of names. The genealogy of Jesus.

At first glance, it can seem like the least "Christmasy" passage in Scripture. But hidden inside its forty-two names is the heart of salvation history, and a glimpse of how God works in the real world: slowly, faithfully, and often through people who are anything but perfect.

### **The Pattern of 14 Generations**

Matthew structures the genealogy into three sets of fourteen generations:

From Abraham to David

From David to the Exile

From the Exile to Christ

This isn't random. Fourteen is the numerical value of David's name in Hebrew—D-V-D.

Matthew is making a bold claim: Jesus is the long-awaited Son of David, the True King, the One the entire story has been leading toward.

Across centuries, covenants, kingdoms, and failures, God was quietly guiding history to this moment in Bethlehem.

### **A Family Line That Isn't "Perfect"**

What surprises many people most about this genealogy is how messy it is.

In the list are kings and heroes—but also sinners, outsiders, and people whose stories are deeply complicated. Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, David, Bathsheba... their lives were marked by suffering, scandal, unexpected turns, and human weakness.

And Matthew includes them on purpose. Because the Incarnation isn't God stepping into a perfect story. It's God stepping into a broken one.

The genealogy teaches us that God's grace isn't hindered by human messiness; not then, and not now. He works through real people with real flaws, shaping salvation history one generation at a time.

### **Why This Matters at Christmas**

By the time we reach the final name—Jesus—everything becomes clear.

Every twist in the story, every unexpected branch in the family tree, every flawed ancestor has been leading to Him.

Christmas is not just the birth of Christ.

It is the arrival of the fulfillment of God's plan, woven patiently through thousands of years of humanity.

The genealogy reveals: God's plan is not rushed. God is not discouraged by human imperfection. God always keeps His promises—no matter how long it takes.

When we hear that list of names at Mass, we are hearing the story of a God who works through real lives... and who is still writing His story in ours

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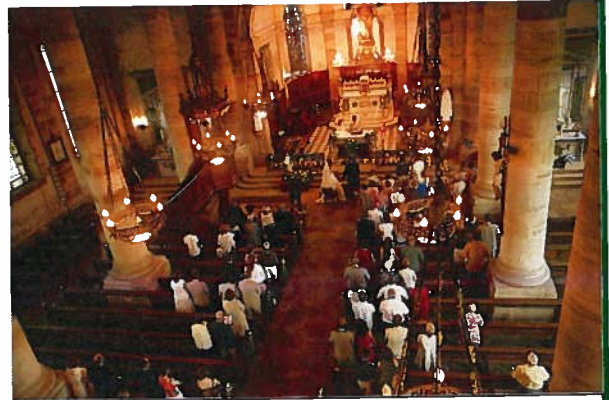
## Questions Catholics Ask

### If I attend a wedding with a full Mass on Saturday at 1 p.m., does that Mass count for Sunday?

No. But let's explore why that's true. It's not just liturgy police making arbitrary rules. It's about why we attend Mass on Sunday. As the Catechism of the Catholic Church explains, the first precept of the church states: "You shall attend Mass on Sundays and holy days of obligation."

Canon law further explores this precept: "Sunday is the day on which the paschal mystery is celebrated in light of the apostolic tradition and is to be observed as the foremost holy day of obligation in the universal church." Reflect on that for a minute: Sunday is the biggest holy day of the church! The church fathers called every Sunday a "little Easter." Participation in the Sunday gathering goes back to the apostles and is the celebration defining us as part of Christ's Body. "Obligation" is a poor word to express this. Consider "privileged."

As members of Christ's Body, we're privileged to participate in this celebration. Sunday observance doesn't merely establish a time window for Mass attendance. Each Sunday liturgy is a specific Mass with its own gospel and readings and corresponding prayers. Together we celebrate a particular event in the life of the church, whether it's the Second Sunday of Lent or the Twenty-Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time. Over the course of a church year, we absorb a complete gospel and recall specific moments of our Christian history together.



As members of Christ's body, we are privileged to participate in this celebration of Mass.

Now, consider the nature of a Nuptial (wedding) Mass. It's also a liturgy of the church with readings, prayers, and rituals appropriate to its occasion. Unlike the public gathering of the community for the Sunday observance, Nuptial Masses normally involve families and friends of the couple receiving the sacrament. Even if the priest performed a Nuptial Mass at 7 p.m. Saturday night or first thing Sunday morning, participants would still not be observing the liturgy for that weekend. It would be like saying: I had supper with a few friends tonight: does that count for dinner with the extended family tomorrow?

Now for the exception. Rarely, couples celebrate the Sacrament of Matrimony WITHIN the confines of the Sunday liturgy. That is, they choose not to have a private Mass with friends and family but prefer to share their commitment with the entire community of faith. Since the marriage rite is inserted into the Sunday Mass, it utilizes the readings and prayers for that Sunday of the church year. In that case, yes, the Mass "counts" for both occasions.



EWTN will be airing a new show, **Hidden Gems: Catholic Shrines in America** an inspiring and visually rich series of half hour episodes that takes viewers to Catholic sites around

the globe. Each episode uncovers the beauty, history, and faith woven into local American churches, shrines, and sacred spaces and reveals them to a greater audience. Former SMM parishioner Nell Andrzejewski is the host of the show.

EWTN is the world's largest Catholic media network that broadcast to 425 million people in 160 countries with 11 networks.

For more information and to watch episodes on demand go to: Shrines.TV. Four upcoming *Hidden Gems* episodes will air on EWTN at 4:30 CST on the following dates

Jan 8, 2026: "Grotto of the Redemption" West Bend, IA



**Reform your lives!**  
**The reign of God is at hand**  
**MT.3:2**

*Rejoice! The Lord is near.*

December 7, 2025

## Second Sunday of Advent

Is 11:1-10 | Rom 15:4-9 | Mt 3:1-12

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

Today's Gospel is a challenging one, inviting us to consider how much spiritual fruit we are bearing in our lives. St. John the Baptist tells us, "Produce good fruit as evidence of your repentance," reminding us that the depth of our conversion will be measured by our fruit. Speaking to the Pharisees and Sadducees, John says it is not enough to say that "We have Abraham as our father." If he were speaking today, John might put it this way: it's not enough to say "I'm Catholic!" or "I belong to X Parish." Our lives must show outward evidence of the inward conversion we have undergone. The good news for us today is that we can pause and take stock of how well we are bearing spiritual fruit. Pay attention to what areas might need pruning or fertilizing to ensure that when we come to the Lord's threshing floor at the end of our lives, there is a bountiful harvest he can gather into his barn.

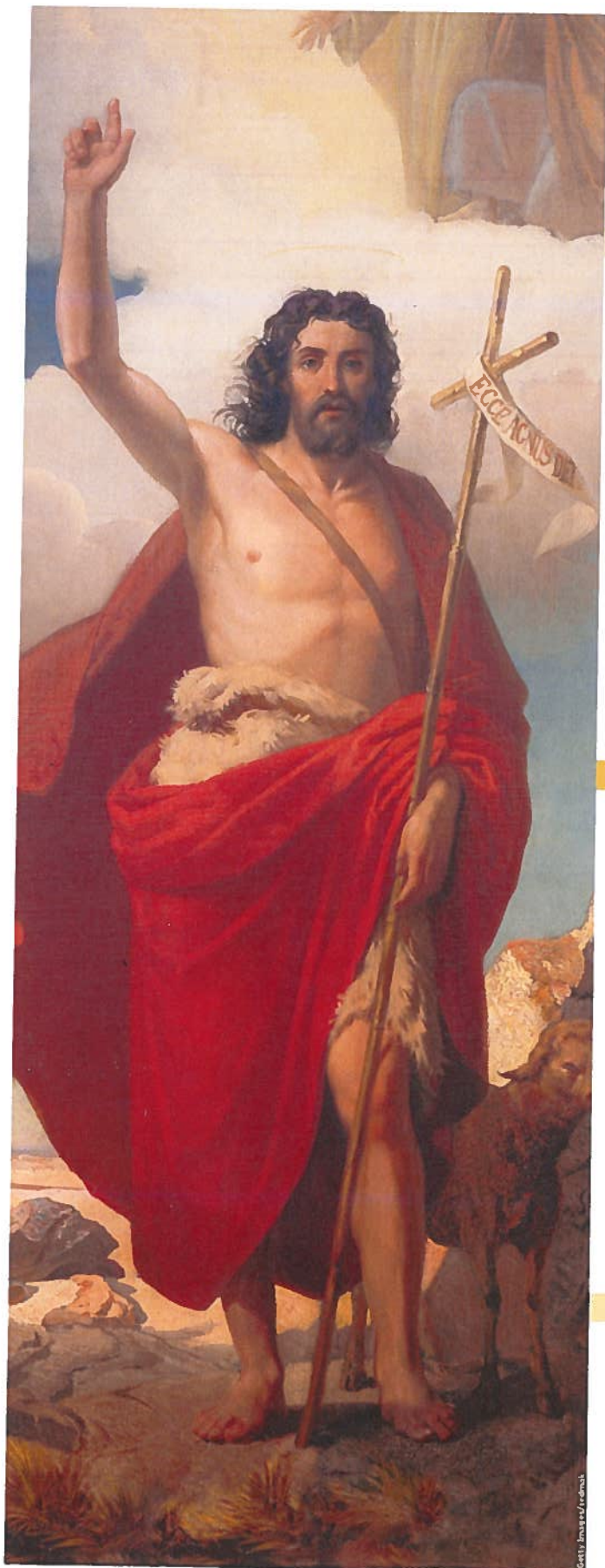
### **GO EVANGELIZE**

#### PRAYER, INVITATION, WITNESS, ACCOMPANIMENT

Our first reading gives us a glimpse of God's kingdom: The Son of David will rule with wisdom, understanding, counsel, and knowledge, judging "the poor with justice" and striking "the ruthless with the rod of his mouth." In his kingdom "the wolf shall be a guest of the lamb" and yet "there shall be no harm or ruin." What a poetic way of describing the harmony and wholeness that God longs for in society! As disciples, this is our mission. We're called to work so that God's kingdom vision can become reality. As we work for peace and justice, we're doing our part in the Church's work of evangelization. As the U.S. bishops reminded us in their letter *Communities of Salt and Light*, "social justice is an integral part of evangelization, a constitutive dimension of preaching the Gospel, and an essential part of the Church's mission."

### **REFLECT**

In the Gospel, John the Baptist says of Jesus, "He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire." Our ability to bear spiritual fruit comes from the power of the Holy Spirit within us. Take a moment to reflect on where you see the gifts (see the first reading from Isaiah!) and fruits of the Holy Spirit in your life. How might the Spirit of God be working to increase your spiritual fruitfulness this Advent?





## SPIRITUALITY

### GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Luke 3:4, 6

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

Prepare the way of the Lord, make  
straight his paths:  
all flesh shall see the salvation of  
God.

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

### Gospel Matt 3:1-12; L4A

John the Baptist appeared,  
preaching in the desert of  
Judea

and saying, "Repent, for the  
kingdom of heaven is at  
hand!"

It was of him that the prophet  
Isaiah had spoken when he  
said:

*A voice of one crying out  
in the desert,*

*Prepare the way of the  
Lord,*

*make straight his paths.*

John wore clothing made of camel's hair  
and had a leather belt around his waist.  
His food was locusts and wild honey.

At that time Jerusalem, all Judea,  
and the whole region around the Jordan  
were going out to him  
and were being baptized by him in the  
Jordan River  
as they acknowledged their sins.

When he saw many of the Pharisees and  
Sadducees

coming to his baptism, he said to them,  
"You brood of vipers!

Who warned you to flee from the coming  
wrath?

Produce good fruit as evidence of your  
repentance.

And do not presume to say to yourselves,  
'We have Abraham as our father.'

For I tell you,

God can raise up children to Abraham  
from these stones.

### Reflecting on the Gospel

"You can attract more flies with a teaspoon of sugar than with a barrel of vinegar," says a popular maxim. Yet in today's gospel, John the Baptist takes a very harsh approach. He is confrontational and uncompromising. There is nothing gentle or alluring about him. He demands repentance—urgently! And people flocked to him: "Jerusalem, all Judea, and the whole region around the Jordan were going out to him and were being baptized by him in the Jordan River as they acknowledged their sins." What did they find so attractive about John and his message?

One thing that could have had appeal was the desert locale where John was baptizing. There is a mysterious beauty to the desert where inner noise can be calmed and the senses are heightened, making one better able to discern priorities in the stark presence of the Holy One.

Another attractive characteristic of John was his wholehearted commitment to God's reign and the Coming One who would usher it in. When a person lives so completely and authentically what he or she proclaims, that witness is very compelling. Others are drawn not just to admire such a one, but to examine their own lives and to follow suit in whatever way possible.

Although John's message at first seems off-putting, its effectiveness rested on the fact

that it was not anger that fueled him but a profound love of God and a passion to help everyone be ready for the imminent arrival of the One who is to come.

John had no patience, however, for those who were not sincere in their quest. It is startling that at the very first appearance in the gospel of the Pharisees and scribes, John slings insults at them, calling them a "brood of vipers." As the gospel progresses, we find that Pharisees and scribes are cast by Matthew as hypocrites who lie in wait to trap Jesus, like snakes coiled to spring at any false move. John exposes their poisonous intent. If they were authentic seekers, that would be visible in their "good fruit."

What "good fruit" looks like is described by Isaiah in today's first reading. All creatures and the whole of creation exist in peaceful harmony. There is justice for all, especially for those most afflicted. Vulnerable little ones have no fear.

There are serious and immediate consequences if the call to repentance is not heeded. John declares that any tree that does not produce fruit is cut down at the root and thrown into the fire. Such strong language is meant to get our attention. Like a mother who suddenly shouts to keep her child from burning himself on a hot stove, a fiery prophet speaks in shocking ways to startle us into action. Today's readings invite us to find a desert spot where we can sink our roots deeply in contemplative oneness with the One who comes, extend our branches in welcome to those with whom we have been at odds, and let the Spirit pollinate us for an abundant harvest of fruitful goodness.



*Continued in Appendix A, p. 261.*