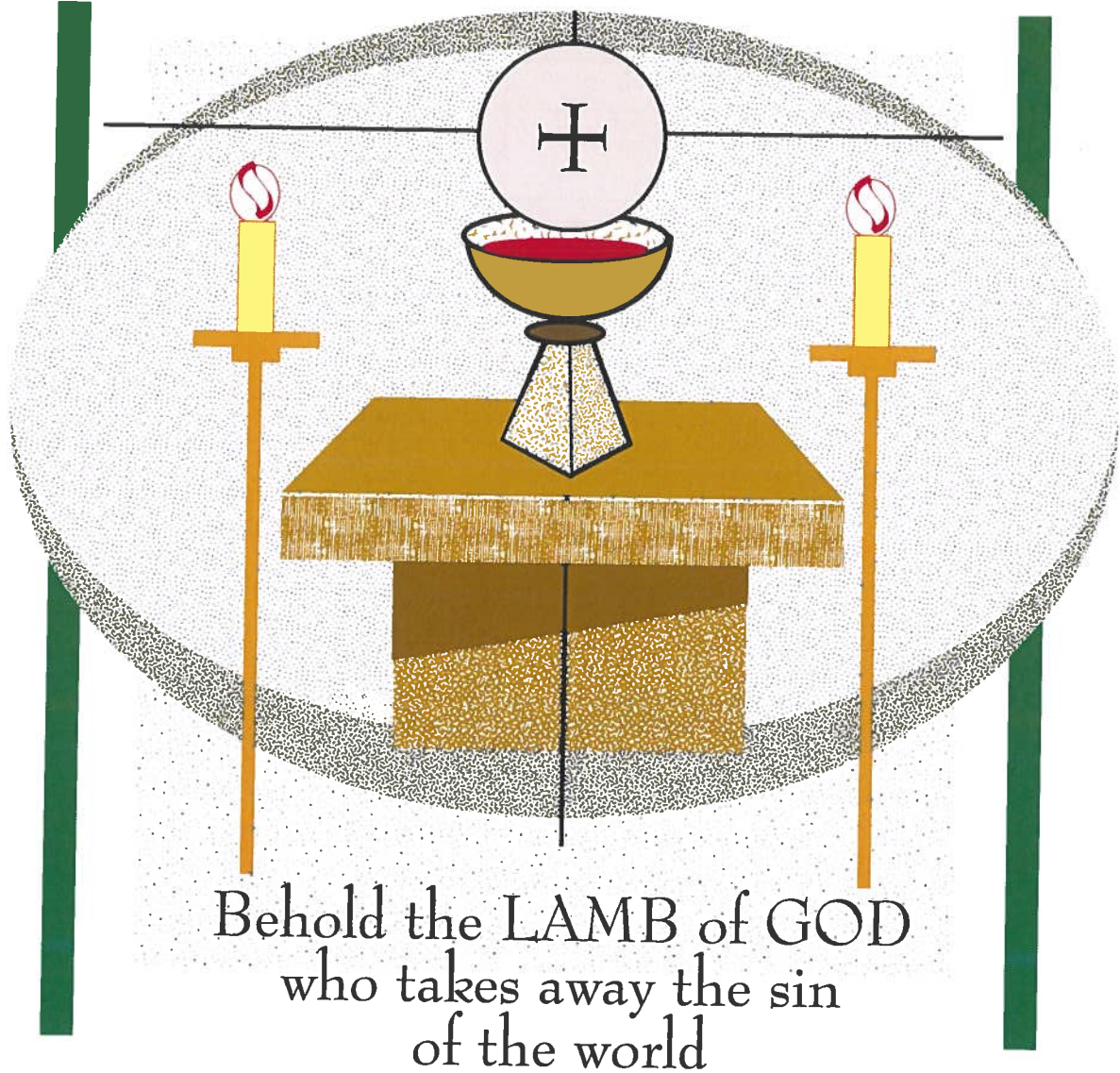


The Roman Catholic Parishes of
St. Margaret Mary, Herscher
St. James the Apostle, Irwin
Sacred Heart, Goodrich

SECOND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

JANUARY 17-18, 2026



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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 - 4:45pm
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Church Mailing Address:

207 E. 5th Street

Herscher, IL 60941

Phone: 815-426-2550

Quotable: *"The most important thing in prayer is never what we say or ask for, but our attitude towards God."*

-Evelyn Underhill

Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

January 24-25, 2026

Liturgical Schedule	St. Margaret Mary Saturday, Jan. 24 5:00 pm	Sacred Heart Sunday, Jan. 25 7:30 am	St. James Sunday, Jan 25 9:00 am	St. Margaret Mary Sunday, Jan. 25 10:30 am
Celebrant	Fr. Ron Deacon Ron	Fr. Ron Deacon Ron	Fr. Ron Deacon Ron	Fr. Ron Deacon Ron
Ushers	Brett Buza Dave Emling Roger Jensen Gery Wright	Dennis Pankey Jim Mallaney	Mary Offerman Jeff Martin Jeff Steinke Dallas Ferris	Dustin Truetner Darren Lovell Larry Wolles Erik Wheeler
Lector	Rob Landeck	Ann Marie Kiefer	Dave Ladehoff	Julie Splear
Eucharistic Minister				
Servers				Sydney Weldon Avery Adams
Greeters			Greeter—C. Forsythe R. Leader—The Peerboltes	The Wheelers

Mass Intentions for the Week

Monday, Jan. 19 (SMM)

8:00 am +Sterling/Madeline Bouchard (M/M John Smolkovich)

Tuesday, Jan. 20 (SH)

8:00 am No Mass

Wednesday, Jan. 21 (SJ)

8:00 am No Mass

Friday, Jan. 23 +Jerome Ruder (Mariann Lane)

Saturday, Jan. 24 (SMM)

5:00 pm +Laura Jensen (Gerald Kroesch)
+Mary McDonald (Mary Ann Wagner)

Sunday, Jan. 25

7:30 am (SH) +Aaron Mills (Rod/Kathy Meli)
+Melvin "Skip" Prince (Don/Marie Feller)
9:00 am (SJ) +Ivan Denault (Linda Klump)
+Paul Muhlstadt (Michae/Laura Vigna)
10:30 am (SMM) For All the Parish Family

Question of the week:

How will I witness to my faith, to Jesus, this week?

A Look Ahead

Sun., Jan. 18—No RE at SMM and SJ

Mon., Jan. 19—SMM CCW meeting at 7pm

Wed., Jan. 21—Adult Ed 7pm at SMM

Pastor— Fr. Ron Neitzke- 815-426-2550
Deacon – Ron Gagnon— rjgckg@aol.com
Home—815-933-4077

Parish Email – smm_sja_sh@yahoo.com
TriParish web page – www.triparishcatholics.org
Like us on Facebook triparishcatholic communities
Tri Parish Church office –Barb Riker 426-2550
Julie Bisailon 426-2550

Bulletin – Debbie Jensen - 426-2550
debjen04@gmail.com

Religious Education –

St. MM – Jill Fulton jfulton.stmm@gmail.com
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

Collections Weekend of Jan. 3-4, 2026

St. Margaret Mary—\$1,953

St. James—\$1,146

Sacred Heart— \$ 1,276

Thank you for your generosity!

Here I am, LORD
I come to do your will

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Reflection— Playing It Safe

"Love anything, and your heart will certainly be wrung and possibly broken. If you want to make sure of keeping it intact, you must give your heart to no one, not even to an animal. Wrap it carefully round with hobbies and little luxuries; avoid all entanglements; lock it up safe in the casket or coffin of your selfishness. But in that casket — safe, dark, motionless, airless — it will change. It will not be broken; it will become unbreakable, impenetrable, irredeemable."

Second Sunday in Ordinary Time

Weekend of January 17/18, 2026

As the prophet Isaiah proclaims in the first reading, the Lord continues to remind us that we are his servants. Imagine the Lord speaking these words to you personally: "You are my servant. Through you I show my glory. I formed you as my servant from your mother's womb. I will make you a light so that you may shine the light of my salvation everywhere you go, and reveal my glory to everyone you encounter. I will give you the strength to do this. I will give you confidence. Heed my words, for I have spoken to you." What would your response be to the Lord? Would it be different from the response you give the Lord now?

The 2026 Catholic Ministries Annual Appeal has begun!

The Diocese of Joliet invites all parishioners to support the 2026 Catholic Ministries Annual

Appeal (CMAA). Together, we can make a profound difference.

This year's theme is ***Beyond all Expectations: Faith that Elevates!*** Through the CMAA, we ensure Christ's mission and ministries reach everyone. We provide shelter for the homeless,

feed the hungry, support vocations, and educate the next generation of Catholics. Our parish

cannot accomplish this alone. As a diocese, we can do so much more.

We receive 70% of any amount raised over goal to use within our parish. Please review your mailing from the Diocese of Joliet and prayerfully reflect on your gift to this year's appeal.

If you do not receive a CMAA mailing, please contact the parish office. Thank you!

Parish News:

All Parishes—

- ⇒ Adult Ed class, January 21 at 7pm at SMM.
- ⇒ 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 Mondays at 7pm at SJ.
- ⇒ Tri-Parish Office Hours— Our office hours are Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday 9am—12 pm.

St. Margaret Mary-

- ⇒ SMM CCW will meet on Monday, Jan. 19 at 7pm. Please bring a non Christmas gift valued around \$20 to exchange.

St. James-

Sacred Heart—

- ⇒ The week of January 18th, the Blessed Virgin Mary candle burns in memory of Patricia Denault and Betty Wenzelman and the St. Joseph candle burns in prayer for all deacons - living and deceased.

Gospel Shorts Living Signposts

We need signs to help us find the way when we travel. John the Baptist, in his ministry in the wilderness, acted as a "living signpost" as he pointed people toward the One who was coming, the Messiah, Jesus Christ.

John's ministry leads us to ask, "Where does my life point? To myself only? Or to the living Lord of life, Jesus Christ?" Admit it or not, our lives do point people in certain directions, as the influence of our attitudes, words, and actions extend beyond ourselves. In this Epiphany season, we have a key opportunity to renew and refresh the ways we point others to Jesus Christ in and through our lives. Not only does this help us fulfill our calling as Christians but also brings a new freedom in knowing all depends upon God, not ourselves.

Dear Lord, In these cold days, we seek
Your warmth and comfort.

Wrap us in Your loving embrace,
shielding us from the chill that sur-
rounds us. May Your presence bring
solace to our hearts and ignite a flame
of hope within us.

Help us to share this warmth with oth-
ers, spreading kindness and love in the
midst of winter's grasp.
Amen.



Obscure saint of the week: St. Deicola of Lure (Jan. 18) was the brother of Saint Gall. He was a monk who studied at Bangor Abbey under Saint Comgall of Bangor and Saint Columba. He evangelized in Austrasia and Burgundy in 567. He was one of the twelve who accompanied Saint Columba to France and helped found the abbey of Luxeuil. When Saint Columba was exiled by Thierry II, Deicola, too old to accompany him, founded the monastery of Lure in the Vosges, France. He then retired to the monastery as a hermit.

Obscure saint of the week: St. Margaret of Hungary (Jan. 18) was the daughter of King Bela IV of Hungary and Marie Laskaris; grand-daughter of the Byzantine emperor. When Hungary was freed from the Tatars, her parents had pledged their next child to God. To keep this promise, Margaret was placed in a Dominican convent at Veszprem, Hungary at age 3; Blessed Helen of Hungary served as her novice mistress. She transferred at age ten to the convent of the Blessed Virgin founded by her parents on the Hasen Insel near Buda, where she lived the rest of her life. At one point her father arranged a marriage for her to King Ottokar II of Bohemia, but she adamantly refused. She took vows at age 18. She was known for severe self-imposed penances, and for kindness to those of lower social station. The investigation for her canonization lists 27 miracles including healings and a case of awakening from death.



The Sunday Gospel in Everyday English

The very next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and yelled out, "Here he is, God's Passover Lamb! He forgives the sins of the world! This is the man I've been talking about, 'the One who comes after me but is really ahead of me.' I knew nothing about who he was—only this: that my task has been to get Israel ready to recognize him as the God-Revealer. That is why I came here baptizing with water, giving you a good bath and scrubbing sins from your life so you can get a fresh start with God."

John clinched his witness with this: "I watched the Spirit, like a dove flying down out of the sky, making himself at home in him. I repeat, I know nothing about him except this: The One who authorized me to baptize with water told me, 'The One on whom you see the Spirit come down and stay, this One will baptize with the Holy Spirit.' That's exactly what I saw happen, and I'm telling you, there's no question about it: This is the Son of God" (from John 1).

In the Likeness of God

Verbally, we seem to be committed to the idea that man is created in the likeness of God. But are we committed to it intellectually? If the divine likeness is our promise, then the question arises: How should a being created in the likeness of God act, think, feel? How should we live in a way that is compatible with our being a likeness of God?

Friendly Visiting Program Volunteers Needed:

Catholic Charities is seeking volunteers to provide free friendly visits, virtual calls, and phone calls to older adults who are homebound or socially isolated, experiencing loneliness, and seeking companionship.

As a volunteer you will:

- Build friendly and caring connections
- Make a positive impact on the lives of older adults
- Share common interests and have good conversations.

Be the reason someone smiles today!



**Behold the Lamb of God
who takes away the sin of the world
JN. 1:29**

Catholic Snacks, Get Fed

Why Ordinary Time might be the most demanding season of all.

Ordinary Time invites us to follow Christ not only in the mountaintop experiences but in the steady unfolding of daily life.

The Church moves through the year with a beautiful rhythm. Advent teaches us to wait. Christmas teaches us to rejoice. Lent teaches us to repent. Easter teaches us to hope.

Then comes Ordinary Time.

It is the longest season of the liturgical year, and perhaps the easiest to overlook. Nothing obvious happens at first glance. No dramatic fasts or feasts dominate the calendar. Ordinary Time looks, well — ordinary.

Yet this is precisely why Ordinary Time is so essential.

Ordinary Time invites us to follow Christ not only in the mountaintop experiences but in the steady unfolding of daily life. It is a season of growth, of quiet faithfulness, and of learning to see Christ in the everyday moments we often take for granted.

Saint Josemaría Escrivá reminded us that God is calling us to serve Him in and from the ordinary. Holiness is not just found in dramatic moments of conversion, but in the faithful living of daily responsibilities and relationships.

The funny thing is that it can be easier to be kind to strangers than to those closest to us. A cheerful word comes easily in passing, yet patience is harder with a spouse after a long day. We may smile at a neighbor but grow weary with our own family.

This reveals something profound: Ordinary Time holds up a mirror to our hearts. It asks not how we behave when we are seen, but how we love when no one is watching.

Saint Teresa of Calcutta said that if we want to serve the poor, we should begin in our own homes. Saint Faustina Kowalska lived this truth, uniting every moment to Christ, offering every breath and act for His glory. In her diary she wrote that even when she was with others, her heart was united to Jesus, allowing His presence to guide her words and actions.

In Ordinary Time, the Church invites us to live this same unity. We are called to grow in prayer, in virtue, and in love — especially toward those right in front of us.

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The Catholic Company



The time
is always right
to do what is right.
Martin Luther King Jr

Experience something

MORE

SUNDAY
JANUARY 25, 2026
1-3 PM

IRISH 2026 EXPO

ACADEMICS

We will be showcasing all we have to offer, including a wide range of athletic programs, diverse clubs, enriching extracurricular activities, and a strong academic curriculum. Our commitment to faith formation, leadership opportunities, and financial aid ensures every student has the chance to thrive. Additionally, we encourage parental involvement through various parent committees, creating a supportive and collaborative community for all.

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MOBILE FOOD PANTRY

Monday, January 26, 2026

St. Lawrence Church

135 E. Rice Road in South Wilmington

4-5:30pm

(Or until food runs out)

RAIN OR SHINE!

The Northern Illinois Food Bank Mobile Food Pantry delivers healthy food (meat, produce, and nonperishable items) to people in need. **No identification is required. This event is open to anyone in need of food!**

Mobile Food Pantries use a "drive thru" method to distribute pre-packed groceries. Please clear space in your trunk or backseat so volunteers can load boxes of food directly into your vehicle.

This Mobile Food Pantry is sponsored by:
St. Lawrence Giving Tree Donors



Catholic Charities is a faith-based organization providing service to people in need and calling others of good will to do the same.



Bishop Hicks' Column
January 2026



One Last Column, Ever Grateful

For more than five years, I have been blessed to share my thoughts with you in this monthly column. When I first began writing, it took me a very long time to craft each reflection. I often wondered if anyone was reading them or if they would make any difference at all.

But at parish visits and events, many of you told me that you read these reflections and that they helped you understand my mind and my heart. Some of you offered positive comments and others offered constructive suggestions. All of that feedback helped me grow in gratitude. I stopped seeing these columns as a task and started seeing them as a privilege. They became one of the ways we shared our faith journey together.

Now I write my final column. It is a bittersweet moment. I am excited for my next steps to New York. At the same time, I am going to miss this ongoing exchange with you.

As we come to the conclusion of this written dialogue, I would like to reflect with you on a few thoughts I shared at my farewell Mass on January 11, 2026.

In my homily, I expressed my sincere gratitude for the faith and love you have shown me throughout my years as your bishop. Together we have shared significant moments. We have celebrated the sacraments. We have strengthened our mission to be a vibrant and evangelizing Church. Through Confirmations, ordinations, graduations, the Chrism Mass, baptisms, funerals, community service, and our care for the most vulnerable, I saw Jesus Christ revealed in you. And each time we gathered for the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, you strengthened my faith and drew me closer to God. And I pray that I have done the same for you.

I am deeply grateful to our priests who faithfully serve with pastoral hearts and leadership. To our deacons, wives, and families, thank you for your steadfast ministry of charity and your service. To our religious women and men and consecrated virgins, your prayerful presence and collaborative ministry have been a constant blessing. I am grateful for every sacrifice and every quiet act of love that often goes unseen but never goes unnoticed by God.

I also want to thank our diocesan staff and all employees who work as a vocation to ensure that the Church continues its mission. Our administrators, teachers, catechists, and youth ministers form disciples in classrooms and parish halls. Our musicians, liturgical ministers, and countless volunteers give life and beauty to our worship and mission. And to every parishioner across our seven counties, please know how grateful I am for your generosity and witness to faith in your homes, parishes, and workplaces.

Through baptism, we are all called to continue living the mission of Jesus Christ. I now move forward to serve in New York, trusting that the good work we have begun together will continue to bear fruit here in the Diocese of Joliet.

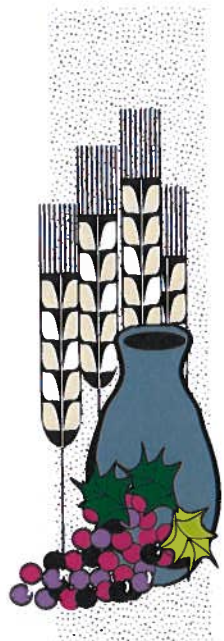
Many have asked who will become the next bishop. Soon, an administrator will be appointed who will continue to guide and govern the diocese while the apostolic nuncio and the Dicastery of Bishops offer recommendations to our Holy Father, Pope Leo. In due time, he will appoint the seventh Bishop of Joliet. Please join me in prayer for that discernment process.

Even though my ministry will continue in another place, I believe that prayer keeps us close. Every time we pray for one another, we remain closely united in Christ. So let us keep lifting each other up before God. I will carry you with me in my heart and in my daily prayer, and I humbly ask you to remember me in yours.

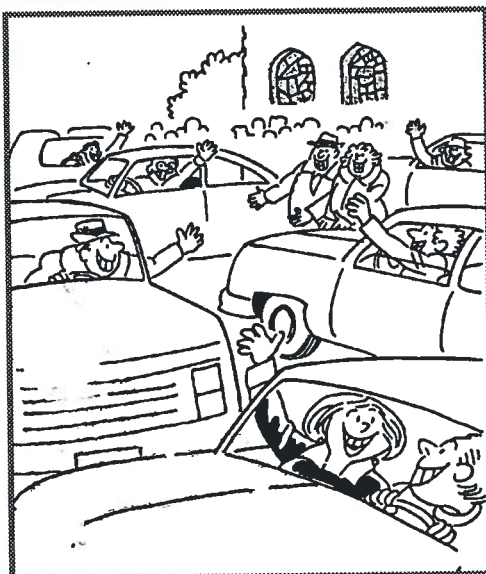
I also encourage you to be disciples who make disciples. Please continue to embrace my pastoral letter entitled *MAKE*. Pray with it. Reflect on it. Share it. Put it into practice every day. The Church grows when every one of us answers the call to live the Gospel with conviction and joy.

You remain in my heart and in my prayers with great love and deep gratitude. May God bless you and bless us always with His Spirit of peace and all good things. Paz y bien.

[Scan the QR code below to listen to the bishop's homily from his January 11th Mass of Thanksgiving.]



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"Who would've thought that everyone in the church parking lot would make the same New Year's resolution?"

Questions Catholics Ask What are the "four last things"?

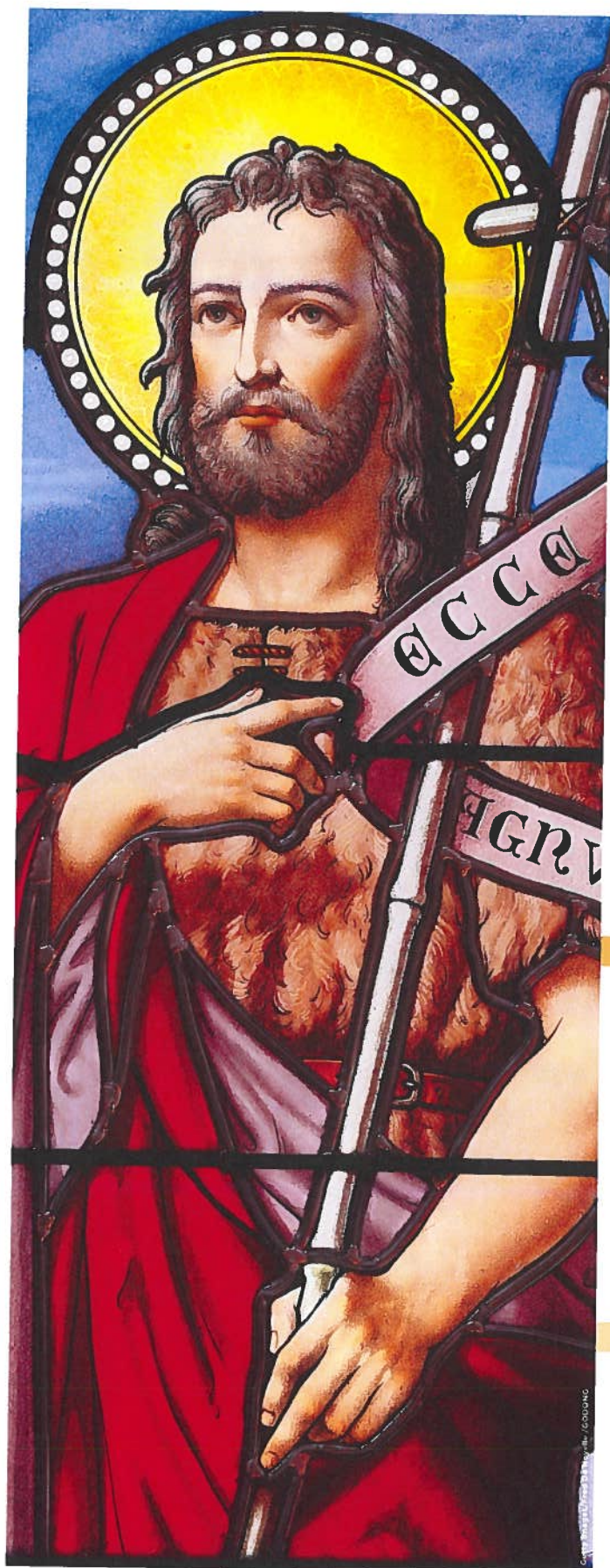
Older Catholics may view this as a simple question. Traditionally, the four last things were: death, judgment, heaven, and hell. The concern was for the ultimate destination of the individual soul. It was understood that, at death, a particular judgment determines a person's immediate fate: Ready for heaven? Need more purification time? A lost cause? The Last Judgment, deserving of its capital letters, is defined as the event after Jesus returns in glory to pronounce the last word on human history and all of its participants. Heaven, or total unity with the God of love, is the logical result of lives that can be summed up by love. Hell, the complete absence of God, is the final result of lives that prefer an existence of indifference to divine love and its ways.

What happens at the end of life and time is technically known as eschatology—Greek for "furthest". The four things were compiled in the Middle Ages by Hugh of St. Victor, and affirmed by the Councils of Florence (1439) and Trent (1563). The Catechism of the Catholic Church describes them in sections 1020-1050. Twentieth-century theologian Karl Rahner regarded the last things as a way of underscoring the "fundamental option" free beings have to determine their fate. What we become, here and always, is in our hands and nowhere else.

Bible scholars widen the conversation. They trace how biblical faith assumes a "future consciousness." History can't be seen as a random series of events; it's going somewhere. For believers, history seeks its fulfillment in God's original intentions for it. The Bible is clear on what those intentions are: unity, justice, peace, reconciliation, life in abundance. Biblical eschatology isn't focused on individual redemptions, yours or mine, but rather the rescue of the world altogether. There's a kingdom, a mansion, a banquet, a new creation out there!

In the writings of Vatican II, eschatology has shifted away from a preoccupation with personal survival in an otherworldly realm. The church's mission in the here and now is the proper focus of the believer. As the Council affirms, Jesus sums up the meaning of history: God and humanity are to be united in goal and will. The coming kingdom is not something we can build with our own hands and bring into being, as some contemporary prayers seem to suggest. But a collaboration of faithful human effort and radical divine transformation will bring us to last things that will certainly surprise us all.

Scripture: Isaiah 2:2-4; 19:18-25; 56:6-8; 60:1-22; 65:17-25; Zephaniah 3:8-13; Zechariah 9:1-10; Wisdom 2:1-3:12; Daniel 12:1-3; 2 Maccabees 6:12-17; 7:1-42; 12:38-46; Matthew 5:1-12; 6:19-21; 7:13-14; 13:24-30, 44-50; 21:28-32; 22:1-14, 23-33; 25:1-46; Revelation 20:11-22:21



January 18, 2026

Written by
THE
FAITHFUL
DISCIPLE

Second Sunday in Ordinary Time

Is 49:3, 5-6 | 1 Cor 1:1-3 | Jn 1:29-34

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

I have struggled when doing work that feels unseen. Has anyone noticed that the floors were mopped today? Do my students care about the feedback I provide on their writing? Does my supervisor notice the extra time I put into my work? In today's Gospel we hear John the Baptist announcing Jesus as "the Lamb of God." John has been preparing for the coming of Christ and now that Jesus has arrived, his role is to step aside and encourage his followers to move their gaze toward Christ, the Messiah. Although we know John's name and his faithfulness, it would have been easy for him to assume that his work would have been forgotten — overshadowed by the signs and wonders of Christ himself. But in his humility, this is exactly what John seemingly wanted. His life and words were focused solely on proclaiming the coming of Christ. While I may have been tempted to say, "Please don't forget about what I did," John responded faithfully to God's call to preach and prepare for Christ's coming, without worry of receiving credit for his actions. And in our lives, too, what matters is not whether our work is appreciated or noticed, but whether our actions are in response to God's call to holiness.

GO EVANGELIZE

PRAYER, INVITATION, WITNESS, ACCOMPANIMENT

Despite not knowing whether his work would extend for years or decades, John the Baptist continued to lead others toward repentance. He did not know the full scope of his role in the plan of salvation, but he trusted in the voice of God. Like John, we are called to persevere in faithfulness to the work that God has called us to do, right where we are. When we persevere in our faith, living according to the teachings of Christ and our vocation, we give witness to the truth that the God who called us is worthy of our trust.

WITNESS

Consider the countless men and women who have gone before us who remained faithful to God's call. Their lives bear witness to their trust in God, in big and in small ways, sometimes visible, but often hidden. What simple acts of faithfulness are you being called to persevere in today? Recommit to practicing faithfulness in the big — as well as mundane — aspects of daily living.

SECOND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

SPIRITUALITY

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

John 1:14a, 12a

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

The Word of God became flesh and dwelt
among us.

To those who accepted him,
he gave power to become children of God.

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel

John 1:29-34; L64A

John the Baptist saw Jesus coming
toward him and said,
"Behold, the Lamb of God, who
takes away the sin of the
world.

He is the one of whom I
said,

'A man is coming after
me who ranks
ahead of me
because he existed be-
fore me.'

I did not know him,
but the reason why I
came baptizing with
water

was that he might be
made known to Israel."

John testified further, saying,

"I saw the Spirit come down like a
dove from heaven
and remain upon him.

I did not know him,
but the one who sent me to baptize
with water told me,

'On whomever you see the Spirit
come down and remain,
he is the one who will baptize with
the Holy Spirit.'

Now I have seen and testified that he is
the Son of God."

Reflecting on the Gospel

As we begin Ordinary Time, in today's gospel reading, John the Baptist sets the stage for the first disciples to recognize and follow Jesus. His proclamation of Jesus as Lamb of God has caused debate among scholars. For some, this title evokes the servant in Isaiah, spoken of in today's first reading; subsequent chapters of Isaiah emphasize the suffering of the servant, who is oppressed and afflicted, "and did not open his mouth; / Like a lamb led to slaughter" (Isa 53:7). Others think of the lambs sacrificed in the temple as sin offerings (Lev 4:32-35). Still others think it's a reference to the Passover lamb, whose blood was smeared on the doorposts of the Israelites the night before beginning their exodus from Egypt (Exod 12:1-13).

One difficulty with the first interpretation is that it fits the Synoptic Gospels better than the Gospel of John. In the Synoptic tradition, Jesus doesn't answer back throughout his trial; he stands before his accusers in silence. In John, however, Jesus is depicted as fully aware and even in control of the events in the passion narrative. He doesn't remain silent but answers back in a confrontational manner when he is struck (18:23). In the book of Revelation, the victorious Lamb completes the picture begun in the Gospel of John.

The symbol of a sacrificial lamb isn't a good fit for the Gospel of John. Jesus stops the sacrificial process in the temple, driving out the sheep and the cattle (2:13-22). Moreover, in this gospel, he speaks of himself not as an unwitting victim but as the shepherd who willingly lays down his life for his sheep (10:7-18).

Most likely it is the symbolism of the Passover lamb that the author of this gospel has in mind. Just as in the exodus, the lamb's blood protects the people as they begin their arduous journey toward new life. At the death of Jesus, the evangelist brings this symbolism to the fore again, by interpreting the decision not to break Jesus's legs, as they did to the other two crucified with him, as a fulfillment of the Scriptures that refer to the Passover lamb: "Not a bone of it will be broken" (John 19:36; cf. Exod 12:46). As the new Passover lamb, Jesus protects his disciples (17:11-15) and opens the way for the new liberation of his people.

It is not as an expiatory sacrificial lamb that Jesus takes away the sin of the world, but as one who embodies a way of life that frees people from all sinfulness that holds them bound. He shares with his disciples the power to live this manner of life when he appears to them after the resurrection, breathing the Spirit upon them and commissioning them: "Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them" (20:23). Just as John predicts in today's gospel, Jesus bathes his followers with the Holy Spirit, enabling us to live as he did, forgiving everyone we can. Living in this way extends John's testimony to the Lamb of God in our day and continues Christ's action of taking away the sin of the whole world.

