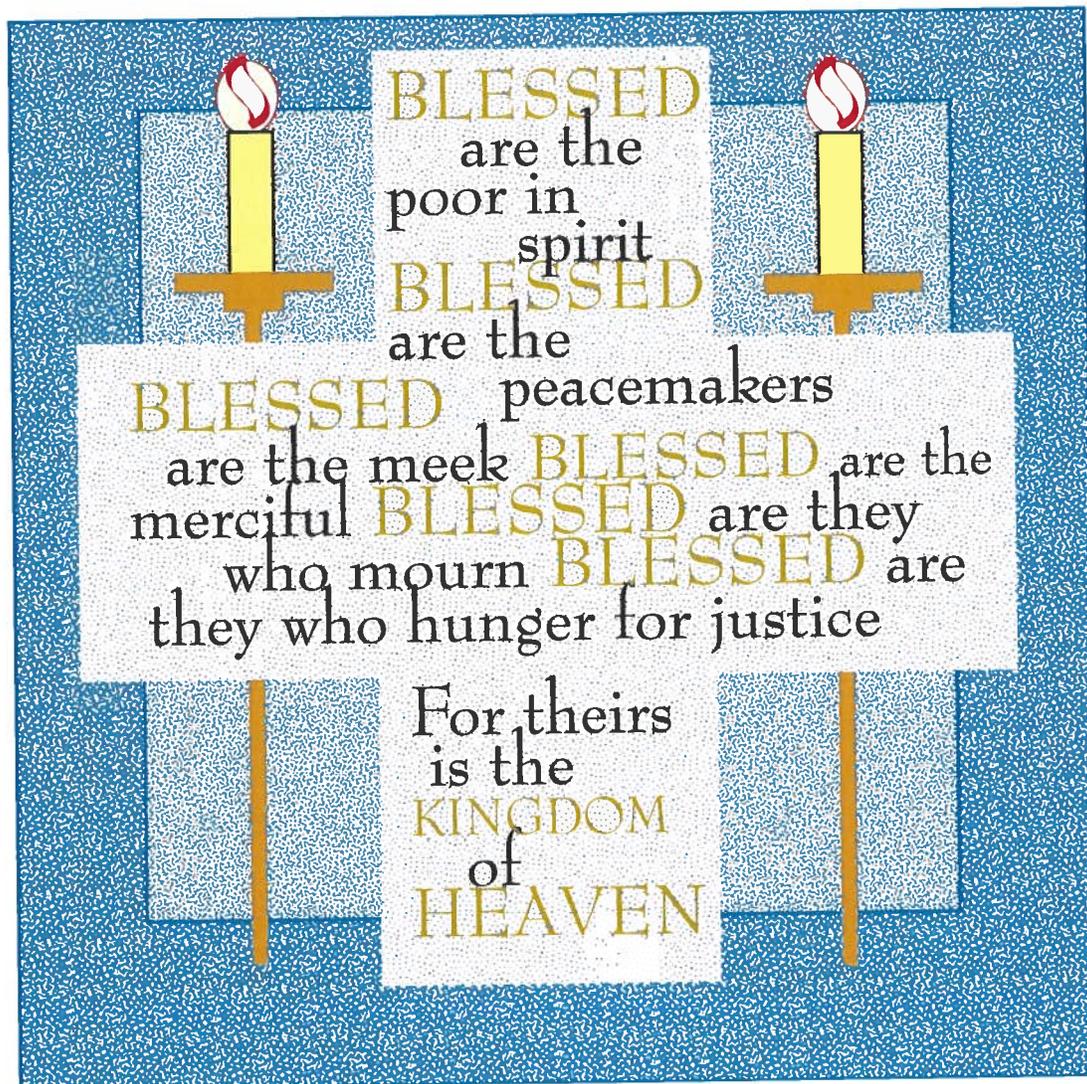


The Roman Catholic Parishes of
St. Margaret Mary, Herscher
St. James the Apostle, Irwin
Sacred Heart, Goodrich

FOURTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

JANUARY 31-FEBRUARY 1, 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

Church Mailing Address: 207 E. 5th Street Herscher, IL 60941 Phone: 815-426-2550

Quotable: "The secret of happiness is to live moment by moment and to thank God for what He is sending us every day in His goodness."
 —Saint Gianna Beretta Molla

Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time

February 7-8, 2026

Liturgical Schedule	St. Margaret Mary Saturday, Feb 7 5:00 pm	Sacred Heart Sunday, Feb. 8 7:30 am	St. James Sunday, Feb. 8 9:00 am	St. Margaret Mary Sunday, Feb. 8 10:30 am
Celebrant	Fr. Ron	Fr. Ron	Fr. Ron Deacon Ron	Fr. Ron
Ushers	Dave Emling Brent Fulton Bob Schultz Gery Wright	Dennis Pankey James Mallaney	Arlen Hansen Bob Buente Jeff Martin Mary Offerman	Dustin Truetner Darren Lovell Larry Wolles Kim Smicker
Lector	Hillary Smith	Rhonda Berns	Andy Hansen	Diane Long
Eucharistic Minister				Diane Long
Servers				Gavin Down
Greeters			Greeter—Mary Offerman R. Leader—Reatta Gohlke	Darren/Hollie Lovell

Mass Intentions for the Week

Monday, Feb. 2 (SMM)

8:00 am +Dr. Igor Dubrvec (Uta Dubravec)

Tuesday, Feb. 3 (SH)

8:00 am +Leland Denault (Steve/Donna Denault)

Wednesday, Feb. 4 (SJ)

8:00 am +Rita O'Connor (John Ader)

Friday, Feb. 6

8:00am +Jim Jepsen (William/Diane Wilcox)

Saturday, Feb. 7 (SMM)

5:00 pm For All the Parish Family

Sunday, Feb. 8

7:30 am (SH) +Sondra & Owen Hertz (Steve/Amy Hertz)

9:00 am (SJ) +Paul Muhlstadt (Bill Warburton)

+Lois Jensen (Judy Harling)

10:30 am (SMM) +Marie Duval (Rosemary Brooks Family)

+Ronald Schneider (Denise Lecocq)

A Look Ahead

Jan. 31/Feb. 1—K of C Food Drive

Monday, Feb. 2—Prayer meeting at St. James at 7pm.

Wed., Feb. 4— Combined Parish Council meeting 7pm SMM

Friday, Feb. 6—**First Friday Mass/Adoration/ Benediction at SMM 8am with Benediction at noon**

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

Question of the week: How will I allow myself to be meek, merciful, and poor in spirit, choosing to rely more often on God's grace?

Collections Weekend of Jan. 24-25, 2026

St. Margaret Mary—\$1,500 Latin America—\$299
St. James—\$4,049 Latin America—\$251
Sacred Heart— \$ 1,108 Latin America -\$287

Thank you for your generosity!



The next Knights of Columbus next Food for Families collection will be held Jan. 31/Feb. 12 at all three parishes. This is a great way to give to help those in need. We thank you for your support!!

"For I was hungry and you gave me food...
"Matthew 25:35

Gospel Shorts The Irony of True Happiness

Take a few minutes and look at the personal ads in your newspaper or online. Read the descriptions of what men and women are looking for so that they can be happy ... "Single, white female, looking for a secure, honest man who loves to line dance and have romantic dinners." If that was all it took to make women happy, there would be a lot fewer divorces.

Watch the pain reliever commercials on TV and notice how many promise instant relief from pain and suffering. It's not difficult to understand why many people, even Christians, believe that true happiness results from the avoidance of pain and the pursuit of pleasure.

The list that Jesus gives us in the Beatitudes for finding happiness is pretty ironic. There is a noticeable absence of the avoidance of pain and conflict, and not one of the Beatitudes describes the pursuit of what we would consider pleasurable. And yet the One who created our hearts to know joy and our mouths to smile knows what will produce lasting happiness.



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, February 6 at St. Margaret Mary. Adoration will conclude with Benediction at 12:00.

Reflection - Destined to Succeed

A young girl visited a farm one day and wanted to buy a large watermelon.

"That's five dollars," said the farmer.

"I've only got one dollar," said the young girl.

The farmer pointed to a very small watermelon in the field and said, "How about that one?"

"Okay, I'll take it," said the little girl. "But leave it on the vine. I'll be back for it in a month."

Parish News:

All Parishes—

- ⇒ If you would like your statement of donations to the church for tax purposes, please call the office.
- ⇒ Adult Ed class, February 4 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.
- ⇒ The next prayer meeting will be held on Monday, February 2 at St. James at 7pm.
- ⇒ Tri-Parish Office Hours— Our office hours are Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday 9am—12 pm.

St. Margaret Mary-

St. James-

Sacred Heart—

- ⇒ The week of January 25th, the Blessed Virgin Mary candle burns in prayer for John Brennan and the St. Joseph candle burns in memory of Carson Cross.

Statue donation plates

Now that the statues have arrived at St. Margaret Mary and St. James, we would like to put together the plaque recognizing all the donors. If you contributed to either of the statues, please contact the office (815-426-2550) and let us know how you want your name plate to read. A suggestion would be "gift of the (your family name) family, or "in memory of (your loved one's name). Please let us know at your earliest convenience so we can begin this process.

A Lenten Opportunity

The Christmas Season is over for another year. Was "Jesus the reason for the season" for you? Maybe now is the time to start feeding that Christmas light so that it burns brighter in your life all year. The Season of Lent will be here before you know it. Lent is a time for inner conversion of our hearts as we seek to follow Christ's will more faithfully. It's an opportunity to reflect on how our walk with Jesus is unfolding. Do you hear him calling? Jesus never wants us to walk alone; rather, he wants us to walk arm and arm with each other. Something to try on the Mondays of Lent is the Stations of the Cross at St. James 6:30 pm, followed by the Prayer Meeting at 7:00 pm. We again invite you to come and see; there is no commitment. Come join us during the first five Mondays of Lent, beginning on February 23rd, as we experience growth in our spiritual life through prayer, scripture, and song.



Saint of the week: St. Brigid of Ireland (Feb. 1) was the daughter of Dubtach, pagan Scottish king of Leinster, and Brocca, a Christian Pictish slave who had been baptized by Saint Patrick. Just before Brigid's birth, her mother was sold to a Druid landowner. Brigid remained with her mother till she was old enough to serve her legal owner Dubtach, her father.

She grew up marked by her high spirits and tender heart, and as a child, she heard Saint Patrick preach, which she never forgot. She could not bear to see anyone hungry or cold, and to help them, often gave away things that were Dubtach's. When Dubtach protested, she replied that "Christ dwelt in every creature". Dubtach tried to sell her to the King of Leinster, and while they bargained, she gave a treasured sword of her father's to a leper. Dubtach was about to strike her when Brigid explained she had given the sword to God through the leper, because of its great value. The King, a Christian, forbade Dubtach to strike her, saying "Her merit before God is greater than ours". Dubtach solved this domestic problem by giving Brigid her freedom.

Brigid's aged mother was in charge of her master's dairy. Brigid took charge and often gave away the produce. But the dairy prospered under her (hence her patronage of milk maids, dairy workers, and cattle) and the Druid freed Brigid's mother.

Brigid returned to her father, who arranged a marriage for her with a young bard. Brigid refused, and to keep her virginity, went to her Bishop, Saint Mel of Ardagh, and took her first vows. Legend says that she prayed that her beauty be taken from her so no one would seek her hand in marriage; her prayer was granted, and she regained her beauty only after making her vows. Another tale says that when Saint Patrick heard her final vows, he mistakenly used the form for ordaining priests. When told of it he replied, "So be it, my son, she is destined for great things."

Her first convent started c.468 with seven nuns. At the invitation of bishops, she started convents all over Ireland. She was a great traveler, especially considering the conditions of the time, which led to her patronage of travelers and sailors. Brigid invented the double monastery, the monastery of Kildara, which means *Church of the Oak*, that she ran on the Liffey River being for both monks and nuns. Saint Conleth became its first bishop; this connection and the installation of a bell that lasted over 1000 years apparently led to her patronage of blacksmiths and those in related fields.

Obscure saint of the week: St. Cecilius of Granada (Feb. 1) was the first bishop of Granada, Spain. One tradition says that he was a disciple of Saint James the Greater and was consecrated as bishop by Saint Peter the Apostle.



Ask and You Shall Receive

A preacher who was popular with his congregation explained his successes as the result of a silent prayer he offered each time he entered the pulpit. It went like this:

"Lord, fill my mouth with worthwhile stuff, and nudge me when I've said enough!"

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!

Interested in becoming a Friendly Visiting Volunteer? Call 815-221-6020, or email FVP@cc-doj.org



Catholic Snacks, Get Fed

Lent starts in less than a month. Will you be ready?

Lent is not meant to be improvised. It is a season of intentional conversion, and like any meaningful pilgrimage, preparation matters.

Lent rarely sneaks up on us by accident. The Church gives us signs well in advance. Readings shift. Alleluias begin to feel numbered. There is a subtle invitation to slow down and take stock.

With one month until Lent begins, the Church is already asking a quiet question: Are you ready to begin the journey well?

Lent is not meant to be improvised. It is a season of intentional conversion, and like any meaningful pilgrimage, preparation matters. When we wait until Ash Wednesday to think about fasting, prayer, or sacrifice, we often start hurried and distracted. But when we prepare our hearts ahead of time, Lent becomes less about doing more and more about becoming different.

This preparatory month is an opportunity to notice what already weighs on the soul. What habits need refining? What relationships need healing? What distractions quietly pull us from God? Lent does not create these realities. It reveals them.

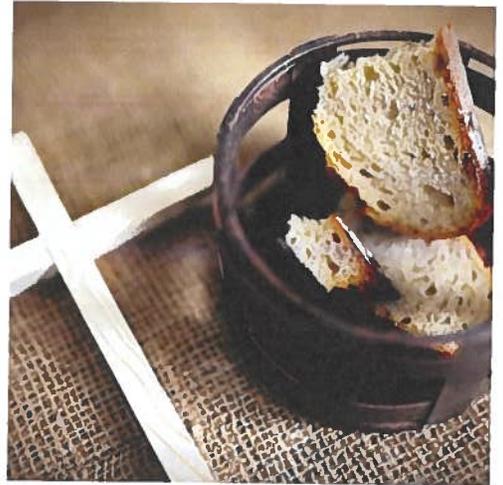
The Church has always understood Lent as a journey, not a challenge. It is forty days of walking with Christ toward the Cross, trusting that resurrection follows. That kind of trust does not appear overnight. It is learned.

This is why many saints speak of beginning Lent before Lent begins, through prayerful intention rather than sudden austerity. A prepared heart enters Lent with clarity and peace instead of pressure.

Mary shows us how to do this. She did not rush God's plan or resist the unknown. She pondered. She listened. She carried the mystery quietly until it unfolded in God's time. Lent lived with Mary becomes less about self-mastery and more about surrender.

As this month unfolds, consider letting prayer shape your expectations for Lent rather than waiting for discipline to do the work alone.

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The Sunday Gospel in Everyday English

When Jesus saw his ministry drawing huge crowds, he climbed a hillside. Those who were apprenticed to him, the committed, climbed with him. Arriving at a quiet place, he sat down and taught his climbing companions. This is what he said:

"You're blessed when you're at the end of your rope. With less of you there is more of God and his rule.

"You're blessed when you feel you've lost what is most dear to you. Only then can you be embraced by the One most dear to you.

"You're blessed when you're content with just who you are—no more, no less. That's the moment you find yourselves proud owners of everything that can't be bought.

"You're blessed when you've worked up a good appetite for God. He's food and drink in the best meal you'll ever eat.

"You're blessed when you care. At the moment of being 'care-full,' you find yourselves cared for.

"You're blessed when you get your inside world—your mind and heart—put right. Then you can see God in the outside world.

"You're blessed when you can show people how to cooperate instead of compete or fight. That's when you discover who you really are, and your place in God's family.

"You're blessed when your commitment to God provokes persecution. The persecution drives you even deeper into God's kingdom.

"Not only that—count yourselves blessed every time people put you down or throw you out or speak lies about you to discredit me. What it means is that the truth is too close for comfort and they are uncomfortable. You can be glad when that happens—give a cheer, even!—for though they don't like it, I do! And all heaven applauds. And know that you are in good company. My prophets and witnesses have always gotten into this kind of trouble."

Questions Catholics Ask

Questions Catholics Ask

Do I have to take a saint's name at my Confirmation?

The ruling on Confirmation names borrows from the practice at Baptism. The earlier 1917 Code of Canon Law required a Christian name be used, including saints' names but also virtues "or the like." Unfortunately for my mom, her parents chose the name Evelyn, derivative of the biblical Eve. That didn't sit well with the priest, who exercised his canonical right to add a Christian name, baptizing her as Mary Evelyn Prudentia. "Mary" alone met the requirement; the priest added the third name from the virtue category, just to be on the safe side. The idea of an unfettered Eve really bothered him! Mom never used Mary or Prudence after that day, but they show up on the paperwork.

The most recent Code of Canon Law (1983) softens the requirement by stating that a saint's name is not required, but the chosen name must not be "foreign to a Christian mentality." (n.855) That is, it should not be alien or contradictory to Catholic beliefs. So, Buddha and Zoroaster are out, and you probably want to avoid Caiaphas or Nero.

It helps to keep the purpose of the sacrament in mind when claiming your new identity. The sacramental action is an expression of faith. You are embracing a "name in religion"—not unlike the traditional custom of being renamed when joining a religious order. While it may work as your Internet handle, do you really want to ritually declare an identity like "Wonderwoman" or "GameBoy"?

The *Roman Ritual* notes that in non-Christian regions, any name that has a Christian meaning might be chosen. This broadens the field to include theological words like Grace, Truth, Justice, Nativity, or Cruz. Or place names like Fatima, Guadalupe, and Lourdes. You can select last names of saints as well as first names: Drexel, DePaul, Jogues, McAuley. And if you have more than one favorite saint, there's no impediment to using a hyphen. Check out *CatholicMom.com* under "Creative Catholic Names" for more clever ideas.

In the end, you may find it best to go all old-fashioned and take a saint's name. As Life Teen advises on its helpful blog about Confirmation names: Choosing a saint's name is a way of saying, "Yes, you may always pray for my poor and weary soul." Why travel alone through this world when you can have a friend? Share the journey!

Scriptures: Genesis 2:20, 22-23; 17:5; 35:10; 1 Samuel 25:25; 2 Kings 24:17; Job 18:17; Isaiah 43:1; 48:1-2; 62:2; Luke 1:13, 31-32, 59-64, 76; 2:21; Matthew 16:17-18; John 1:42; Philippians 2:9-11

Spiritual Ministry Programming of the Servants of the Holy Heart of Mary.

Here are the programs on our calendar for February and Lent 2026:

FEBRUARY:

- **Martin Scorsese Presents: The Saints** will be led by facilitators, Sr. Evelyn Varboncoeur and Sr. Kathleen Mulchay, for 7 sessions starting February 4th from 9-10:30am at Nazareth Spirituality Center in Batavia and online via ZOOM
- **Sunday Gospel Faith Sharing Groups**, New groups will be forming beginning the week of February 22nd with meetings in person and online. Facilitators, days of the week and times vary from group to group.

LENT

- **Pondering the Heart and Mind of Jesus**, our in-person Lent retreat, has 3 presentations:
 - Weekend retreat at Nazareth Spirituality Center in Batavia, March 6-8, 2026
 - 1-day retreat at One Heart, One Soul Spirituality Center in Kankakee, IL, Saturday, February 21, 2026
 - A 1-day retreat at St. Patrick's Church in Urbana, IL, Saturday, February 28, 2026
 - Our **Lent Busy Person's Retreat** can be done at home accompanied by the Spiritual Director of your choice,
 - **Lent Gospel Film Series** facilitated by Sr. Myra Lambert and Kathy Brady-Murffin, Sundays, February 22, & March 1, 8, 15, 22, 3:00-6:00pm, online via ZOOM

More information and registration for these programs can be found on our website at: <https://www.sscm-usa.org/Workshops-Retreats.html>

February 1, 2026

Written by
THE
FAITHFUL
DISCIPLE

Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Zeph 2:3; 3:12-13 | 1 Cor 1:26-31 | Mt 5:1-12a

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

There have been many times when I have experienced “imposter syndrome” in my work, where I doubt my own ability. In these times, I often looked to others to try to determine if I was doing enough. But instead of giving me the validation and encouragement I was seeking, this act of comparison frequently led to dissatisfaction. I began to wish I was more like others — more outgoing, more disciplined, more organized. But who I am and the gifts that I have to offer are exactly what I am being called to give in my vocation. Saint Paul reminds us in his First Letter to the Corinthians that we were not called because we possess a specific talent or personality; we have been called to bear witness to the work Christ is doing in us. And this witness comes from living our vocation authentically, with the gifts we naturally possess. When we not only accept but love and value our unique qualities, we give glory to the One who so lovingly and perfectly created us.

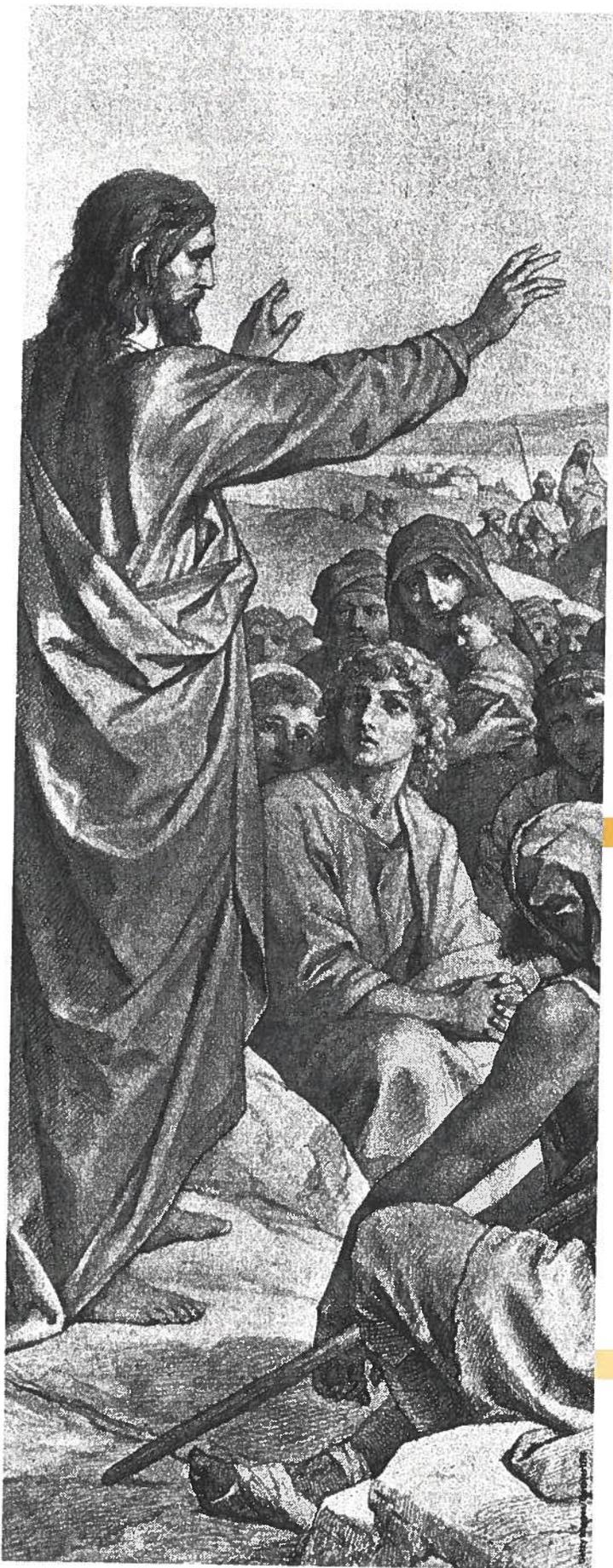
GO EVANGELIZE

PRAYER, INVITATION, WITNESS, ACCOMPANIMENT

In proclaiming the beatitudes, Christ reveals that those who will experience the rewards of heaven aren't those we might consider “blessed” by human standards. What our culture values as markers of success and happiness are not always what is valued in the kingdom of God. Indeed, the joys of life in the kingdom are deeper than those here on earth; we were created for fulfillment greater than what this world can offer. Therefore, we must live confidently in the hope of Christ's promises instead of comparing ourselves to others who might appear more successful. And as we live our vocation, we are called to live out the countercultural message of the beatitudes — a radical trust in the eternal promises of God in spite of earthly poverty, grief, or persecution. In doing so, we invite others to see and experience the joy of the abundant life that Christ proclaims.

REFLECT

As we go through life, there can be times when we feel unprepared for the vocation God has called us to. Consider how these feelings of inadequacy may be an invitation for us to rely more fully on Christ working within us. Bring this to prayer and ask the Lord to reveal how he may be using this particular circumstance to draw us closer to him.



SPIRITUALITY

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

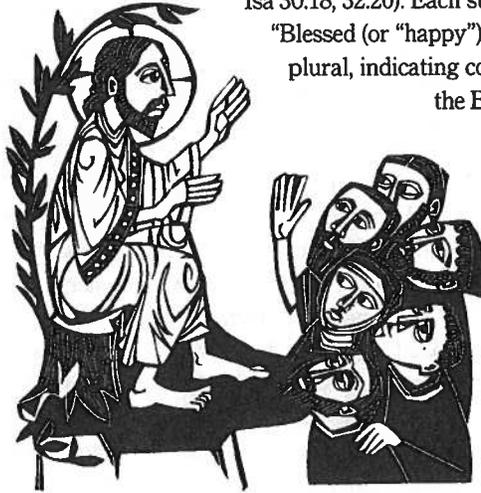
Matt 5:12a

R/. Alleluia, alleluia.
Rejoice and be glad;
your reward will be great in heaven.
R/. Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel

Matt 5:1-12a; L70A

When Jesus saw the crowds, he
went up the mountain,
and after he had sat down, his
disciples came to him.
He began to teach them, saying:
"Blessed are the poor in spirit,
for theirs is the kingdom of
heaven.
Blessed are they who mourn,
for they will be comforted.
Blessed are the meek,
for they will inherit the land.
Blessed are they who hunger and
thirst for righteousness,
for they will be satisfied.
Blessed are the merciful,
for they will be shown mercy.
Blessed are the clean of heart,
for they will see God.
Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they will be called children of
God.
Blessed are they who are persecuted
for the sake of righteousness,
for theirs is the kingdom of
heaven.
Blessed are you when they insult you
and persecute you
and utter every kind of evil against
you falsely because of me.
Rejoice and be glad,
for your reward will be great in
heaven."



Reflecting on the Gospel

How do we find fulfillment and joy when the effects of sin and strife have marred the past and when hunger, poverty, devastation of the planet, ongoing wars, and terrorism point to a bleak future? In today's gospel Jesus sums up in eight statements a way of life that brings true happiness and blessing already in the present, along with the promise of fullness of joy in days to come. There is nothing terribly new in this teaching. The prophets and wisdom teachers before Jesus spoke in a similar manner (e.g., Prov 3:13; 28:14; Sir 25:7-9; Isa 30:18; 32:20). Each statement of the Beatitudes begins, *makarioi hoi*, "Blessed (or "happy") are those who. . . ." Each is in the third-person plural, indicating communal action and relationship. The first thing the Beatitudes tell us, then, is that living them is not an individual pursuit.

The Beatitudes name the ways in which peoples' happiness is threatened: grinding poverty (the Greek *ptochos* in v. 3 denotes "beggar," one who is destitute), grief, landlessness, hunger, war, and persecution. Jesus does not advise that those so afflicted simply wait for a reversal of fortune in the hereafter, though the final verse does speak of great reward in heaven.

Jesus also counsels attitudes and actions that will bring about the reign of God, already tasted in the present. To be poor in spirit is not

to accept poverty as an inevitable state of life, but rather to find one's wealth in God, to trust in God's care for the poor (Exod 22:25-27; Isa 61:1), and to seek righteousness, which rectifies the unequal distribution of goods, so that all have enough to thrive.

To be meek is not to be shrinking violets who accept injustice but, rather, to know our proper place as children of God and to ensure that all are treated as full heirs to God's realm. To be peace builders, we are to engage in acts of mercy and forgiveness, which cleanse the heart and allow us to see God in the faces of our brothers and sisters here and now. And like the grieving women who went to the tomb of Jesus, we do not mourn in despair when we suffer loss but we allow our sorrow to be transformed by hope in the risen One.

Such a manner of life is able to heal the hurtful memories of the past and to transform the present toward a hope-filled future. This is not proposed as an intense form of Christianity meant for only a few select persons (as some in past generations suggested). Jesus addresses this teaching to all his disciples and to a great crowd, inviting them to recognize their capacity for happiness in the present by espousing attitudes and actions that will influence the future.

Jesus's teaching is different from the often-quoted maxim of Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804-64): "Happiness is a butterfly, which, when pursued, is always just beyond your grasp, but which, if you will sit down quietly, may alight upon you." Happiness is available to us when we pursue Jesus's manner of living, which is already within our grasp.