

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

THE EPIPHANY OF THE LORD

JANUARY 3-4,



Rise up in splendor
Jerusalem!
your light has
come,
the glory of the
LORD
shines upon you.

©Religious Graphics, Ltd.

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: "When they reached Bethlehem, the Magi adored the divine Child and offered him symbolic gifts, becoming forerunners of the peoples and nations which down the centuries never cease to seek and meet Christ."

—Saint John Paul II

The Baptism of the Lord

January 10-11, 2026

Liturgical Schedule	St. Margaret Mary Saturday, Jan.10 5:00 pm	Sacred Heart Sunday, Jan. 11 7:30 am	St. James Sunday, Jan 11 9:00 am	St. Margaret Mary Sunday, Jan. 11 10:30 am
Celebrant	Fr. Ron	Fr. Ron Deacon Ron		Fr. Ron
Ushers	Gery Wright Dave Emling Roger Jensen Todd Datweiler	James Mallaney David Kirkpatrick	Bob Buente Jeff Martin Jeff Steinke Dallas Ferris	Darren Lovell Larry Wolles Waune Bisailon Sean Riordan
Lector	Hillary Smith	Mike Hertz	Kelly Buente	Dana Masching
Eucharistic Minister			Natalie Mesewicz	Susan Feller
Servers				Sydney Weldon Gavin Down
Greeters			Greeter—Dallas Ferris R. Leader—Rita Thiesen	Wayne Bisailon

Mass Intentions for the Week

Monday, Jan. 5 (SMM)

8:00 am +Sterling & Madeline Bouchard (Marianne Lane)

Tuesday, Jan. 6 (SH)

8:00 am +Wayne, Pat, Mike McCarty (Terri/Jerry Weakley)

Wednesday, Jan. 7 (SJ)

8:00 am +Fred Gohlke (Darwin/Mary Peerbolte)

Friday, Jan. 9 (SMM)

8:00 am +Adam Andrzejewski (Tom/Bev Buckley)

Saturday, Jan. 10 (SMM)

5:00 pm +Jim Gray (Pat Gray)

Sunday, Jan. 11

7:30 am (SH) +Norman Wright (Viator Buckley Family)

9:00 am (SJ) +Dale Weber (The Family)

+Beverly Barrles (Eileen Johnson)

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

Question of the week:

What will I do this week to manifest the presence of Christ in me to others?

A Look Ahead

Wed., Jan. 7—Adult Ed 7 pm 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 Dec. 27-28, 2025

St. Margaret Mary—\$3,882
Christmas—\$4,951
St. James—\$1,954
Christmas—\$2,65
Sacred Heart— \$1,029
Christmas—\$8,968

Thank you for your generosity!

Parish News:

All Parishes—

- ⇒ Adult Ed classes will resume in January 7 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 Monday at 7pm at SJ.
- ⇒ Tri-Parish Office Hours— Our office hours are Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday 9am—12 pm.

St. Margaret Mary-

St. James-

Sacred Heart—

Gospel Shorts Forgetting

Matthew 2:1-12 has popularly been called the Epiphany, which means "showing." It explains God manifesting or showing divine love to humanity through Jesus Christ. This story of the three magi visiting Jesus has become so familiar to us that many times it ceases to challenge or inspire.

The magi were humbly led to give homage and honor to Jesus. Today our modern minds often lead us in the opposite direction. We sometimes seek peace, joy, and fulfillment through our modern technology, ingenuity, and knowledge. In failing to recognize our dependence on God, we have lost the virtue of humanity. In losing humility, we miss experiencing the supreme revelation of God's love

YOU ARE INVITED:

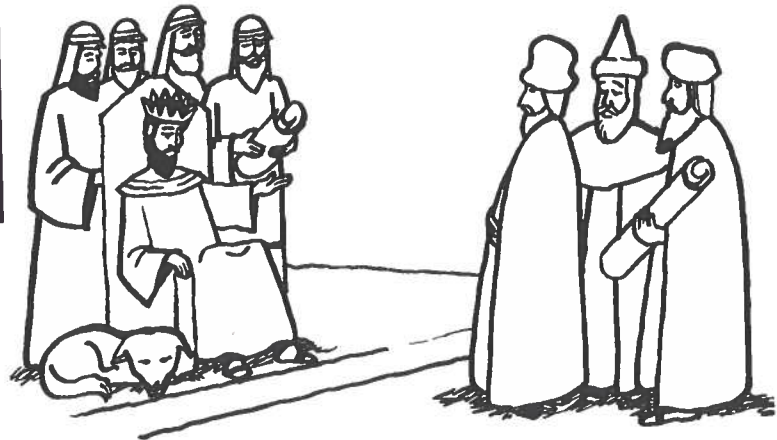
ARCHBISHOP-DESIGNATE HICKS WILL CELEBRATE THE MASS AT THE CATHEDRAL OF ST. RAYMOND IN JOLIET FOR THE PRIESTS, DEACONS AND PEOPLE OF THE DIOCESE OF JOLIET ON SUNDAY, JANUARY 11, 2026, AT 2:00 PM, FOLLOWED BY A SIMPLE RECEPTION IN THE CATHEDRAL COMMONS. ALL ARE WELCOME TO ATTEND.

Reflection— Let the Son Shine

There's a light that is shining in the heart of man,
It's the light that was shining when the world began.
There's a light that is shining in the Turk and the Jew
And a light that is shining, friend, in me and in you.

The Sacred Heart Religious Ed Students would like to thank everyone who supported the Christmas Crafts/Kids Helping Kids fundraiser. Due to the tremendous support, we made \$235! Thank You!!

The week of January 4th, the Blessed Virgin Mary candle burns in memory of Tom Johnson, the St Joseph candle burns in prayer for healing of Denise Urquijo

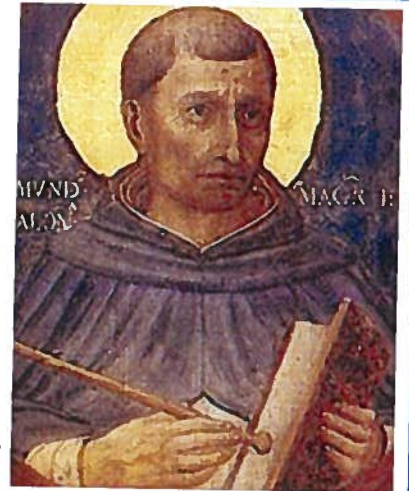


Where is the newborn
King of the Jews?
MT.2:2

Saint of the week: St. Raymond of Penyafort (Jan. 7) was born to the Aragonian nobility. Raymond was educated at the cathedral school in Barcelona, Spain. He became a philosophy teacher around age 20. Later he became a priest and graduated law school in Bologna, Italy. Raymond joined the Dominicans in 1218. Summoned to Rome, Italy in 1230 by Pope Gregory IX, he was assigned to collect all official letters of the popes since 1150. Raymond gathered and published five volumes and helped write Church law.

Chosen master general of the Dominicans in 1238, he reviewed the *Order's* Rule, made sure everything was legally correct, then resigned his position in 1240 to dedicate himself to parish work. He was offered the archbishopric, but he declined, instead returning to Spain and the parish work he loved. His compassion helped many people return to God through Reconciliation.

During his years in Rome, Raymond heard of the difficulties missionaries faced trying to reach non-Christians of Northern Africa and Spain. Raymond started a school to teach the language and culture of the people to be evangelized. With Saint Thomas Aquinas, he wrote a booklet to explain the truths of the faith in a way that non-believers could understand. His great influence on Church law led to his patronage of lawyers.



Obscure saint of the week: St. Canute Lavard (Jan. 7) was the second son of King Eric the Good of Denmark, and the nephew of King Saint Canute of Denmark. He was raised in the court of Saxony. Canute was the Duke of Jutland with his court at Schleswig. He spent years defending against Viking raids. Canute supported the missionary work of Saint Vicelin. He became the king of the Western Wends in 1129. Canute's uncle, King Nils of Denmark, opposed Canute coming to the throne and arranged his murder. He was venerated in Denmark.

The Sunday Gospel in Everyday English

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem village, Judah territory—this was during Herod's kingship—a band of scholars arrived in Jerusalem from the East. They asked around, "Where can we find and pay homage to the newborn King of the Jews? We observed a star in the eastern sky that signaled his birth. We're on pilgrimage to worship him."

When word of their inquiry got to Herod, he was terrified—and not Herod alone, but most of Jerusalem as well. Herod lost no time. He gathered all the high priests and religion scholars in the city together and asked, "Where is the Messiah supposed to be born?"

They told him, "Bethlehem, Judah territory. The prophet Micah wrote it plainly:

It's you, Bethlehem, in Judah's land,
no longer bringing up the rear.
From you will come the leader
who will shepherd-rule my people, my Israel."

Herod then arranged a secret meeting with the scholars from the East. Pretending to be as devout as they were, he got them to tell him exactly when the birth-announcement star appeared. Then he told them the prophecy about Bethlehem, and said, "Go find this child. Leave no stone unturned. As soon as you find him, send word and I'll join you at once in your worship."

Instructed by the king, they set off. Then the star appeared again, the same star they had seen in the eastern skies. It led them on until it hovered over the place of the child. They could hardly contain themselves: They were in the right place! They had arrived at the right time!

They entered the house and saw the child in the arms of Mary, his mother. Overcome, they kneeled and worshiped him. Then they opened their luggage and presented gifts: gold, frankincense, myrrh.

In a dream, they were warned not to report back to Herod. So they worked out another route, left the territory without being seen, and returned to their own country (*from Matthew 2*).

Catholic Snacks, Get Fed
Why did the Magi bring those strange gifts?

The Three Magi' unusual offerings proclaim the truth about Christ.

The adoration of the Magi is a powerful, heartwarming part of Nativity history. But do you sometimes wonder...were the Magi well-meaning but clumsy gift-givers? After all, they were older, learned, wealthy men who probably didn't spend a lot of time around children. Couldn't someone have told them to bring swaddling clothes, a crib, and some money?

Actually, the Magi were the very best gift-givers. Their offerings of gold, frankincense, and myrrh were more than a nice gesture—they proclaimed the mystery of God Incarnate. Here's why:

Gold has always been highly valued due to its scarcity, the difficulty of purifying it, and its lustrous color. The only people able to flaunt gold for millennia were the royalty—so naturally, it became a symbol of blue blood. Depositing gold at the feet of the Child in Bethlehem means that this Child is royalty—Son of David, King of Kings.

Frankincense is a type of hardened plant resin that creates aromatic smoke when burned. Nearly all cultures have reserved it as an offering to divinity. For the Jews, incense reminded them of the mystery of God, its smoke forming a spiritual link between heaven and earth. Its presence tells us that the Christ Child is God.

Myrrh is also plant resin, but its most common use was as a burial ointment. This gift of myrrh foretells Christ's death—that is, it undeniably announces His humanity and proclaims the salvific sacrifice He will undergo.

With one seemingly small gesture, the Magi declare to us that here is the Word Incarnate, God made man, born to be our King and our Salvation. Their offerings proved their homage and belief—that is why they were the best gift-givers.

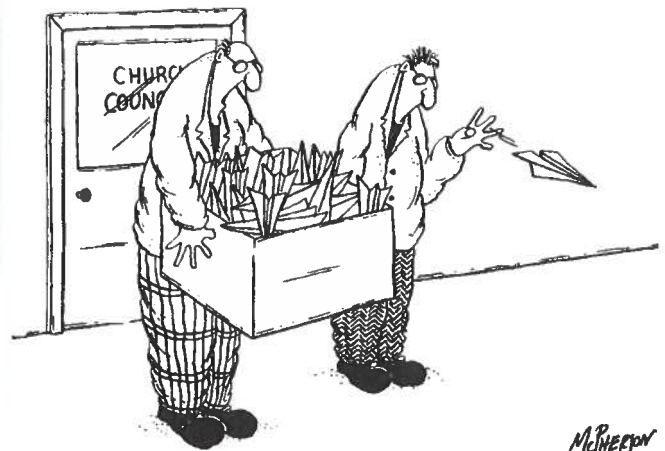
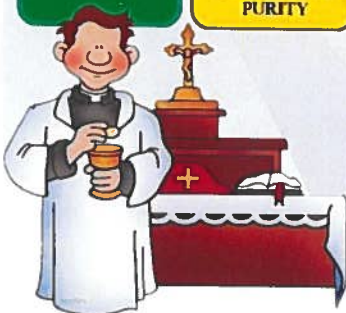
-reprinted with permission the Catholic Company www.thecatholiccompany.com



LITURGICAL COLORS

GREEN	WHITE/ GOLD	RED	VIOLET	PINK
IS USED FOR	IS USED FOR	IS USED FOR	IS USED FOR	IS USED FOR
ORDINARY TIME (Weeks 1-34)	FEASTS OF OUR LORD, THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY AND SAINTS WHO ARE NOT MARTYRS	PALM SUNDAY, GOOD FRIDAY, PENTECOST, MASS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT AND MARTYR SAINTS	ADVENT, LENT AND MASS FOR THE DECEASED	THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT (GAUDETE) AND FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT (LAETARE)
SYMBOLIZES	SYMBOLIZES	SYMBOLIZES	SYMBOLIZES	SYMBOLIZES
HOPE	GLORY, INNOCENCE, PURITY	FIRE, CHARITY, LOVE	PENANCE, ATONEMENT	REJOICING

Colors play an important part of the worship of the Church and they change according to the seasons of the Church year. Colors are a primary source of symbolism, and tell us much about what we believe about the lessons we hear during the Liturgy of the Word (which are themed according to the seasons), and about what we do during worship.



"Remind me never to ask the Youth Group to help fold the church bulletins again."

Catholic Charities is Seeking an Experienced Executive Director

Catholic Charities, Diocese of Joliet, is seeking an experienced, mission-driven professional to serve as its Executive Director. This is a senior-level leadership role requiring a Bachelors degree from an accredited college or university, extensive professional experience and a strong background in managing large teams and complex organizations. Preference will be given to those who reside in the Diocese. The annual salary range for this position is \$140,000–\$160,000, based on qualifications and experience. Catholic Charities offers the opportunity to participate in a group health plan, 403(b) retirement plan and a short-term disability plan to eligible individuals

Qualified candidates should email their resume to Beka Deja at

bdeja@cc-doj.org



*My prayer is for all of us to
take the miracle of Christmas
Day and bring it into every day
of this happy new year.*

Questions Catholics Ask

What is the Catholic teaching regarding marriage? Does it say a marriage must be between a baptized man and a baptized woman?

Not quite. The church teaches that a marriage between a baptized man and a baptized woman is a SACRAMENT. When a person who's baptized marries another who is not, the Church recognizes the marriage. But it doesn't consider the marriage a sacramental union.

Please understand this teaching doesn't pronounce judgment on the quality of a relationship. It simply defines what a sacramental marriage is. If you inhabit a realm outside the sacramental orbit, the marriage doesn't fit the criteria.

Because sacramental living is central to Catholic identity, official church teaching prohibits the marriage of a baptized Catholic to an unbaptized (non-Christian) person. (Canon 1086) Obviously, in our modern interconnected world, many such marriages take place. This impediment to marriage can be—and generally is—dispensed by the local bishop who issues a “dispensation from the impediment of disparity of worship.” In order to receive this dispensation, the unbaptized person must be made aware of the Catholic person's obligation to practice the faith, as well as to raise any children under the same obligation. The unbaptized person must agree not to object to the Catholic spouse's obligations, nor to impede the fulfillment of them. The marriage may then be celebrated in a Catholic ceremony—however, not in the context of a Mass (Eucharist being a sacrament). In fulfilling these stipulations, the couple is considered married by the Catholic Church. But not sacramentally.

Canon Law offers requirements for a Catholic sacramental marriage as follows:

- The couple must be a male and a female.
- The proposed marriage must be legal in the state where it is celebrated.
- The couple must produce a valid marriage license issued by the local civic authority.
- The couple must produce proofs of baptism by certificate or affidavit.
- Neither party can be bound to a previous marriage.
- Both parties must be capable of natural intercourse.
- The couple must be aware, or be made aware, of Church teaching regarding marriage as a bond broken only by death, and open to welcoming children. The couple must agree to these teachings.
- Neither party can be ordained or under the vow of religious profession.
- The couple must complete the preparation requirements of the parish or the diocese.

As with any teaching, church law regarding marriage continues to evolve. A fair amount of local discretion can be exercised pastorally for the good of the couple.

Scripture: Genesis 2:18-24; Tobit 8:5-7; Matthew 19:3-12; Mark 10:2-12; 1 Corinthians 6:16; 7:1-16; Ephesians 5:21-33

January 4, 2026

The Epiphany of the Lord

Is 60:1-6 | Eph 3:2-3a, 5-6 | Mt 2:1-12

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

Have you ever had a moment where you've been so joyful that your heart "throbbed and overflowed"? (Is. 60:5) Perhaps this prompt might call to mind moments we have been chosen or noticed, especially when we otherwise felt sidelined or forgotten. (Imagine expecting to be picked last for the team, only to be someone's first choice!) Today's first reading speaks of a moment like that. While the nations of the earth are shrouded in darkness, God shines his light and glory on Jerusalem, and all the nations come streaming to her bearing precious tributes. Similarly, our Gospel speaks about how God chose Bethlehem — a seemingly insignificant town — to be the birthplace of his Son: "And you, Bethlehem, land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; since from you shall come a ruler, who is to shepherd my people." Like Jerusalem and Bethlehem, we, too, have been chosen by God. As we continue our celebration of Christmas, our hearts are filled to overflowing when we recall that by taking on our flesh, God has chosen to make his home with us for all eternity.

GO EVANGELIZE

PRAYER, INVITATION, WITNESS, ACCOMPANIMENT

Paul reminds us that God has chosen us, not only for ourselves, but for the sake of others: "You have heard of the stewardship of *God's grace that was given to me for your benefit.*" God gives Paul a special revelation to know the mystery of God so he could preach the Gospel to the Gentiles and to all peoples. We who know the joy of having been chosen to be God's beloved sons and daughters have the beautiful task of helping others to know that they, too, are chosen by God. Because of this, evangelization is not simply an item on our spiritual to-do list; it is a work of joy — the joy of helping others to discover their own "belovedness" as children of God. And of course, this message is for *everyone!*

INVITATION

One of the best presents we can offer to someone is our presence. Make an effort this week to intentionally spend time with someone who may feel lonely or forgotten, setting aside other tasks to focus entirely on them. The goal is to help them feel special and *chosen* as a way of giving a glimpse of God's love that chooses each of us out of the many. May the gift of your presence help them to remember how very loved they are.



SPIRITUALITY

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Matt 2:2

℟. Alleluia, alleluia.

We saw his star at its rising
and have come to do him homage.

℟. Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel

Matt 2:1-12; L20ABC

When Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea,
in the days of King Herod,
behold, magi from the east
arrived in Jerusalem,
saying,
“Where is the newborn king of the Jews?”

We saw his star at its rising
and have come to do him
homage.”

When King Herod heard this,
he was greatly troubled,
and all Jerusalem with him.

Assembling all the chief priests and the scribes of the people,
he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born.

They said to him, “In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it has been written through the prophet:

*And you, Bethlehem, land of Judah,
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;
since from you shall come a ruler,
who is to shepherd my people Israel.”*

Then Herod called the magi secretly and ascertained from them the time of the star's appearance.

He sent them to Bethlehem and said,
“Go and search diligently for the child.

When you have found him, bring me word,
that I too may go and do him homage.”

Continued in Appendix A, p. 269.

Reflecting on the Gospel

The struggle to recognize an equal dignity in those who are not like us is a very human one. The community for which Matthew's Gospel was written, which was predominantly Jewish, struggled to welcome Gentile believers. This is the gospel in which Jesus emphatically warns his disciples, when he sends them out on mission, not to go anywhere near Gentiles or Samaritans but only to “the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (10:6).



This is also the community that told the story of the Canaanite woman whom Jesus rebuffed when she pleaded with him to heal her daughter. He declared that he had been “sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (15:24). Her faithful persistence helped him to see that his mission could embrace others beyond the borders of his own people. This openness to people beyond the Jews reaches a climax at the conclusion of the gospel, where the final words of the risen Christ are his instruction to go and make disciples of all nations (28:19).

This all-inclusive mission of Christ is already foreshadowed in the opening chapters of the gospel, where exotic visitors from the East are the first to do homage to Jesus. The term *magi* originally referred to

a caste of Persian priests. They were not kings themselves but served their king with skills such as interpreting dreams. In the gospel they also appear to be adept at interpreting the movement of the stars. Following the star, they are the first Gentiles to seek and recognize Jesus, offering their precious gifts to him. In so doing, they foreshadow the way Gentiles will flock to the Christian communities, bearing gifts for mission.

All the readings for today's feast underscore the welcome extended to all in God's embrace. Isaiah speaks of how peoples from every nation will stream toward the renewed Jerusalem, all bearing their gifts and proclaiming God's praises. The responsorial psalm likewise sings of how every nation on earth will adore God's Anointed One. The letter to the Ephesians emphasizes that “the Gentiles are coheirs, members of the same body, and copartners in the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel” (3:6). There are no second-class members and no privileges for those who had priority in the faith. All are equal comembers.

The very insistence on the equal status of Gentiles, backed up with the assertion that this has now been revealed to the apostles and prophets by the Spirit, reveals the struggles of the early Christian communities to make this a reality. Today, the difficulties in welcoming Gentiles have long ago been overcome, but others still face us. What welcome is given to people of different races? to people of different socioeconomic strata? to women? to those whose marital status is irregular? to those of a different sexual orientation? Facing our prejudices and working to dismantle them is a most difficult task. It can take a lifetime, but it is possible to do with the help of the Spirit, who continues to reveal the copartnership of all in the body of Christ.