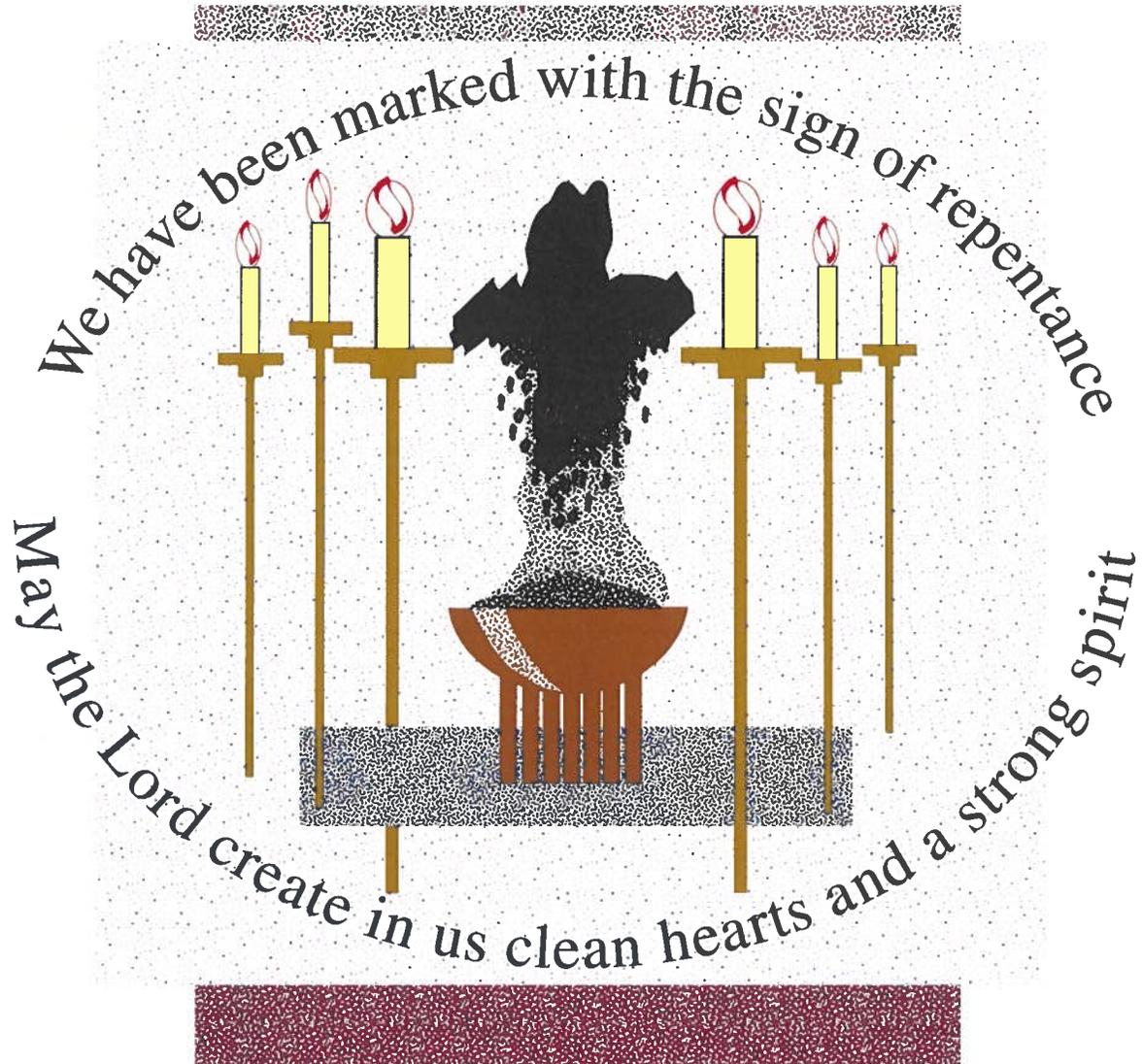


The Roman Catholic Parishes of  
St. Margaret Mary, Herscher  
St. James the Apostle, Irwin

FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT

FEBRUARY 21-22, 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: "Our guardian angels are our most faithful friends, because they are with us day and night, always and everywhere. We ought often to invoke them."

—Saint John Vianney

Second Sunday of Lent			February 28/March 1, 2026	
Liturgical Schedule	St. Margaret Mary Saturday, Feb 28 5:00 pm	Sacred Heart Sunday, March 1 7:30 am	St. James Sunday, March 1 9:00 am	St. Margaret Mary Sunday, March 1 10:30 am
Celebrant	Fr. Ron	Fr. Ron Deacon Ron	Fr. Ron	Fr. Ron
Ushers	Todd Datweiler Dave Emling Gery Wright Roger Jensen	Kyle Ferris Daryl Ferris	Youth Mass	Kim Smicker Joe Smolkovich Wayne Bisailon Brent Fulton
Lector	Dave Emling	Ann Marie Kieffer	Youth Mass	Julie Splear
Eucharistic Minister			Carrie Abrassart	Stacie Powers
Servers				Caroline <u>Fulton</u>
Greeters			Greeter—Youth Mass R. Leader—The Peerboltes	Stacie Powers

### Mass Intentions for the Week

#### Monday, Feb. 23 (SMM)

8:00 am +Jim Feller (Norm & Sharon Riordan)

#### Tuesday, Feb. 24 (SH)

8:00 am +Dolores Clodi (Gary & Kate Cloonen)

#### Wednesday, Feb. 25 (SJ)

8:00 am +Noreen Saathoff (Tim O'Connor)

#### Friday, Feb. 27

8:00am +Dolores Clodi (Pam & Andres Matern)

#### Saturday, Feb. 28 (SMM)

5:00 pm +Mary Lou Fousnaugh (The Family)

+Donna Ruder (Lori-Ann Bruer)

#### Sunday, March 1

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

9:00 am (SJ) +James & Joan Scanlon (Tom Scanlon)

+Jason Wood (The Wood Family)

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

### Looking Ahead

Wednesday, Feb. 25—Senior Luncheon at Villas 11 am

Sunday, March 8—SJ Spring Forward Donut Sunday

Pastor— Fr. Ron Neitzke- 815-426-2550

Deacon – Ron Gagnon— rjgckg@aol.com

Home—815-933-4077

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TriParish web page – [www.triparishcatholics.org](http://www.triparishcatholics.org)

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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

Question of the week: How do I resist temptation? Can I remember to look ahead to the long-term consequences before I choose what to do?

## Collections Weekend of Feb. 14-15, 2026

St. Margaret Mary—\$ 2,097  
Eastern & Central Europe \$259  
St. James—\$ 1,384  
Eastern & Central Europe \$239  
Sacred Heart— \$1,044  
Eastern & Central Europe \$324

### Gospel Shorts- Getting Out of the Spaghetti Bowl

Life sometimes seems to be very messy, almost as though it were a bowl full of spaghetti with all the entangling noodles. We need to make decisions about this or that; we find ourselves pulled in this direction or that. We do not always know what to do. And that is when it becomes extremely easy to fall prey to temptation.

Fortunately, Jesus is not only a good role model but also provides a way out of the thicket of entangling temptations. When He encounters the Devil in the desert, shortly before the official start of his ministry, Jesus cut through all the confusion and entanglements and straightforwardly dealt with temptation. We can also do this, and in so doing, get ourselves out of our spaghetti bowls.

### An Ungrateful Heart

If one should give me a dish of sand and tell me there are particles of iron in it, I might look for them with my clumsy fingers and be unable to detect them; but let me take a magnet and sweep through it, and the almost invisible particles would be drawn to it.

The unthankful heart, like my finger in the sand, discovers no mercies; but let the thankful heart sweep through the day, as the magnet finds the iron, so it will find some heavenly blessings.

**Senior Luncheon** Please plan on joining us for our Senior Luncheon at the Villa's on Wednesday, February 25, at 11:00. Suggested donation is \$10.00. Harp music will be our entertainment. Please spread the word in your church and in the community! We hope you can join us and bring a friend... or even your spouse!!! If able to attend please call Jackie 815-421-4048

## THE SEASON OF LENT

### Prepare your heart for the Lord

Every Friday of Lent is an obligatory day of fasting and abstinence for Catholics. Fasting is required for individuals between the ages of 18 and 59. On fasting days, a person may eat one full meal and two smaller meals, which together should not equal the amount of the full meal.

The obligation of abstinence from meat applies to all Catholics age 14 and older. Those who are exempt from fasting and abstinence outside the specified age limits include individuals who are physically or mentally ill, such as those with chronic conditions like diabetes, as well as pregnant or nursing women.

Lenten activities for the week of February 23<sup>rd</sup> :

- Monday, Feb. 23<sup>rd</sup>— Stations of the Cross 6:30 at SJ –Prayer meeting to follow at 7pm
- Tuesday, Feb 24<sup>th</sup>: Evening and Night Prayer 7:00 MM
- Wednesday February 25<sup>th</sup>: Scriptural Stations of the Cross 7:00 SMM
- Friday February 27<sup>th</sup>: Traditional Stations of the Cross 3:00 SMM

During Lent bring in your old palms and we will use them for the Easter Fire at the Vigil.

### Parish News:

#### All Parishes—

- ⇒ Herscher Council of Churches is looking for drivers to deliver meals in Herscher please call Jackie Eberle 815- 421-4048
- ⇒ The next prayer meeting will be held on Monday, February 23 at St. James at 7pm .
- ⇒ Tri-Parish Office Hours— Our office hours are Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday 9am—12 pm.

**St. Margaret Mary**-CCW meeting to discuss Night in Italy—  
Monday. March 16, 7PM

#### St. James-

- ⇒ Our St. James Lenten Project is Georgie's Closet. Georgie's Closet is an organization that is dedicated to providing children in foster care and their foster families the essentials needed to feel loved and supported. We will be collecting monetary donations to aid in scholarships for families to cover kids' sports, extracurricular activities, hair care and other random expenses. Donations can be dropped off in the hall or in the Sunday collection. Checks should be written out to Georgie's Closet.
- ⇒ The Spring Forward Donut Breakfast will be Sunday, March 8 after mass at St. James. All are invited!

#### Sacred Heart—

⇒

**Obscure saint of the week: St. Margaret of Cortona (Feb. 22)** was a farmer's daughter. Her mother died when Margaret was seven years old, and her step-mother considered the girl a nuisance. Margaret eloped with a young nobleman from Montepulciano, bore him a son, and lived as his mistress for nine years. In 1274 he was murdered by brigands, and his body dumped in a shallow grave.

Margaret saw the incident as a sign from God. She publicly confessed to the affair and tried to return to her father's house; he would not accept her. She and her son took shelter with the Friars Minor at Cortona. Still young and attractive, Margaret sometimes had trouble resisting temptation, but each incident was followed by periods of deep self-loathing. To make herself unappealing to local young men, she once tried to mutilate herself, but was stopped by a friar named Giunta.

She earned her keep by tending to sick women. She later began caring for the sick poor, living on alms, asking nothing for her services. She became a Franciscan tertiary in 1277. Margaret developed a deep and intense prayer life and was given to ecstasies during which she received messages from heaven.

In 1286 Margaret received a charter to work with the sick poor. She gathered others of like mind and formed them into a community of tertiaries. They were later given the status of a congregation and called the *Poverelle (Poor Ones)*. With them she founded a hospital at Cortona. Margaret preached against vice of all sorts to any who would listen. She developed a great devotion to the Eucharist and Passion and prophesied the date of her own death.

Though she worked for those in need, and though the poor sought her help and advice, the slander of her earlier life followed her the rest of her days, and she was forever the target of local gossips



**Obscure saint of the week: St. Maximian of Ravenna (Feb. 22)** became the bishop of Ravenna, Italy in 546 by Pope Vigilius with the support of Emperor Justinian; the choice was initially so unpopular that the Maximian had to live outside the city walls for a while. He built the basilica of Saint Vitalis, and either built or renovated many other churches. Maximian commissioned a number of illuminated manuscripts and made sure that the text were updated with the most authoritative versions. He may have been the first Latin bishop to use the title *archbishop*.

### Questions Catholics Ask

#### Why do we have Knights of Columbus?

The first time you see those guys march up the aisle of a church, you might well wonder: what does this have to do with Catholicism? The Knights' history begins in 1882 with Father Michael McGivney, a diocesan priest in New Haven, Connecticut. McGivney had two concerns: the strong attraction of local youth to secret societies like the Masons, and the number of families struggling with the loss of their breadwinner. The Knights of Columbus were created to address both needs: a Catholic fraternal society offering an insurance policy to support families in times of loss.

McGivney chose Christopher Columbus as the society's patron, a strong symbol of the Catholic contribution to our national story. This was a calculated choice in an era when Catholic immigrants were far from welcome, and Protestant societies like the American Protective Association questioned Catholic patriotism. By 1905, the Knights could be found in every state of the union and beyond. A powerful sense of ritual enabled its immigrant members to assimilate a new identity, avoid shrinking into ethnic particularity, relinquish old world ties, and affiliate with the story of America. The K of C soon became and remains the largest organization of Catholic laity in the world.

The Knights' activities evolved along with the nation's needs. In generations when the church faced prejudice, the Knights studied bias in the press and politics. When U.S. troops needed respite that was safe and wholesome, the K of C provided "Huts" where every soldier was welcome, and everything was free. After the First World War, the Knights sponsored college scholarships and night schools for veterans. In 1922, a K of C Racial Contribution Series published monographs by W.E.B. DuBois, George Cohen, and Frederick Franklin Schrader about the respective contributions of Black, Jewish, and German citizens to the United States.

After the Second Vatican Council, the Knights reorganized with a strong social justice component. Over a million Knights worldwide put their nearly \$100 million in annual contributions toward papal charities and projects. Tens of millions of service hours annually are donated by members to their local communities. The K of C still run a well-respected insurance company. All this, and swords too.

#### Scriptures:

Deuteronomy 10:17-19; 14:28-29; 16:11-12; 24:17-22; 27:19; Isaiah 10:1-2; Malachi 3:5; Acts of the Apostles 6:1

## The Sunday Gospel in Everyday English

Next Jesus was taken into the wild by the Spirit for the Test. The Devil was ready to give it. Jesus prepared for the Test by fasting forty days and forty nights. That left him, of course, in a state of extreme hunger, which the Devil took advantage of in the first test: "Since you are God's Son, speak the word that will turn these stones into loaves of bread."

Jesus answered by quoting Deuteronomy: "It takes more than bread to stay alive. It takes a steady stream of words from God's mouth."

For the second test the Devil took him to the Holy City. He sat him on top of the Temple and said, "Since you are God's Son, jump." The Devil goaded him by quoting Psalm 91: "He has placed you in the care of angels. They will catch you so that you won't so much as stub your toe on a stone."

Jesus countered with another citation from Deuteronomy: "Don't you dare test the Lord your God."

For the third test, the Devil took him to the peak of a huge mountain. He gestured expansively, pointing out all the earth's kingdoms, how glorious they all were. Then he said, "They're yours—lock, stock, and barrel. Just go down on your knees and worship me, and they're yours."

Jesus' refusal was curt: "Beat it, Satan!" He backed his rebuke with a third quotation from Deuteronomy: "Worship the Lord your God, and only him. Serve him with absolute single-heartedness."

The Test was over. The Devil left. And in his place, angels! Angels came and took care of Jesus' needs (*from Matthew 4*).

### Catholic Snacks, Get Fed

What is the Lenten tradition of lighting candles?

The Catechism teaches that sacramentals such as candles prepare us to receive grace and dispose the heart toward prayer.

Lent is often associated with fasting, penance, and simplicity. Yet throughout Catholic history, one quiet tradition has remained deeply meaningful: the lighting of candles during the penitential season.

Candles have always held rich symbolism in the Church. Christ Himself is the Light of the world (John 8:12), and every candle lit in prayer is a small sign of that truth. Even in seasons of sorrow, the faithful do not pray in darkness, but in hope.

During Lent, many Catholics adopt the practice of lighting a candle during personal prayer, especially before a crucifix or sacred image. This simple gesture becomes a reminder that Christ's Passion is not merely an event of the past, but a mystery entered through prayer.

In monasteries, candles are often kept burning near icons or in chapels as a sign of continual intercession. The Liturgy of the Hours, prayed daily by clergy and religious, frequently uses light as a symbol of vigilance and repentance. Lent calls Christians to stay spiritually awake, watching with Christ in the garden (Matthew 26:40).

Some families also keep a special Lenten candle at the center of the home, lighting it during evening prayer or Scripture reading. This creates a visible rhythm of the season, reminding the household that Lent is a journey toward Easter.

The Catechism teaches that sacramentals such as candles prepare us to receive grace and dispose the heart toward prayer (CCC 1667). A candle does not replace conversion, but it can help shape the soul's attention toward God.

In the quiet flame, Lent becomes more than a list of sacrifices. It becomes a steady longing for the Light that cannot be overcome.

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February 22, 2026

Written by  
THE  
FAITHFUL  
DISCIPLE

## First Sunday of Lent

Gen 2:7-9; 3:1-7 | Rom 5:12-19 | Mt 4:1-11

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

Although we're at the very beginning of Lent, today's first reading from Genesis prepares us for words we will hear on the night of the Easter Vigil: "O truly necessary sin of Adam, destroyed completely by the Death of Christ! O happy fault that earned so great, so glorious a Redeemer!" (*Exsultet*) *O truly necessary sin?! O happy fault?!* What could these words actually mean? I think the *Exsultet* is drawing us to see that sin is not the end of the story. In the mysterious working of grace, being in a state of needing God's forgiveness (sin) opens us up to the possibility of experiencing and receiving his endless love and mercy. As we take on practices of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving this Lent, may we not grow discouraged when we inevitably fall short, but may we recognize that our very weakness presents us with an opportunity to rejoice in his merciful love.

### **GO EVANGELIZE**

#### PRAYER, INVITATION, WITNESS, ACCOMPANIMENT

At the heart of evangelization is announcing the good news that our sin doesn't have the last word. St. Paul puts it this way: While death came through Adam's sin, "the gift is not like the transgression. For if by the transgression of the one, the many died, how much more did the grace of God and the gracious gift of the one man Jesus Christ overflow for the many." While sin certainly wreaks havoc by bringing suffering and death into our world, the conviction of the Church is that the restoration God brings about through the death and resurrection of Jesus elevates humanity to a state far better than what we lost in the fall. What might it look like to witness to this great hope we have in Jesus in our own lives? How can we offer encouragement to those who feel they have fallen too far from grace that God's mercy is far more powerful than any transgression they may have committed?

### **REFLECT**

Throughout the Gospels, we hear story after story of sinners ending up closer to God than those who think themselves to be perfectly obedient (*The Prodigal Son* [Lk 15:11-32]; *the Pharisee and the Tax Collector* [Lk 18:9-14]). As you contemplate which Lenten practices to adopt in these next few weeks, keep in mind that holiness isn't found in perfect adherence to these practices, but by humbling yourself to recognize the God who loves you even when you fall.



**SPIRITUALITY**

**GOSPEL ACCLAMATION**

Matt 4:4b

One does not live on bread alone,  
but on every word that comes forth from the  
mouth of God.

**Gospel**

Matt 4:1-11; L22A

At that time Jesus was led by  
the Spirit into the desert  
to be tempted by the devil.  
He fasted for forty days and  
forty nights,  
and afterwards he was  
hungry.

The tempter approached and  
said to him,  
"If you are the Son of God,  
command that these stones  
become loaves of  
bread."

He said in reply,  
"It is written:

*One does not live on bread alone,  
but on every word that comes  
forth  
from the mouth of God."*

Then the devil took him to the holy city,  
and made him stand on the parapet  
of the temple,  
and said to him, "If you are the Son  
of God, throw yourself down.

For it is written:

*He will command his angels  
concerning you  
and with their hands they will  
support you,  
lest you dash your foot against a  
stone."*

Jesus answered him,

"Again it is written,  
*You shall not put the Lord, your  
God, to the test."*

*Continued in Appendix A, p. 272.*

**Reflecting on the Gospel**

It is the subtle way that temptation resembles truth that gets us. For people who have made a fundamental choice to accept God's invitation to orient their lives toward the divine love, those things that are blatantly evil do not hold allure. They are easily recognizable as wrong, and it does not take much effort to reject them. The real temptations are the ones that are just close enough to the truth that they appear good and beneficial.

In the gospel reading from Matthew that we hear today,

Jesus has just had a powerful experience at his baptism, of being filled with the Spirit and knowing in a profound way that he is God's beloved Son (Matt 3:17). It is this very sense of his identity that the tempter tries to undermine. First, the devil holds out this seductive image: surely the beloved Son is entitled to have all his hungers satisfied.

Quoting Deuteronomy 8:3, Jesus instead focuses on his hunger for the word of God. Throughout the gospel, we see him feeding God's hungry people with both physical and spiritual food (see Matt 5:1-7:29; 14:13-21; 15:32-39; 26:26-30).

Next is the temptation to believe that if Jesus is truly the beloved Son, God would never let any harm come to him. God's angels would swoop down and rescue him before any danger could befall him. Again Jesus turns to the Scrip-

tures, which enable him to recognize the falsity in the claim of the tempter. A third time the devil tries to derail Jesus's centeredness on God as the source of all power and the one deserving of worship. And yet again, Jesus clings to the word of God to overcome the wiles of the tempter.

Finally the devil departs when Jesus commands, "Get away, Satan!" But not for long. The temptations circle back again and again, as variations on the same theme, throughout Jesus's life and ministry. Midway through the gospel, we again hear Jesus say, "Get behind me, Satan!" (16:23), when he is tempted by Peter to reject suffering as integral to his identity as beloved Son. Right to the end, as Jesus is dying on the cross, the devil's words are echoed by the passersby: "If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross!" (27:40). The chief priests, scribes, and the elders chant the same: "He trusted in God; let him deliver him now if he wants him. For he said, 'I am the Son of God'" (27:43).

Finally, the bandits who were crucified with Jesus taunt him the same way (27:44). Yet again on the cross, Jesus turns to the Scriptures and prayer to stay solidly grounded in his identity as God's beloved Son. The words of Psalm 22 sustain him through the challenges that try to undermine his expectations of how God would care for him. The final verse of today's gospel assures us that just as God's angels accompanied Jesus in his ordeals, so we are never abandoned in times of trial.

