

The Roman Catholic Parishes of

St. Margaret Mary, Herscher

St. James the Apostle, Irwin

Sacred Heart, Goodrich

FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT

MARCH 14-15, 2026

If you choose you can keep
the commandments, they will
save you.

If you trust in God,
you too shall live.

He has set before you
fire and water
to whichever you choose,
stretch forth your hand.
Before man are
life and death,
good and evil,
whichever he chooses
shall be given to him.

from the
Book of Sirach



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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: "Start being brave about everything, driving out darkness and spreading light as well. Don't look at your weakness but realize that in Christ crucified you can do everything."

—Saint Catherine of Siena

Fifth Sunday of Lent			March 21-22, 2026	
Liturgical Schedule	St. Margaret Mary Saturday, March 21 5:00 pm	Sacred Heart Sunday, March 22 7:30 am	St. James Sunday, March 22 9:00 am	St. Margaret Mary Sunday, March 22 10:30 am
Celebrant	Fr. Ron	Fr. Ron	Fr. Ron	Fr. Ron
Ushers	Brett Buza Dave Emling Todd Datweiler Bob Schultz	Daryl Ferris Dennis Pankey	Dave Ladehoff Dan Forsythe Duane Papineau Jerry Ogrentz	Erik Wheeler Corinn Wheeler Dustin Truetner Brent Fulton
Lector	Bobbi Buza	Alicia Kirkpatrick	Jeff O'Connor	Dana Masching
Eucharistic Minister			Reatta Gohlke	Dana Masching
Servers				Caroline Fulton
Greeters			Greeter—C. Forsythe R. Leader—Reatta Gohlke	The Lovells

Mass Intentions for the Week

Monday, March 16 (SMM)

8:00 am NO MASS

Tuesday, March 17 (SH)

8:00 am No Mass

Wednesday, March 18 (SJ)

8:00 am No Mass

Friday, March 20

8:00am +Mary Kelch (SMM CCW)

Saturday, March 21 (SMM)

5:00 pm +Madonna Hoffman (Lavonne & Kimberly Maurseth)

+Theresa Gualandi (Mike & Sue Evans)

Sunday, March 22

7:30 am (SH) +Leland Denault (Joe & Tina Petersen)

+Duane Ferris (The Family)

9:00 am (SJ) +Pat Perreault (Gene & Patty Storer)

+Jeff Cooley (Maryanne Cooley)

10:30 am (SMM) All the Parish Family

Looking Ahead

Mondays—1:00 Matter of Balance 1pm at SMM

Monday, March 16—SMM CCW meeting 7pm

Monday, March 30—7 Last Words 7pm SH

Wed., April 1—Tennebrae 7pm SMM

Thursday, April 3— Holy Thursday 7 pm SH

Friday, April 4—Good Friday SJ 7pm SMM

Saturday, April 5—Easter Vigil 7pm SJ

Thursday, April 9—SH CCW Spring Luncheon

Thursday, April 16—SMM Night in Italy

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

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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—

• What are my blind spots? What biases do I have that distort the way I see others or see the world? Am I willing to ask someone I know well to be honest with me?

Collections Weekend of March 1-2, 2026

St. Margaret Mary—\$1,783

St. James—\$1,153

Sacred Heart— \$ 1,192

Thank you for your generosity!

Sacred Heart Kids Helping Kids Fundraisers

There will be a "Donut Sunday" on March 15 in the Hall after 7:30 mass. We will be serving donuts, coffee cake, muffins and bagels. There will be a "free will" offering for this with 100% of the proceeds benefiting Ronald McDonald House. There will also be raffle baskets and the drawing for the 50/50 winner. Please join the kids in helping raise money for Ronald McDonald House.

Gospel Shorts-

The man born blind had his sight restored by Christ, yet his spiritual eyes were not quite in focus. When asked who had given him his sight, he first answered "the man called Jesus." Later, the beggar said, "He is a prophet." Pressed still further, he said that Jesus surely was "from God." No one else could have performed such a miracle.

The Pharisees would not stand for this. Jesus had "worked" on the Sabbath by healing the man and therefore was a sinner. The healed man didn't agree and was "cast out" of their presence. Jesus sought out the rejected man. In Christ's presence the man came to realize that Jesus was the Son of God, the Messiah. He now understood that Jesus was Lord and Savior. He had the right focus.

Reflection— A True Lent

To keep a true Lent means more than to deny oneself some outer satisfaction. To keep a true Lent is to deny limiting beliefs of the past and to lay hold of ideas that are life-giving. To keep a true Lent is to spiritualize our thinking and thus to transform our life.

We are asking you to enter into the true spirit of Lent.

2026 Reconciliation Class St. James & St. Margaret Mary



Blayne Bauer
Darlene Crane
Adalyn Fritz
Penelope Gilbert
Matthew Harwood
Lauren Stone
Jade Wulff

Parish News:

All Parishes—

⇒ Tri-Parish Office Hours— Our office hours are Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday 9am—12 pm.

St. Margaret Mary-

⇒ CCW meeting March 16

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.

Sacred Heart—

⇒ "SPRING IS COMING" and that means so is Sacred Heart C.C.W.'s Spring Luncheon with Bunco on Thursday April 9th, 11:00 a.m. in Sacred Heart's parish hall. There will be a delicious lunch, bunco with prizes, cash & basket raffles, 50/50 and door prizes. Continue returning cash raffle money & stubs in the Sunday collection. If you have a basket that you wish to donate, be sure to list the items on a paper on the outside of the basket. All baskets and (door prizes of \$5 value and up) may be dropped off at the hall and placed on the bar. Hope to see you April 9th!



"You mean your predecessor didn't tell you about our Leprechaun cookie drive before every St. Patrick's day?"

THE SEASON OF LENT

Prepare your heart for the Lord

Lenten Devotions for the 4th Week of Lent

(No Mass Monday March 16th through Wednesday March 18th)

Stations of the Cross will be held on Friday March 20th at 3:00 at



Obscure saint of the week: St. Clement Mary Hofbaur (March 15) was the ninth child of a butcher who changed the family name from the Moravian *Dvorák* to the Germanic *Hofbauer*. His father died when Clement was six years old. The young man felt a call to the priesthood, but his family was too poor to afford his education. He became an apprentice and journeyman baker at Premonstratensian monastery at Bruck, Germany. From there he went on to become a hermit.

When hermitages were abolished by Emperor Joseph II, Clement worked as a baker in Vienna, Austria, then became a hermit in Italy with Peter Kunzmann, taking the name *Clement*. He made three pilgrimages to Rome. During the third, he joined the *Redemptorists* at San Giuliano, adding the name *Marie*. He met some sponsors following a Mass, and they agreed to pay for his education. Clement studied at the University of Vienna, and at Rome. He was ordained in 1785 and assigned to Vienna.

Clement did missionary work in Warsaw, Poland with several companions from 1786 to 1808, working with the poor, building schools and orphanages; the brothers preached five sermons a day. He became the spiritual teacher of Venerable Joseph Passerat. With Father Thaddeus Hubl, he introduced the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer to Poland. From there he sent Redemptorist missionaries to Germany and Switzerland. Clement and his companions were imprisoned in 1808 when Napoleon suppressed religious orders, then expelled to Austria.

A noted preacher and spiritual director in Vienna, Clement became a chaplain and spiritual director of an Ursuline convent. He founded a Catholic college in Vienna, worked with young men, and helped revitalize German religious life. Clement worked against the establishment of a German national Church and also worked against Josephinism which sought secular control of the Church and clergy.

Other obscure saint of the week: . St. Leocritia of Cordoba(March 15) was born to wealthy Moorish parents. Leocritia converted to Christianity; her family drove her out. Saint Eulogius of Cordoba gave her shelter. She entered into religious life and was arrested, scourged, and martyred.



The church continues to develop a Marian theology that honors both who Mary has been historically and who she remains in the life of the faithful.

Questions Catholics Ask

What do I need to know about Mary?

The Blessed Virgin Mary, as she's familiarly known, is best approached from several directions: biblically, doctrinally, devotionally, and theologically. First, there's the biblical Mary of Nazareth. She fulfills Isaiah's prophecy in giving birth by the power of the Holy Spirit to Emmanuel, "God with us." The canticle Mary sings about her conception gives praise to God for the same activity her son Jesus will one day proclaim as the coming of God's Kingdom: that the mighty will be toppled, while the poor will be lifted up. Mary plays noteworthy roles after the Nativity, including advocating for the miracle at Cana, her presence at the cross, and her participation in the Spirit's release at Pentecost.

The church teaches four doctrines about Mary. Two declarations from the early church are that Mary remains a virgin perpetually and that she is the Mother of God. Both doctrines point to the divine origin of Jesus. Two later doctrines are that Mary herself was conceived immaculately (that is, without original sin) and that at the point of death, she was assumed body and soul into heaven. These are related teachings: since death is a consequence of sin, and Mary is spared sin's effects, her body does not undergo the corruption of the grave.

Devotionally, Mary has played a large role in the church's popular piety. Her icon has been venerated since the early centuries in the East, and by means of the rosary, litanies, and pilgrimage, people of many lands have felt a special closeness to the mother of Jesus who is mother to all. Throughout history, Mary has been known to pay singular visits, known as apparitions, to humble folk around the world. These appearances underscore Mary's concern for her children and their needs.

The church continues to develop a Marian theology that honors both who Mary has been historically and who she remains in the life of the faithful. In the spirit of Vatican II, Pope Paul VI offered principles for consideration. First among them is that Christian faith must be rightly prioritized: nothing said about Mary can detract from the honor due to God. Also, that Christ alone mediates between God and humanity. Finally, since Mary is the first disciple of her son, she is the ideal model for what we all can do. Pope John Paul II also advanced the idea of Mary as the special champion of the poor.

The Sunday Gospel in Everyday English

Walking down the street, Jesus saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked, “Rabbi, who sinned: this man or his parents, causing him to be born blind?” Jesus said, “You’re asking the wrong question. You’re looking for someone to blame. There is no such cause-effect here. Look instead for what God can do. We need to be energetically at work for the One who sent me here, working while the sun shines. When night falls, the workday is over. For as long as I am in the world, there is plenty of light. I am the world’s Light.”

He said this and then spit in the dust, made a clay paste with the saliva, rubbed the paste on the blind man’s eyes, and said, “Go, wash at the Pool of Siloam” (Siloam means “Sent”). The man went and washed—and saw.

Soon the town was buzzing. His relatives and those who year after year had seen him as a blind man begging were saying, “Why, isn’t this the man we knew, who sat here and begged?”

Others said, “It’s him all right!”

But others objected, “It’s not the same man at all. It just looks like him.”

He said, “It’s me, the very one.”

They said, “How did your eyes get opened?”

“A man named Jesus made a paste and rubbed it on my eyes and told me, ‘Go to Siloam and wash.’ I did what he said. When I washed, I saw.”

“So where is he?”

“I don’t know.”

They marched the man to the Pharisees. This day when Jesus made the paste and healed his blindness was the Sabbath. The Pharisees grilled him again on how he had come to see. He said, “He put a clay paste on my eyes, and I washed, and now I see.”

Some of the Pharisees said, “Obviously, this man can’t be from God. He doesn’t keep the Sabbath.”

Others countered, “How can a bad man do miraculous, God-revealing things like this?” There was a split in their ranks.

They came back at the blind man, “You’re the expert. He opened your eyes. What do you say about him?” He said, “He is a prophet.”

The Jews didn’t believe it, didn’t believe the man was blind to begin with. So they called the parents of the man now bright-eyed with sight. They asked them, “Is this your son, the one you say was born blind? So how is it that he now sees?”

His parents said, “We know he is our son, and we know he was born blind. But we don’t know how he came to see—haven’t a clue about who opened his eyes. Why don’t you ask him? He’s a grown man and can speak for himself.” (His parents were talking like this because they were intimidated by the Jewish leaders, who had already decided that anyone who took a stand that this was the Messiah would be kicked out of the meeting place. That’s why his parents said, “Ask him. He’s a grown man.”)

They called the man back a second time—the man who had been blind—and told him, “Give credit to God. We know this man is an impostor.”

He replied, “I know nothing about that one way or the other. But I know one thing for sure: I was blind...I now see.”

They said, “What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?”

“I’ve told you over and over and you haven’t listened. Why do you want to hear it again? Are you so eager to become his disciples?”

With that they jumped all over him. “You might be a disciple of that man, but we’re disciples of Moses. We know for sure that God spoke to Moses, but we have no idea where this man even comes from.”

The man replied, “This is amazing! You claim to know nothing about him, but the fact is, he opened my eyes! It’s well known that God isn’t at the beck and call of sinners, but listens carefully to anyone who lives in reverence and does his will. That someone opened the eyes of a man born blind has never been heard of—ever. If this man didn’t come from God, he wouldn’t be able to do anything.”

They said, “You’re nothing but dirt! How dare you take that tone with us!” Then they threw him out in the street.

Jesus heard that they had thrown him out, and went and found him. He asked him, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?”

The man said, “Point him out to me, sir, so that I can believe in him.” Jesus said, “You’re looking right at him. Don’t you recognize my voice?” “Master, I believe,” the man said, and worshiped him.

Jesus then said, “I came into the world to bring everything into the clear light of day, making all the distinctions clear, so that those who have never seen will see, and those who have made a great pretense of seeing will be exposed as blind.”

Some Pharisees overheard him and said, “Does that mean you’re calling us blind?”

Jesus said, “If you were really blind, you would be blameless, but since you claim to see everything so well, you’re accountable for every fault and failure” (*from John 9*).

Catholic Snacks, Get Fed

What is the most disturbing detail on the Shroud of Turin?

Long before the Shroud became widely studied by science and technology, the early Church venerated the Holy Face of Christ through tradition and sacred art.

Most people look at the Shroud of Turin and go straight to the face.

That makes sense. We all want to know: Is this what Jesus looked like?

But researchers who have studied the Shroud for decades often say the most unsettling part is not the face at all.

It's the wounds.

The Shroud shows over one hundred distinct scourge wounds covering the body — front and back — consistent with Roman flagellation. The wounds are not random. They match the pattern of a Roman flagrum, a whip fitted with metal or bone fragments designed to tear flesh.

The Gospels tell us simply: "Then Pilate took Jesus and scourged him" (John 19:1).

One sentence.

The Shroud suggests what that sentence cost.

Medical experts who have studied the image note that the wounds appear in pairs, as though delivered by two soldiers standing on either side. The blows are angled differently, consistent with trained executioners. The severity suggests someone scourged nearly to death before crucifixion.

Isaiah prophesied centuries earlier:

"But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that made us whole, and with his stripes we are healed." (Isaiah 53:5)

"With his stripes."

The Shroud does not argue. It does not preach. It simply shows stripes.

Yet even amid all the wounds, there is one aspect that has captured the devotion of pilgrims for centuries: the face.

The face that appears on the Shroud is not only haunting; it is intimate. It reveals a human being who suffered deeply, yet whose eyes seem somehow open to mercy. It reminds us that the Passion was not only physical horror. It was humiliation, spiritual loneliness, abandonment — and love.

This focus on the Holy Face is not new.

Long before the Shroud became widely studied by science and technology, the early Church venerated the Holy Face of Christ through tradition and sacred art. The story of Veronica wiping Jesus' face on the way to Calvary and the imprint left on her veil became one of the oldest devotions connected to Christ's Passion. That moment is remembered in the Sixth Station of the Cross, where Veronica reached out in compassion to the suffering Savior.

The gaze of Christ's face ... sacred, wounded, human, divine ... has become a powerful object of reparation and prayer for countless Christians. The Church does not require belief in any particular relic, but the devotion to the Holy Face expresses a deeper truth: Christ's wounds are not only marks of suffering, but invitations to love.

In fact, Pope Benedict XVI once described the Shroud carefully as "an icon written in blood... the blood of a man flagellated, crowned with thorns, crucified and wounded on his right side."





March 15, 2026

Fourth Sunday of Lent

Written by
THE
FAITHFUL
DISCIPLE

1 Sm 16:1b 6-7, 10-13a | Eph 5:8-14 | Jn 9:1-41

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

There has been much commentary over the centuries about Jesus' use of saliva and mud to heal the man born blind. One of the most profound interpretations I have read reminds us that in Genesis, God made man out of "the dust of the ground." (Gen 2:7) Jesus' use of mud in the Gospel suggests that he is re-creating the blind man before him. The man receives a whole new life, such that even those who see him after his healing question whether he is the same person as before: "Isn't this the one who used to sit and beg?" ... "No, he just looks like him." Through this Gospel, I've come to believe that Jesus is inviting us to see that every time he touches us in the sacraments, we are inwardly re-created, inwardly renewed. As we come to this midway point in Lent, let's open our eyes to the ways God is waiting to meet us with his healing love in the sacraments, and avail ourselves of this amazing grace.

GO EVANGELIZE

PRAYER, INVITATION, WITNESS, ACCOMPANIMENT

Our first reading offers a powerful reminder that although humans see what's on the outside, God looks at our hearts. While the prophet Samuel thought surely God's hand was on Jesse's oldest son, God chooses David, the youngest, who was out tending the sheep. In the Gospel, the Pharisees look at the man born blind and think he is a sinner, born from sinners. But underneath is a man whom Jesus sends (the name of the pool that Jesus instructs him to go wash in means "Sent") to bear witness to all that God has done for him. God often chooses the unlikeliest (in our eyes) persons to be the messengers of his Gospel. At times we may wonder why God has chosen us or feel ourselves lacking in the qualities needed to lead others to the Lord. In those moments, let's trust that through our baptism and confirmation, the Lord has put his Spirit in us and has equipped us for the work of sharing the Gospel.

REFLECT

The lyrics "I once was lost, but now am found, was blind, but now I see," from the hymn "Amazing Grace" is based in part on today's Gospel reading. The man born blind says, "He put clay on my eyes, and I washed, and now I can see." Locate a favorite rendition of this song and use it in your prayer time this week, reflecting on the ways God has brought you greater spiritual vision and inner renewal this Lent.

SPIRITUALITY

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

John 8:12

I am the light of the world, says the Lord;
whoever follows me will have the light of life.

Gospel

John 9:1-41; L31A

As Jesus passed by he saw a man
blind from birth.

His disciples asked him,

“Rabbi, who sinned, this man or
his parents,
that he was born blind?”

Jesus answered,

“Neither he nor his parents
sinned;
it is so that the works of God
might be made visible
through him.

We have to do the works of the
one who sent me while it is day.

Night is coming when no one can work.

While I am in the world, I am the light
of the world.”

When he had said this, he spat on the
ground

and made clay with the saliva,
and smeared the clay on his eyes,
and said to him,

“Go wash in the Pool of Siloam”—
which means Sent—.

So he went and washed, and came back
able to see.

His neighbors and those who had seen
him earlier as a beggar said,

“Isn’t this the one who used to sit
and beg?”

Some said, “It is,”

but others said, “No, he just looks
like him.”

He said, “I am.”

Reflecting on the Gospel

In today’s first reading, we hear of an unlikely choice of a leader. It goes against traditional thinking to look to the youngest to lead into the future. The prophet Samuel was sure that Eliab was the one to be anointed, but God instructed him not to judge by appearance and invited him to see as God does: by looking into the heart.

Today’s gospel is also about seeing with the heart and about the unlikely leadership of a man who had been born blind. By allow-

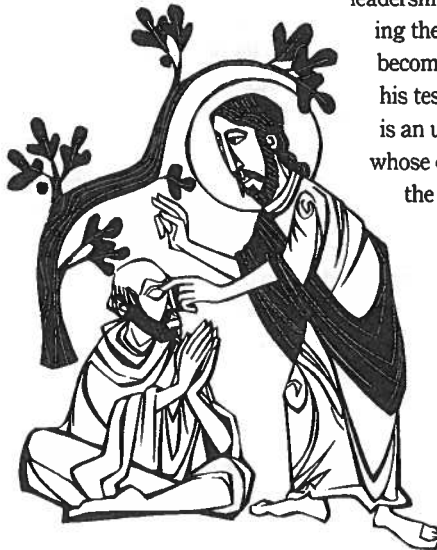
ing the works of God to be made visible through him, he becomes able to lead others to faith, even if not all accept his testimony. This same thing can be said of Jesus—he is an unconventional leader in the eyes of other leaders, whose objections and denials end with their refusal to see the works of God being made visible through him.

The man who was blind is open to the simple instructions of Jesus. He allows Jesus to put mud on his eyes, an ancient technique thought to have curative properties, and he obediently goes to the pool of Siloam, washes, and comes back able to see. In the lengthy exchanges that follow, first with his neighbors and then with the Pharisees, the man becomes more and more able to see with his heart, understanding more and more clearly who Jesus is. He moves from not knowing Jesus (v. 12) to recognizing him as a prophet (v. 17), then as a man of God (v. 31), and then as the Son of Man

(v. 38). In the end he worships him as Lord (v. 38).

The other characters in the narrative throw up one obstacle after another, tenaciously refusing to see. The neighbors first debate about the identity of the man, insisting they do not see what they see. When the healed man settles that issue, they shift to the question of how the healing was done. Resisting the explanation of the newly sighted man, they turn to their leaders, who pick up the debate with the question of how the cure was done. The Pharisees latch on to another obstacle: Jesus must be a sinner because he did the healing on a Sabbath. When they turn to the healed man for his interpretation, he counters with, “He is a prophet.” Unpersuaded, the leaders then revert to questioning whether there had actually been any blindness.

Coming back to the healed man, the leaders have now made up their minds about what they see: that Jesus is a sinner. They circle back to question the fact of the healing and how it was done. They shore up their certitude about what they know and what they see, claiming their faithfulness to Moses, and finally end by dismissing the healed man as a sinner too. What Jesus does is unheard of (v. 32). The person he calls to lead others to faith is unconventional. The logical arguments about why it cannot be so are endless. Those who allow themselves to quell their objections and to see with the heart can lead the way into a transformed future.



*Continued in Appendix A, p. 275, or
John 9:1, 6-9, 13-17, 34-38 in Appendix A, p. 276.*