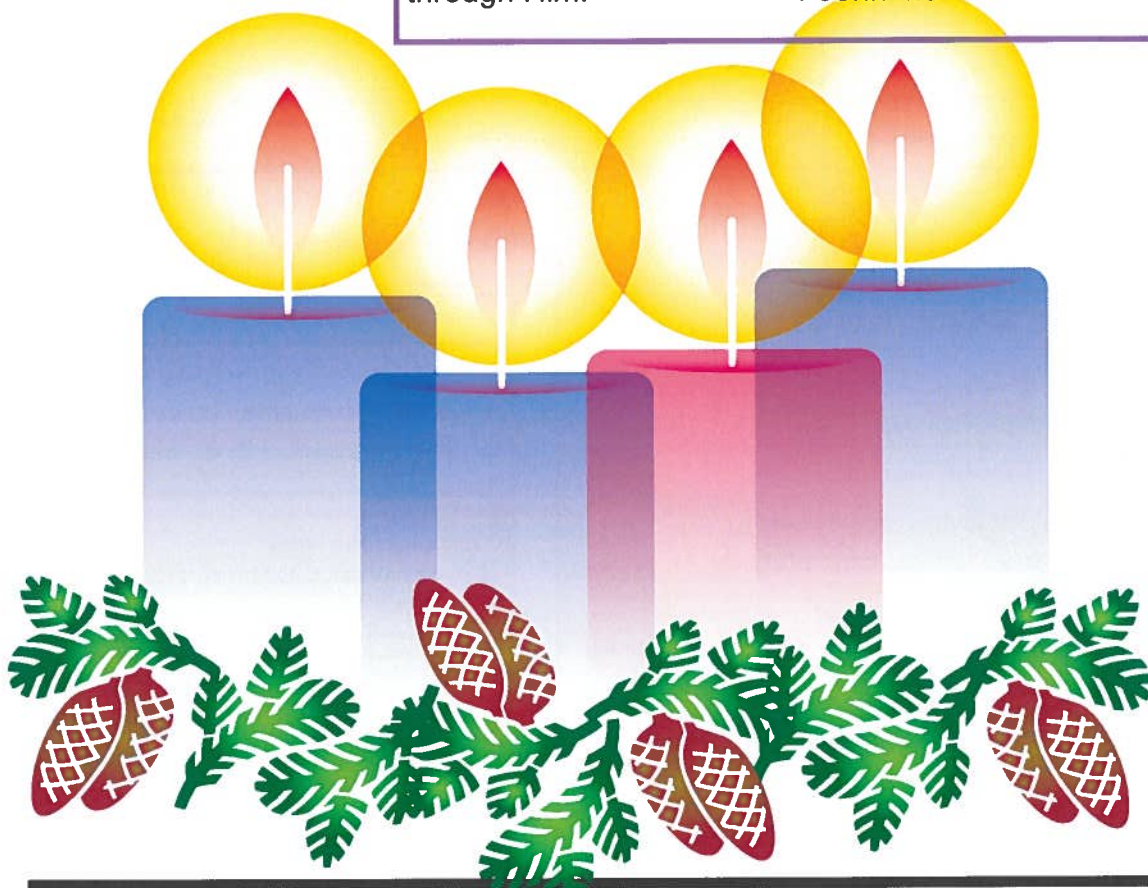


The Roman Catholic Parishes of
St. Margaret Mary, Herscher
St. James the Apostle, Irwin
Sacred Heart, Goodrich

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

DECEMBER 21-22, 2024

This is how God showed his love among us. He sent his
one and only Son into the world that we might live
through Him. 1 John 4:9



Love

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: "Never worry about numbers. Help one person at a time, and always start with the person nearest you."
—Mother Teresa

The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph				December 28-29, 2024
Liturgical Schedule	St. Margaret Mary Saturday, Dec. 28 5:00 pm	Sacred Heart Sunday, Dec. 29 7:30 am	St. James Sunday, Dec. 29 9:00 am	St. Margaret Mary Sunday, Dec. 29 10:30 am
Celebrant	Fr. Ron	Fr. Ron Deacon Ron	Fr. Allam Deacon Ron	Fr. Allam
Ushers	Dave Emling Bob Schultz Dan Hoffman Roger Jensen	Kyle Ferris David Kirkpatrick	Arlen Hansen Bob Buente Jeff Martin Jeff Steinke	Sean Riordan Larry Wolles Kim Smicker Wayne Bisailon
Lector	Hillary Webb	Terri Weakley	Carrie Abrassart	Dana Masching
Eucharistic Minister			Darwin Peerbolte	Marie Johnson
Servers				Sydney Weldon
Greeters			Greeter—Rita Thiesen R. Leader—Reatta Gohlke	Wayne Bisailon

Mass Intentions for the Week

Monday, Dec. 23 (SMM)

8:00 am + Lorraine Brennan (Jeff/LoriAnn Bruer)

Tuesday, Dec. 24

3:00 pm SMM +Vicki Webber (Tom/Julie Uribe)
+Madeline/Sterling Bouchard (MaryAnn Wagner)
5:00 pm SJ +Gerald Bernicky (Dennis/SueAnn O'Connor)
9:00 pm SH +Sondra Hertz (Karen Diefenbach)

Wednesday, Dec. 25

7:30 am SH +Robert "Flip" Henry (Tom/Carol Henry)
9:00 am SJ +Susanna Bugni (Cathy/Bruce Jensen)
10:30 am SMM +Dolores Clodi (MaryAnn Wagner)

Friday, Dec. 27 (SMM)

8:00 am +Donna Ruder (Ruth Schott)

Saturday, Dec. 28 (SMM)

5:00 pm +Marie Duval (Norm/Sharon Riordan)

Sunday, Dec. 29

7:30 am (SH) +Deb Johnston (Jackie Cross Family)
9:00am (SJ) +Marian McKenna (Janes/Cindy Traver)
+Stephen Jensen (Bruce/Cathy Jensen)

10:30 am SMM For All the Parish Family

A Look Ahead

Tuesday, Dec. 24—No morning Mass

Friday, Jan. 17—Herscher Legion Fish Fry 5-7 pm

Monday, Jan.27—Knights of Columbus meeting 7pm SJ

Question of the week

Whom can I visit this Christmas season, bearing Christ and bringing joy, whom I hadn't planned to see?

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. 14-15, 2024

St. Margaret Mary—\$1,704

St. James—\$2,896

Sacred Heart—\$1,846

Thank you for your generosity!

2024 CHRISTMAS MASS SCHEDULE

CHRISTMAS EVE

3:00 PM AT ST. MARGARET MARY FR. RON
 5:00 PM AT ST. JAMES FR. RON
 9:00 PM AT SACRED HEART FR. ALLAM

CHRISTMAS DAY

7:30 AM AT SACRED HEART FR. RON
 9:00 AM AT ST. JAMES FR. ALLAM
 10:30 AM AT ST. MARGARET MARY FR. ALLAM



Parish News:

St. Margaret Mary—

St. James—

- ◆ We are collecting winter wear accessories (mittens, hats, etc) in the hallway of St. James for the Salvation Army. Thanks to all who participate!

Sacred Heart—

- ◆ The week of Dec. 22, , the Blessed Virgin Mary candle burns for Lorraine Brennan, for her heavenly birthday and the St. Joseph candle burns in prayer for Fr. Ro and for the doctors and nurses caring for him during and after his surgery.
- ◆ *Sacred Heart Church is planning another free breakfast following the 7:30 AM Mass Sunday Dec. 29th. All are invited to join in fellowship and welcome in a new year.*

All Parishes—

- ◆ The next Adult Religious Ed Class will be announced.
- ◆ **Tri-Parish Office Hours—** Our office hours are Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday 9am—12 pm.
- ◆ There will be no Knights of Columbus meeting on December 23, 2024. The next meeting will be January 27, 2025 .

Sacred Heart Christmas Eve 9:00 pm	Sacred Heart Christmas Day 7:30 am
Ushers: D. Pankey, J. Mallaney	Ushers: K. Ferris, D. Ferris
Lector: Rhonda Berns	Lector: Cindy Gagnon
St. James Christmas Eve 5:00 pm	St. James Christmas Day 9:00 am
Ushers: A. Hansen B. Buente J. Martin, J. Steinke	Ushers D. Forsythe, J. Ogrentz D. Ferris, D. Ladehoff ,
Com. Min.: N. Mesewicz, Dena Coy, R. Gohlke	Com. Min.: Dallas Ferris
Lector: Jeff O'Connor	Lector: Dave Ladehoff
Greeter: Jerry Ogrentz	Greeter: Mary Offerman

St. Margaret Mary Christmas Eve 3:00 pm	St. Margaret Mary Christmas Day 10:30 am
Ushers: T. Datweiler, L. Wolles, W. Bisailon, E. Wheeler	Ushers:
Lector: Corinn Wheeler	Lector: Steve Jacob
Com. Min. : Stacy Powers, Linda Wolles, Wayne Bisailon	
Server: Caroline Fulton	Server: Sydney Weldon

Oplatki

Oplatki packets are available at the back of church. This is a great tradition to introduce or re-introduce to your family. As your family gathers for Christmas Eve dinner or Christmas Day dinner, the senior member of the family takes the wafer, breaks off a piece and then passes it onto the rest of the family. Every member of the family breaks off a piece and once it is distributed to all around the table a prayer of blessing is said.

“May the blessing of Almighty God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit come down upon all who partake of this wafer. May He grant us peace in our lives, length of days and joy in all we do.
 Amen”

Gospel Shorts— Holiness of Our Humanity

All too often we fall prey to the temptation of losing the humanity of various holy men and women in the familiar biblical stories. We forget that it was in the midst of their very humanity and very human weaknesses that God brought about holiness in their lives. It was the very human struggles of our biblical heroes and heroines that formed and shaped them into role models for us as modern-day disciples of Jesus Christ.

Mary, as the Mother of God and as a faithful disciple, is looked to as one such model of strong faith and trust in God. However, the temptation has been to make Mary something less than human by ignoring or forgetting her womanhood and humanity. By ‘robbing’ Mary of her humanity, we also lessen her dignity, holiness and image as a faithful disciple and mother of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

Saint of the week: St. John the Apostle (Dec. 27) was the son of Zebedee and Salome. He was a fisherman, the brother of Saint James the Greater, and called one of the *Sons of Thunder*. He was a disciple of Saint John the Baptist and a friend of Saint Peter the Apostle. He was called by Jesus during the first year of His ministry and traveled everywhere with Him, becoming so close as to be known as *the beloved disciple*. He took part in the Last Supper. He was the only one of the Twelve not to forsake the Savior in the hour of His Passion, standing at the foot of the cross. John was made the guardian of Our Lady by Jesus, and he took her into his home. Upon hearing of the Resurrection, he was the first to reach the tomb; when he met the risen Lord at Lake of Tiberias, he was the first to recognize Him.



During the era of the new Church, he worked in Jerusalem and at Ephesus. During Jesus' ministry, he tried to block a Samaritan from their group, but Jesus explained the open nature of the new Way, and he worked on that principle to found churches in Asia Minor and baptizing converts in Samaria. He was imprisoned with Peter for preaching after Pentecost. John wrote the fourth Gospel, three Epistles, and possibly the Book of Revelation. He survived all his fellow apostles and was the only apostle not to be martyred.

Traditional stories:

- ◆ Emperor Dometian had him brought to Rome, beaten, poisoned, and thrown into a cauldron of boiling oil, but he stepped out unharmed and was banished to Patmos instead. This is commemorated by the feast of Saint John before the Latin Gate.
- ◆ When John was in route to preach in Asia, his ship was wrecked in a storm; all but John were cast ashore. John was assumed dead, but two weeks later the waves cast him ashore alive at the feet of his disciple Prochoros.
- ◆ When John denounced idol worship as demonic, followers of Artemis stoned him; the rocks turned and hit the throwers.
- ◆ He prayed in a temple of Artemis; fire from heaven killed 200 men who worshipped the idol. When the remaining group begged for mercy, he raised the 200 from the dead; they all converted and were baptized.
- ◆ He drove out a demon who had lived in a pagan temple for 249 years.
- ◆ Aboard a ship, he purified vessels of sea water for drinking.
- ◆ Ceonops, a magician, pretended to bring three dead people back to life; the "people" were actually demons who mimicked people so the magician could turn people away from Christ. Through prayer, John caused the magician to drown and the demons to vanish.
- ◆ Once a year his grave gave off a fragrant dust that cured the sick.



Obscure saint of the week. St. Fabiola of Rome (Dec. 27) was born to the Roman Patrician class. She was divorced from her first marriage after being abused by her adulterous husband. She was widowed in her second marriage. She was a friend of Saint Jerome, Saint Paula of Rome, and Saint Pammachius. She founded the first hospital in the west. In addition, she built a hospice in Porto Romano for the poor and for sick pilgrims. After doing penance for her divorce, she re-entered communion with the Church by dispensation of Pope Saint Siricius. Fabiola made a pilgrimage to the Holy Land in 394 where she worked in a hospice in Bethlehem. Fabiola wanted to live as a hermit in Jerusalem, but never managed it. Saint Jerome wrote about her life.

Reflections

He Dwelt Among Us

The incarnation, the mystery of God with us, speaks in the language of compassion. The roots of compassion are buried in the heart and sensibility of God, who reminds us that compassion must reach out to all. When Jesus was asked to choose, he chose everything and everyone! He invites us to try to do the same!

4th Sunday of Advent

The theme for the Fourth Sunday of Advent is "Love". As Advent ends and Christmas comes, we share the song the angels sing: Joy and glory; peace, sweet peace!

"Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests".

-Luke 2:14

Catholic Snacks, Get Fed

What is the tradition of the Christmas "Oplatki" wafer?
The spirit of Christlike charity is baked into this wafer bread.



On Christmas Eve, the head of the family prays for the members of his family, present or absent, then breaks a piece off the wafer and gives it to each person. As the family members receive the wafer

pieces, they are greeted with a kiss and a felicitation for a joyful feast. They then return the greeting in the same way.

The lesson of this custom is that the family must be united with the bonds of charity. It reminds us that we do not seek salvation alone, but with others, especially our family. We should help each other obtain salvation, always bearing Christ-like charity toward one another. When we are united in charity, we are joined, by the head of the family, to the unbroken links of One Body, One Bread, One Christ, and One Church.

If you have family and friends who live far away or overseas, the Christmas wafer is an excellent way to reach out to them and let them know they are loved and missed and are still an integral part of the family or group. The oplatki wafers are so thin and surprisingly sturdy that they can be carefully mailed in a Christmas card without breaking.

Today, many also purchase oplatki wafers to share among a special group of friends, such as friends from church or the classroom. You can even send several oplatki wafers to your friends and family members so that they can enjoy the tradition with those who are special to them.

Do you want to renew and cultivate the bond of charity you have with your family? Incorporate the [Oplatki Christmas Wafers](#) tradition into your own family customs this year.

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LOOKING FOR A FUN, NEW WAY TO BE MORE ACTIVE?



Bingo + Exercise = Bingocize®

BINGOCIZE® is a 20-week health promotion program that combines the game of bingo with fall prevention exercise. Play bingo with us and meet new people while learning about techniques to reduce falls.

**Dates: Monday afternoons,
January 6th through June 9th, 2025**

Time: 1:00 pm - 2:00 pm

(No class on 1/20, 2/17, or 5/26)

**Location: St. Margaret Mary Catholic Church, 207 E. 5th
St., Herscher IL, 60941**

**TO REGISTER,
CALL NATALIA
(815) 933-7791 EXT 9954**



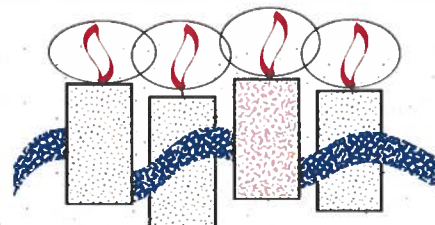
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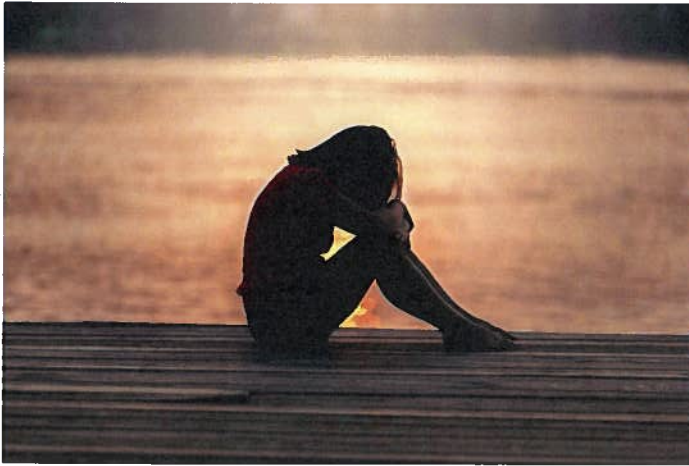
The Sunday gospel in everyday English

Mary didn't waste a minute. She got up and traveled to a town in Judah in the hill country, straight to Zachariah's house, and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby in her womb leaped. She was filled with the Holy Spirit, and sang out exuberantly,

You're so blessed among women,
and the babe in your womb, also blessed!
And why am I so blessed that
the mother of my Lord visits me?
The moment the sound of your
greeting entered my ears,
The babe in my womb
skipped like a lamb for sheer joy.
Blessed woman, who believed what God said,
believed every word would come true *(from Luke 1)*!



Questions Catholics Ask I'm not at peace. Is there a Catholic way to get there?



Peace isn't a thing to "have" so much as a "way."

To enjoy peace, we travel the road of peace: or "go in peace" as is proclaimed at the end of every Mass. The gospels tell us this Way has a name: Jesus.

There's certainly a Catholic way to *understand* peace. We normally think of peace as a condition of no conflict. Yet the biblical concept of peace, *shalom*, assures us it's a fullness rather than an absence of something. In fact, *shalom* could be described as wholeness altogether, including immersion in right relationships. To experience peace, we must get right with God, neighbor, and creation itself.

That sounds big. It is. But it's also simple. Peace isn't a thing to "have" so much as a "way." To enjoy peace, we travel the road of peace: or "go in peace" as is proclaimed at the end of every Mass. The gospels tell us this Way has a name: Jesus. Isaiah announced him as the Prince of Peace. John the Baptist heralded one who

would "guide our feet in the way of peace." Saint Paul tells us plainly that Jesus IS our peace. And Jesus himself offers his friends at the last supper a peace the world cannot give.

How does this work? Consider the gospel story of the woman healed of a hemorrhage. She believes the merest contact with Jesus will end her misery. Which it does. The moment Jesus acknowledges that she's been healed, he invites her to go in peace, to continue in the wholeness she's received. As healthcare specialist Sister Juliana Casey puts it: "Peace appears when God is near." A wonderful wholeness of being is our introduction to *shalom*. All that's left is to remain in this way, not to lose this precious wholeness.

Does holding onto peace come cheaply? Not to Thomas Aquinas, who insisted harmonious relationships require a soul governed by love. Pope Leo XIII defined peace as rooted in justice and guided by love. Pius XII chose as his motto *Opus iustitiae pax*: "Peace is the work of justice." John XXIII expanded this idea beyond the personal to the social order. Only when truth, justice, love, and freedom are universally accessible can there be peace. My favorite phrase arrived courtesy of Pope Paul VI, in noting the struggle of the world's poor: "Development is the new name for peace." Pope John Paul II reframed the quest for peace as "solidarity" with our neighbor, particularly the most marginalized.

The angels at Bethlehem sang that peace comes "to people of good will." If our minds or hearts are troubled, it may be we're not harboring good will toward all—even if we just withhold our love from a single one.

Scriptures: Isaiah 9:5-6; 48:18; Mark 5:25-34; Matthew 5:9; Luke 1:76-79; 2:14; 8:43-48; John 14:27; 20:19-29; Ephesians 2:13-18

Thank you to all who helped make last Sunday such a success at St. James. We appreciate all the donations for our basket raffle, those who helped with the breakfast, those who purchased raffle tickets, anyone who joined us for breakfast, the teachers who helped with the pageant, the photographers, and especially the children who participated in the pageant to help us all remember the reason we celebrate. We couldn't do it without you all!

In addition, I am adding a thank you to Tanhya Osenga for all her hard work organizing this event! DJ





December 22, 2024

Written by
THE
FAITHFUL
DISCIPLE

Fourth Sunday of Advent

Mi 5:1-4a | Heb 10:5-10 | Lk 1:39-45

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

Ask a child, "Where is God?" and you'll likely receive a variety of responses: "In heaven," "In church," "everywhere" and "in my heart" are all conceivable answers from a child's lips. But the one we most easily write off as silly or sentimental is one that the saints would urge us to revisit more seriously: God is indeed "in my heart" – that is, he is present in our souls! This is true not only when we receive him in Holy Communion, and not only because he is "everywhere," but because we possess *sanctifying grace*. Grace is *divine life* – God's life – and if we are "in a state of grace" (that is, we have brought any mortal sins to confession), we have this life within us! Our model for becoming aware of this wonderful gift is our Blessed Mother, whose example in today's Gospel teaches us to love, reverence, and obey God within us. Setting out "in haste" to serve her aged cousin, Mary carried God in her womb. We can imagine the love and joy with which she carried him. At every moment, God is present in us, too (not physically, but by grace) and we should strive to recognize and love him who has made our hearts his dwelling place.

GO EVANGELIZE

PRAYER, INVITATION, WITNESS, ACCOMPANIMENT

The events of today's Gospel suggest that Jesus' presence in Mary is not *for* Mary alone. Prompted by love, she made the arduous journey to visit Elizabeth – itself an act of charity. But Mary brought more than her services and support to Elizabeth during a potentially difficult pregnancy; she brought God himself! Mary was so conscious of God within her that even her words, flowing from a heart burning with his love, carried a special power; at Mary's greeting, Elizabeth was "filled with the Holy Spirit" and John the Baptist "leaped for joy." As we become increasingly aware of God dwelling in our souls, we, too, become "Christ-bearers" to others. By being lovingly attentive to our Divine Guest, our words and actions become means by which he can act on the hearts of those we encounter each day.

SING

*O come, divine Messiah!
The world in silence waits the day
When hope shall sing its triumph
And sadness flee away*

4th Sunday of Advent

December 22, 2024: Mi 5:1-4a | Ps 80:2-3,15-16,18-19 (4) | Heb 10:5-10 | Lk 1:39-45

The final Sunday of Advent shows Elizabeth and her unborn son, John, reacting to the nearness of the unborn Christ. We know that Elizabeth immediately understood that Mary was pregnant with the Lord, because the Gospel says she was filled with the Holy Spirit. But how could the fetal John understand? How could he leap for joy while still in the womb?

If it's true that an unborn baby is not a person with a soul until it takes its first breath, as is claimed by many who believe that abortion is okay, how could the unborn John recognize the presence of the unborn Savior?

The faith to recognize the presence of Christ – in the womb of people's lives, in the Eucharist, in the humanity of unborn children, etc. – comes from being fully alive in the Holy Spirit, who was given to us fully during our baptisms. However, it takes a humble willingness to let God change our minds about what we think is true in order to be open to God's Spirit teaching us what is indeed true.

John as a fetus was incapable of understanding anything, especially when it happened outside the womb, yet he leapt for joy. This teaches us that we don't need to see God working in the world or solving our personal problems before we can leap for joy. We don't have to understand what God is doing, and we don't even have to know his plans.



The Holy Spirit enlivened the faith of Elizabeth and John through an act of grace that depended on Christ's future activity. For us, our faith is enlivened by the grace God provides in the Sacraments.

The joy that comes from recognizing the presence of Christ is God's Christmas gift to us. It's a joy that's meant to last all year. It's a lifestyle, not a holiday. It comes from a faith that appreciates God for working mercifully in ways that we can see and ways that we cannot see, because we trust in his goodness. Even when we suffer or feel sorrow, we can learn to recognize the presence of Christ.

And then what? Like John, we are called to be heralds of Christ's presence. How? First by sharing our joy with others.

Reflect & Discuss:

- † How much is the joy of Christ's Spirit within you affecting your outward life?
- † What will you do this Christmas to become more aware of the Holy Spirit increasing your faith?
- † Give examples of how the Spirit of Christmas is really the Holy Spirit.
- † What activities have helped you get into the Spirit of Christmas? How has this affected your preparations for celebrating Christmas as a holy day?

Christmas

GOD IS WITH US

For the Church, Christmas is not just a one-day event but a full 12-day season that begins with the Christmas celebration of God's incarnation in Jesus of Nazareth and then progresses to the Epiphany as he is gradually manifested to John the Baptist, to his disciples, to the magi and finally to us and to the whole world.

The Twelve Days of Christmas have roots in early Christian tradition, marking the period between the birth of Jesus and the visit of the Magi. The early church established this period as a time of celebration and reflection on the Incarnation and the revelation of Christ to the Gentiles.

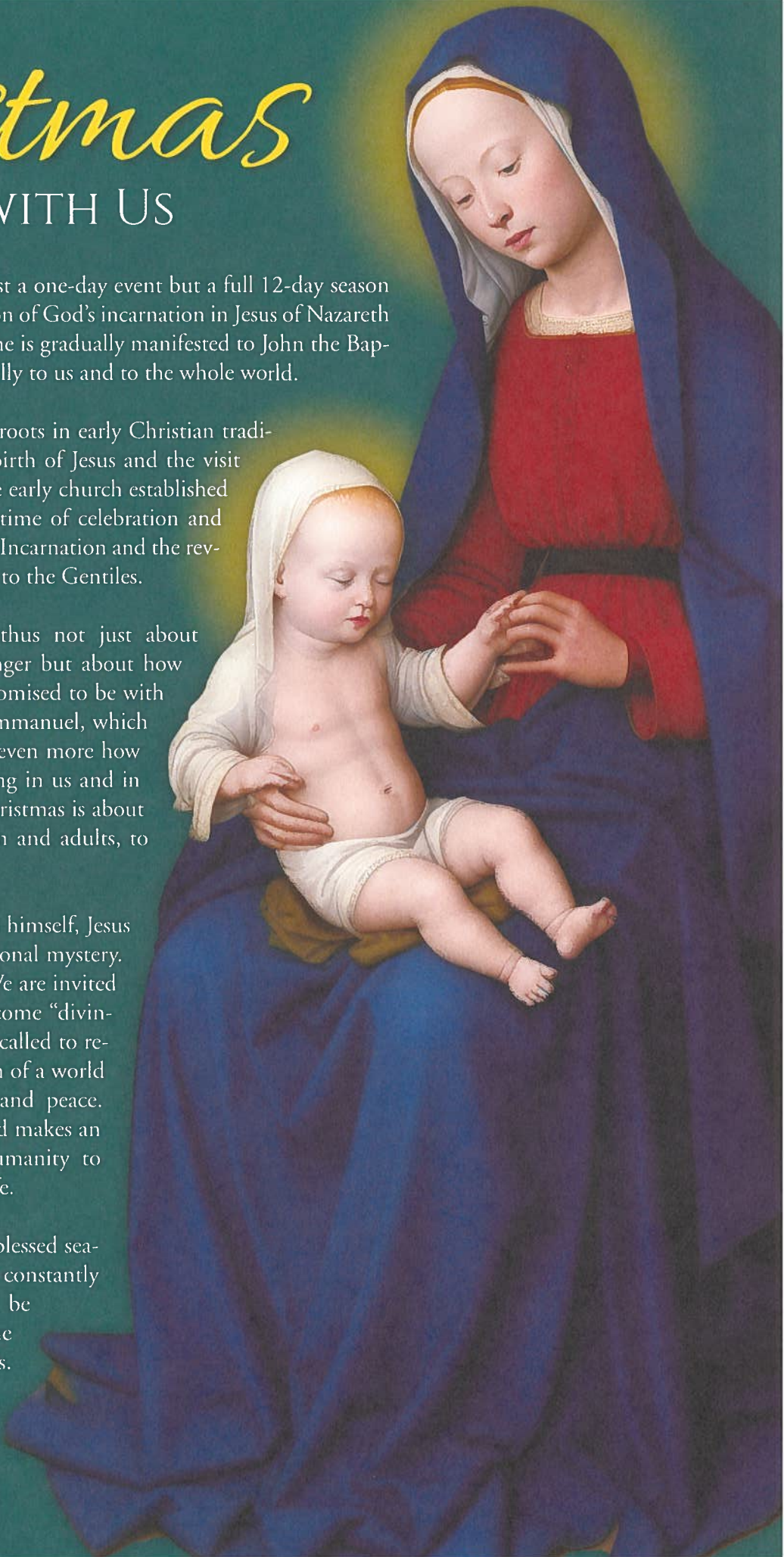


Christmas is thus not just about a baby in a manger but about how the God who promised to be with us comes to be with us in Jesus, our "Emmanuel, which means God is with us" (Mt 1:23), and even more how God continues to be with us by dwelling in us and in our community, the Body of Christ. Christmas is about God's call to men and women, children and adults, to become "divinized" persons.

By uniting divinity and humanity in himself, Jesus invites us to participate in this incarnational mystery. Our lives are Christmas in miniature. We are invited to let God be born in us so that we become "divinized" persons, full of the divine life and called to realize God's vision of a world of justice, love and peace. Through us, God makes an appeal to all humanity to enter into this life.



During this blessed season, then, we are constantly reminded of God's love and desire to be with us so that we can share in the divine life and also share this life with others. Celebrating the full Christmas Season provides us with a period of calm in which the spiritual meaning of the manifestation of Jesus, God-With-Us can be explored.



CELEBRATING THE 12 DAYS OF CHRISTMAS AT HOME

To celebrate these 12 days in your household, gather each day, perhaps around a meal, light a candle, read the suggested biblical passage, then share what you can do to make Jesus' presence more real in our world. As Vatican Council II reminded us, "Christ is the Light of nations. Because this is so, by proclaiming the Gospel to every creature, [we] bring the light of Christ to all persons." (*Constitution on the Church*, #1).

1st Day of Christmas (Lk 2:1-18)

Both Mary and the shepherds see in this child the revelation of God's love for all, especially the poor. *How might each of us recognize and respond to the needs of the poor?*

2nd Day of Christmas (Acts 6:8-10; 7:54-59)

St. Stephen models our call to witness to Jesus' message of love despite the cost to us. *How might each of us reach out to love and help the poorest among us?*

3rd Day of Christmas (Lk 2:22-40)

Simeon's message to Jesus' parents reminds us that sorrow is part of every life. *How might each of us respond to the sorrow that so many are experiencing in their lives and relationships?*

4th Day of Christmas (Mt 2:13-18)

Jesus' birth threatened King Herod, who murdered many innocent children to remain king. *Where are innocent persons being persecuted today and how might we try to help them?*

5th Day of Christmas (1 Jn 1:1-4)

God has been revealed and become visible in Jesus. *How might each of us act today to make God visible in ourselves and to recognize God's presence in those around us?*

6th Day of Christmas (Mt 2:13-15, 19-23)

When the holy family becomes refugees fleeing Herod's persecution, Joseph must trust God's plan to protect Jesus and Mary. *How might we respond to help refugees and immigrants find a better life?*

7th Day of Christmas

(Jn 1:1-18)

Jesus, God's Word made flesh, invites us to embody in ourselves the loving, forgiving, nurturing ways of God. *How might each of us better model these godly ways in our relationships?*

8th Day of Christmas

(Jn 1:19-28)

John the Baptist prepares the way for others to discover and draw near to Jesus. *How might we "make straight the Lord's way" in our daily activities?*

9th Day of Christmas

(Jn 1:29-34)

John the Baptist knows that God's Holy Spirit is at work in Jesus. *How might each of us show our trust that through the Holy Spirit God is also working in us?*

10th Day of Christmas

(Jn 1:35-42)

Jesus asks his would-be disciples "What are you looking for?" *How might each of us answer this same question to better understand who Jesus is and who we are as his disciples?*

11th Day of Christmas

(Jn 1:43-51)

Inspired by his experience of Jesus, Philipp invites Nathanael to come and meet Jesus too. *How might we reach out to share what we know and love about Jesus with someone else?*

12th Day of Christmas

(Mt 2:1-12)

The Gentile magi follow the star as the sign of God's inclusive love for all peoples. *How might we make real God's inclusive love in our society, especially the most vulnerable?*

CELEBRATIONS DURING CHRISTMASTIDE

Christmastide, also known as the Twelve Days of Christmas, features several key celebrations that commemorate significant events and figures related to the birth and early life of Jesus Christ.

Christmas Day (December 25)

Celebration of the Nativity of Jesus: This is the central feast of Christmastide, marking the birth of Jesus Christ in Bethlehem.

Feast of St. Stephen (December 26)

St. Stephen's Day: Honors St. Stephen, the first Christian martyr. Known as Boxing Day in some countries, it often involves charitable giving and acts of kindness.

Feast of St. John the Apostle (December 27)

St. John's Day: Celebrates St. John the Evangelist, one of Jesus' closest disciples and the author of the Gospel of John. This day recognizes his contributions to the early Christian Church.

Feast of the Holy Innocents (December 28)

Holy Innocents' Day: Remembers the massacre of the infants ordered by King Herod in an attempt to kill the baby Jesus. It is a day of reflection on the innocence and suffering of children.

Feast of the Holy Family

(Sunday within the Octave of Christmas or December 30)

Holy Family Day: Celebrates Jesus, Mary, and Joseph as a family unit, highlighting the virtues of family life and the importance of the family in Christian teaching.

Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God (January 1)

This day honors Mary's role as the Mother of God and is a major feast in the Catholic Church. It also marks the Octave Day of Christmas, concluding the eight-day celebration of Jesus' birth.

Feast of the Epiphany (January 6)

Commemorates the visit of the Magi to the infant Jesus, symbolizing Jesus' revelation to the Gentiles.