



# St. Mary St. Michael

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616.677.3934 • [www.saintmarysmarne.org](http://www.saintmarysmarne.org)

17150 88th Ave., Coopersville, MI 49404  
616.384.4026 • [www.saintmichaels.us](http://www.saintmichaels.us)



## Pastor: Rev. Michael Hodges

[frmhodes@grpriests.org](mailto:frmhodes@grpriests.org) • For emergencies please call: 616.745.1409

### Saint Mary Parish Staff

**St. Mary Parish Office Hours**  
Monday ..... 9:00AM - 4:30PM  
Tuesday ..... 9:00AM - 4:30PM  
Wednesday 9:00AM - 11:30AM  
Thursday .... 9:00AM to 4:30PM  
Friday ..... Closed

**Deacon**  
Tom Roberts  
[troberts@saintmarysmarne.org](mailto:troberts@saintmarysmarne.org)

**Business Manager**  
Todd Kline  
[businessmanager@saintmarysmarne.org](mailto:businessmanager@saintmarysmarne.org)

**Parish Secretary**  
Cathie VanGessel  
[secretary@saintmarysmarne.org](mailto:secretary@saintmarysmarne.org)

**Director of Faith Formation**  
Debbie Veneklase  
[dre@saintmarysmarne.org](mailto:dre@saintmarysmarne.org)

**Maintenance**  
Jim Looks

**Custodian**  
Marian Looks

**Liturgical Minister**  
Gary Karr  
[gakarr@saintmarysmarne.org](mailto:gakarr@saintmarysmarne.org)

**Music Director**  
Dr. Bernie Stanko  
616.490.3836  
[berniestanko@hotmail.com](mailto:berniestanko@hotmail.com)

**St Mary Prayer Line**  
616.677.3934 or  
Linda at 677.3269  
For evening requests call  
Darlene 616.453.0157 or  
email [bfa1414@yahoo.com](mailto:bfa1414@yahoo.com)

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Tuesday ..... 9:00AM - 4:00PM  
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Thursday ..... Closed  
Friday ..... 9:00AM to 4:00PM

**Deacon**  
Tom Roberts  
[troberts@saintmarysmarne.org](mailto:troberts@saintmarysmarne.org)

**Business Manager**  
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**Parish Secretary**  
Beki Rotman  
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**Director of Faith Formation**  
Debbie Veneklase  
[childrensministry@saintmichaels.us](mailto:childrensministry@saintmichaels.us)

**Director of O.C.I.A**  
Cliff Kozminski  
616.437.5318

**Maintenance**  
David Goosen

**Custodian**  
Carol Reens

**Liturgical Minister**  
Kevin Kilpatrick  
[liturgy@saintmichaels.us](mailto:liturgy@saintmichaels.us)

**Scrip Coordinator**  
Brenda Kilpatrick  
616.837.6363

**St Michael Prayer Line**  
Chris Albrecht  
616-403-7110  
Judy Driedger  
616-899-2470

### Weekend Mass Schedule

Saturday ..... 4:00PM • St Michael  
Sunday ..... 8:30AM • St Michael  
Sunday ..... 10:30AM • St Mary

### Weekday Mass Schedule

Tuesday ..... 12:00PM • St Mary  
*Adoration begins after Mass until 3:30PM*  
Wednesday ..... 12:00PM • St Michael  
*Adoration begins after Mass until 3:30PM*  
Thursday ..... 12:00PM • St Mary  
Friday ..... 12:00PM • St Michael

### Sacrament of Reconciliation

Tuesday and  
Thursday ..... 12:30PM to 1:30PM • St. Mary  
Wednesday and  
Friday ..... 12:30PM to 1:30PM • St. Michael  
Saturday ..... 3:00PM to 3:45PM • St. Michael

# Mass Schedule & Intentions

## Saturday September 13

4:00PM † Sherry Maslowski by the Maslowski Family..... **MI**  
 Sacrament of Reconciliation: 3:00 PM—3:45 PM - St Michael

## Sunday September 14

8:30AM † Elaine Schoenborn by School Friends ..... **MI**  
 10:30AM † Matt Potts by M/M Paul Kirkwood ..... **MA**

## Monday September 15 No Mass

## Tuesday September 16

12:00PM † Mass of Thanksgiving for Adam Skorska by Margie Jirous.. **MA**  
*Adoration begins after Communion Service until 3:30pm*  
 Sacrament of Reconciliation: 12:30PM—1:30PM - St Mary

## Wednesday September 17

12:00PM † Brian Brown by Ruth Hecksel ..... **MI**  
*Adoration begins after Mass until 3:30pm*  
 Sacrament of Reconciliation: 12:30PM—1:30PM - St Michael

## Thursday September 18

12:00PM † Chuck Klein by Knights of Columbus #11581 ..... **MA**  
 Sacrament of Reconciliation: 12:30PM—1:30PM - St Mary

## Friday September 19

12:00PM † Troy Spencer by Richard & Mary Baker..... **MI**  
 Sacrament of Reconciliation: 12:30PM—1:30PM - St Michael

## Saturday September 20

4:00PM † Lelah Bouchard by Curt & Joan Kutchin ..... **MI**  
 Sacrament of Reconciliation: 3:00 PM—3:45 PM - St Michael

## Sunday September 21

8:30AM † Pete & Marge Ferwerda by Pam Raczkiewicz ..... **MI**  
 10:30AM † Jim Potts by M/M Paul Kirkwood ..... **MA**

**MA**=St. Mary      **MI**=St. Michael's



## Scripture Readings for the Week of September 14, 2025

Sunday	Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross Nm 21:4b-9; Ps 78:1bc-2, 34-35, 36-37, 38; Phil 2:6-11; Jn 3:13-17
Monday	Memorial of Our Lady of Sorrows 1 Tm 2:1-8; Ps 28:2, 7, 8-9; Jn 19:25-27 or Lk 2:33-35
Tuesday	Memorial of Saints Cornelius, Pope, and Cyprian, Bishop and Martyrs 1 Tm 3:1-13; Ps 101:1b-2ab, 2cd-3ab, 5, 6; Lk 7:11-17
Wednesday	1 Tm 3:14-16; Ps 111:1-2, 3-4, 5-6; Lk 7:31-35
Thursday	1 Tm 4:12-16; Ps 111:7-8, 9, 10; Lk 7:36-50
Friday	1 Tm 6:2c-12; Ps 49:6-7, 8-10, 17-18, 19-20; Lk 8:1-3
Saturday	Memorial of Saint Andrew Kim Taegon, Priest, and Paul Chong Ha-sang, and Companions, Martyrs 1 Tm 6:13-16; Ps 100:1b-2, 3, 4, 5; Lk 8:4-15
Sunday	Twenty-Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time Am 8:4-7; Ps 113:1-2, 4-6, 7-8; 1 Tm 2:1-8; Lk 16:1-13

## St. Michael's Liturgical Ministers

	Sep 20—4:00PM	Sep 21 —8:30AM
Altar Servers	Kassidy Britt MaKaelyn Britt	Bryson Lindberg Reid Lindberg
Eucharistic Ministers	Sue Felicioni NEED ONE	Deacon Tom Debbie Veneklas Rob Guilbault Mary Guilbault Denise Nelson Cindy Lindberg Kenny Harker
Lector	Mark Phillips	Carl Pohlman
Sacristan	NEED ONE	Chris Albrecht
Ushers	Ray Maka NEED ONE	Ed Irwin Greg Helsen Joe Meerman Peter Nielsen
Music	Bernard Stanko	Bernard Stanko

## St. Mary's Liturgical Ministers

	September 21 —10:30AM
Sacristan	Gary Karr
Altar Servers	Casimir Lothschutz Timothy Lothschutz Sela Ricord
Precious Body	Deacon Tom Becky Warners Need One
Precious Blood	Geary Farrell Bruce Kamp Margie Jirous Need One
Hospitality	Nettie Leale Leonard Horter
Lector	Nicolette Looks
Music	Bernie Stanko

## Pray for Vocations

*O God,*  
 hear our prayer  
 and let our cry come to You.  
 Bless the Diocese of Grand Rapids  
 with many vocations to the  
 priesthood, diaconate,  
 and religious life.

Give Your sons and daughters  
 the confidence to  
 accept Your call,  
 and the love to follow always  
 in the footsteps of  
 Your beloved Son  
 with courage and dedication  
 to Your will.

*Amen.*

# Cluster News and Community News and Events

## Catholic Service Appeal - 2025

Thank you for your gifts to 2025 Catholic Services Appeal! Your generous support funds essential diocesan ministries that strengthen us in Christ. Every gift, regardless of the amount, is important in this effort. Our parish goal for 2025 is: Thank you for your stewardship!

### St Mary

CSA 2025 Pledge Goal: \$50,516.00

Total Pledges Made: \$55,055.00 (109%)

**Balance: \$4,539.00 OVER- THANK YOU!**

Participation: 107 of 260 Active - Households (42%)

### St Michael

CSA 2025 Pledge Goal: \$52,297.00

Total Pledges Made: \$39,930.00 (76%)

Balance: \$12,367.00

Participation: 97 of 255 - Active Households (38%)

Totals as of September 9, 2025

Please keep in mind that any amount raised over our goal is returned 100% to the parish. Please continue to pray for the success of this important effort.



**STRENGTHENED IN CHRIST,  
RESPONDING WITH JOY.**

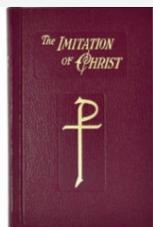
Diocese of Grand Rapids  
Catholic Services Appeal

## St. Joseph Church - Wright is celebrating 175 years

of worshipping God and we want you to join us! On Saturday, October 18th the parish is hosting an Octoberfest Homecoming party starting at 5:00pm. Food will be provided with beer available for purchase. Bring the family to enjoy the live music, historic photos, commemorative items, big raffle, and s'mores for the kids. Please RSVP By September 30, 2025 by visiting the parish website ([www.ourcluster.org/175th-anniversary](http://www.ourcluster.org/175th-anniversary)), or calling the parish office at 616-899-2286.

## Women's Book Club

All Ladies of St Mary's and St Michael's are welcome to join in our 2nd book study beginning **Tuesday, September 16th, at 10am** in St Mary Church Community Room. **The Imitations of Christ**, by Thomas à Kempis. Call Mary Guilbault with any questions and to sign up. 810-397-4461



## Fr Mike's Musings



Our veneration of the Cross reminds us of the most important moment in the history of the world: Jesus' death bringing us salvation. We have contemporary accounts from exorcists on the power of the Cross. As part of the exorcism ritual, an exorcist holds up a cross over the afflicted person and says, "Behold the Cross of the Lord!", commanding the demon(s) to depart. That is a key moment and those afflicted report afterwards that it was at that moment the demons began to go. There is a power in the Cross of Jesus that I think we may not understand but these accounts help us to grasp this power. All the graces that we receive, everything, come to us through Jesus' death. That is what the blood and water flowing from Jesus' side symbolize, though they represent the realities of Baptism and the Eucharist. Everything comes to us from the Cross. That is why in the Gospel today, we heard John making a little fuss about how it is not a mere symbol but real point of spiritual healing and redemption. He does not want us to be in any doubt that all the graces we receive really come from Jesus on the Cross.

That is because although Jesus died once, it was for all time. There were daily sacrifices of animals in the Old Covenant, but they were ineffective because they had to be repeated every day (Hebrews 10:1-4). Jesus sacrificed Himself once because His sacrifice is effective for all time. The Apostles experienced this effectiveness during the Last Supper when Jesus revealed the benefits of His sacrifice as He states that the bread is His body and the chalice is His blood poured out for the forgiveness of sins. In our age the benefits of Jesus' sacrifice are given to us during Mass when at the consecration we hear:

*"This is my Body which will be given up for you. . . This is the chalice of my Blood which will be poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins."*

During Mass we are spiritually present at the Crucifixion, as if in a time warp, like the women and John at the foot of the Cross on Calvary.

Contemplating Jesus on the Cross brings us back to ourselves as we reflect on Him doing this for us, for our salvation. Apart from celebrating together at Mass, it is good to also spend time every day with Jesus. We can talk to Him in our own way, in our own words, thanking Him for what he has done for us, asking His help to assist us as we carry our own "crosses" and share in His sufferings and His joys. As we unite ourselves with Him, we do so because we are mindful that on the Cross hung the salvation of the world, a salvation wrought once for all.

## Wedding Anniversary Mass

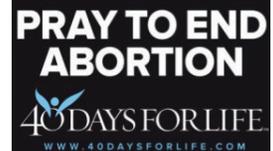
Together with your families, the Diocese of Grand Rapids honors the faithful witness to your vocation of marriage and wishes to celebrate with you. Bishop Walkowiak is inviting **all couples celebrating milestone anniversaries** to join him on **Sunday, Oct. 5 at the 10 a.m. Mass at the Cathedral of Saint Andrew** (301 Sheldon Blvd., Grand Rapids) for this annual celebration. A simple reception will immediately follow. Please RSVP by scanning the QR code or calling Lauren Vandervort at 616-246-0588.



## 40 Days for Life-Day of Prayer

**October 17, 2025** ~ Would you be willing to pray for one hour? 40 Days for Life is a unique pro-life effort that consists of 40 days of prayer, fasting and peaceful vigil in front of abortion clinics. This will be the 32nd campaign in Grand Rapids, and it will take place in front of Planned Parenthood- 425 Cherry Street SE Grand Rapids, This facility provides the abortion pill and refers for abortions. Dozens of area churches have adopted a day of prayer. Our parish family has chosen Friday, **October 17, 2025** ~ Would you be willing to pray for one hour to fill in the time slots to pray to end abortion? We will need 2 prayer volunteers from 7 am till 7 pm throughout the day. This is a powerful and proven effective way to close abortion centers and show the Mother's that we are praying and thinking about them and their babies. Please consider a hour of your time~ If you are unable to attend that day you may go to the clinic and pray any time! Thank you for your commitment to LIFE!

**Sign up sheets are in the Narthex. Questions? Please call the Parish Office.**



## Bulletin Sponsor of the Week



THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING OUR BULLETIN!

September 14, 2025 ~ The Exaltation of the Holy Cross

View this bulletin online at [www.DiscoverMass.com](http://www.DiscoverMass.com)

## St Mary Faith Formation

**Children's Liturgy of the Word (CLW):**  
**Pre-School thru 2nd Grade During 10:30 AM Mass.**  
 CLW is on Summer break.

This is the Twenty-fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time. Today is The Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross celebrates the Cross as a symbol of Christ's victory over death and a reminder of God's great love for us.

**1st-7th Grade Faith Formation Classes -**  
**Wednesdays at Hall / 6:00- 7:30pm**

**8th Grade - Confirmation Classes -**  
**Wednesdays at Hall / 6:00- 7:30pm**

**Registration is now open for the 2025/2026 school year.**

Forms are available online or in the Narthex.



### Register ONLINE HERE:

<https://www.saintmarysmarne.org/religious-education-elementary>

**Classes resume Sept 24.** We are working on class lists and ordering books and supplies. To help us get an accurate number of students, please take a minute and register your child(ren) today.

**For more information** or any questions on any of these programs Please contact Debbie Veneklas at [dre@saintmarysmarne.org](mailto:dre@saintmarysmarne.org) or 616.677.3934

### High School Students

Are you still in high school and have not yet received the Sacrament of Confirmation? We invite you to join our Confirmation Preparation Classes, where you will grow in our Catholic faith, learn more about the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and be ready to complete your initiation into the Church. Classes will begin soon, and all high school students are welcome. Come journey with other young people as you take this important step in Catholicism. **"Be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit."** For more information or to register, please contact our DRE Debbie Veneklas at [dre@saintmarysmarne.org](mailto:dre@saintmarysmarne.org) or 616-677- 3934

### Pray for our Priests - September 23

The priests of the diocese attend a retreat together every fall. This fall convocation is an important time away from their parishes to build camaraderie, pray together, engage in continuing formation and celebrate milestone anniversaries. Let us gather as a Catholic community during this time to pray for our shepherds. Check with [GRdiocese.org](http://GRdiocese.org) to find open times for prayer in churches across the diocese.



**St Mary will offer Rosary and Prayer Service at 12PM and 6PM on Tuesday, Sept. 23 . Please Join us. All are Welcome.**

## Knights of Columbus #11581 News

How to become a Knight: You can enroll in the Knights of Columbus immediately as an "Online Member" by scanning the QR Code. Once you complete and submit the form on that page a local council will contact you. For additional information or to learn more about what the Knights do, Contact Grand Knight: Bruce Kamp [b.kamp@charter.net](mailto:b.kamp@charter.net) / Phone 616-780-4941



### Upcoming Blood Drive & Community Breakfast

**Pre-Register here: Oct 12**

[https://donateblood.versiti.org/donor/schedules/drive\\_schedule/11598498](https://donateblood.versiti.org/donor/schedules/drive_schedule/11598498)



### Cor

Cor continues this fall as we begin a series on "The Mission of the Family". Inspired by the "Into the Breach" video series, "The Mission of the Family" places a special focus on the spiritual battle that occurs within our own families. St. John Paul II said that "the future of the world and the Church passes through the family." Men are called in a particular way to lead their families in the faith. All men are invited for fellowship, discussion, and prayer on Saturday, September 13th from 7:00 to 8:30 am in the Community Room. Coffee and donuts will be provided. Cor will be held the 2nd and 4th Saturday of each month, and new members are always welcome. If you have any questions, please reach out to Robert Lothschutz at 616-292-5964.

**Upcoming Dates:** Sept 27, Oct 11, 25, Nov 8, 22, Dec 13

### Knight of the Month

**Knight Person of the Month- September:**  
**Paul Lothschutz**

**Knight Family of the Month- September:**  
**John & Christina Withers Family**

The Knight Person / Family of the month is a way of recognizing someone who has gone above and beyond, or done something extra for the council or our church community. Congratulations and Thank you for service and commitment to our Parish Family!



### Monthly Charitable Donation-

**Lori's Voice**

### Fall Scrap Metal Drive - September 26-29

Trash Bin will be in the Parish Hall Parking Lot. Start saving your scrap now.

All proceeds benefit the K of C charitable donations.

**Items not taken:** TV's, freezers, refrigerators, air conditioners (anything with Freon or oil/fluids in it)

**Items taken:** scrap metal, old metal equipment / implements, washers, driers, engines & transmissions with all fluid drained.

Contact: Grand Knight:

Bruce Kamp: [b.kamp@charter.net](mailto:b.kamp@charter.net) / Phone 616-780-4941



## Giving Back to God

Mass: Attendance	9/7	141
Adult Contributions		\$4173.00
Children Contributions		\$9.00
Loose Contributions		\$269.00
Capital Improvement		\$555.00
Online Giving		\$2005.00
<b>Total</b>		<b>\$7011.00</b>
Weekly Offertory Needed for Budget		\$5444.57
Offertory-YTD Budget vs YTD-Actual		+3511.27

**Thank you** for your continued support and generosity! To donate now, open your phone camera, scan the QR code and follow instructions.



## Welcome to the Cluster Parishes of St. Mary and St. Michael

## St. Michael's Parish News

**Scrip News**— Thank you to our 10 families that purchased Scrip this week. Our total profit was \$140.71.



### St. Michael's Parish Family

**Remembers in Their Prayers:** Kevin Johnson, Anne Pols, Alexandria Gordon, George Langlois, Brooke Campbell, Linda Abel-Carroll, Jackie May, Dennis Goosen, Jean Mayse, Ken Heflin, Marvin Hecksel, Payton Patterson, Pat Harlett, the victims of abortion, & the men and women in the military.

## St. Michael's Faith Formation

**Faith Formation Registration** for the 2025-2026 school year is now enrolling. Attention families with children ages 3 through grades 8. You can find registration forms on the parish website and forms are also located in the church narthex.



### Attention parents of 1st or 7th graders:

**First graders'** Parents! Do you know of a child that is attending first grade at a public school this fall? Please have their families contact the Parish Office now so that we can be sure to sign them up for Wednesday night classes. If a child is anticipating receiving their First Holy Communion and First Reconciliation, they will have to complete one year of Catechism class prior to preparing for these sacraments in second grade.

Do you have a seventh grader or know one? Confirmation preparation begins in the seventh grade. If you know a student in seventh grade this fall, please spread the word to their parents now. They can still attend Faith Formation class.

**Children's Liturgy of the Word:** CLW program is offered on Sunday during 8:30 Masses. Children 3-9 years old are welcome to join us each week as we pray, read and explore the Sunday Gospel from a child's viewpoint. We include the Gospel Acclamation so children understand the importance of preparing our mind and heart for the Gospel reading. CLW will resume on September 28th. This Sunday is The Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross. What is the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross? It's a special Catholic feast day on September 14th. It celebrates three main things: Saint Helena finding the True Cross. The dedication of churches built where Jesus suffered and was buried. The triumph of the Cross when it was returned to Jerusalem.

**Elementary Faith Formation:** The elementary program is for students in grades 1-5. We meet on Wednesday from 6:00- 7:30 pm in the parish school. Class will resume on Wednesday, September 17th. Contact Debbie if you have any questions (616) 384-4026.

**Middle School Faith Formation:** Grades 6, 7 and 8 meet on Sundays from 9:45-11:15am in the Youth Room. The 8th Grade students will also receive Confirmation Preparation. Our programs are on Summer break. Class will resume on Sunday, September 28th.



## St. Michael's Sanctuary Lamp

for +Caroline Idziak  
by Bob Idziak

**Thank You!**



**Thank You!!** Thank you to EVERYONE who worked so tirelessly to make this year's festival a big success. We will have final numbers to report in the coming weeks, but we could not have pulled it off without the efforts of our co-chairpeople Cindy Bleckley and Cindy Lindberg, and the countless volunteers who gave of their time, talent and treasures. Thank You!



What is it? The PaperGator® is a fundraiser where St. Michael's is paid to collect paper products for recycling.

**What CAN go in the bins?**  
Newsprint  
Catalogs/Magazines  
Junk Mail  
Phone Books  
Office/School paper  
Hard and soft cover books

**What CANNOT go in the bins?**  
Paperboard  
(Grocery Item boxes)  
Plastic  
Metal  
Trash  
Glass  
Cardboard

## Giving Back to God

September 6/7

<b>Mass Attendance: 9/6- 4:00PM:</b>	76
<b>Mass Attendance: 9/7: 8:30 PM</b>	142
Adult Envelopes	\$3,591.00
Loose Cash	\$262.00
Children's Envelopes	\$8.00
Online Giving	\$1,155.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$5,016.00</b>
Building Fund	\$675.00
Weekly Offertory Needed for Budget	\$5,385.39
Offertory-YTD Budget vs YTD Actual	+\$3,458.51

*Thank you for your continued support!*

**Online Giving** — Now there's an even more convenient way to contribute to St. Michael's! To donate now, open your phone camera, scan the QR code and follow instructions. Or text the word GIVE to: 616-384-5011.



**September 14, 2025 ~ The Exaltation of the Holy Cross**

View this bulletin online at [www.DiscoverMass.com](http://www.DiscoverMass.com)

## Light and Dark

Jesus did not come to condemn the world. He came that the world might be saved. This refers not only to people, but to all the values in the world. Jesus did not come to condemn anything human. He came to save every activity people engage in from destructiveness, distortion, and mediocrity.

More than this, Jesus came to bring every human activity to fulfillment; to lift up everything people do to a divine plane. The new law of Jesus is a law, not just for good human behavior, but for living on the level of God.

The paradox is that, just as Jesus had to be lifted up on a cross in order to be glorified (see John 3:14; 8:28; 12:32), so we have to die to our merely human ways of thinking and acting in order to become divine. In the same way, when we come into the light of Christ, many things which before we accepted as good and natural we now condemn as darkness by comparison. It is not that Christians or Jesus are taking a “condemnatory attitude” toward things. We just say with Saint Paul, “Yet whatever gains I had, these I have come to regard as loss because of Christ” (see Philippians 3:7-8; also Matthew 16:26, Mark 8:36). But to those who have not come into the light, Christians can appear to be negative when they preach a higher ideal. When we are lifted up with Christ, we do not put down anything human; we just see everything from a different perspective in the light of our call to be divine.

In our day the Church protests against many things that the world in general accepts as natural or even good: pragmatic war, divorce, business for profit only, abortion, racial and sexual discrimination, foreign policy based only on national interest, sex without marriage, capital punishment, nuclear testing and stockpiling, the option to stop providing adequate public care for the poor, the old, and the emotionally disturbed in favor of leaving them dependent on private charities. All of the above are facts in American society. Many of them are embodied in policy or law. Most of them have been explicitly condemned by the U.S. bishops, not without criticism from Catholics and non-Catholics alike.

To take one of the most common examples, how eas-

SEPTEMBER 14, 2025

EXALTATION OF THE CROSS

Numbers 21:4b-9;  
Phillipians 2:6-11; John 3:13-17

ily do people take for granted today that Church teaching takes a negative attitude toward sex? And yet, if we look at Church teaching, what is hard to accept is how much positive value the Church proclaims in sex. Does it give more or less value to sexual intercourse to see this as more than just a way of saying, “I love you”—to see it as a deep, personal expression of the total gift of oneself to another forever? Are Catholics refusing to accept their sexuality if they say that the surrender of the body in intercourse is inauthentic sex so long as it does not express actual commitment—not just an intended or possible commitment, but the real gift of oneself already made in marriage? Those who say that intercourse is acceptable provided two people love each other—with or without the total commitment of marriage—are giving a much less radical value to the act. They are devaluing the currency of human sexual expression.

To understand Church teaching, it is not enough to look at what she condemns. Like Jesus, the Church is not here to condemn human values, but to save them—and to lift them up to the level of the divine life given to us in grace. And therefore, the Church’s restrictions on war can only be understood in the light of the sacredness she recognizes in every human person. Her stance toward profit for profit’s sake only makes sense in the light of what Jesus says about money, property and the real purpose of life. And ultimately, we can only understand the Church’s teaching on sex by seeing every act of intercourse as an expression of the Body of Christ. Those truly committed to human values will welcome Christ’s transforming light.



## REFLECTING ON THIS WEEK'S GOSPELS

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### Twenty-Fourth Week of the Year

*Pray daily:* Lord, you said, “Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God.” I want to see you so that I will be pure of heart. Open my mind to your truth and win me to follow you without reserve. Amen.

**Monday:** Luke 7:1-10: When the centurion heard about Jesus, he sent elders of the Jews to him, asking him to come and save the life of his slave. Do you believe anything dies in you when you sin? Do you believe Jesus can bring you back to life—and fully? How often do you ask him specifically to do this?

**Tuesday:** Luke 7:11-17: As Jesus drew near to the gate of the city, a man who had died was being carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow. When the Lord saw her, he was moved with pity for her. How do you think Jesus feels when an ideal dies in one of us? When someone stops coming to Mass? Stops praying as before? How does he feel about parents whose children have turned away?

**Wednesday:** Luke 7:31-35: “We played the flute for you, but you did not dance. We sang a dirge, but you did not weep.” When does your religion make you feel like dancing? When does it make you weep? When does it leave you indifferent? Have you deadened in any way your ability to respond to the Good News?

**Thursday:** Luke 7:36-50: When the Pharisee who had invited Jesus saw this he said to himself, “If this man were a prophet, he would know who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him, that she is a sinner.” In Jesus’ eyes, was the Pharisee more of a sinner than the woman? Was the Pharisee himself aware of how little he understood about God? What had blinded him? Could the same thing be blinding you?

**Friday:** Luke 8:1-3: Jesus journeyed from one town and village to another, preaching and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God. Accompanying him were

the Twelve and some women who had been cured of evil spirits and infirmities. Why did some people follow Jesus around, listening to everything he preached, while others were less interested? Is the same true today? What is the cause of the difference? Which category would you fit into? Why?

**Saturday:** Luke 8:4-15: Jesus said, “As for the seed that fell on rich soil, they are the ones who, when they have heard the word, embrace it with a generous and good heart, and bear fruit through perseverance.” When do you hear the Good News proclaimed? Does it give you joy? Do you think deeply about what you have heard? Do you keep thinking about it until it bears fruit in your life?

## LIVING THIS WEEK'S GOSPELS

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**As Christian:** Think specifically of your most frequent sins. Ask Jesus to save you from them. Ask what you have been doing to cooperate with him as Savior, what you can do.

**As Disciple:** See if you can find something in the Gospels or writings of the Apostles that casts light on the sins you are most inclined to commit.

**As Prophet:** Look at the sins you commit and change your aim. Instead of trying to avoid them as evil, try to live out positively the highest ideal they contradict. That is, instead of trying to be patient, do something extraordinarily loving for the people who make you impatient.

**As Priest:** Ask yourself what you can do to help heal someone whose woundedness leads to visibly destructive behavior. How can you put that person into deeper or more constant contact with the healing love of Christ?

**As King:** Look for destructive or distorted attitudes that are so commonplace where you live, go to school, or work that they aren’t even recognized as destructive any more. Look at unquestioned competitiveness, for example, or stereotypes, or assumed goals that are not worth pursuing. Start asking “Why?” constantly. (Warning: The Surgeon General won’t tell you, but this could be injurious to your health. It got Socrates killed.)

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