

## 3RD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Jesus said to them in reply,  
“Go and tell John  
what you hear and see.”  
- Mt 11:4

# ST. MARY'S CATHOLIC CHURCH

SERVING ST. MARY'S/ MALTA, SACRED HEART/ DODSON, ST. FRANCIS /SACO

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 14, 2025

### Contact Us

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Please check our website for additional information.

Weekly bulletins are posted in full color with several additions – check them out here: <https://www.saintmarysmalta.org/bulletins>

**Confession** – Friday's 9-10am, Saturday's 11-noon or contact Fr. Felix directly for an appointment.

**Adoration** – every Friday 9:00-10:00am immediately following daily Mass.

### **MASS SCHEDULE:**

Saturday vigil – Malta 5:00pm    Sunday – Saco 8:30am, Malta 10:30am, Dodson 12:30pm

Daily Mass (Monday thru Friday) – Malta 8:30am

## Homily by Fr. Felix:

*Advent, III Sunday (A): Isaiah 35:1–6, 10; James 5:7–10; Matthew 11:2–11*

Dear brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ,

The theme of today's liturgy is joyful expectation: rejoicing because God's saving work is already breaking into our world, even before its fullness is seen. It calls us to patient, hope-filled trust as we recognize the signs of Christ's presence transforming our deserts into places of new life.

In the first reading, Isaiah gives us one of the most breathtaking visions in all of Scripture. He speaks to people living in exile, with little outward reason for optimism. Yet amid their dryness, God promises a landscape transformed: deserts flowering, weak hands strengthened, the blind seeing, the lame leaping like a stag.

What Isaiah offers is more than poetic comfort; it is a revelation of the very character of God. God is not resigned to our barrenness. He does not look upon human suffering as fixed or final. Instead, Isaiah proclaims a God who comes to us, who breaks into our wastelands, and whose coming brings renewal that no human power can manufacture. This is the heart of Advent Hope. We wait for a God already journeying toward us. Advent is the season to name our dryness honestly, and then to dare to believe that God has plans for beauty far beyond what we imagine.

In the second reading, in contrast to Isaiah's soaring poetry, James gives us the sober wisdom of the spiritual life. He takes Isaiah's promise and shows us our role in receiving it. He knows that God's promises are sure, God's timing is often slower than our impatience desires. He uses the image of a farmer who waits for the precious yield of the earth. The farmer cannot rush the rain, cannot command

the seasons. Yet he prepares the soil, trusts the process, and remains faithful until the harvest arrives. So, the Christian life is like a farmer working the soil. While the world demands instant gratification, Advent teaches us that the deepest gifts, conversion, forgiveness, holiness and Christ's presence. They require time, attention, and openness.

In the Gospel, we encounter John the Baptist, not the fiery prophet at the Jordan, but a man in prison, wrestling with uncertainty. John had announced a Messiah who would come with judgment and fire. Yet Jesus' mission looks different: healing the sick, raising the lowly, proclaiming good news to the poor. John asks the deepest Advent question to Jesus and Jesus responds to him not with theories but with signs: The blind sees, just as Isaiah foretold. The lame walk, just as the prophet promised. The poor hear good news, just as God desired. Jesus' identity is revealed in His works of mercy, His restoration of human dignity, His manifestation of God's tender power.

And then Jesus offers a beatitude for us all: "Blessed is the one who takes no offense at me." John's struggle can be our own. We may expect God to act quickly, and He moves slowly. We may expect Him to solve a problem, and He goes deeper, healing a wound we didn't name. We may expect triumph, and He offers transformation.

As Isaiah proclaims God's promise, James calls us to patient trust, and Jesus shows us that the promise is already breaking into our world, let us rejoice because God is faithful, the Messiah is among us, Amen.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS:

THIS WEDNESDAY, December 17<sup>th</sup>: **Advent Penance Service**- To ready hearts and minds for Christ's coming, moving from mere countdown to true spiritual preparation. Individual confession and absolution, with Fr. Felix and visiting Priests, to spiritually prepare for Jesus' birth by acknowledging sin's impact and seeking God's mercy, making Christmas celebrations more meaningful.

**Mass at 6:30pm in Malta**

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New Years Day, January 1<sup>st</sup>: Holy Day of Obligation- **Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God**

**Mass at 10:30am in Malta**

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Annual "**Christmas Cards for Seminarians**" program has been rescheduled to "Easter Cards for Seminarians." Follow for more information to come- starting around Ash Wednesday 2026.

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Did you know? There is an excellent **Catholic Funeral Planning Guide** on our website

[www.saintmarysmalta.org/ministries](http://www.saintmarysmalta.org/ministries)

*The documents include information on: steps before death, at the time of death, and after death. The Order of Catholic Funeral Rites explained and an easy "fill in the blank" area to share with loved ones.*

**If you would like to have another Priest perform a service (funeral, wedding, baptism, ect.) in our Parish, please contact Fr. Felix so he may grant his permission.**

**Week of December 7th, 2025 Donations: Malta \$4,861, Saco- \$150, Dodson- \$1,591**

*Please join us as we gather in faith and community  
to celebrate the joy of Christmas at St. Mary's Parish*

### **Christmas Eve Mass**

5:00pm @ St. Mary's Church, Malta

### **Christmas Day Masses**

8:30am @ St. Francis of Assisi Church, Saco

10:30am @ St. Mary's Church, Malta

12:30pm @ Sacred Heart Church, Dodson



## **Prayer Requests**

*If you have a prayer request, please contact **Dianne Salsbery** at **406-654-4675**. Names will be listed in the bulletin for a minimum of 30 days.*

**Please pray for** –Dawn Goodheart Jones, the family of Skyla Sisco, Debbie and Joe Nicholson, Leona Kienenberger, the families of Staci French, Carletta Benson, Joe Simanton, Judy Henry, Adalyn McCollom, Gloria Combs, Corky LaBrie, Dianne Salsbery, Bob Kaluza, Tammy Peterson and those from our area serving in the military.

**For the repose of the souls of** – Skyla Sisco, Staci French, Shirley Eklund, Alvina Doucette, Derek Davis, KJ Wilke, Jim Robinson, David Williamson, Lee Stevens and all souls in need and pray also for their families that they find comfort and peace.



*Week three of Advent: **JOY*** "Dear Jesus, fill my heart with joy,

even when things feel hard or busy. Remind me of the joy you bring to my life. And when Christmas comes, help me come to your manger with a heart full of thanks and joy. Amen."

**Mass Intentions** - to schedule an intention,  
please fill out an envelope at the back of the church.

|                                |   |
|--------------------------------|---|
| Saturday 12.13.25              | Repose of Myrtle Hould r/b Cummings                       |
| Sunday 12.14.25<br>10:30 Malta | - For the faithful in our Parish                          |
| 8:30am Saco                    | - For special intentions r/b Lana Fortin                  |
| 12:30 Dodson                   | -Sue Kron r/b The Howells                                 |
| Monday 12.15.25                | For my family living and deceased r/b Lana Fortin         |
| Tuesday 12.16.25               | For LeRoy Rummel r/b The Rummels                          |
| Wednesday 12.17.25             | Repose of Staci French & Richard Gilmore r/b The Cummings |
| Thursday 12.18.25              | For my family r/b Lana Fortin                             |
| Friday 12.19.25                | Repose of Derek Davis & Family r/b Lana Fortin            |
| Saturday 12.20.25              | For all souls in purgatory r/b The Cummings               |
| Sunday 12.21.25                | For the faithful in our parish                            |

**Daily Readings for the Week of  
December 10th:**

|                     |  |
|---------------------|--|
| <b>Sunday:</b>      | Is 35:1-6a, 10/Ps 146:6-7, 8-9, 9-10 (see Is 35:4)/Jas 5:7-10/Mt 11:2-11 |
| <b>Monday:</b>      | Nm 24:2-7, 15-17a/Ps 25:4-5ab, 6 and 7bc, 8-9/Mt 21:23-27                |
| <b>Tuesday:</b>     | Zep 3:1-2, 9-13/Ps 34:2-3, 6-7, 17-18, 19 and 23/Mt 21:28-32             |
| <b>Wednesday:</b>   | Gn 49:2, 8-10/Ps 72:1-2, 3-4ab, 7-8, 17/Mt 1:1-17                        |
| <b>Thursday:</b>    | Jer 23:5-8/Ps 72:1-2, 12-13, 18-19/Mt 1:18-25                            |
| <b>Friday:</b>      | Jgs 13:2-7, 24-25a/Ps 71:3-4a, 5-6ab, 16-17/Lk 1:5-25                    |
| <b>Saturday:</b>    | Is 7:10-14/Ps 24:1-2, 3-4ab, 5-6/Lk 1:26-38                              |
| <b>Next Sunday:</b> | Is 7:10-14/Ps 24:1-2, 3-4, 5-6 (7c, 10b)/Rom 1:1-7/Mt 1:18-2             |

**Finance Council members include:**

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**Deb Sjostrom** 406-654-1451, [sjostrom@itstriangle.com](mailto:sjostrom@itstriangle.com).  
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*Meetings are generally the 3rd Thursday of the month. If interested in serving please contact a member of the finance council.*

**Parish Council members include:**

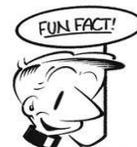
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**Leona Kienenberger**—406-383-4459, [leona\\_kienenberger@yahoo.com](mailto:leona_kienenberger@yahoo.com) (Dodson)

**Each intention is \$10.**

**“What is St. Joan of Arc’s favorite Christmas carol?”**



**“O, Holy Knight!”**

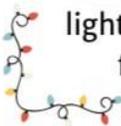


St. Joan of Arc led the French to victory in 1429, a valiant soldier for Jesus. (Being French, she probably preferred French carols, though).



# Catholic Family Advent Calendar



|  |   |  |   |   |
|--|---|--|---|---|
| <p><b>1</b> Light a candle in church for a special intention</p>  | <p><b>2</b> Offer up your struggles for another</p>              | <p><b>3</b> Donate toys to a children's charity</p>                       | <p><b>4</b> Bake cookies for a neighbor</p>                 | <p><b>5</b> Smile at everyone you meet today</p>                 |
| <p><b>6</b> Give a small gift to a friend</p>                    | <p><b>7</b> Prayer a rosary for someone in need of prayers</p>  | <p><b>8</b> Attend Mass for the feast of the Immaculate Conception</p>  | <p><b>9</b> Surprise someone with flowers</p>              | <p><b>10</b> Decorate a gingerbread house together</p>         |
| <p><b>11</b> Offer to wrap gifts for someone</p>                | <p><b>12</b> Donate baby items to a pregnancy center</p>       | <p><b>13</b> Offer to do a chore for a family member</p>                | <p><b>14</b> Read a book to someone younger than you</p>  | <p><b>15</b> Go look at Christmas lights as a family</p>       |
| <p><b>16</b> Pray a Divine Mercy Chaplet as a family</p>        | <p><b>17</b> Invite your priest over for dinner</p>            | <p><b>18</b> Pray for those who lost loved ones this year</p>           | <p><b>19</b> Donate canned goods to a food pantry</p>     | <p><b>20</b> Thank God for something you take for granted</p>  |
| <p><b>21</b> Spread some cheer and go Christmas Caroling</p>    | <p><b>22</b> Write a thank you note to someone helpful</p>     | <p><b>23</b> Donate clothes to those in need</p>                        | <p><b>24</b> Attend a special Christmas Vigil Mass</p>    | <p><b>25</b> Merry Christmas!</p>                              |

# Weekly Prayer

## Sunday's Readings

### First Reading:

Those whom the LORD has ransomed will return  
and enter Zion singing,  
crowned with everlasting joy;  
they will meet with joy and gladness,  
sorrow and mourning will flee. (Isa 35:10)

### Psalm:

Lord, come and save us. (Ps 146)  
OR  
Alleluia.

### Second Reading:

Be patient, brothers and sisters,  
until the coming of the Lord. (Jas 5:7)

### Gospel:

Jesus said to them in reply,  
"Go and tell John what you hear and see:  
the blind regain their sight,  
the lame walk,  
lepers are cleansed,  
the deaf hear,  
the dead are raised,  
and the poor have the good news proclaimed to them."  
(Mt 11:4-5)

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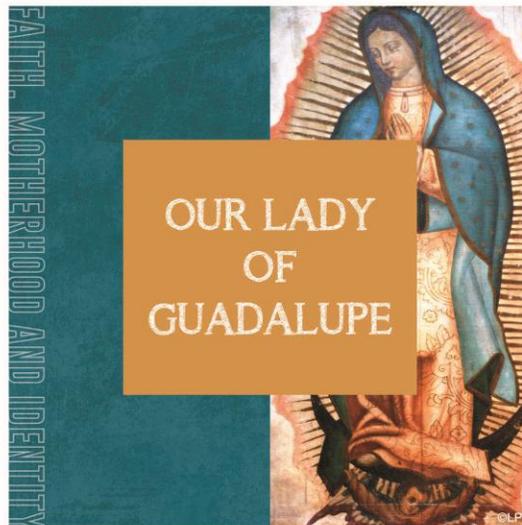
## Live The Liturgy Inspiration of the Week

"Go and tell what you have seen and heard,"  
Jesus says. When it comes to proving who he  
is, he always lets his actions do the talking. We  
have heard. We have seen. We must go and  
tell. Let's let our actions do the talking. Who  
do we think Jesus is?

## Observances for the week of December 14, 2025

**Sunday:** 3rd Sunday of Advent

**Next Sunday:** 4th Sunday of Advent



## Devotions, *Explained!*

Our Lady of Guadalupe appeared to Juan Diego in Mexico City in 1531. The Patroness of the Americas, Our Lady of Guadalupe is a beloved symbol of faith, motherhood and identity. Her feast day is Dec. 12.

## Prayer for Advent - New Growth

Dear God,  
Bring new life! Your love creates  
and cultivates.  
Bring Your power into the places I  
think of as "deserts"  
and your grace to the prayers I  
fear may be "deserted."  
You can redeem and restore,  
bring a new song to my heart.  
Amen.

# Worship & Meditation

## Readings for the week of December 14, 2025

### Sunday:

Is 35:1-6a, 10/Ps 146:6-7, 8-9, 9-10  
(see Is 35:4)/Jas 5:7-10/Mt 11:2-11

### Monday:

Nm 24:2-7, 15-17a/Ps 25:4-5ab, 6 and 7bc, 8-9/Mt 21:23-27

### Tuesday:

Zep 3:1-2, 9-13/Ps 34:2-3, 6-7, 17-18, 19 and 23/Mt 21:28-32

### Wednesday:

Gn 49:2, 8-10/Ps 72:1-2, 3-4ab, 7-8, 17/  
Mt 1:1-17

### Thursday:

Jer 23:5-8/Ps 72:1-2, 12-13, 18-19/  
Mt 1:18-25

### Friday:

Jgs 13:2-7, 24-25a/Ps 71:3-4a, 5-6ab, 16-17/Lk 1:5-25

### Saturday:

Is 7:10-14/Ps 24:1-2, 3-4ab, 5-6/  
Lk 1:26-38

### Next Sunday:

Is 7:10-14/Ps 24:1-2, 3-4, 5-6 (7c, 10b)/  
Rom 1:1-7/Mt 1:18-24



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## Gospel Meditation

### Encourage Deeper Understanding of Scripture

When I was 11, I was riding my bike on a Friday night in Scottsdale, Arizona. I saw giant spotlights swirling in the sky. Something amazing had to be happening. I pedaled after them with excitement. Sweaty and tired, I arrived, only to find a used car lot. Bright lights, flapping banners, inflatable balloon men swaying wildly in the wind. I stood there, heart sinking. All that spectacle, and all my effort ... for this?

As life proceeds, we learn what it is like to pursue promising but fruitless searches. This week we hear Jesus ask the crowds regarding John the Baptist: **“What did you go out to the desert to see? A reed swayed by the wind?” (Matthew 11:7)**. He’s not just describing the crowd’s mis-aimed pursuit. He’s naming our tendency to chase after what’s flashy but flimsy.

What are our swaying reeds? For me, it is endless video reels on my phone, worldly pleasures, entertainment in sports, and the good opinion of others. Inflated distractions that bend whichever way the wind blows. But they can’t satisfy my soul. What are your flimsy reeds?

John the Baptist wasn’t a swaying reed. He was rooted, grounded, unafraid to speak the solid truth. The people went to see him because, deep down, they were starving for something real.

This Advent, the Church asks us to reassess: What are we really looking for? Are we chasing the dazzling but hollow? Or are we seeking what is solid and lasting — that which points to Christ?

— *Father John Muir*

# Liturgical Life

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## ( PRACTICING ) CATHOLIC

**Mini Reflection:** We go to Mass. We go to Confession. We pray. We read Scripture. In doing all these things, again and again, we go out to the desert. Why? What are we expecting to see?

### **What We See in the Desert**

I've always wanted to see a real desert.

I know all about frigid, snowy winters and warm, wet summers. I grew up on rich soil that yields lush vegetation and bountiful harvests. But I've never experienced a desert, not in my own country or abroad, and I'm curious.

I know there must be something magical about the desert for it to feature so heavily in Scripture, for it to provide a backdrop to so many crucial moments of salvation history. The Israelites following the cloud, the temptation of Christ, the voice crying out: "Prepare the way for the Lord."

Why do these moments have to happen in a desert? Why do they make so much less sense in a tropical rainforest or a verdant forest?

I think it's because the desert doesn't have anything to offer us, at first glance. No one longs for the physical sensation of a dry heat and a beating sun. But the vast emptiness and the almost mystical harshness — even if we don't desire and delight in it, this is a setting that we understand, somehow, intrinsically. We know it deep within our soul. God is there.

We go to Mass. We go to Confession. We pray. We read Scripture. In doing all these things, again and again, we go out to the desert.

Why? What are we expecting to see?

If we expect to be entertained, we will be disappointed. If we expect reassurance, we will be disappointed. If we expect to feel pleasant and safe and sheltered, we will be disappointed.

The desert is there to challenge us. The desert is there to show us who we are, and who we can be.

So go.

— Colleen Jurkiewicz Dorman

## **Why do we do that? Catholic Life Explained**

### **Question:**

Our prayer group has been reading the lives of some saints, and we were struck by how some of them thought they were such sinners. Why would someone so holy think they had such serious sin?

### **Answer:**

As Professional athletes practice the fundamentals of their sport over and over again, reaching for better form, consistency, and performance. They focus on the basics, review past performances, and visualize greater success. Practice makes better, if not perfect!

Spiritual masters such as the saints also looked for perfection. They practiced their faith in the search for holiness, grace, and virtue. Through sacraments, prayer, study, good works, and penance, they raised their level of awareness and their sensitivity to the presence of God, the demands of the Gospel, and the workings of the Holy Spirit. They examined their consciences daily, reviewing the day for moments of failure and times that they could have been more virtuous in one way or another. They resolved to do better, be more attentive, and alert!

Therefore, anything that would distract them or interfere with their relationship with God would be like a small black spot on a bright white wall — you can't miss it! The great saints were aware of sin and the presence of evil because they were so tuned into the struggle between good and evil that was fought in their own lives, hearts, and souls.

“This is the one about whom it is written: *Behold, I am sending my messenger ahead of you; he will prepare your way before you.* Amen, I say to you, among those born of women there has been none greater than John the Baptist; yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.”  
- Mt 11:10-11

Excerpts from the Lectionary for Mass ©2001, 1998, 1970 CCD.

## Questions of the Week

Invite Parishioners to Reflect and Respond to Scripture

### First Reading:

The prophet Isaiah taught his community to “be strong, fear not!” because God has planned a remarkable future where both the people and the land will be restored. Is there a friend or co-worker who needs your encouragement this week?

### Second Reading:

James encourages his community to be patient and firm of heart in waiting for the coming of the Lord. What are you waiting for during this Advent season?

### Gospel:

In prison, John the Baptist seemed uncertain about who Jesus is. Who do you talk to when you have questions about Jesus?



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