

Saint Mary's Church

15164 Juniper Dr. Marne, MI 49435 / 616.677.3934 / www.saintmarysmarne.org

December 10, 2023 ~ Second Sunday of Advent

**Weekend Mass Schedule:**

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

Weekday Mass Schedule:

Tuesday 9AM St Mary
Adoration begins after Mass until 2:00 pm
Wednesday 9AM - St Michael
Adoration begins after Mass until 2:00 pm
Thursday 9:00 AM St Mary
Friday 9:00 AM St Michael

Sacrament of Reconciliation:

Tuesdays: 2:00PM to 3:00PM ~ St. Mary
Wednesdays 2:00PM to 3:00PM ~ St. Michael
Thursdays: 2:00PM to 3:00PM ~ St. Mary
Fridays: 12:00PM to 1:00PM St. Michael
Saturdays: 3:30PM to 4:15PM ~ St. Mary
Sundays 3:30PM to 4:15PM ~ St. Michael
(or anytime by appt. please call parish office)

St. Mary Parish Office

Monday - 8:00AM - 4:30PM
Tuesday - 8:00AM - 4:30PM
Wednesday - 8:00AM - 11:30AM
Thursday - 8:00AM to 4:30PM

St Mary's Mission Statement: *We, the Roman Catholic community of St. Mary's, by our baptism have become the People of God, dedicated to living and proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We are a community built on faith and the sharing of individual talents, abilities and skills for the sake of the Kingdom of God. Empowered by the Holy Spirit and strengthened by prayer and the sacraments, we continue the mission of Jesus to reveal God's presence in all of human life.*

Pastor:

Rev. Michael Hodges / frmhodes@grpriests.org
616.677.3934

For emergency please call: 616.745.1409

Deacon:

Deacon Tom Roberts / troberts@saintmarysmarne.org
616.677.3934

Business Manager:

Todd Kline / businessmanager@saintmarysmarne.org

Parish Secretary:

Cathie VanGessel / secretary@saintmarysmarne.org

Director of Religious Education:

dre@saintmarysmarne.org

Director of R.C.I.A: Jill Brown-616.677.3934

Adult Bible Study: Jill Brown-616.677.3934

Maintenance/Custodian: Jim & Marian Looks: 677.3934

Liturgical Minister:

Gary Karr / 616.677.3934 / gkarr@saintmarysmarne.org

Music Director:

Dr. Bernie Stanko 616.490.3836 /
berniestanko@hotmail.com

Pastoral Council:

Sharon Davis, Vito Dolci, Geary Farrell,
Doug Frantz, Becky Warners,

Finance Council:

Lisa Bradley, Jose Gomez, Scott Lampe,
Mel Northup, Brent Patterson

Martha League: Parish Office: 616.677.3934
(assistance with meals during illness or injury)

Prayer Line:

Parish Office 616.677.3934
or Linda at 677.3269 for evening requests
call Darlene 616.453.0157
or email: bfa1414@yahoo.com

Our Cluster Parish:

St Michael's - 17150 - 88th Avenue
Coopersville, MI 49404
616.384.4026
www.saintmichaels.us

Mass Intentions

Saturday December 9

4:30PM Our Parish Family **MA**
 Sacrament of Reconciliation: 3:30 PM—4:15 PM - St. Mary

Sunday December 10

8:30AM † Chuck Albrecht by Chris Albrecht **MI**
 10:30AM † Monica Zahm by Family **MA**
 4:30PM † Sherman Hecksel by Dave & Lori Hastings **MI**
 Sacrament of Reconciliation: 3:30 PM—4:15 PM - St. Michael

Monday December 11 No Mass

Tuesday December 12

9:00AM Our Parish Family **MA**
 Adoration begins after Mass until 2pm
 Sacrament of Reconciliation: 2:00 PM—3:00 PM - St. Mary

Wednesday December 13

9:00AM † Robert Perea by Carol Perea **MI**
 Adoration begins after Mass until 2pm
 Sacrament of Reconciliation: 2:00 PM—3:00 PM - St. Michael

Thursday December 14

9:00AM Our Parish Family **MA**
 Sacrament of Reconciliation: 2:00 PM—3:00 PM - St. Mary

Friday December 15

9:00AM † Al Spencer by Arlyn & Louann Doornbos **MI**
 Sacrament of Reconciliation: 12:00 PM—1:00 PM - St. Michael

Saturday December 16

4:30PM Our Parish Family **MA**
 Sacrament of Reconciliation: 3:30 PM—4:15 PM - St. Mary

Sunday December 17

8:30AM † John VanDenBrink by The Merlin Steffes Family **MI**
 10:30AM † Betty Ozeimkiewicz by M/M Joe Pulte **MA**
 4:30PM † Carl Goosen by Marcy Goosen **MI**
 Sacrament of Reconciliation: 3:30 PM—4:15 PM - St. Michael

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

Please Note: When there is inclement weather (where Coopersville Public Schools or Kenowa Hills Public Schools are closed) The Parish Offices will be closed and all events scheduled for that day will be cancelled. Daily Mass will also be cancelled. The Mass intention for that day will be rescheduled at our earliest opportunity. Additionally, when a Funeral Mass has been scheduled, Daily Mass will be cancelled

Scripture Readings for the Week of December 10, 2023

Sunday Second Sunday of Advent
 Is 40:1-5, 9-11; Ps 85:9-10, 11-12, 13-14; 2 Pt 3:8-14; Mk 1:1-8

Monday Is 35:1-10; Ps 85:9ab & 10, 11-12, 13-14; Lk 5:17-26

Tuesday Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe
 Zec 2:14-17; Judith 13:18bcde, 19; Lk 1:26-38 or Lk 1:39-47

Wednesday Memorial of Saint Lucy, Virgin and Martyr
 Is 40:25-31; Ps 103: 1-2, 3-4, 8 and 10; Mt 11:28-30

Thursday Memorial of Saint John of the Cross, Priest and Doctor of the Church
 Is 41:13-20; Ps 145:1 and 9, 10-11, 12-13ab; Mt 11:11-15

Friday Is 48:17-19; Ps 1:1-2, 3, 4 and 6; Mt 11:16-19

Saturday Sir 48:1-4, 9-11; Ps 80:2ac and 3b, 15-16, 18-19; Mt 17:9a, 10-13

Sunday Third Sunday of Advent
 Is 61:1-2a, 10-11; Lk 1:46-48, 49-50, 53-54; 1 Thes 5:16-24; Jn 1:6-8, 19-28

St. Michael's Liturgical Ministers

	Dec 17 / 8:30 AM	Dec 17 / 4:30 PM
Altar Servers	Alivia Kosten Hyde Kosten Lauren Meerman	NEED TWO
Eucharistic Ministers	Deacon Tom Joe Hitchings Jeff Johnson Kenny Harker Jennifer DeMull Mark Phillips Debbie Veneklase	Deacon Tom NEED ONE
Lector	Chris Albrecht	Joe LeMieux
Sacristan	Rosemary Weigel	NEED ONE
Ushers	Dave Tronovich Deb Tronovich Wade Lindberg Peter Nielsen	NEED TWO
Music	Craig Bleckley	Craig Bleckley

St. Mary's Liturgical Ministers

	December 16 - 4:30PM	December 17 - 10:30AM
Sacristan	Vito Dolci	Gary Karr
Altar Servers	Kassidy Britt MaKaelyn Britt	Peter Lothschutz Casmir Lothschutz
Precious Body	Deacon Tom Need Two	Deacon Tom Janette Ney Becky Warners
Precious Blood	Geary Farrell Keith Anderson Breton Petrauskas Angie Hanks	Julie Lothschutz Margie Jirous Need Two
Hospitality	Need Four	Anthony Leale Nettie Leale Leonard Horter Need One
Lector	Doug Frantz	John Klein
Music	Bernie Stanko	Bernie Stanko



Cluster News and Community News and Events

This Is My Body: A Call to Eucharistic Revival by Bishop Robert Baron

Thursday, December 14 - 7-8:30PM
ADORATION / HOLY HOUR

will be held prior to the presentation from 6PM-7PM

Fr. Michael Hodges will lead a presentation offering a threefold analysis of the Eucharist as sacred meal, sacrifice, and Real Presence, helping us to understand the sacrament of Jesus' Body and Blood more thoroughly so that they might fall in love with him more completely. Discover the profound truth flowing out of Jesus' words at the Last Supper: "Take, eat; this is my body. . . . Drink from it, all of you; for this is my blood of the covenant."

Books will be provided.. Free Will Offering
Seating is limited to the first 175 people.
Please RSVP to 616.677.3934



Advent Confession Times

Individual Confession Times During Advent-

Come receive the healing power of God

- Tuesdays: 2:00PM to 3:00PM ~ St. Mary
- Wednesdays 2:00PM to 3:00PM ~ St. Michael
- Thursdays: 2:00PM to 3:00PM ~ St. Mary
- Fridays: 12:00PM to 1:00PM St. Michael
- Saturdays: 3:30PM to 4:15PM ~ St. Mary
- Sundays 3:30PM to 4:15PM ~ St. Michael

Advent Family Prayer: God of Love, Your son, Jesus, is your greatest gift to us He is a sign of your love. Help us walk in that love during the weeks of Advent, As we wait and prepare for his coming. We pray in the name of Jesus, our Savior. Amen

- Author Unknown



Please Pray for our Engaged Couples

Julia Delaney & Logan Brouwer

.....April 13, 2024 (Cathedral of St Andrew)

Rachel Berg & Joseph Elenbaas

.....September 21, 2024 (St Mary)

Lord God, the source of all love, the wise plan of your providence has brought these young people together. As they prepare themselves for the sacrament of marriage and pray for your grace, grant that, strengthened by your blessing, they may grow in their respect for one another and cherish each other with a sincere love. We ask this through Christ our Lord, Amen



Fr Mike's Musings



"I want patience and I want it now," or so the joke goes. Fine. But we must remember, the purpose of Advent is to wait. Did you ever stay awake on Christmas Eve as a child and sneak into a hiding place in order to see the Christmas tree being decorated? I surely did. I was impatient. We kids also had big felt stockings hung on each of the doors to our rooms and I remember during the night trying to keep an eye open to see Santa putting goodies into it. Did I keep my eyes open all night? No. I woke in the morning to find a bulging stocking, mysteriously full, having arrived by magic. So, I had gone to sleep instead of patiently spying. Patience is not often a virtue of the young.

Gerard Manley Hopkins, the Jesuit poet, has a poem on patience that speaks to Advent.

Patience, hard thing! The hard thing but to pray, but bid for, patience is! Patience who asks, wants war, wants wounds; weary His times, His tasks; to do without, take tosses, and obey. (Patience is difficult because it grows only in adversity.)

Rare patience roots in these and, these away, Nowhere. Natural heart's -ivy, Patience masks our ruins of wrecked past purpose. There she basks purple eyes and seas of liquid leaves all day.

(Like ivy it gradually covers the failures of our lives with quiet beauty.)

We hear our hearts grate on themselves; it kills to bruise them dearer. Yet the rebellious wills of us we do bid God bend to Him even so.

(Our hearts are like stones chafing on each other, bruising themselves at a greater cost. Yet, we ask God to bend our defiant wills to Him.)

And where is He who more and more distills delicious kindness?—He is patient. Patience fills His crisp combs, and that comes those ways we know. (Comparison of God to the bees who—patiently—fill up honeycombs.)

Our most beloved plans and purposes often come to ruin, just like ancient buildings. But patience resembles beautiful ivy, Hopkins says, gradually spreading its way over the rubble, making it a picture of quiet composure. The phrase, "purple eyes and seas of liquid leaves," doesn't just remind us of how ivy looks, it bathes us in the luxury, the peace and the relief of such a sight. Hopkins portrays patience as "delicious kindness," a honey that fills the combs of our lives. A gift to us.

God's kindness provides us with comfort and also time to prepare—an allowance of days, weeks, years, and even a lifetime—to get ready, to desire, and gradually, along the way, to receive. With patience. Even though infants demand their every wish be granted right now, our adult humanity is simply too deep to get an instant fill-up.

If there were nothing worth waiting for, then patience would be silly. The birth of Christ into this world and into our hearts is well worth the wait. We know that His birth has happened already. But also, in a surprising way, it has not happened at all. We are still uncharitable to our neighbors. We still hide the truth from those who love us. We envy and lust after what is not ours, and there is horrendous evil all around us in this 21st Century. We need the birth of Jesus into our hearts, into the world. And so we bask in the patience of Advent.

St. Mary's & St. Michael's Parishes -National March for Life Trip

Washington DC / January 18-21, 2024

This year's trip is open to all! Let's fill a bus! I will be working with the Right to Life of Grand Rapids as I've done in past years. Any high school-aged students are welcome to join us! I will be coordinating a special side group to ensure a fabulous experience for them. Contact me for special pricing and permission slips.

Schedule: Information Packet with exact information will arrive in January.

Cost: Due upon sign up.

\$ 395 per person – 4 people per room

\$ 440 per person – 3 people per room

\$ 525 per person – 2 people per room

I will coordinate arranging the rooms/requests to share rooms. I can place you in a room with others to reduce your cost. Rate Includes: bus transportation to/from DC, hotel, tip for driver, DC night tour

Deadline to Sign-up/Pay: December 10, 2023

If you are interested contact Sue Smith to sign-up, make payment, or for more information. Cellphone: 616.446.6390 Email: ssmith@jarvishhandling.com

December 10, 2023 ~ The Second Sunday of Advent

St. Mary's Parish News

St Mary Religious Education

Children's Liturgy of the Word (CLW) During 10:30AM Mass.

All children pre-school through 2nd grade are encouraged to join Miss Carmody for an age-appropriate experience of sacred scripture. Children are dismissed after the opening prayer and gather in the community room to hear the readings and reflect on the Gospel. Children return to Mass during the offering.

Religious Education Classes

1st-7th Grade

Wednesdays at Hall / 6:15- 7:30pm

8th Grade -Confirmation Classes

Wednesdays at Hall / 6:15- 7:30pm



Schedule

All Dates / Times are subject to change.

Please watch for updates from your catechist.

Dec. 10 - Children's Liturgy of the Word -CLW

Dec. 13 - **Rel Ed Family Christmas Celebration Begins at 6:15PM**

Dec. 17 - No -CLW- Christmas break.

Dec. 20 - No Rel Ed Classes- Merry Christmas!

Questions or comments:

Please contact the Parish Office. 616.677.3934
or dre@saintmarys.marne.org

Winter Weather Closings

REMINDER: When there is inclement weather (where Coopersville Public Schools or Kenowa Hills Public Schools are closed) The Parish Offices will be closed and all events scheduled for that day will be cancelled. Daily Mass will also be cancelled. The Mass intention for that day will be rescheduled at our earliest opportunity.



Advent Resources

Available at **NO COST** to you in the Narthex.

- "Little BLUE Books" -Six Minute Reflections
- "The Word Among Us" includes Daily Scripture readings and prayers from the Liturgy. Free Mass Supplement, Daily meditations based on the Mass.
- "One Bread Body" - Daily Readings, Prayers and Reflections

Catholic Service Appeal 2023

Thank you for your gifts to 2023 Catholic Services Appeal! Your generous support funds essential diocesan ministries that strengthen us in Christ.

CSA 2023 Pledge Goal: \$51,834.00

Total Pledges Made: \$45,880.00 (89%)

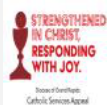
Balance: \$5,954.00

Participation: 120 of 292 Active Households (41%)

Totals as of November 7, 2023

Thank you for your stewardship

Please Note, if we do not reach the parish goal set by the diocese, the shortage will need to come out of our church operating account. Please help us reach our goal and send in your pledge card ASAP. If you have returned your CSA pledge card, thank you!



OCIA

Order of Christian Initiation for Adults

We ask for your prayers for Marissa Barczak who made a public step on December 10 in the Rite of Acceptance and Welcome. She has completed her period of Inquiry and is now a part of the Church in the Order of Catechumens. With your continued prayerful support she will grow in her faith and relationship with God, and our faith community.

Prayer for OCIA Candidates

Lord and God, you know the secrets of our hearts and reward us for the good we do. Look kindly on the efforts and the progress of those who seek to complete their initiation into the Church. Strengthen them on their way; increase their faith and hope; and accept their repentance. Open to them your goodness and justice, and lead them to share in your sacraments on Earth until they finally enjoy your presence in heaven. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.



Knights of Columbus #11581 News

WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A KNIGHT

We are Catholic men who lead, serve, protect and defend. We share a desire to be better husbands, fathers, sons, neighbors and role models and to put charity and community first.

Why you should become a Knight?

If you're interested in helping those in need, serving your parish, growing in your faith or having exclusive access to top-rated insurance protection for your family, then the Knights of Columbus is the organization for you.

To learn more about the Knights of Columbus' activities and what they do to support our parish community, the surrounding area and the world, please contact Grand Knight: Rob Rander at: roblander82@gmail.com or come to a General Membership Meeting. Meetings are held the 1st Thursday of the month at 7:00pm in St Mary's Parish Hall. **Next Meeting - January 4 at 7PM at the Parish Hall.**

Breakfast & Blood Drive - Feb 11, 2024

Register : https://donate.michigan.versiti.org/donor/schedules/drive_schedule/156075



Meal Train for Fr Mike

THANK YOU to everyone that has cooked a meal for Fr Mike. He has appreciated and has been enjoying his homecooked meals. Have you signed up yet? We are starting to book up the new year. It really is as easy as making an extra serving of whatever you are preparing your family for dinner. Put it in a microwavable container and drop it off at the Parish Office on your way to (or home) from work. Or call the office to make special drop off arrangements. (Sign up online: or call the parish office)

<https://www.mealtrain.com/trains/8vv97n>

Giving Back to God ~ Time, Talent & Treasure

Attendance at Mass:	Dec 2/3	4:30PM: 86	10:30AM: 155	Dec 2/3
Adult Contributions				\$5599.43
Children Contributions				\$12.00
Loose Contributions				\$123.00
Capital Improvement				\$835.00
Online Giving				\$2545.00
Total				\$9114.43
Weekly Offertory Needed for Budget				\$5486.13
Budget vs Actual to Date (since July 1)				-\$393.29

Thank you for your continued support and generosity!

St. Mary's Sponsor of the Week

FOX CHEVROLET

foxchevrolet.com ~ 616.891.8104

THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING OUR BULLETIN!

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

St. Michael's Parish News



Scrip News— Thank you to our 12 families who purchased Scrip this week. Our total profit was \$262.43. Last day to order Scrip for Christmas is Dec. 17, no later than 10AM!

St. Michael's Preschool

Have you considered St. Michael's Preschool for your child or grandchild? If not, you should! Come see what a great experience St. Michael's Preschool can provide. Come meet our Director/Teacher, Cindy Lindberg! Preschool meets on MWF from 8:45—11:45 am. For more info, call the Parish Office at 616-384-4026.



St. Michael's Faith Formation

Children's Liturgy of the Word:

program is offered on Sunday during 8:30 Mass. 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. We are called to repent, to turn away from ways of living that are not in right relationship with one another and with God. John the Baptist was the last in a line of prophets calling God's people back to live their lives according to God's mandates. His words are for the people of his time and for us today.



Elementary Faith Formation: The elementary program is for students in grades 1-5. We meet on Wednesday from 6:15- 7:30 pm.

Middle School Faith Formation: Grades 6, 7 and 8 will meet on Sundays after the 8:30 am Mass from 9:45 to 11:15 in the Youth Room. The 8th Grade students will also receive Confirmation Preparation.

The Giving Tree: Thank you to all of St. Michael's parishioners who so generously donate to our giving tree. Your help in supporting Coopersville Cares is greatly appreciated. May God bless you as you have blessed others. Merry Christmas!



St. Michael's Parish Family

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



St. Michael's Sanctuary Lamp

for Carl Goosen
by Marcy Goosen

Photo Directory — If you haven't already turned in your family photo for our directory, please do so ASAP. You may email a photo to: secretary@saintmichaels.us or call the office (616) 384.4026 to schedule a time to stop in and have a simple photo taken by Beki. It is not too late to take part, and we want all to be included!

Thank You — We wish to thank Fr. Mike, Msgr. Lou, Deacon Tom, Kevin Kilpatrick, Craig Bleckley, the musicians and Eucharistic Ministers for the beautiful Mass in honor of our mom, Winnie. Thank you to Dennis Zimmer for leading the rosary at the visitation. A special thank you to the members of St. Michael's parish for their prayers for mom these past three years. We so appreciated them. Our family wishes to thank all those who donated food and served the funeral luncheon. Winnie would have been so proud of you, and it was delicious.

Thank you and God Bless you,
The Spencer Family

Decorating for Christmas —

Due to Christmas Eve falling on the Fourth Sunday of Advent this year, we will be decorating the church for our Christmas Masses after the 8:30 AM Mass on Sunday, December 24. If you are able, please come to help out. There will be much to do in a short amount of time.



Giving Back to God

December 3, 2023

Adult Envelopes	\$4,486.00
Loose Cash	\$327.00
Children's Envelopes	\$14.00
Holy Day	\$5.00
Total	\$4,832.00
Building Fund	\$165.00
Endowment Fund	\$20.00

Thank you for your continued support!

December 10, 2023 ~ Second Sunday of Advent

View this bulletin online at www.DiscoverMass.com

Openness to Change: Blessed Are Those Who Mourn

Any new beginning means accepting change. Growth presupposes change. And any acceptance of Jesus Christ—or any deeper, more fulfilling acceptance of him—takes place in an act of simultaneously opening and delivering ourselves to change.

When John the Baptizer appeared on the scene “proclaiming a baptism of repentance,” he was preaching change. He was saying that only change can “lead to the forgiveness of sins.” And only change can lead us deeper into relationship with Jesus Christ. Only change can free us from what holds us back from the fullness of life. Only change can open us to the clarity his light gives to our lives, to the joy his love brings to individuals and families, to working days and weekends. Only change can make peace possible in the world. Change is the price we pay for life.

The strange thing is that we fear change more than pain! Psychologists say that animals will change their habits rather than endure pain, but humans won't. I heard this in a class and did not believe it. Years later I asked a practicing psychologist about it, who said, “I see that every day!”

“People will endure the pain of an unsatisfying marriage for years rather than open themselves to changes by seeking counseling.” Many people prefer to endure physical pain as long as they can instead of seeing a doctor and perhaps having to adapt to an unknown diagnosis or treatment. How many times have we all chosen to put up with some pain or dissatisfaction we are used to rather than take the risk of making a major change in our lives?

*Only change can make
peace possible*

DECEMBER 10, 2023

2ND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Isaiah 40:1-5, 9-11; 2 Peter 3:8-14;
Mark 1:1-8

What is behind this is fear of the unknown; fear of facing something we do not want to face; fear of knowing something we do not want to know; fear of a challenge we may not want to meet. We make a proverb of the ostrich who buries his head in the ground at the approach of danger in order to feel safe, but we do the same thing. We “put our heads under the pillow” by burying ourselves in distractions: in TV or social media, in work, in talking with others, in anything that blocks out the questions we do not want to hear, the options we do not want to think about. We

make sure we do not have time to pray.

That is why the spiritual life is always, in some sense and to some degree, a call to “go out into the desert.” There are voices that cry in the desert—voices like that of John proclaiming the good news of change, the good news of repentance and “life to the full.” Voices that cannot be heard in the “city,” where there are bright lights to blind us and street bustle to deafen us and idols available to take the place of God.

When Jesus says, “Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted,” he is inviting us to go out into



the desert, to listen to the voices we think we do not want to hear, to open ourselves to that wind of change which is the gentle breeze or the roaring tornado of the Holy Spirit. He is saying, "Look at those things you are afraid of, think the thoughts you are suppressing, face the pain, the dissatisfaction in your life: there is a solution!" Blessed are those who face all the things they have to mourn, for they—and they alone—will find peace, will find comfort, will find joy.

This is not just good psychological advice. The promise of Jesus is not based on the good, homey wisdom that it is better to face reality than to bury your head in the sand. The assurance of comfort Jesus gives is a promise he makes only because "the reign of God is at hand." Jesus does not say just because we face our problems everything will be all right.

He says that redemption, deliverance, healing, the fullness of life is at hand; that all this is present in our world now, is offered—he offers it. There is comfort for those who face the truth of this world only if they believe in the truth of Christ.

And even then, only for those of us who are willing to open ourselves to change.

REFLECTING ON THIS WEEK'S GOSPELS

Second Week of Advent

***Pray daily:** Lord, you came that we might have life and have it to the full. Teach me to look clearly at what diminishes my life, believing that through interaction with you all things can be turned into good.*

Monday: Luke 5:17-26. Some men brought on a stretcher a man who was paralyzed. When Jesus saw their faith, he said, "Friend, your sins are forgiven you." Would you have preferred to hear these words or "Stand up and walk!"? Why? What afflicts you more: sickness, failure, or distance from Christ?

Tuesday: Matthew 18:12-14. "If a shepherd has a hundred sheep and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the 99 on the mountains and go in search of

the one that went astray?" What do you feel is most missing in your life? How are you going in search of it?

Wednesday: "Take my yoke upon you and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls." What is the difference between taking Christ's yoke and learning from him? Which are you more conscious of doing?

Thursday: Matthew 11:11-15. "Let anyone with ears listen!" What is the difference between hearing Jesus' words and listening? Which do you do most often during Mass?

Friday: Matthew 11:16-19. "We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; / we wailed, and you did not mourn." When have you reacted with feeling to something Jesus said? What seems to influence your reaction?

Saturday: Matthew 17:10-13. "Elijah has already come, and they did not recognize him, but they did to him whatever they pleased ... Then the disciples understood that he was speaking to them about John the Baptist." Are there things you have come to see in the Gospels that you did not understand before? Is this because you changed?

LIVING THIS WEEK'S GOSPELS

As Christian: At the end of each day this week, look back and pick one thing that Jesus would want you to mourn over and one thing he would want you to rejoice in.

As Disciple: Try to think of some words or examples of Jesus that cast light on what you mourn over and what you rejoice in.

As Prophet: Visibly express in some way your mourning or your rejoicing each day. Try to express the Christian reason for it.

As Priest: Comfort someone who is mourning.

As King: Try to change one source of annoyance, anger, discouragement or sadness in the environment where you live or work.

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