

Saint Mary's Church

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

December 31, 2023 ~ The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph



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 / frmhodges@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 30 - The Holy Family of Jesus Mary, Joseph

4:30PM † Winnie Spencer by M/M Jim Harlett..... **MA**
Sacrament of Reconciliation: 3:30 PM—4:15 PM - St Mary

Sunday December 31 - The Holy Family of Jesus Mary, Joseph

8:30AM † Edna Schumaker by Pam Raczkiwicz **MI**
10:30AM † Lyle Lothschutz by Mary Lothschutz..... **MA**

Sunday December 31 - The Solemnity of Mary, Holy Mother of God

4:30PM † Carl Goosen by Dave & Pat Goosen **MI**
Sacrament of Reconciliation: 3:30 PM—4:15 PM - St Michael

Monday January 1 - The Solemnity of Mary, Holy Mother of God

8:30AM Our Parish Family **MI**
10:30AM Our Parish Family **MA**

Tuesday January 2 - No Mass/No Adoration/No Confessions

Wednesday January 3

9:00AM † Bev Hehl by Dennis & Rita Zimmer **MI**
Adoration begins after Mass until 2pm
Sacrament of Reconciliation: 2:00 PM—3:00 PM - St. Michael

Thursday January 4

9:00AM Our Parish Family **MA**

Friday January 5

9:00AM † Jamie Thomas by Carol Perea **MI**

Saturday January 6

4:30PM † Ross Schoenborn by M/M Stan Schoenborn **MA**
Sacrament of Reconciliation: 3:30 PM—4:15 PM - St Mary

Sunday January 7

8:30AM † Rich Marshall by Dick & Kathie Poelma **MI**
10:30AM † Our Parish Family **MA**
4:30PM NO MASS **MI**

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

Scripture Readings For the Week of December 31, 2023

Sunday **Feast of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph**
Sir 3:2-6, 12-14 or Gn 15:1-6, 21:1-3; Ps 128:1-2, 3, 4-5 or Ps 105:1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 8-9; Col 3:12-21 or 3:12-17 or Heb 11:8, 11-12, 17-19; Lk 2: 22-40

Monday **Solemnity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of God**
Nm 6:22-27; Ps 67:2-3, 5, 6, 8; Gal 4:4-7; Lk 2:16-21

Tuesday **Memorial of Saints Basil the Great and Gregory Nazianzen, Bishops and Doctors of the Church**
1 Jn 2:22-28; Ps 98:1, 2-3ab, 3cd-4; Jn 1:19-28

Wednesday **Memorial of the Most Holy Name of Jesus**
1 Jn 2:29-3:6; Ps 98:1, 3cd-4, 5-6; Jn 1:29-34

Thursday **Memorial of Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton, Religious**
1 Jn 3:7-10; Ps 98:1, 7-8, 9; Jn 1:35-42

Friday **Memorial of Saint John Neumann, Bishop**
1 Jn 3:11-21; Ps 100; 1b-2, 3, 4, 5; Jn 1:43-51

Saturday **Memorial of Saint André Bessette, Religious**
1 Jn 5:5-13; Ps 147:12-13, 14-15, 19-20; Mk 1:7-11 or Lk 3:23-38 or Lk 3:23, 31-34, 36, 38

Sunday **The Epiphany of the Lord**
Is 60:1-6; Ps 72:1-2, 7-8, 10-11, 12-13; Eph 3:2-3a, 5-6; Mt 2:1-12

St. Michael's Liturgical Ministers

	Jan 7 / 8:30 AM	Jan 7 / 4:30 PM
Altar Servers	Lauren Meerman Kenzie Harker	NO MASS
Eucharistic Ministers	Deacon Tom Rosemary Weigel Kenny Harker Cindy Lindberg Peter Nielsen Jennie Taylor NEED ONE	NO MASS
Lector	Kevin Schumaker	NO MASS
Sacristan	Jane Vitunskas	NO MASS
Ushers	Dave Tronovich Deb Tronovich Ed Irwin Mary Bueche	NO MASS
Music	Craig Bleckley	NO MASS

St. Mary's Liturgical Ministers

	January 6 - 4:30PM	January 7 - 10:30AM
Sacristan	Need One	Gary Karr
Altar Servers	Isaac Patterson Lucas Patterson	Lauren LeMieux Ty Ricord
Precious Body	Vito Dolci Keith Anderson Mary Kirkwood	Deacon Tom Becky Warners Margie Jirous
Precious Blood	Sara Patterson Geary Farrell Breton Petruskas Need One	Marian Looks Jim Looks Janette Ney Christina Withers
Hospitality	Jeff Schneider Need Three	Anthony Leale Nettie Leale Leonard Horter Need One
Lector	Nicolette Looks	Rita Carmody
Music	Bernie Stanko	Bernie Stanko

Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph

The Feast of the Holy Family celebrates the human family unit, as well as the ultimate family unit: Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. The feast is usually celebrated on the Sunday after Christmas. The Holy Family feast is a good time to remember the family unit and pray for our human and spiritual families. We also may take this feast to reflect on the value and sanctity of the family unit, and to evaluate our own family life. What ways may it be improved? What would Jesus, Mary, and Joseph do? Finally, we can use this feast to ask ourselves what are we doing to promote the family within our own cultures, neighborhoods, and communities.

Holy Family Prayer

God, who were pleased to give us the shining example of the Holy Family, graciously grant that we may imitate them in practicing the virtues of family life and in the bonds of charity, and so, in the joy of your house, delight one day in eternal rewards. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen



Exploring Priesthood Discernment Meetings

Discernment is a time of obtaining spiritual guidance and understanding. If you are considering the priesthood, the Diocese of Grand Rapids invites you to meet with other young men (ages 16+) to gather and discern God's will for your life.

Meetings will take place from 12:30-1:30 p.m. at St. Stephen Parish, 750 Gladstone Dr. S.E., East Grand Rapids and are offered on the following Sundays in 2024: **Jan. 28, Feb. 18, March 10, and April 21.** Just show up or email Pattie Reynolds, preynolds@grdiocese.org, to RSVP. Questions? Contact Father Stephen Durkee, director of priestly vocations, sdurkee@grdiocese.org.

Discerning the Diaconate Meetings

Is God calling you to discern a vocation to become a deacon? The Office of Diaconate Formation invites men with interest or questions about discernment and formation to an informational session.

Pick a session that works best for you.

Meetings are from 6:30 – 8:30 p.m.

-Jan. 8, 2024, at Cathedral Square Center, 360 Division Ave. S., Grand Rapids

-March 11, 2024, at Christ the King Catholic Church, 9596 Reed Rd., Howard City

-May 6, 2024, at Cathedral Square Center, 360 Division Ave. S., Grand Rapids

To RSVP or learn more, contact Dcn. Jerry Roersma, director of diaconate formation, at

616-288-0913 or jroersma@GRdiocese.org

Nine Men to be Ordained Permanent Deacons for the Diocese of Grand Rapids

We invite you to celebrate with us as nine men begin their life of service as permanent deacons in the Diocese of Grand Rapids. Bishop Walkowiak will ordain the men on Saturday, January 13 at 10 a.m.

You are welcome to attend the ordination Mass in person at the Cathedral of Saint Andrew or join the livestream on the diocesan website (GRdiocese.org) or Facebook page (Diocese of Grand Rapids).

Read more about the men in your Jan./Feb. issue of FAITH Grand Rapids magazine in print or online. Please pray for our newest deacons as they prepare for ordination and begin their ministry in the diocese.

St Vincent De Paul Building Corp. Annual Mixed Doubles Euchre Parties.

January 6, January 27 & February 17

Registration starts at 6:30PM

Play starts at 7PM Sharp

St Vincent Dr Paul Haul - 21130 32nd Ave, Conklin

\$20.00 per Team

Adult Beverages Available,

Complimentary Popcorn

Cash Prizes for 1st, 2nd

and 3rd Place.

50/50 Basket Raffles

Ages 18 and Up.

Register at the Door.



Fr Mike's Musings

At this time of year when families are reunited and as we celebrate the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, we reflect on what it is to be a family. The family is the basic unit of society and the Church. It is in the family that we first learn to communicate, and that we learn what is good and bad. It is in the family that we learn what love is because it is in the family that we first receive love. It is in the family that we first learn to forgive and to pray. It is in the family that we first learn about God and Jesus and Our Lady. It is in the family that we learn to value ourselves and to value everything else, picking up our values from what is said and unsaid by our parents. Our family forms us for many years to come. The future of humanity depends on the family because it is through a family that we all come.

Is our family fulfilling God's plan for our family? We desire our families to be the best possible families for our children so that they get the best possible start in life. It is important to reflect on how our family fulfills God's plan because the family we grow up in influences us for the rest of our lives. When families reflect God's plan, they are mighty. What is God's plan for the family?

"Have you not read that the Creator from the beginning made them male and female and that he said: This is why a man leaves his father and mother and becomes attached to his wife, and the two become one flesh? They are no longer two therefore, but one flesh. So then, what God has united, human beings must not divide." (Matthew 19:4-6) These are very clear words about God's plan for the family. It is a man and woman who become one flesh and what God has united man must not divide.

In the Letter to the Ephesians, we read that husbands are to love their wives as much as Christ loved the Church (Ephesians 5:25). How much did Jesus love the Church? He loved the Church so much that He died for the Church. That is how much husbands are to love their wives; husbands are to love their wives as Christ loved the Church. Husbands are to love their wives as much as they love themselves.

What about parents and children? Again, Ephesians states: *"Children be obedient to your parents in the Lord—that is what uprightness demands."* (Ephesians 6:1) Do children always love their parents as they should? Or have devolved to the point of where the command is reversed and parents are expected to obey their children. The passage goes on to say, *"Parents, never drive your children to resentment"* (Ephesians 6:4) So, according to scripture the familial relationship is to be one of cooperation, "give-and-take", rather than one of strict obedience and subservience.

If our families are to be families reflecting God's plan, then they will also be families that put God first. Can we turn off the TV every night to pray together as a family? If faith in God is not what motivates a family, that family is starting-off at a disadvantage. Let us put Jesus in the center of our families: *"Let the message of Christ in all its richness find a home with you."* (Colossians 3:16)



The Solemnity of Mary, The Holy Mother of God

Sunday, December 31

4:30PM ~ St. Michael - Fr. Mike

Monday, January 1

8:30AM ~ St. Michael - Fr. Mike

10:30AM ~ St. Mary - Fr. Mike

Liturgical Ministers are needed for The Solemnity of Mary Masses.

Sign up Sheets are Posted in the Narthex.

O God, who through the fruitful virginity of Blessed Mary bestowed on the human race the grace of eternal salvation, grant, we pray, that we may experience the intercession of her, through whom we were found worthy to receive the author of life, our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son. Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever." Amen



Meal Train for Fr Mike

Looking for a New Year's resolution? How about cooking an occasional meal for Fr Mike?? 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. Scheduling now for the 2024 (Sign up online: or call the parish office) <https://www.mealtrain.com/trains/8vv97n>

St. Mary's Parish News

St Mary Religious Education

Children's Liturgy of the Word (CLW)

During 10:30AM Mass.

There is No Children's Liturgy of the Word on Sunday December 31.

CLW will resume on January 7, 2024.

Enjoy this special time with your family!

Religious Education Classes

1st-7th Grade

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

8th Grade -Confirmation Classes

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

Will be on Christmas/New Years break.

Classes will resume on January 10.

May the peace and joy of Christ be with you all on This special day and throughout the upcoming year. May God bless you and your family with a very Merry Christmas!

Questions or comments:

Please contact the Parish Office. 616.677.3934 or dre@saintmarysmarne.org

Winter Weather Closings

When there is inclement weather and 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.

Warming Drive

Our Lady of Fatima Guild will be having a warming drive during the month of January. Warm Hats, socks, gloves/mittens, scarves and GENTLY used coats will be collected to donate to In the Image, Mel Trotter Ministries and Coopersville Cares. A collection box will be in the Narthex. Thank you for your support.



Save the Date - Feb 10, 2024

The St Mary Valentine Dinner and Dance is back... Watch the bulletin for more details and ticket information.



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: \$46,280.00 (90%)

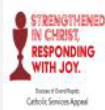
Balance: \$5,554.00

Participation: 121 of 292 Active Households (42%)

Totals as of December 18, 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. card,



Happy New Year ~ 2024

Wishing Our Saint Mary's Parish Friends and Family a very Happy New Year! May it be filled with Peace, Joy and Blessings. From all of us on the Parish Staff:

Fr Mike, Deacon Tom, Gary, Todd, Debbie, Jim, Marian and Cathie

A New Year's Prayer: Lord, You make all things new.

You bring hope alive in our hearts and cause our Spirits to

be born again. Thank you for this new year, For all the potential it holds. Come and kindle in us a mighty flame, So that in our time, many will see the wonders of God and live forever to praise Your glorious name. Amen



Parish Office Holiday Hours

The Parish Office will be Closed Dec 25 - Jan 2

For EMERGENCIES please call: 1.616.745.1409



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.

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: robrander82@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.

SAVE THE DATE! Breakfast & Blood Drive - Feb 4, 2024

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



Knight Person of the Month for December - Bruce Kamp

Knight Family of the Month for December - Deacon Tom & Cindy Roberts

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!



Giving Back to God ~ Time, Talent & Treasure

Attendance at Mass: Dec 16/17 4:30PM: 89 10:30AM: 156	Dec 16/17
Adult Contributions	\$5254.15
Children Contributions	\$18.20
Loose Contributions	\$147.00
Capital Improvement	
Online Giving	\$820.00
Total	\$6239.35
Weekly Offertory Needed for Budget	n/a
Budget vs Actual to Date (since July 1)	n/a

Christmas & Holy Day Collections will be updated Next Week

Thank you for your continued support and generosity!

St. Mary's Sponsor of the Week

CONTRACT ELECTRIC CO. INC.

Residential & Commercial ~ 59 Years in Business ~ 616.784.2393

THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING OUR BULLETIN!

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

View this bulletin online at www.DiscoverMass.com

St. Michael's Parish News



Scrip News— Scrip totals will be updated next week.

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. **CLW will be on break until January 14, 2024. May your family share special moments celebrating the New Year!**



Elementary Faith Formation: The elementary program is for students in grades 1-5. We meet on Wednesday from 6:15- 7:30 pm. **Elementary faith Formation is on Christmas break and will resume on January 10, 2024. Have a safe and blessed Christmas Season!**

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. **Middle School Faith Formation will be on Christmas break and will resume on January 14, 2024 May you and your family experience the true meaning of Christmas and keep it with you throughout the New Year!**

CSA 2023 — Thank you for your gifts to 2023 Catholic Services Appeal! Your generous support funds essential diocesan ministries that strengthen us in Christ. Our parish goal for 2023 is \$59,280.00 and 100% participation, which means every parishioner should return their pledge card. To date, we have pledged \$43,875 (or 74.01%) toward our goal. We still have \$15,405.00 to go to reach this goal. If you haven't already contributed, please consider doing so before the end of the year. Please continue to pray for the success of this important effort.

For 2023 charitable deductions and tax credits, the IRS has ruled that charitable gifts are deductible only in the year the organization received the donation. To be considered a charitable donation for 2023, the deadline has passed to turn them into the office. Mailed contributions must have a Dec. 31, 2023 postmark.

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!

Coffee and Donut Servers Needed!

Please sign up in the family center. Contact the parish office with ?'s or to volunteer to be scheduled on a monthly or bi-monthly basis. There are complete instructions posted in the kitchen if you are a new server.



Giving Back to God

December 17, 2023

Adult Envelopes	\$3,521.00
Loose Cash	
Children's Envelopes	
Holy Day	\$25.00
Total	\$3,867.00
Buildings	.00
Assistance	\$1,555.00
Christmas Memorial Flowers	\$395.00
Retirement for Religious	\$245.00
Thank you for your continued support!	

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.



Portrait of a Family: Blessed Are the Merciful

It seems strange to us that a woman would have to be “purified” after childbirth; even stranger, perhaps, that the reason behind this Jewish law was the fact that birth involves the shedding of blood (see Leviticus 12:1-8).

Isn't it true, however, that blood is always a sign to us that something is wrong? We associate blood with sickness, pain and death—none of which God wanted in his world (see Genesis 3:16-19; Romans 5:12-6:23). It is reasonable, then, that whenever blood becomes visible (or hurt, or sin, or death), God would require some visible act of response on our part to “make sense” out of what does not make sense: to integrate into the universe something that does not belong there. And what is it that gives a value, a role in human life to blood and pain? It is sacrifice. In her blood a woman gives life to a child. In his blood Jesus gave life to the world.

Through our blood—the sacrifices we make in love—we give life to one another.

Did God require a ritual sacrifice every time blood was shed in order to teach us that blood and pain are purified of meaninglessness only through sacrifice? The pain we transform into love becomes the wine of the wedding feast. The “hour” of our redemption is the moment when blood is poured out as wine, and the wine is a pledge of love (see John 2:1-11).

This is how priesthood and marriage are one: they are both dedications to giving life through the offering of ourselves. This offering has as its goal the formation of communities of grace. Matrimony is a consecration to forming Christian community in the home; Holy Orders on the level of the local Church. Together they are the sign that the world can be redeemed if we radically offer ourselves to be united in love.

DECEMBER 31, 2023

THE HOLY FAMILY

Sirach 3:2-6, 12-14; Colossians 3:12-21;
Luke 2:22-40

*In his blood Jesus
gave life to the world*

Today's Gospel story combines two themes: purification from blood and the presentation/consecration of a firstborn child to God. Because God delivered the Jews from slavery by sacrificing every firstborn son in Egypt, every firstborn male in Israel belonged to God and had

to be “bought back.” This was done in two ways: by an offering, and by the consecration of the Levites (Numbers 18:16, 8:16). Of them God said, “I have taken them for myself in place of every firstborn.” The tribe of Levi, then, was “sacrificed”

(“made sacred,” set aside) for priestly service as a sign that they were taken by God in place of firstborn sons.

In Jesus, both themes come together. As firstborn he was consecrated for our redemption (see 1 Corinthians 15:20 ff. and John 17:19). As Priest he overcame sin and death by offering his blood on the cross as the wine of the wedding feast to bring the world together into unity in love.

The Church combines both themes, not only in this one Gospel story, but by celebrating the Purification of Mary and the Presentation of Jesus as one feast (February 2). And by selecting this Gospel for the feast of the Holy Family, the Church calls our attention to the connection there is between the same two themes in fami-



ly life. Every Christian family is a community of people consecrated to the Lord as priests and dedicated to redeeming the whole human race through the offering of themselves—of their blood and pain and sacrifices—in love.

The Levites were offered in place of the firstborn of Israel only. But every Christian baptized into the priesthood of Christ is offered, as Jesus was, to “buy back” every other member of the human race. And the way we live out this offering is by trying to bring about that community—that oneness of all people with each other and with God—which Jesus came to accomplish (see Ephesians 1:10). Christian families exist not just to take care of one another, but to offer, to “sacrifice” themselves to bring about unity in the whole human race. When Jesus teaches, “Blessed are the merciful” (those who help others out of a sense of relatedness), he is calling us to be one family on earth: to consecrate and offer ourselves for this.

REFLECTING ON THIS WEEK'S GOSPELS

***Pray daily:** Lord, by taking flesh in Mary you made her the Mother of God. By continuing your life and mission in me you have made me the Body of Christ. Join me to you in mind and heart and desire. Amen.*

January 1: Luke 2:16-21. “The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen.” How do you praise and glorify God in your life? How do you spread the Good News to others?

January 2: John 1:19-28. “This is the testimony given by John when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, ‘Who are you?’ he confessed and did not deny it, but confessed, ‘I am not the Messiah.’” Would you answer in the same way? Is Jesus continuing his work as Messiah in you? How?

January 3: John 1:29-34. John said, “The one who sent me to baptize with water said to me, ‘He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.’” Has the Holy Spirit come down on you? Does he remain with you? How does the power of the Spirit show itself in what you do?

January 4: Wednesday: John 1:35-42. “Andrew first found his brother Simon and said to him, ‘We have found the Messiah’ (which is translated ‘Anointed’). He brought Simon to Jesus, who looked at him and said, ‘You are Simon, son of John. You are to be called Cephas’ (which is translated Peter).” When were you first brought to Jesus? What did he say to you? Did he give you a name? A mission? What is it?

January 5: John 1:43-51. Nathanael said to Philip, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” Philip said to him, “Come and see.” Do you think anything good can come of you? How good? Why?

January 6: Mark 1:7-11. This is what John proclaimed: “One who is more powerful than I is coming after me. I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thongs of his sandals. I have baptized you with water; he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.” When were you baptized with the Holy Spirit? What effect did it have on you? How is that visible in your life?

LIVING THIS WEEK'S GOSPELS

As Christian: See how you feel saying to yourself, “I am the body of Christ. I am the embodied presence of Jesus in the world.”

As Disciple: Read Romans, chapter 12. Relate what you read to yourself.

As Prophet: Examine your room, your home, your workplace. Is there anything visible that is unworthy of the body of Christ?

As Priest: At the Eucharist, offer yourself in Christ and with Christ as his Body. Think of what it means to be offered with him as a “living sacrifice” for the life of the world in everything you do all day.

As King: Notice the living conditions in the parts of town you drive through. Are they worthy of the body of Christ? What about the environment where you work? What do you see in your city which is unworthy of the body of Christ? What can you do about it?

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