

**DECEMBER  
2024**



**VOICE OF  
ST. MARY'S**

*Parish Newsletter*

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**CHRISTMAS MASSES**

*Christmas Eve  
4pm & 8pm*

*Christmas Day  
7am & 9:30am*



**HOLY DAY OF OBLIGATION**

**SOLEMNITY OF  
MARY, MOTHER  
OF GOD**

**Masses will be offered at  
the following times:  
December 31 at 6:00pm  
January 1 at 9:30am**

**Wishing all our  
parishioners a  
Very Merry Christmas  
and a Blessed New Year!**

**Thank you for your  
generosity to our church,  
school and food pantry  
this season and  
throughout the year.**





As I stare outside, looking at the beautiful snow-covered landscape of St. Meinrad Seminary in Indiana, it seemed like a perfect time to send my Christmas message for the parishioners of St. Mary's Parish. We welcome Fr. David Whiteside as our new Parochial Vicar serving my four parishes. What a way to start his first week with me being on retreat. His experience, humility and joy will be a powerful addition to our parishes. Welcome Fr. Whiteside!

I just finished praying and celebrating Mass with the Monks of St. Meinrad. It is my first retreat at a monastery/seminary. It was a beautiful way to begin my retreat. It also is helping me reflect on my Advent journey, preparing myself for celebrating Jesus' remarkable sacrifice of leaving heaven, becoming a helpless child, and trusting in us humans to take care of Him as a child to become the Savior of the world. As we ponder the Christmas story, let us remember the trust that God had

in us to send His Son into this imperfect world, made imperfect by sin.

God's hope in us is truly evident in this amazing Christmas Story! Let us not lose hope ourselves! May this Advent journey be a reminder to us of how God trusted in His human creatures, especially Mary and Joseph, who prayed to God, who listened to God and acted out the Will of God to finish the Christmas Story in Bethlehem.

The parishioners of our parishes are called during this Advent season to live out the Christmas story in our own way. We are to pray to God, listen to God and do the Will of God by our learning to be obedient to the Will of God and live the message of the Christmas story. As we journey ourselves to Bethlehem, let's grow in holiness, growing in the increase of God's Grace given to us in the Sacraments, especially the Eucharist and Reconciliation. Surrender to God's Grace so you can become the imitation of Jesus Christ and share that gift to someone so they may become a child of God!

Have a Holy and Joyful Advent/Christmas journey!

*Fr. David*



I was born in Peoria the youngest of 10 children. Like every family we grew up with certain Christmas traditions. Each year growing up in my home I was given the privilege of arranging the beautiful ceramic nativity figures made by my mother in our small, simple, wooden stable. The shepherd, the angel, the wisemen and the animals were placed in different spots from year to year depending on what "inspiration" I had received, but the baby Jesus, Mary and Joseph were always placed in the same spot, right in the center of the stable, with the other figures arranged around the Holy Family. As a child I instinctively knew that Jesus, Mary and Joseph were the most important part of the story and so they must be placed at the center of it all.

As Catholics, it is obvious that Jesus, the Son of God, our Savior and Redeemer, should be at the center of our lives. A personal, intimate relationship with Him is indispensable for salvation and for peace and happiness in our lives. As Catholics, we also know how important our Blessed Mother Mary is to our faith and our relationship to Jesus. Being the holiest creature that God ever created by virtue of her Immaculate Conception, in view of her exalted vocation as Mother of the Savior and our own spiritual mother, bringing us closer to her Son through her powerful prayers and heavenly intercession, we can quickly recognize how central Mary is to our spiritual lives as well. But what about St. Joseph? How central ought he to be in our lives? Does he truly merit to be at the center of the stable too? Or should he be standing back, off-center, along with the shepherd, the cow, and the donkey in the Christmas creche?

I think all of us instinctively know that he ought to be at the center, but we may not know why. Is it just because he is a part of the Holy Family? Well, in a way, yes, but let me explain further. Like Mary, St. Joseph was a very integral part in the life of Jesus and in the Divine Plan to save the world. Therefore, like Mary, he too had to be endowed with an abundance of special graces to fulfill his role as foster-father and guardian of the Redeemer. Because of his close relationship with Jesus and his exalted vocation, we believe that after Mary, St. Joseph is the person most endowed with grace, and after Mary, the holiest creature that God ever created. So, yes, it is because he is part of the Holy Family, and therefore super holy, that he deserves to be at the center of the stable, but not only at the center of the stable. Like Jesus and Mary, St. Joseph should be at the center of our spiritual life as well.

One of our most important Carmelite saints, St. Teresa of Avila (1515-1582) had first-hand experience of the importance and powerful intercession of St. Joseph. As a young and new Carmelite nun, Teresa found herself gravely ill and ended up completely paralyzed for three years. Her patient endurance amazed the other nuns in the convent. After those three years she had only improved slightly. Bound and determined not to give up on her life, one day with all the strength she could muster, she forced herself to get out of her bed falling to the floor and proceeded to crawl at a snail's pace. She wanted to be healed, but the doctors declared her to be incurable, so she decided to ask St. Joseph to intercede for her to the Lord. She suddenly felt in her body that she could stand up. Miraculously, she slowly stood up, found her balance, and walked as easily as if she had never been ill. From this point on, St. Joseph was a central part of her spiritual life. She writes in her autobiography that St. Joseph always helped her in all her needs, helped her to grow in virtue and helped her obtain a deeper interior life of prayer with the Lord. In her autobiography, she begs everyone to experience these things for themselves and to trust in the powerful intercession of St. Joseph. This year when we arrange the nativity scene in our home, let's remember that St. Joseph should not only be at the center of the creche, but also at the center of our spiritual lives as well. Good St. Joseph, pray for us!

*Fr. Whiteside*



Please join us for our monthly Holy Hour to specifically pray for Vocations within our church and community. We will gather at 6:30pm in the church. The Holy Hour will include time for quiet prayer

in front of the Blessed Sacrament, group prayers for Vocations, and will conclude with Benediction.

Dates for the Holy Hours will be:

December 19 January 16 February 20 March 20

Our diocese and our world need many good, holy priests and consecrated men and women, in addition to faithful marriages, to continue God's mission on this earth. Please join us to pray for all vocations.



We have some amazing updates and opportunities for the youth of St. Mary's that will help deepen their faith and create lasting memories! We invite all 8th graders through high school seniors to join us for an inspiring season of prayer, service, and fellowship.

**Youth Group Meetings – Join Us for Fellowship!**

Our Youth Group will be meeting upstairs in the Parish Center on **December 22nd!** These gatherings are a wonderful opportunity to come together, build relationships, and grow in faith. Whether you're new or have been part of the group for a while, we'd love to see you there!

**Gonzaga Retreat – Don't Miss This!**

Our annual high school retreat, **Gonzaga XIII**, will be taking place right here at St. Mary's! This retreat, for **8th graders through high school seniors**, is a chance to retreat from the busy world and grow closer to Christ. The retreat will start at **10:00 AM on January 4th** and conclude on **January 5th at 3:00 PM**. The cost is just **\$25** to attend, and applications are available in the back vestibule of church. It's a time of renewal, prayer, and personal growth—don't miss out!

**Steubenville Conference – Only 2 Spots Left!**

We are thrilled to announce that our group is all set to attend the **Steubenville Youth Conference** in Joliet, IL, from **June 25-27!** This powerful retreat will help our youth grow in their relationship with Christ. **We have only 2 spots left**, so if you or a friend are interested in joining us, now is the time to sign up!

**Catholic Heart Workcamp – We're In!**

In more exciting news, we've been moved off the waitlist for the **Catholic Heart Workcamp** and are now officially attending this transformative service camp in **North Haldren, NJ**, from **July 21-25, 2025!** This camp provides the perfect opportunity for our youth to serve others while deepening their own faith. The Holy Spirit is truly at work in the hearts of our beloved youth, and we can't wait for these experiences to come to life!

For more information about any of these exciting opportunities, please reach out to **Jamie Woolford** at [woolford.jamie@stmaryspontiac.org](mailto:woolford.jamie@stmaryspontiac.org). Thank you for your ongoing support of our high school youth. By investing in them, we are helping to form the next generation of leaders who will go on to make a positive difference in the world and, most importantly, point others toward heaven. **St. Gonzaga, pray for us!**



**Come watch Season 4 of THE CHOSEN before the next season debuts in April. Every Wednesday evening from January 8 - February 26 at 6:30pm\* in the parish hall. One episode per night.**

**\*St. Mary's Youth Group will have a Soup Supper on Wednesday, January 15 so the show will be at 7pm that evening. Come enjoy some soup prior to the show.**

**SOUP SUPPER FUNDRAISER FOR OUR YOUTH!**

To help offset the costs of these incredible trips, >>> we will be hosting a **Soup Supper** on **Wednesday, January 15** from **5-7 PM** in the Parish Hall. This event is a wonderful opportunity to come together as a parish and support our youth. **A free-will offering will be taken** at the door. Your support makes these opportunities possible and helps our youth grow in faith and service.



# 2025-2026 REGISTRATION DATES

## Kindergarten

- Registration for current PreK4 students and current SMS families begins 1/13/25.
- New family registration begins 2/3/25.

## 4-year old PreK

- Registration for current PreK3 students and current SMS families begins 1/13/25.
- New family registration begins 2/3/25.

## 3-year old PreK

- Registration for current SMS families begins 5/1/25.
- New family registration begins 5/19/25.

For more Information:  
[school.stmaryspontiac.org](http://school.stmaryspontiac.org)  
or 815-844-6585



## ***SELF-REFLECTION AT YEAR'S END***

The end of a year is a reminder that time moves forward and presses on whether we are ready or not. Change is the only constant. Christmas has come and gone. Trees and decorations are coming down. Everything is on sale.

Somebody once told the story of a department store return desk the day after Christmas. It had a long line with people returning gifts: sweaters, tools, jewelry, toys, and other things they did not want. At the end of the line was somebody holding the baby Jesus, seeking to take him back. Will the hope, peace, joy, and love of Christmas live on in our hearts or will we pack it away for another year and return to life as usual?

Now is the time to reflect and ask some important questions during this brief time of transition. What lessons did we learn in 2024? What did we accomplish this year? How have we changed? Many people will jump right ahead to New Year's goals and resolutions and will miss this important opportunity to reflect upon their lives over the past twelve months. In his letter to the Galatians, Paul identifies what he calls the fruit of the spirit. These are nine virtues that are signs of spiritual depth and maturity: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. It seems true that those who have a strong faith and a healthy spiritual life are constantly working to cultivate these virtues in the way that they live and interact with others. Therefore, our end of year reflection should include questions like these:

**LOVE** – Did I love others well this year, starting with my own family? Was it evident in my words and actions? Did I love and respect myself?

**JOY** – Did I experience moments of joy that went beyond simply being happy? Was I able to live in the present?

**PEACE** – Did I find inner peace in my own heart or did I live with ongoing tension and resentment from the past? Did I seek to make peace among family and friends? Was I able to let certain things go?

**PATIENCE** – Was I patient with difficult people and in difficult situations, or did anger, frustration, and restlessness take over?

**KINDNESS** – Was I kind in my words and actions, and did I speak kindly of other people? When others were unkind to me, how did I respond?

**GENEROSITY** – What percentage of my income did I give away to help others? Where did I volunteer?

**FAITHFULNESS** – Was I faithful in my spiritual life? Did I cultivate spiritual disciplines to nurture my soul?

**GENTLENESS** – Was I gentle in sensitive situations? Did I show compassion to those who are hurting?

**SELF-CONTROL** – Did I manage myself well? Did I eat and drink too much? Did I get enough sleep? Did I choose my words carefully? Was self-care a priority?

Being human is not easy. It is hard. Paul says, "I don't understand my own actions. I do the very thing that I hate." Dr. M. Scott Peck begins his classic book *The Road Less Traveled*, with three simple words: "life is difficult." We all have our flaws and shortcomings. Stress affects our attitude and behavior. We also live in a world that often seems out of control, politically, socially, technologically, and even morally. Many days, we are trying to make sense and bring order out of the chaos.

As we look ahead to 2025, perhaps our goals and priorities should go beyond simply dieting and losing weight (both important). May we strive to do the challenging reflection and inner work that develops character and that leads us to a healthier state of heart and mind.

# From the Principal's Desk



Mrs. Karen Jones

Greetings,

It's beginning to look like Christmas at school! Bulletin boards reflect the season and students are creating gifts for their parents! We just had our amazing Christmas program, both Mrs. Erickson and Mrs. Yedinak do a phenomenal job at preparing our students for both this program and our Spring Concert in April. We are so blessed to have them at St. Mary's.

As you prepare for Christmas, I hope you take time to reflect on what Christmas is all about. It is about the birth of Jesus. It is amazing to me the journey Mary and Joseph took and the hardship it must have been to give birth in a stable.

Looking to the 2025-2026 school year, we will have several teaching positions open. We are actively looking for teachers to fill these openings. We will have 2nd Grade, 3rd Grade, Jr. High Language Arts/Literature, and a full time paraprofessional to fill. Please pray that God sends us the candidates we need.

Have a very Merry Christmas and Blessed New Year. *Mrs. Jones*

*I can do all things through Christ, who strengthens me. Philippians 4:13*

## TEACHERS/STAFF NEEDED AT ST. MARY'S SCHOOL

**IMMEDIATE OPENING: Third Grade Teacher**

**2025/26 SCHOOL YEAR: Second Grade Teacher and Jr. High Language Arts/Literature**

**SUPPORT STAFF FOR 2025/26: Full Time Paraprofessional (Teacher's Aide)**

Classroom teachers must have a valid Illinois teaching certificate. We are seeking teachers and staff who know and love Jesus. We seek someone with a desire to make disciples of their students and grow in discipleship with other staff. Candidates must portray abilities of healthy teamwork among colleagues along with a desire to share their knowledge and love of Jesus with students and staff.

Please send 3 letters of recommendation and a copy of your transcripts, along with your resume and cover letter to Mrs. Karen Jones, St. Mary's School, 414 N. Main St. Pontiac, IL 61764 or you may email these items to: [jones.karen@stmaryspontiac.org](mailto:jones.karen@stmaryspontiac.org)

**SPONSORSHIP OPPORTUNITY:** Are you a local business owner? In the coming months, St. Mary's School will host our annual Kevin Casson Memorial Basketball Tournament, the St. Mary's DrawDown, and the SMS Scramble Golf Outing. These fundraising events, sponsored by our Parent-Teacher Organization, are great ways for your business to advertise. Contact Director of Development, Danielle Gill at [gill.danielle@stmaryspontiac.org](mailto:gill.danielle@stmaryspontiac.org) for more information.

***MERRY CHRISTMAS AND THANK YOU  
FOR YOUR SUPPORT OF ST. MARY'S SCHOOL!***

The St. Mary's School  
Annual Fund Drive  
is underway and we have  
already raised 76%  
of our goal!

YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE!



Please help us reach  
our \$41,000 goal!  
[school.stmaryspontiac.org](http://school.stmaryspontiac.org)

## PRAY FOR OUR PARISH FAMILIES THIS YEAR

*We ask everyone to pray for specific church and school families each week-day. Please remember these families in your prayers each day for them to grow in their faith this year. Thank you.*



|              |   |              |   |
|--------------|---|--------------|---|
| Mon Dec 23   | Bill Legner Family<br>Larry & Lucille Limberg Family                | Fri Jan 31   | Adam & Christian McDermott Family<br>Ryan McGuckin Family         |
| Tues Dec 24  | Mike Linskey Family<br>Dan & Sami Legner Family                     | Mon Feb 3    | Regina McGuire Family<br>Kathy McMillan Family                    |
| Wed Dec 25   | Doris Legner Family<br>Dolores Locke Family                         | Tues Feb 4   | Teri McWethy Family<br>Mark & Kim Mehrkens Family                 |
| Thurs Dec 26 | Raymond & Christian Logan Family<br>Ed Legner Family                | Wed Feb 5    | Peg Meier Family<br>Michael & Amanda Meiner Family                |
| Fri Dec 27   | Elizabeth Legner Family<br>Robert & Beth Limberg Family             | Thurs Feb 6  | Rhys & Kaylee Meiner Family<br>Tom & Colleen Melvin Family        |
| Mon Dec 30   | Susan Legner Family<br>Margaret Legner Family                       | Fri Feb 7    | Joshua & Elizabeth Meisner Family<br>Jeff & Kenzie Meister Family |
| Tues Dec 31  | Mary Lou Legner Family<br>Rhiannon Long Family                      | Mon Feb 10   | William & Kylie Meiner Family<br>Aaron & Kieran Metcalf Family    |
| Wed Jan 1    | Harold Lyons Family<br>Mike & Pam Lyons Family                      | Tues Feb 11  | Susan & Julie Michel Family<br>Jane Mies Family                   |
| Thurs Jan 2  | Owen Lyons Family<br>Mike & Nancy LoPiccalo Family                  | Wed Feb 12   | Judy Mikel Family<br>Nick & Nancy Milhauser Family                |
| Fri Jan 3    | Matthew & Heather Machroli Family<br>Patrick Lyons Family           | Thurs Feb 13 | Jim & Carol Miller Family<br>Karen Miller Family                  |
| Mon Jan 6    | Don & Rita Mackinson Family<br>Rick & Amy Lyons Family              | Fri Feb 14   | Helen Million Family<br>Eric Mills Family                         |
| Tues Jan 7   | Sara Lyons Family<br>Lisa Mackinson Family                          | Mon Feb 17   | Megan Miller Family<br>Linda Minar Family                         |
| Wed Jan 8    | Matt & Amy Mackinson Family<br>Ryan & Danielle MacZura Family       | Tues Feb 18  | Gerry & Brenda Mills Family<br>Rob Miller Family                  |
| Thurs Jan 9  | Jesus & Maura Madrigal Family<br>Bill & Gina Manker Family          | Wed Feb 19   | Kale & Jodi Minnaert Family<br>Mike & Tammie Mills Family         |
| Fri Jan 10   | Gregorio & Marissa Manabat Family<br>Jerry Marcin Family            | Thurs Feb 20 | Dave Mishur Family<br>Ron Minnaert Family                         |
| Mon Jan 13   | Marie Margherio Family<br>Jim & Lisa Martin Family                  | Fri Feb 21   | Karen Moen Family<br>Santos & Letisia Molina Family               |
| Tues Jan 14  | Patrick & Lisa Martin Family<br>Jim & Nanette Marx Family           | Mon Feb 24   | Connie Monical Family<br>Jason & Clarissa Montello Family         |
| Wed Jan 15   | Brian & Lindsay Masching Family<br>Gene & Tammie Masching Family    | Tues Feb 25  | Michael Moore Family<br>Greg Monical Family                       |
| Thurs Jan 16 | Jose & Teresa Mata Family<br>Jerry & Jeannine Mathia Family         | Wed Feb 26   | Mary Monical Family<br>Sandra Moore Family                        |
| Fri Jan 17   | Chris & Isabelle Matthews Family<br>Florence Masching Family        | Thurs Feb 27 | Shirley Moran Family<br>Lonor Moreno Family                       |
| Mon Jan 20   | Mark & Kristy Masching Family<br>Matthew Mattingly Family           | Fri Feb 28   | Kay Morgan Family<br>Spring Morgan Family                         |
| Tues Jan 21  | Cathy Masching Family<br>Nick & Adelle Masching Family              | Mon Mar 3    | Phyllis & Keith Moritz Family<br>Josephine Morrison Family        |
| Wed Jan 22   | Teresa Masching Family<br>Carla Mays Family                         | Tues Mar 4   | Jakob & Bridget Morrisette Family<br>Jeannae Morta Family         |
| Thurs Jan 23 | Claire Mays Family<br>Tim & Diane Masching Family                   | Wed Mar 5    | Angela Mote Family<br>Lety Morrisette Family                      |
| Fri Jan 24   | Ricky & Brenda Matuszewski Family<br>Todd Masching Family           | Thurs Mar 6  | Maryann Motes Family<br>James Motteler Family                     |
| Mon Jan 27   | Nikki McBeath Family<br>Bill & Michelle Masching Family             | Fri Mar 7    | Denise Mrozek Family<br>Jeff & Patti Muir Family                  |
| Tues Jan 28  | John McCarthy Family<br>Vicki McBeath Family                        |              |   |
| Wed Jan 29   | Casey & Christine McCaskey Family<br>Ryan & Amanda McCluskey Family |              |   |
| Thurs Jan 30 | Mary Helen McCorvie Family<br>Mike & Kathy McCoy Family             |              |   |





# ENCOUNTERING THE EUCHARIST

Happy New Year to All!!!! No, I haven't lost my mind or my 2024 calendar. Advent is the start of the new liturgical year so... it is a new year for us Catholics.

With that said, the Eucharistic Revival team here at St. Mary's is looking at possible new features, in the new year, to the Encountering the Eucharist for upcoming newsletters. We are also looking over new information from the USCCB, the Nation Eucharistic Revival Committee and Bishop Tylka. This information has brought about some new and interesting ideas. So, keep an eye out in upcoming bulletins and newsletters for more information.

In the meantime, mark your calendars for April 2025 we should have more information on the Eucharistic Procession happening sometime in May. This procession will be leaving Indianapolis and traveling to California. Bishop Lou has informed us that the procession will be stopping in the Diocese of Peoria. We will keep you updated on the Diocese's plans as they become available to us. As the Eucharistic team, we encourage you to pray-at home, at Mass and at Eucharistic Adoration for this 3rd year of Eucharistic Revival, The Year of Mission.

May Our Lord Bless you all in this New Year!



St. Mary's Church uses Flocknote to keep our parishioners informed of special Masses and events and any changes or cancellations that may occur. If you do not receive texts or emails from us, there are two ways to sign up. Text the word PONTIAC to 84576 OR click the Flocknote link at the bottom of the homepage of our website: [church.stmaryspontiac.org](http://church.stmaryspontiac.org)



St. Mary's Parish is now offering Online Giving.

Online Giving can be used to give to:

- Sunday Offering
- School Collection
- Food Pantry
- Building Maintenance Fund
- Memorials/Gifts
- School Annual Fund
- Scholarships

Start giving online today!

1. Visit our website at [www.stmaryspontiac.org](http://www.stmaryspontiac.org) and click on the online giving link.
2. Create an account.
3. Schedule your gift. Gifts given via checking or savings account have no service charge. Debit and credit card gifts will be assessed a 3% fee.

Please prayerfully consider giving online. If you have any questions, contact the parish office at 815-844-7683. Online Giving is provided by Our Sunday Visitor, a Catholic not-for-profit organization serving parishes for more than 100 years.

2024 ANNUAL DIOCESAN APPEAL

"Do everything for the *Glory of God.*"  
1 Cor 10:31

## 2024 ANNUAL DIOCESAN APPEAL

Thanks to all who have made a pledge to the Annual Diocesan Appeal. No gift is too small. If you have not yet made a gift to the ADA, we invite you to do so today. Every dollar raised to make our goal supports important diocesan services and every dollar raised over our goal will be returned to the parish.

**This year's goal: \$80,751**  
**Pledged to date: \$73,882**  
**(as of December 5)**

# From The Back Page

by Margo Law

## WHAT THE BABIES SAW

'Twas the night before Christmas,  
each home filled with grace,  
Excitement and cheer  
were all over the place.

The children could hardly  
drift off to sleep,  
But after their prayers,  
they slept soundly and deep.

The parents had finished  
each cookie and toy,  
While looking so forward  
to Christmas with joy.

When all of a sudden  
there appeared a new star,  
Seen only by newborns  
(who see very far.)

These little ones see  
through each cloud and each wall,  
Because they aren't proud  
and have no doubts at all.

For each babe is given,  
especially tonight,  
The gift to see Jesus  
With miraculous sight.

By the light of a star  
to a manger they're led,  
Where Jesus is smiling  
from His small little bed.

And each babe can gaze  
on the face of God's Son  
With more gladness and joy  
than a day full of fun.

Then it's suddenly over,  
and there's no star above,  
But the gift was received  
and was given with love.

They may not remember  
just what they saw,  
Still, their hearts will hold on to  
His wonder and awe.

And as they grow older,  
as hearts break and mend,  
They'll know Jesus loves them;  
He's their very best friend.

So, may we help show them  
God's beauty and light,  
Each day, and not only on  
Christmas Eve night.



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