



# St. Mary - Holy Cross Parish

St. Mary: 460 NW Washington Avenue, Elkhart Iowa 50073

Holy Cross: 12704 NE 98th Street, Maxwell Iowa 50161



## Fourth Sunday of Advent

December 20 & 21, 2025



## The Nativity of the Lord

December 25, 2025

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*It is customary at our Parish that after the final song, the assembly kneels and silently prays the "Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory Be" for the next person of our Parish who passes away. Parishioners near death have expressed the comfort they experience knowing the Parish Community is praying for them. Please join us in this sacred prayer.*

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Dear Good People,

I hope this letter finds you well. We are getting close to the end of our Advent journey as we prepare for the birth of our Lord. Thank you to Father Aiello for helping us for mass and confessions on Saturday as I have our Bishop's discernment retreat.

Just to remind you of our Christmas schedule. We will have mass at St. Mary on Christmas Eve at 5PM and Mass at Holy Cross Christmas Eve at 7PM. We will also have mass on Christmas Day at St. Mary at 9 AM. I wish all of you a very Merry Christmas as we believe Jesus is the reason for the season!

Finally, just my yearly reminder about hospitality during Christmas and Easter. We do not know exactly where everyone is on their faith journey. Let us challenge ourselves to be extra welcoming, invite people to join us in our pews, and to introduce ourselves to people who we may not know. May all be welcomed as Christ!

~ A.M.D.G. Fr. Ross

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<b>Parish General Email</b>	<a href="mailto:smhc@saintmaryhc.org">smhc@saintmaryhc.org</a>
<b>Fr. Ross Parker, Pastor</b>	515-367-2685/ <a href="mailto:rparker@dmdioocese.org">rparker@dmdioocese.org</a>
<b>Nicole Cory - Confirmation</b>	<a href="mailto:ncory@saintmaryhc.org">ncory@saintmaryhc.org</a>
<b>Andrea Fisher - 7th-12th Ministry</b>	<a href="mailto:afisher@saintmaryhc.org">afisher@saintmaryhc.org</a>
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<b>Barb Liske - Secretary</b>	<a href="mailto:bliske@saintmaryhc.org">bliske@saintmaryhc.org</a>
<b>Tracy Miller - Preschool - 6th RE</b>	<a href="mailto:tmiller@saintmaryhc.org">tmiller@saintmaryhc.org</a>
<b>Aubrey Sigmund - Music</b>	<a href="mailto:asigmund@saintmaryhc.org">asigmund@saintmaryhc.org</a>
<b>Candy Zidon - Bookkeeper</b>	<a href="mailto:bookkeeper@saintmaryhc.org">bookkeeper@saintmaryhc.org</a>
<b>Parish Web Site</b>	<a href="http://www.saintmaryhc.org">www.saintmaryhc.org</a>
<b>Parish Facebook Site</b>	St. Mary's Holy Cross Parish-Elkhart

*See inside  
for varied  
Mass  
schedule.*

Tuesday	8:00am	St. Mary
Wednesday	5:30pm	Holy Cross
Thursday	8:00am	St. Mary
Friday	8:00am	St. Mary
Saturday	5:00pm	St. Mary
Sunday	8:00am	Holy Cross
	10:00am	St. Mary

**Reconciliation:** Saturday 4:00 - 4:30pm,  
St. Mary or by appointment with Fr. Parker

**Baptism:** Please contact the Office.

**Marriage:** Please contact the Office at least six  
months prior to the proposed wedding date.

**Order of Christian Initiation of Adults:** Please  
contact Fr. Parker or Nicole Cory

**Priesthood/Religious:** [www.vocationsonline.org](http://www.vocationsonline.org)

## Mass and Reconciliation

### Tuesday, December 23

8:00am Mass, St. Mary † Victoria & Clarence Becker

### Wednesday, December 24 Christmas Eve

5:00pm Mass, St. Mary † Kay Ross

7:00pm Mass, Holy Cross † Chris Schreurs

### Thursday, December 25 Christmas Day

9:00am Mass, St. Mary † Delila Roberts

### Friday, December 26 — No Mass today

### Saturday, December 27

4:00 - 4:30pm Reconciliation, St. Mary

5:00pm Mass, St. Mary † Tom Morris

### Sunday, December 28

8:00am Mass, Holy Cross People of the Parish

10:00am Mass, St. Mary † Virginia Tietz

## Are You New to Our Parish?



We welcome you to our family of St. Mary-Holy Cross and invite you to become a member of our parish! Please fill out a registration card found in the vestibule of St. Mary or Holy Cross or on our website, <https://www.saintmaryhc.org/membership>. We are glad you are here!



## Pastoral Assistance

In case of an emergency please contact Fr. Ross Parker, 515-720-3434. To schedule a visit with Father at your home, or if a family member is in a care facility, home-bound, or hospitalized, and they wish a visit, please contact him at [rparker@dmdiocese.org](mailto:rparker@dmdiocese.org).

## Masses for Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God



Our Masses for this Holy Day of Obligation are 5:00pm Vigil Mass on December 31 at St. Mary and January 1, 9:00am Mass at Holy Cross. Please join us to celebrate Mary!



## Opening for a Parish Music Coordinator

We thank Aubrey Sigmund for the wonderful work she has done! We are looking to hire a new coordinator within our parish for this position beginning January 2. **This is a very flexible job—work some from home! Training provided!** It's a paid position averaging 10 hours most weeks, though more around Easter and Christmas. For more information or if interested, contact Fr. Ross at [rparker@dmdiocese.org](mailto:rparker@dmdiocese.org).

## "Keep Christ in Christmas" Ornament Contest

Ornament entries by SMHC children in grades Preschool - 6th are to be placed on the Christmas tree in the Social Hall by Sunday, January 4, after our Mass celebrating The Epiphany of the Lord. Winners will be selected at the Jan. 19 K of C meeting and awarded the following week. Please see the [Religious Ed](#) page of the website for more information.



## It Is the Season!

Could you help with weekend and/or week day snow removal of sidewalks at St. Mary? Sign up at <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/409094EA4A722A2FB6-60961940-sidewalk>. Thank you! Questions, please contact Bill Schmitt, 515-291-8005 / [isucui@isualum.com](mailto:isucui@isualum.com).

## Advent Prayer



All-powerful God,  
your eternal Word took flesh on our earth  
when the Virgin Mary placed her life  
at the service of your plan.  
Lift our minds in watchful hope  
to hear the voice  
which announces his glory  
and open our minds to receive the Spirit  
who prepares us for his coming.  
We ask this through Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

### Parish Council

Meeting: February 17, 6:30pm, Social Hall

### Finance Council

Meeting: February 24, 6:30pm, Social Hall

### Stewardship

Meeting: January 12, 6:00pm, Social Hall

### OCIA / Grow in Your Catholic Faith

Mondays, Jan. 5 & 12, 6:15pm, Youth Room

### Knights of Columbus

Meeting: January 19, 7:00pm, Social Hall

### Funeral Luncheon Food Donations

Team 3: Ankeny

**The Parish Office is closed Dec. 24 through January 2.**

Father Parker does not have set office hours at the Parish.

To reach him please email, call or text:

[rparker@dmdiocese.org](mailto:rparker@dmdiocese.org) or 515-720-3434.

## Coming Events

- †**This Weekend:** Food Pantry Collection for Catholic Charities Emergency Family Shelter
- †**Choir practice:** Sunday, Dec. 21, 11:15 – 12:15pm and Thursday, Dec. 18, 6:30-7:30pm, St. Mary
- †**Social Hall in Use:** Saturday, Dec. 27, 6:00-8:00pm

## Donations for 2025

If you wish to have any donation included on your 2025 contribution statement, it must reach the Parish Office by Wednesday, Dec. 31, via the collection at Mass or by mail. Monies received after this date, even if dated 2025, will be credited as 2026 donations. Thank you; your support is greatly appreciated! The Parish Office is closed December 24 through January 2.

## Two Vacancies on Our Parish Council

If you know of anyone you would like to nominate (including yourself) or would like more information, please contact Father Ross, [rparker@dmdiocese.org](mailto:rparker@dmdiocese.org) or 515-720-3434. Term begins January 1, 2026. Attributes such as faithfulness, integrity, generosity, compassion, and actively deepening a personal relationship with Jesus Christ are desirable in all members of the Council. Skills for effective communication and listening, creative discernment and verbalization of a vision, and working collaboratively with others are essential elements. Thank you for considering serving your Parish!



## Christmas Masses

**Christmas Eve**  
5:00pm, St. Mary  
7:00pm, Holy Cross

**Christmas Day**  
9:00am, St. Mary

O Child of Bethlehem,  
you are the light of the world,  
shining in the darkness of our lives.

As we celebrate your birth,  
we pray that your light  
may illuminate our hearts,  
dispelling all fear and doubt.

Help us to recognize you  
in the poor and vulnerable,  
and may we show them  
the same love and care  
that you show us.

Grant us the grace  
to be faithful witnesses of your love  
in the world. Amen.

~ Pope Benedict XVI

## Religious Education: Preschool - 6th Grade

### Coordinator

Tracy Miller, [tmiller@saintmaryhc.org](mailto:tmiller@saintmaryhc.org), 515-520-7981

Winter weather has hit us early this year. Please check your emails before you leave for RE if the roads or weather is questionable. I will send out an email if canceling sessions.

We have our First Holy Communion parent meeting January 7, 6:30pm at St. Mary. If your child is hoping to receive their sacraments this year, please plan to attend.

### Upcoming Sessions

Dec. 24-Jan. 7 - No Sessions, Christmas Break  
Jan. 7- Mandatory First Communion Parent Meeting, 6:30pm  
Jan. 14- Regular Sessions

## S.T.O.R.M. Report: 7th - 12th Grade

### Coordinators

Melissa Kahler, [mkahler@saintmaryhc.org](mailto:mkahler@saintmaryhc.org), 515-290-2830  
Andrea Fisher, [afisher@saintmaryhc.org](mailto:afisher@saintmaryhc.org), 515-240-5059  
Nicole Cory, [ncory@saintmaryhc.org](mailto:ncory@saintmaryhc.org), 515-313-3014

**EDGE** — Wednesdays, 6:00-7:30pm, Social Hall, 7th & 8th  
No sessions Dec. 24 - Jan 7, Christmas Break  
Jan. 14 & 21: EDGE sessions

**Confirmation** 9th & 10th Graders, Sessions in Youth Room  
Sunday, Dec. 21: 11am-12:30pm, 9th & 10th grade session  
Sunday, Jan. 11: 11am-12:30pm, 9th grade only session  
Sunday, Jan. 25: 11am-12:30pm, 10th grade only session .  
Wednesday, Jan. 28: 6-7:30pm, Family session, Social Hall

**S.T.O.R.M. Youth Group** — Wednesdays, 7:30-9:00pm,  
Youth Area, 9th-12th graders  
No gatherings Dec. 24 - Jan. 7, Christmas Break  
Jan. 14 & 21: Youth Gatherings

## Church Sign

Without Christ there would be no Christmas.

## Weekly Collection Financial Update

**December 14** Budget Week 24

	<u>Received</u>	<u>Budget</u>
Tithes/Plate/Youth/Bldg. Fund	\$14,727	\$5,536

*Year-to-Date Tithes/Plate/Youth/Bldg. Fund*

<u>Received</u>	<u>Budget</u>	<u>Last Year</u>
\$145,126	\$132,853	\$130,110

*Mass Attendance: Dec 13/14: 316*

## 2025 Annual Diocesan Appeal

<u>Goal</u>	<u>Pledged</u>	<u>Payments</u>	<u>Outstanding</u>	<u>Refund</u>
\$47,320	\$55,425	\$53,285	\$2,100	\$6,090

## Councils and Committees

### PARISH COUNCIL

Anne Davis - [annedavis06@gmail.com](mailto:annedavis06@gmail.com)  
Terri Hamm - [Theresa.Hamm@mercyroneiowa.org](mailto:Theresa.Hamm@mercyroneiowa.org)  
Drew Hanlon - [drewsmhcpc@yahoo.com](mailto:drewsmhcpc@yahoo.com)  
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Bill Kyle - [bill@northiowaair.com](mailto:bill@northiowaair.com)  
Tim Miller - [millertimothyg@gmail.com](mailto:millertimothyg@gmail.com)  
Lisa Schoening - [lisa@lissaschoening.com](mailto:lisa@lissaschoening.com)

### FINANCE COUNCIL

Laurie Phelan, *Chair* - [Laurie.c.Phelan@gmail.com](mailto:Laurie.c.Phelan@gmail.com)  
Julia Coash - [jcoash@outlook.com](mailto:jcoash@outlook.com)  
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Bill Rooney - [1rooneybill@gmail.com](mailto:1rooneybill@gmail.com)  
Tom Rooney - [roondog007@msn.com](mailto:roondog007@msn.com)

### STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE

Julia Coash - [jcoash@outlook.com](mailto:jcoash@outlook.com)  
Katie Fredericks - [katie.fredericks1@hotmail.com](mailto:katie.fredericks1@hotmail.com)  
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Kathy Petersen - [katherine@huxcomm.net](mailto:katherine@huxcomm.net)  
Sue White - [charylmyron@q.com](mailto:charylmyron@q.com)

### BUILDING & GROUND COMMITTEE

John Roberts, *Co-Chair* - [jroberts@huxcomm.net](mailto:jroberts@huxcomm.net)  
Scott Turczynski, *Co-Chair* - [ScottT@hrtlnd.us](mailto:ScottT@hrtlnd.us)  
Drew Hanlon - [drewsmhcpc@yahoo.com](mailto:drewsmhcpc@yahoo.com)  
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Lynn Schreurs - [lschreurs@msn.com](mailto:lschreurs@msn.com)

### CEMETERY COMMITTEE

Laurie Phelan, *Chair* - [Laurie.c.Phelan@gmail.com](mailto:Laurie.c.Phelan@gmail.com)  
Pat Bishop - [pjbishop@midiaowa.net](mailto:pjbishop@midiaowa.net)  
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Lynn Schreurs - [lschreurs@msn.com](mailto:lschreurs@msn.com)  
Larry Shaw - [shawcattle77@gmail.com](mailto:shawcattle77@gmail.com)

### PARISH TRUSTEES

Sheri Fogarty - [fogarty929@gmail.com](mailto:fogarty929@gmail.com)  
Doug Jones - [djones@bossard.com](mailto:djones@bossard.com)

### PARISH HISTORIAN

Larry Sauer - [sauerld@outlook.com](mailto:sauerld@outlook.com) - 515-710-2421

### PARISH AMBASSADOR TO CATHOLIC CHARITIES

John & Peg Evans - [evansp3@yahoo.com](mailto:evansp3@yahoo.com)

### KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS GRAND KNIGHT

John Roberts - [jroberts@huxcomm.net](mailto:jroberts@huxcomm.net)



## Laudato Si

Lower the amount of energy used to pump, treat, and heat water by washing your car less often. When you do wash your vehicle, take it to a commercial car wash. That will use less water and the water will be treated afterward. *More at:* <https://www.saintmaryhc.org/on-care-for-our-common-home>

## Grow in Your Catholic Faith through OCIA

All adults in our Parish are invited to join us on Monday evenings at 6:15 in the Youth Room downstairs at St. Mary for OCIA. While OCIA is the pathway for those who are interested in becoming Catholic, it is also a wonderful opportunity for lifelong Catholics to deepen their understanding of the faith. Whether you are curious, returning to the Church, or simply looking to grow in your relationship with Christ, these sessions provide prayer, discussion, and learning in a supportive community. Come and journey with us as we explore the richness of our Catholic tradition together.

### Ministers for Dec. 24 - Jan. 1 by sign up

*Please sign up at Church. Thank you!*

#### Christmas Eve, Wednesday, 5:00pm Mass, St. Mary

*Needed: 1 Host Distributor to choir loft, 2 Ushers*

Lector	Candy Miller
Host (Church)	Joe Rumbaugh
Host (Hall)	Linda Froehlich, Tom Froehlich
Cup (Church)	Bob & Susan Selby
Cup (Hall)	Angela Collum, Drew Hanlon
Altar Servers	David Collum, Rex Roberts, Jack Cory
Ushers	Joe R. Drew H. Gregg R.
Music	Choir, Mary Ortmann

#### Christmas Eve, Wednesday, 7:00pm Mass, Holy Cross

Lector	Matt Hart
Cup Bearer	Matt Hart
Altar Servers	Claire & Oliver Hand
Ushers	Jerry & Patty Hilton
Music	Drew & Lorrie Hanlon

#### Christmas Day, Thursday, 9:00am Mass, St. Mary

*Needed: 1 Cup Bearer, Altar Servers, 4 Ushers*

Lector	Tom Froehlich
Host Distributor	Tom Froehlich
Cup Bearer	Linda Froehlich
Music	Drew & Lorrie Hanlon

#### Saturday, December 27, 5:00pm Mass, St. Mary

Lector	Lorrie Hanlon
Host Distributor	Drew Hanlon
Cup Bearers	Susan Stillmunkes, Linda Froehlich
Ushers	Drew Hanlon, Tom Froehlich
Music	Lisa Jones, Mary Schmelzer

#### Sunday, December 28, 8:00am Mass, Holy Cross

*Needed: Cup Bearer, Usher*

Lector	Jackie Crouse
Altar Servers	Claire & Oliver Hand
Music	Drew & Lorrie Hanlon

#### Sunday, December 28, 10:00am Mass, St. Mary

*Volunteers needed for all Ministries*

Music	Jen Linderblood, Mary Ortmann
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## Money Counters

December 21: Trish Morris, Kathy Daup  
December 28: Trish Morris, Kathy Daup, Dona Cowman



Styrofoam that sits in landfills releases methane gases that have over 20 times the ozone-destroying potency as CO2 emissions.

## To All the Friends of Fr. John Acrea

Thank you very much for all your prayers, sympathy letters and cards in regards to the passing of my brother. Our family misses him dearly. He was a great brother and was always there for us in love and prayers. We feel so lucky the good Lord gave us a brother like him. Thank you Lord and God bless him.

While thinking about him it brings back a lot of great memories of us growing up together on the farm and later in our home town of Missouri Valley, Iowa. As time went by that farm boy turned into an apostle of Jesus and over the years became a part of so many peoples lives.

We miss him a lot and all the good times we had together. How fast time flies by.

Thank you very much for all your letters, cards and sharing your friendship with him. God bless each one of you.

— Fr. John's brother, Mark Acrea

## Prayer Chain

If illness or crisis strikes your family or friends, please don't hesitate to contact us so members of our Parish can offer prayers for them. *If the request is not for you, please ask permission from the one it is, to be on our prayer chain.* For requests or to participate in our prayer chain, please contact the Office at [bliske@saintmaryhc.org](mailto:bliske@saintmaryhc.org) or 515-367-2685.

## Keep the Christmas Spirit Alive in 2026

Our parish families provide a meal at Catholic Charities Emergency Family Shelter in Des Moines for up to 34 people on the second Sunday of each month. Volunteers are needed for April, June, July, September and December. For more information or to volunteer, contact Stacey Rooney, [rooneyslg17@gmail.com](mailto:rooneyslg17@gmail.com) / 515-490-5034.



## Winter Weather Cancellations

Whenever North Polk School is cancelled, dismissed early, or evening school activities are cancelled due to weather, classes, meetings and activities here at the Parish will be cancelled as well. In most instances, Masses - both daily and weekend - will not be cancelled, so please use your own judgment. If the need arises to cancel weekend Masses or activities, it will be on Channel 8 TV and online only. (Holy Cross may be under "Maxwell" and not "Elkhart").

## Readings and Questions for Faith Sharing

### Fourth Sunday of Advent, December 20 & 21

*Theme: Jesus is God made flesh.*

*Reading I:* Isaiah 7:10-14 • She shall name him Emmanuel.

*Reading II:* Romans 1:1-7 • In him we have been given the gift of being apostles.

*Gospel:* Matthew 1:18-24 • God is with us.

*Question for Children:* When you pray, how do you hear God's voice in response?

*Question for Youth:* What is your experience of hearing God speak to you in your intuitions and imagination? What is God asking of you?

*Question for Adults:* What experiences do you have of God "speaking to you" and directing your life and work? How does God speak to you in prayer?