

In my second-to-last year of seminary, I woke up one September morning to devastating news: two beloved classmates had died in a car crash. I was overwhelmed with grief and anger like I had never known. I entered therapy for the first time and had intense conversations with my spiritual director. For months I felt lost in a spiritual wilderness. But something unexpected happened: I encountered Christ there. The fear and sorrow didn't destroy me. In fact, that spiritual desert was a time of intense growth in faith.

Today's Gospel begins: "Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil" (Matthew 4:1). The word "led" denotes a gentle, humble submission to the Spirit. Jesus does not send Himself into this desolate place where wild beasts roam and Satan tempts. Who wants to be around roaming, wild beasts? The Church Fathers saw them as symbols of our inner chaos: fears, temptations, wounds. The Spirit leads us there, sometimes against our wishes. But those same Fathers also saw that this deserted place is also where angels ministered to Jesus, amidst His great trial and temptation.

**Lenten Challenge:** This Lent and throughout life's struggles, the Spirit leads you and me into the wilderness. Name one "desert" into which the Spirit has led you: perhaps grief, fear, silence, change, disappointment. Ask for the grace to go there willingly. The beasts may be real, but they will not harm you. There, the angels are waiting to minister to the Christ living in you, who always goes where the Spirit leads. —Father John Muir

**LITURGICAL MINISTERS FOR FEB. 28 & MARCH 1, 2026**

**Sat. Feb. 28 @ 4:30PM @ St. Nicholas**  
 Reader: Pat Kalous  
 Music: Sally Rehberger, Barb Zaloga, & Colleen Lozier  
 Euch. Min.: Brenda & Marce Tebbe  
 Server: Pat Kalous

**Sun. Mar. 1 @ 8:00AM @ St. Gertrude**  
 Reader: Carole Sauls  
 Music: Nick Worman & Randy Eckstein  
 Sacristan: Sue Dickman  
 Euch.Min.: Larry & Tina Luitjohan & Gail Ohren  
 Ushers: Randy & Dianne Leitschuh  
 Servers: Aubrey & Maris Barr

**Sun. Mar. 1 @10:00AM @ IC**  
 Reader: PAPAYA Youth Group  
 Music: Joy Winkeler  
 Servers: PAPAYA Youth Group  
 Euch. Min.: Erica Knebel, John Dea, & Evelyn Knebel

**REMEMBER** in your prayers

Members of our parish families who are recovering in the hospital & at home, for their strength and patience each day, and for all those who ask for our prayers for health or other issues.

John Alberternst, Pat Beard, Ana Cantrell, Steve Crawford, Don Dapkus, Teresa Dickman, Garland Edwards, Jean Fields, Gabriel Frey, Jerry Fyke, Ed Gagen, Karen Grabowski, John Grubb, P.J. Hereford, James Hodge, Gene Jolliff, Pat Kalous, Val King, Janice Korsmeyer, Barrett Korte, Denny Korte, Randy Korte, Ruth Korte, Steve Korte, David Kuehn, Sue Luber, Christopher Marti, Taylor Marti, Barry May, Alex McCall, Eleanor Munie, Cody Neal, Linda Merkle-Neumann, Jeannie Oestringer, Robin Pollmann, Suzanne Steinbring, Marcia Rowe, Gunner Sadler, Abby Schrage, Bill Schroeder, Marie Weis, Ginny Werner, Dean Wernle.

**FOR OUR PARISHIONERS IN NURSING HOMES:**  
 Delmar Knebel, Harold Schwarz, Barbara Weiss, Margie Zurliene and special people in our families.

**FOR THOSE CURRENTLY SERVING IN THE MILITARY:**  
 Adam Canfield, Tim Doll, Ensign Eli Jones, Chad Knebel, Michael Knebel, Dustin Korte, Solon McGill, Lt. Abigail Mesaros, Jerritt Mettler, Jimmy O'Boyle, Sgt. Joseph Patterson, Rickie Schuster, Joseph Schatte, Greg Spina, T.J. Waddington, Sgt. Tyler Wegman, Sgt. Zach Weiss.

**If you would like to have someone added or removed from the prayer list please call the parish office.**

**SAVE THE DATE**

**Immaculate Conception Chicken Dinner**  
 will be held on March 1st serving from 11am to 5pm. All Dinners \$15. This will be a drive-thru dinner with limited indoor seating available. We are requesting that each family bring three (9 x 12) cakes and/or cupcakes. Chicken Dinner signs and Worklists are now available at the back of IC. This is a big fundraiser for our parish, your support is needed and always appreciated!

**St. Gertrude Chicken Dinner Meeting will be held on Tuesday, Feb. 24th at 7PM**



Anointing of the Sick will be offered after all Masses the weekend of March 7 & 8

**OCIA**  
 A STRONG START TO THE FAITH

This Sunday, at the 10AM Mass at IC, we will celebrate the "Rite of Sending for Election" with our catechumenate, Kelsi Hannan. The Church has discerned her readiness for reception of the sacraments this Easter. After Mass, she and her sponsor will be sent to the Bishop for the Rite of Election. As Kelsi's new parish family, we are called to support & encourage her. Please continue to keep Kelsi, her family, sponsor & OCIA team in your prayers.

**February HACSM Pantry Needs: Granola Bars**  
 All food donations will still be accepted no matter the above assignment each month. We appreciate your support! Thank You!

Mon. (Feb.23)	8:00am	
Tues. (Feb.24)	8:00am	(St.G)
Wed. (Feb.25)	8:00am	(IC)
Thur. (Feb.26)	8:00am	(St.N)
Fri. (Feb.27)	8:00am	(IC)
Sat. (Feb.28)	4:30pm	(St.N)
Sun. (Mar. 1)	8:00am	(St.G)
Sun. (Mar. 1)	10:00am	(IC)

**† Mass Intentions †**  
**No Mass**  
 † **Ruth Richter** — Int. of Emily Schwarz  
 † **Loretta Knebel** — Int. of Delmar Knebel & Family  
 † **All Souls**  
 † **Terra Richmond** — Int. of Bill & Denise Trickey  
 † **Ronnie & Bonnie Rutz** — Int. of Barb Kalous  
**For the People of St. Nicholas, St. Gertrude & Immaculate Conception**  
 † **Sonny Schwarz** — Int. of Emily Schwarz & Family  
 † **Allan & Millie Frey** — Int. of Mary Miller  
 † **Marilyn & Richard Aldrich** — Int. of Bill & Denise Trickey

**Readings for the week of February 22, 2026**

**Sunday:**  
 Gn 2:7-9; 3:1-7/Ps 51:3-4, 5-6, 12-13, 17/ Rom 5:12-19 or 5:12, 17-19/Mt 4:1-11

**Monday:**  
 Lv 19:1-2, 11-18/Ps 19:8, 9, 10, 15/ Mt 25:31-46

**Tuesday:**  
 Is 55:10-11/Ps 34:4-5, 6-7, 16-17, 18-19/ Mt 6:7-15

**Wednesday:**  
 Jon 3:1-10/Ps 51:3-4, 12-13, 18-19/ Lk 11:29-32

**Thursday:**  
 Est C:12, 14-16, 23-25/Ps 138:1-2ab, 2cde-3, 7c-8/Mt 7:7-12

**Friday:**  
 Ez 18:21-28/Ps 130:1-2, 3-4, 5-7a, 7bc-8/ Mt 5:20-26

**Saturday:**  
 Dt 26:16-19/Ps 119:1-2, 4-5, 7-8/ Mt 5:43-48

**Next Sunday:**  
 Gn 12:1-4a/Ps 33:4-5, 18-19, 20, 22/ 2 Tm 1:8b-10/Mt 17:1-9

**Lenten Penance Services**

**BE MERCIFUL, LORD, FOR WE HAVE SINNED**  
 PSALM 51

**St. Gertrude Grantfork – February 25<sup>th</sup> @ 6:30PM**

**St. Jerome and MPH at St. Jerome in Troy - March 8 at 6pm**

**Immaculate Conception Pierron – March 11 @ 7:00PM**

**Tri City (Holy Family, St. Elizabeth, St. Mary/St. Mark- Granite City/ Madison) March 12 at 6:30 pm @ Holy Family**

**St. Cecilia/St. Mary Edw @ St. Cecilia – Wednesday, March 18, 6:00pm**

**St. Paul Highland – March 18 6:30pm**

**St. Paul Highland – March 19 10:00am**

**St. Boniface – March 22 2:30 p.m.**

<b>STN Collection</b>	<b>2/14/26</b>
Envelopes/Loose	\$3,754.55
Eastern Europe	\$20.00
Budget Goal	\$1,257.00
Weekly Surplus/Deficit	\$2,497.55
Support Needed (budget)	\$41,481.00
Support Actual	\$47,282.27
Surplus/Deficit YTD	\$5,801.27

**"For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven." Matthew 5:20**

The Pharisees lived according to the letter of the law, and they used this to elevate themselves above the other people. Jesus is clear – it's the love that you have in your heart, for God and others, that will get you to heaven. Simply following church rules to the letter and not out of love, does not necessarily put you on the path to heaven. Attending Sunday Mass and then gossiping about a fellow parishioner on the parking lot is an example of being a modern-day Pharisee.

**Our Lord is so humble that He allows us to see Him experience temptation. The vulnerability of this moment is awesome to behold. Let us learn from Jesus' interaction with the devil, and be transformed by it. Let us say, with Him: "Get away, Satan."**



Pics from the "Moses" movie at St. Gertrude last Sunday. Thanks to the 4th-8th Grade PSR Classes, their catechist Karen Straube as "Moses" and all those who participated and donated items for the Food Pantry—80 lbs. were collected!



**Observances for the week of February 22, 2026**

**Sunday:** 1st Sunday of Lent  
**Monday:** St. Polycarp, Bishop and Martyr  
**Friday:** St. Gregory of Narek, Abbot and Doctor of the Church  
**Next Sunday:** 2nd Sunday of Lent

**Stations OF THE CROSS**

**Stations of the Cross During Lent**  
**IC after the 8AM Mass on Wed. & Fri.**  
**STN after the 8AM Mass on Thursdays**  
**STG Wednesdays at 6:30PM**  
**IC 6:30PM Feb. 25, Mar. 4, 11, 18, April 1 and Shadow Stations Mar 25th at dusk.**

<b>STG Collection</b>	<b>2/15/26</b>
Envelopes/Loose	\$866.00
Sister Parish	\$20.00
Maintenance Fund	\$120.00
Cemetery	\$20.00
Budget Goal	\$1,505.00
Weekly Surplus/Deficit	-\$639.00
Support Needed (budget)	\$49,665.00
Support Actual	\$44,736.66
Surplus/Deficit YTD	-\$4,928.34

<b>IC Collection</b>	<b>2/15/26</b>
Envelopes/Loose	\$5,619.84
Sister Parish	\$10.00
Candles	\$130.00
Latin America	\$20.00
Eastern Europe	\$50.00
Building Fund	\$100.00
Budget Goal	\$2,672.00
Weekly Surplus/Deficit	\$2,947.84
Support Needed (budget)	\$88,176.00
Support Actual	\$91,135.77
Surplus/Deficit YTD	\$2,959.77

## Highland Knights of Columbus Lenten Fish Fries

Beginning Ash Wednesday, February 18<sup>th</sup>, then every Friday until Good Friday, April 3<sup>rd</sup>.

**DINE-IN AND CARRY OUT AVAILABLE CASH AND CREDIT/DEBIT CARDS ACCEPTED**

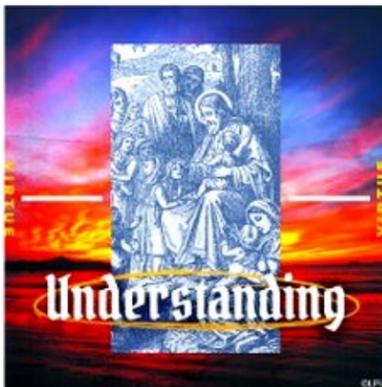
Three meal sizes \$8, \$11, & \$14. Desserts available

**THANK YOU 4:00 PM-- 7:00 PM**

**Second Collection:** Support Madison County Catholic Charities by giving towards the 2nd collection scheduled for March 1st. For 85 years, we've been on the front line serving the hungry, scared, and hurting, in our local community. A powerful way to ensure we can continue to provide our programs for years to come is to donate. Every gift



you give, no matter how small enables us to continue our mission, to extend to all the healing and empowering presence of Jesus. Please designate your cash/check donation to us during the 2nd Collection or use the QR code. You are the future of Catholic Charities, together we are the hands and feet of Christ.



### Virtues, Explained!

Understanding is the "food" of faith. "I believe, in order to understand," said St. Augustine. We must constantly ask the Holy Spirit for greater and more profound understanding, for though understanding proceeds from faith, it in turn nourishes that faith.

### Lenten Blessing

Bless us in Your mercy, Lord, as we enter these 40 Days of Lent. Use this time to call, anoint, bind, strengthen, and inspire us anew. Like a good shepherd, teach us Your voice, and give us the strength to follow. Amen.



From February 18 to March 29, we are uniting with many others for another major simultaneous pro-life mobilization – the 40 Days for Life campaign. The mission of 40 Days for Life is to bring together the Body of

Christ in a spirit of unity during a focused 40 day campaign of prayer, fasting and peaceful activism, with the purpose of repentance, to seek God's favor to turn hearts and minds from a culture of death to a culture of life, thus bringing an end to abortion. We (Immaculate Conception, St. Gertrude and St. Nicholas parishes) chose to Adopt a Day in the 40 Days for Life Granite City campaign to end the demand for abortion. We were assigned Sunday, February 22<sup>nd</sup> as our adopted day, and we need prayer warriors join us in this important mission. We need prayer warriors to pray at the facility in Granite City, and we need some to pray from work, home, etc. too! 40 Days for Life works because prayer works! If you would like to pray for an hour or two on February 22, 2026, please contact Denise Trickey at 314-495-9080. Thank you for standing up for life!



We are once again doing a "Just Jeans Drive for the Homeless" during the month of February. We ask that you please donate new or gently used adult jeans during the month of February. We will have boxes, to place the jeans in, at the following churches,

Immaculate Conception, St. Gertrude, St. Nicholas and St. Paul, we will also have boxes at the KC Hall in Highland and the Highland Police Station. At the end of February, the jeans will be delivered to St. Vincent de Paul Parish in St. Louis. Should you have any questions, please reach out to Bill or Denise Trickey at 314-495-9080.

### Meet Our Seminarians



**Martin McGrath**  
Discipleship IV  
Bishop Simon Bruté

One thing I learned throughout discernment is that I cannot discern alone. Fruitful discernment comes about through relationship with God, our Blessed Mother, and, ideally, close friends and mentors with whom we can share our hearts.

**Euchre tournament**  
Feb. 22 2026; starting 1:00 pm  
at St. Rose Development Club  
Building — 8004 S 1st St.,  
St. Rose



*If we do not struggle, we shall not be victorious, nor shall we merit the crown of immortal glory which God has prepared for those of us who are victorious and triumphant. Let us fear neither the temptation nor the tempter, for if we make use of the shield of faith and the armor of truth, they will have no power whatsoever over us.*

*Saint Francis de Sales*

*(from the meditation for February 22, 2026).*

## FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT FEBRUARY 21 & 22, 2026



**Saint Nicholas - Pocahontas**



**Immaculate Conception—Pierron**



**Saint Gertrude—Grantfork**

FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT

# FASTED FOR 40 DAYS.

— MATTHEW 4:2 —

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 22, 2026

©LPI

+BISHOP  
THOMAS JOHN PAPROCKI  
DIOCESE OF SPRINGFIELD  
IN ILLINOIS

✠  
REV. CALLISTUS OSIAGA  
PASTOR

SONYA CURRY  
SECRETARY

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Rectory: 618-654-2789

Office Address:  
401 E State Street,  
Pocahontas  
Office Hours:  
Mon.—Thurs. 9am to 4pm  
Fridays 9am to 1pm

**Mass Times**  
**Immaculate Conception**  
Wed. & Fri. —8:00am  
Sunday —10:00am

**Saint Nicholas**  
Thursday — 8:00am  
Saturday — 4:30pm

**Saint Gertrude**  
Tuesday — 8:00am  
Sunday — 8:00am