

IMMACULATE CONCEPTION CHURCH

1223 16th St (P.O. Box 849), Fort Benton, MT - 59442

ST. MARGARET'S CHURCH

700 Brewster St (P.O. Box 50), Geraldine, MT – 59446

Second Sunday in Ordinary Time (Year A)

Rev. Mohan Raj Samy

Website: iccfb.org

Pastor

Office: 406-622-3726

Day, Month & Date	<u>Mass Schedule for January 18 – January 25, 2026</u>
Sun Jan 18 th	<i>2nd Sunday in Ordinary Time: 9 am Mass @ ICC & 11 am Mass @ St. Margaret's (Intention: Joanne & Leah Johnson, R/B Sheila Ross).</i>
Wed Jan 21 st	9 am Mass @ ICC (St. Agnes, Virgin & Martyr).
Thurs Jan 22 nd	10:30 am Mass @ Bluffs.
Fri Jan 23 rd	11 am The Angelus, Novena & Mass @ St. Margaret's.
Sat Jan 24 th	9 am Mass @ ICC.
Sun Jan 25 th	<i>3rd Sunday in Ordinary Time: 9 am Mass @ ICC & 11 am Mass @ St. Margaret's.</i>

Sunday Collections: Jan 11, 2026 – The Baptism of the Lord (Year A)

ICC: \$ 1,167 .00 + \$ 90 .00 (Maintenance) = \$ 1,257.00.
St. Margaret's, Geraldine: \$ 1,506.00

[Thank you to All who have generously donated. Your Generosity is very humbling.](#)

Reflection by Pastor: Dear Loving Sisters, Brothers and Children in Christ!

The New Paschal Lamb

John the Baptist saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world. He is the one of whom I said, 'A man is coming after me who ranks ahead of me because he existed before me.'" [John 1:29–30](#).

Central to the Jewish faith was the Feast of Passover, the commemoration of God's deliverance of His people from slavery in Egypt (Exodus 12). In Jesus' time, Passover was one of three major annual feasts during which the Jews made a pilgrimage to the Temple in Jerusalem. Additionally, the Feast of Weeks celebrated the giving of the Law on Mount Sinai and the first fruits of the harvest ([Leviticus 23:15-22](#)), and the Feast of Tabernacles recalled the Israelites' wandering in the desert and celebrated God's providence ([Leviticus 23:33-43](#)).

Recall the first Passover meal. Moses instructed the people to sacrifice an unblemished lamb, mark the doorposts of their homes with its blood, and eat the lamb with unleavened bread and bitter herbs in haste, ready to depart. This act of faith and obedience protected them from the angel of death who passed over the marked houses, sparing the firstborn of Israel, while striking down the firstborn of Egypt. The Passover thus became a perpetual memorial of God's saving power and His covenantal faithfulness to His people.

Because of the Passover, the idea of a sacrificial lamb was intimately familiar to the Jewish people. The Jews were also familiar with the prophecy in Isaiah 53—often referred to as the Suffering Servant—in which the servant of the Lord is described as “a lamb led to the slaughter,” who bears the sins of many ([Isaiah 53:7, 10–12](#)). Additionally, each morning and evening, a lamb was sacrificed in the temple as a continual offering for sin ([Exodus 29:38–42](#)).

As Jesus began His public ministry, the first thing said of Him came from John the Baptist: “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.” His words would have resonated within the minds and hearts of John's disciples. His disciples believed that John was a great prophet and the forerunner of the Messiah, sent to prepare the way for the Lord. They saw him as a holy man who called for repentance and renewal, and some even wondered if he himself might be the Christ, though John consistently denied this.

Because John's ministry was one of preparation for the Messiah, his disciples would have anticipated the Messiah's imminent arrival. Imagine the excitement, surprise, questions, uncertainty, and hope that would have filled their minds and hearts as they listened to John's prophecy about Jesus. John continued, “He is the one of whom I said, ‘A man is coming after me who ranks ahead of me because he existed before me.’”

Though John's proclamation about Jesus took on a powerful significance for his disciples that first moment that he revealed Jesus as the Lamb of God, John's words must resonate within each of us today. Now that the Christmas Season is complete and we enter into Ordinary Time, we are invited to embrace Jesus' public ministry, with all His teachings

and Paschal Sacrifice, as something extraordinary in our lives. We must approach His ministry with the same hope, enthusiasm, excitement, and anticipation that John's disciples experienced. Reflect today on the moment when John the Baptist's disciples heard him proclaim, "Behold, the Lamb of God!" Like them, strive to see Jesus with new eyes and hopeful anticipation as we begin Ordinary Time. This liturgical season marks the beginning of Jesus' public ministry, and it must also be a renewed beginning of His works in your life. Follow Him without reserve, allowing Him to take away your sins and share in His life and love.

HOSPITAL MINISTRY

As our elderly parishioners transition to Assisted Living and the Nursing Home, Hospital Ministry becomes their connection with the Immaculate Conception Parish family. At this time we are fortunate to have ministers who cover our homebound and Front Range Assisted Living and other ministers to cover Benefis MRMC.

One of our Hospital Ministers has some ongoing health issues that is keeping them from participating. That leaves just one Minister to cover all of the weeks. This will be an issue for the next several months and we are asking for your help. Please consider becoming a temporary Hospital Minister. Training is available for those new to this position or as a refresher.

If you are willing to help, please contact Fr Mohan at (406) 622-3726 or Cecilia Dostal at (406) 836-0184

Catholic Foundation of Eastern Montana

Did you know the Catholic Foundation of Eastern Montana has more than 200 endowments that support Catholic churches, schools, and ministries all throughout the Diocese of Great Falls-Billings? By supporting these endowments, you can help ensure the Church remains strong for generations to come. To learn more, visit www.catholicfoundationmt.org or call (406) 315-1765.

St. Margaret's Bulletin

Women's Annual Luncheon Sunday, January 25 at noon. If convenient bring something for the potluck. We will plan the calendar of events for 2026, enjoy playing a simple game and visiting with one another.

Faith Sharing Group facilitated by Trish Eklund will meet Tuesdays at 1:30 at the Senior Center. First session is Tuesday, January 20. If you wish to join please contact Trish Eklund. Text or call 406-781-0076.

Reflection by Trish - A Bit of History

Pope Leo is planning a visit to Nicaea in Turkey this year to celebrate the 1,700th anniversary of the Council of Nicaea. What happened at this council? Why does it deserve special attention?

325 years after Jesus' life on earth, the Roman emperor Constantine converted to Christianity and recognized it as an official religion. Prior to this, Christians had been under threat for three centuries. There were bishops in the different urban areas, but no way to organize globally. In the different regions there were councils to debate and discuss issues that arose. There was a bishop in Rome, as many cities, but he had no recognized special power, unlike the Pope in Rome today.

Notably, the Council of Nicaea was the first meeting of all the bishops. From May to July in 325 AD, bishops came together across their differences to listen, to discern, and to seek. The Council was held in Nicaea, a suburb of Constantinople, which is now Istanbul. There were over 300 bishops present, and most were from the east.

Constantine recognized that Christians debated issues that affected Rome. If Constantine was to be an effective leader of the Roman Empire, the Christian church had to be in agreement with the Empire over many issues. (There were many things that they did not agree upon. Remember that Jesus was murdered because he raised ideas and issues that were cause for debate and made the leaders uncomfortable at that time.)

For example, the date of Easter was not uniform across the regions. Bishops used local formulas to calculate when Easter was celebrated. At this council it was decided Easter would be the Sunday after the first full moon following the spring equinox. It is apparent today that there were faulty assumptions of when the equinox would be, but it was unifying to agree upon a date for everyone to celebrate Jesus' resurrection.

Today the Eastern Church and the Western Church celebrate Easter on different dates due to the fact that when the Gregorian calendar was accepted in 1582 by the Pope, the Eastern Church kept the Julian calendar for their religious holidays.

The council discussed practical issues as well as theological issues. One of the biggest debates was over Jesus being divine and human. Some believed he was a wonderful

person. Others thought he as divine appearing as human. Of course, some believed he was both human and divine. After lengthy and heated debate, it was at this council that Jesus' divinity was affirmed. In other words, God loves us so much that God entered our mucky and messy reality to bring us in union with God. It was agreed upon that Jesus is fully human and fully divine.

The council crafted the Nicene Creed, which we frequently say during our Mass. This allowed all the faithful to coherently and simply state what we believe. We believe in God; Jesus, human and divine; and the Holy Spirit; all separate and all one.

In the Nicene Creed, we say the word "consubstantial". Consubstantial means "of the same essence" or "of one being with the Father". It is hard to find a word to really express this understanding that is foundational to our faith.

Jesus as human and divine was the experience of the first Christian communities, those who had personal experience with Jesus. They shared their experience of Jesus and God being deeply connected. They preached about God being present to all of humanity. But after 300 years, some had lost this message. The message of this first ecumenical council is that our faith is really about experiencing God here and now. In doing so we experience the Divine, we experience God as love.

Religion is not about following the rules. The rules were set to help us to come to know the Great Love ever present and close to us. Pope Leo wrote a letter that states, "We are enriched by the unity of all Christians to reach a common understanding. The Nicene Creed is the heart of shared faith." It is important to note that unity is not uniformity. Unity is being harmony, of one accord. There may be many things Christians disagree about, but the creed is basic to all.

We give thanks to the One Loving God of all.