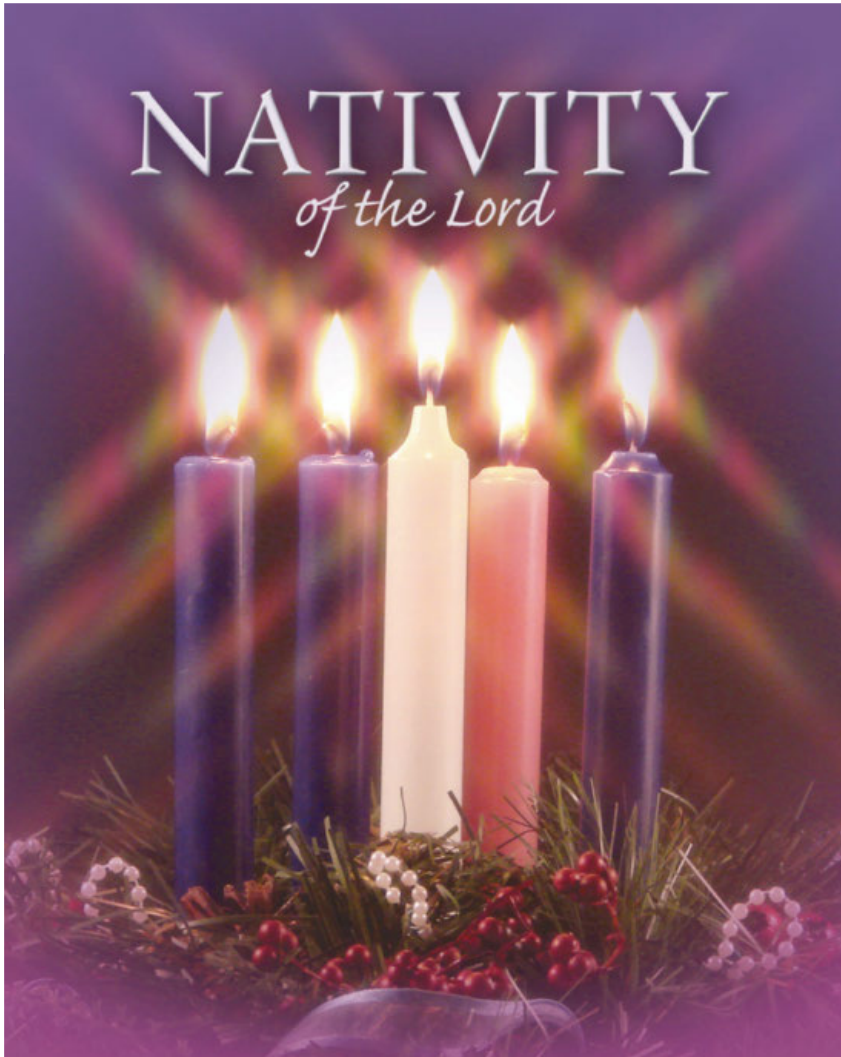




## St. THOMAS the APOSTLE

2160 North Edward Decatur, IL 62526 (217) 877-4146 StThomasDecatur@gmail.com



### **Look to the Holy Family for inspiration.**

While families come in all shapes and sizes and no two are the same, they all need a common focus and grounding. Families provide us with lessons about relationships and communication and the unconditional acceptance and love we so desperately crave. The center of every family is faith. We discover the windows to God Himself in His gifts of faith, hope, and love. Because our families struggle with weakness and sin, we have to come back to the Holy Family often for inspiration and guidance. In the bond of love that they shared, they clung to the anchor of God Himself and endured challenges far greater than many we will ever face.

### LITURGY SCHEDULE

#### ***Weekends***

Sunday 10 am

#### ***Weekdays***

Monday-Thursday 8:15 am

#### **Reconciliation**

Sundays: 9:15 - 9:45 am  
Wednesdays: 7:30 - 8:10 am

#### **Eucharistic Adoration**

First Friday from 9 am - 5 pm

#### **Decatur Catholic Radio**

WDCR 88.9/96.5

### CONTEMPLATE

#### **This Child Is Blessed**

Every parent knows a child is a blessing who is filled with innocence and wonder and grace. Grandparents know this, too, perhaps in renewed and deeper ways.



It is their hope that every child will grow strong, be wise, and be favored. Even the pre-teen Jesus astonishes and worries his parents as they fret over their child!

Those of us who are parents know this stress. But all of us, even us aged ones, are still children of God, dearly loved and called to be obedient.



## A WORD FROM FR. PETER

### How Was Your Christmas?

The long-awaited time is here! Christmas. Parties, decorations, movies, dates, meetings, plays, reunions, dinners, visits, vacations, travels, and concerts. All these and more are going on. Many of us are having real fun with family and friends. Indeed, this is a time to rejoice, give thanks to God for his blessings, and be happy. That is why the Christmas cards we send and the ones we receive will both say – “Merry or Happy Christmas.”

Very soon, the Christmas and New Year celebrations will be over. Some of us will feel refreshed and rejuvenated by the fine and reinvigorating parties, dinners, meetings, and other similar experiences that make Christmas a special holiday. Then we will be back to school, work, and other routines. This will mean traveling to a distant town, city, state, or country for some of us to begin or continue various businesses, works, ministries, and other life activities. For others, it may be staying home but resuming a regular job or study routine.

Many of our relatives, friends, acquaintances, and colleagues will be happy to see us back after the holidays when we are back to these work, study, or ministerial routines. One of the most common questions they will ask us is – how was your Christmas? We all know the likeliest answer to this and similar questions. The majority of people will immediately, sometimes almost involuntarily, answer this question positively. “Oh, it was great. It was good. It was wonderful. My Christmas was fantastic.” Shortly after we have responded, we realize we have told a lie. Yes, not everyone is having a wonderful Christmas.

Some people are spending Christmas sick on hospital beds or taking care of a sick loved one. Some are grieving the recent death of a loved one or hopelessly sitting beside a loved one in hospice care. Others are lonely or depressed, sometimes even amid family and friends. Still, some people may be too poor to afford decent food for



**Fr. Peter Chineke,**  
*Parochial  
Administrator*

Christmas or enjoy a warm shelter while the cold winter braces on. Others are celebrating this Christmas without their loved ones, who are behind bars, perhaps for crimes they did not commit. These and many other situations are the realities that characterize this Christmas holiday for some of us. But we will prefer to say that our Christmas was fantastic, or good, or great when others ask us, “how was your Christmas?”

While some of us are undoubtedly enjoying this Christmas, we also know that we can help others enjoy this season of hope with us. Christmas, as we know, is not a secular holiday. It is a Christ-centered holiday - a Holy Day. Not an ordinary holiday. Being Christ-centered, we should celebrate it with Christ at the center of our celebrations in a special way.

If by chance, you don't know HOW, please read *Matthew 25:31-36* or stop me by after any of the Masses this week and ask me how. You can also call the parish office or send me an email at [pchineke@dio.org](mailto:pchineke@dio.org) to know how.

I wish you and yours a HAPPY CHRISTMAS and a BLESSED NEW YEAR.

*Fr. Peter*

### Incense at Masses this Weekend

#### Christmas Eve Mass

Saturday, Dec. 24, 5 p.m. — No incense used

#### Christmas Day Mass

Sunday, Dec. 25, 10 a.m. — Incense will be used



### St. Jude's Novena

May the Sacred Heart of Jesus be adored, glorified, loved, and preserved throughout the world now and forever.

Sacred Heart of Jesus, pray for us.  
St. Jude, worker of miracles, pray for us.  
St. Jude, help of the hopeless, pray for us. I will never forget thy graces and favors you obtain for me and I will do my utmost to spread devotion to you.

Pray an Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory Be.

Say this prayer 9 times a day for 9 days.

**Thank you, St. Jude, for Prayers Answered.**

**Q: Why did God choose Mary to be the mother of Jesus? Why was she so young?**



**A:** These two questions are actually hard to answer with accuracy. In many ways, the answers remain a mystery.

From a theological perspective, we can say that God chose Mary to be the mother of Jesus because she, herself, was the Immaculate Conception. This means that she was the only fitting mother for God in the flesh. Mary was conceived in the womb of her mother in a miraculous way in that she was conceived without sin. God chose to bestow upon her a “preservative grace,” meaning, God preserved her from all stain of sin, including Original Sin, at the moment of her creation in the womb of her mother. Of course, He did this so that she would be a fitting vessel for God the Son to become incarnate in her womb. The grace that preserved her came from the Cross of her Son Jesus, but it transcended time so as to free her at the moment of her conception. Thus, her Son was her Savior, even though He had not yet been born in time. If that’s confusing, try to ponder it for a while. It’s a great mystery of faith and a deep one also.

You might also be wondering, “But why Mary?” This is a question that is hard, if not impossible, to answer. It’s most likely a matter of God’s mysterious will. Perhaps God, who can see all things and knows all people even before they are born, looked at all women from all time and saw that Mary was the one who would never freely choose to sin. And perhaps for that reason God chose to gift her with the Immaculate Conception. But this is ultimately a mystery of faith that will be revealed only in Heaven.

As for the second question, “Why was she so young?” this might be easier to answer from a historical perspective. Today, in the twenty-first century, it’s uncommon for a fifteen-year-old girl to marry and have a child. But it wasn’t that way back then. When Mary had Jesus, she was seen, not as a dependent child, but as a young woman ready to start a family. So it’s always important to try to understand the culture of the time when considering questions of history.

The logo features a circular emblem with a cross and a 'P' inside, flanked by wheat stalks. To the right of the emblem, the text 'Mass Intentions for the Week' is written in a blue, serif font.

**Mass Intentions for the Week**

Saturday, December 24 — *Christmas Eve*  
5 pm – **Delmer Collett †**

Sunday, December 25 — *Christmas Day*  
10 am – **Lenore “Sug” Lee †**

Monday, December 26  
8:15 am – **Bernie Custin †**

Tuesday, December 27  
8:15 am – **Polly Hensley †**

Wednesday, December 28  
8:15 am – **Austin Nichols †**

Thursday, December 29  
8:15 am – **Lenore “Sug” Lee †**

Friday, December 30  
*No Mass*

Saturday, December 31  
*No Mass*

Sunday, January 1 — *Mary, Holy Mother of God*  
10 am – **Rachel Croner**



**PRAYER REQUESTS**

**Please Remember in your Prayers**

**All who are Ill at Home or in the Hospital and their Families and Caregivers**

Alfred, Betty Althoff, Rachel Flick,  
Kevin Henry, Jim Hertel, Darlene,  
Ann-Marie Hillyer, Sawyer Dale Hunter,  
Anonymous, Amber Johnson, Edwin Jones,  
Patricia Jones, Kelly McLean, Trey McLean,  
Lucia Molloy, Christina Mooney, Lucia Mounce,  
Rev. Msgr. James O’Shea, Joe Perry,  
Andy Richards, Kay Russell, Carolyn Thorpe,  
Roz Sandage, Ed Schanuel, Ron Shinall,  
Brenda Sullivan, Virginia Thompson, JoAn Wayne,  
Pete Wayne, and Tami Wittenauer

## Feast of the Holy Family

Each year brings new hope, new opportunities, new changes. May we know the blessings of the Lord in our lives as we begin this new year. The Lord will always be with us in every opportunity and change that may come our way.



This **Friday, December 30**, we celebrate the **Feast of the Holy Family**. The Feast presents the Holy Family as the model for all Christian families. Our family life becomes sanctified when we live the life of the Church within our homes.

We pray and ask God to grant each of our families — and our larger parish family — a special blessing, and to open our hearts to His grace to live our lives following the loving example of Mary, Joseph, and Jesus.

Happy Feast of the Holy Family, and a Blessed New Year to all!



During Christmas season, please remember to pray for those in our Sister Parish, Immaculate Conception, in Comapa, Guatemala, as they

**GUATEMALA**

## Let the Parish Pray for Your Intentions



The **parish petition book** is located on a stand in the chapel under the icon of Our Lady of Perpetual Help. These intentions will be remembered in our intercessions at all Masses. If you would like the parish to pray for your intention, please write the intention in the book. Talk to Jesus about your special intention.

## Mary, the Holy Mother of God

If you are planning your New Year's schedule:

**Sunday, Jan. 1,**  
New Year's Day —  
Solemnity of Mary, the  
Holy Mother of God

- **Sunday Mass at 10 a.m.**

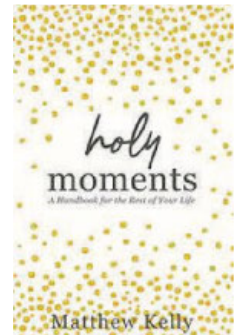
*There is no New Year's Eve Mass at St. Thomas .*



## A Special Christmas Gift for You!

Pick up a copy of Matthew Kelly's newest book, *Holy Moments*, from the table in the back of church. It's a special Christmas gift for you from **a generous parish family.**

You have so much more to offer. You know it. You have sensed it for some time now. This sacred truth has been bubbling up in your soul. But you have never known quite what to do about it. All that is about to change. Some ideas are so powerful that simply becoming aware of them, changes our lives forever. Holy Moments is such an idea. It is profoundly simple, astonishingly practical, and once you discover it, your life will finally make sense. It's time to let Holy Moments show you what is possible. It's time to explore your soul-potential.



## Next First Friday Adoration: Feb. 3

**There will not be First Friday Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament in January.**

The next First Friday Eucharistic Adoration will be Friday, February 3, from 8:15 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Please join us in February for one of the most beautiful ways to pray!



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