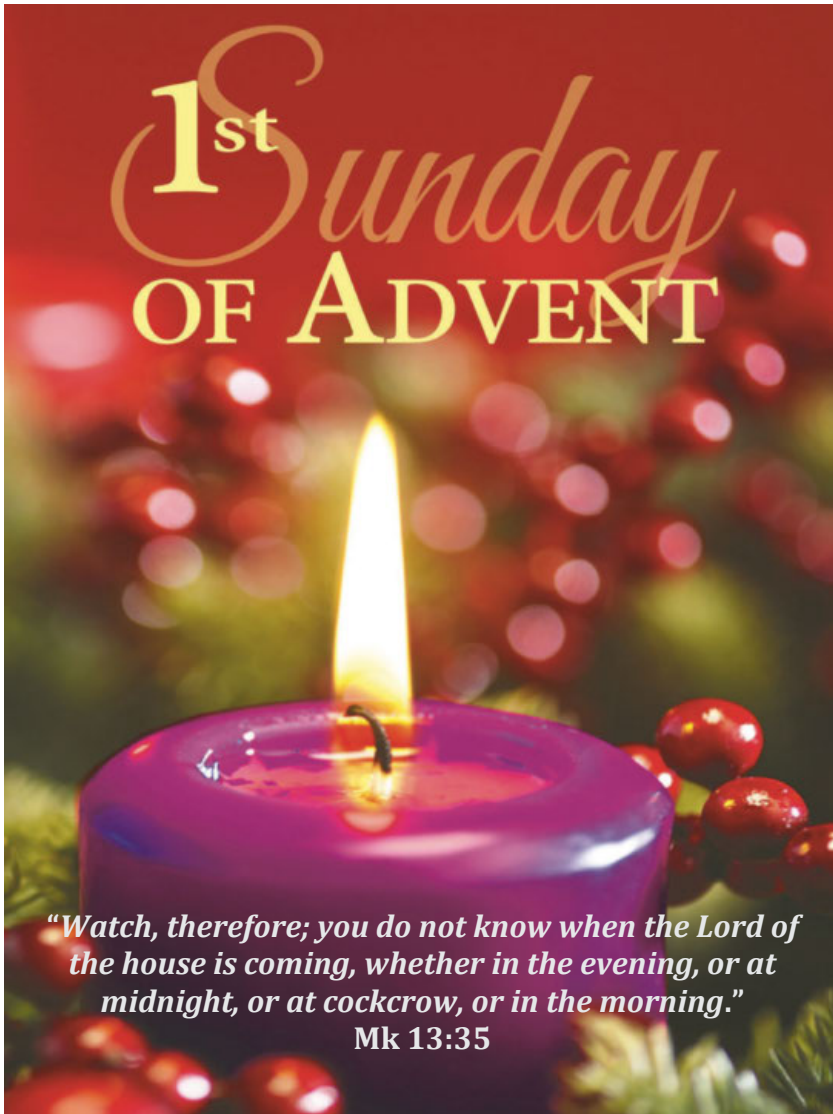


1st Sunday of Advent • December 3, 2023



St. THOMAS the APOSTLE

2160 North Edward Decatur, IL 62526 (217) 877-4146 stthomasdecaturn@dio.org



"Watch, therefore; you do not know when the Lord of the house is coming, whether in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or in the morning."
Mk 13:35



Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception

The observance of this feast began with an Encyclical by Pope Pius IX, *Ineffabilis Deus*, when he formally defined the dogma of the Immaculate Conception on December 8, 1854:

"The most Blessed Virgin Mary was, from the first moment of her conception, by a singular grace and privilege of almighty God and by virtue of the merits of Jesus Christ, Savior of the human race, preserved immune from all stain of original sin."

Several years later, in 1858, the Blessed Mother gave her name to St. Bernadette at Lourdes stating, "I am the Immaculate Conception." The Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception (< L, *immaculatus*, "stainless") is a time to celebrate the great joy of God's gift to humanity in Mary, and to recognize with greater clarity, the truth that each and every human being has been created by God to fulfill a particular mission that he and only he can fulfill. (from CNA, EWTN, Marywood)

LITURGY SCHEDULE

Weekends

Sunday 10 am

Weekdays

Monday-Friday 8:15 am

Reconciliation

Sundays: 9:15 - 9:50 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

Lately I've been listening to a science-based podcast on healthy daily living. The host frequently discusses the wide range of health benefits of sleep. So, each night I'm trying to get more, and better, slumber, and it's helping me feel energized. So, why in the world should we follow Christ's advice this week? "Watch therefore, for you do not know when the master of the house will come ... lest he find you asleep." Isn't sleep, especially at midnight and cockcrow, a good thing?

Of course, it is. But the wakefulness the Lord calls us to is a deep, personal orientation to Him. A nightly vigil is therefore a metaphor for this, but it's not just that. We should give up real sleep in order to pray, too. This difficult practice is a time-tested way to foster wakefulness of heart. When we give up sleep to pray, it focuses us. We learn that life is not an endless series of days. You and I belong to the Lord — awake or asleep, in life and in death. Sooner or later, even our need for our physical sleep will pass away. And our attentiveness to God — that is, whether we are awaiting Him to meet us — will be all that matters. May I challenge us this week and this Advent to intentionally give up at least one hour of sleep each week for prayer? Stay up later, wake up in the middle of the night, or an hour earlier, and pray. Will we be a bit more tired the next day? Yes. But we'll be amazed at the spiritual wakefulness that results, too.

— *Father John Muir*

A WORD FROM FR. PETER

40 Days for Life – A Spiritual Campaign Against Abortion

From September 27th through November 5th, many Catholics across Decatur went daily to pray the Holy Rosary at Decatur's Planned Parenthood. Cecilia Kehoe and her 40 Days For Life colleagues organized this event. These prayer-warrior Catholics and advocates for life from our Decatur Catholic community invited all Catholics in the area through our parishes to sign up for times to go and pray the Holy Rosary at the abortion clinic. They went several times themselves.

On November 2nd, to observe All-Soul's Day, our St. Thomas parish went as a family to join in this spiritual campaign for an end to the ongoing bloody massacre of innocent babies. Many people participated. However, something happened later that evening. Someone sent me an email asking why all the prayers and campaigns against abortion and if that's the worst crime against humanity in our society today.

It was not the first time I was confronted with such questions or arguments about the obsession against abortion. I responded briefly to the email and invited the person to meet sometime to discuss their concerns. In my response, I explained how there are undoubtedly so many crimes against humanity in our society today. However, abortion stands out as one of the most heinous of these crimes. It concerns a child who is helpless, defenseless, and powerless. Abortion also has caused insurmountable and irreparable psychological damage in the lives of many people who have participated in it.

Later that evening, I spoke with a friend and discussed the email. I was referred to this website: <https://ifapray.org/blog/why-we-must-all-pray-about-the-abortion-law-in-ohio/>. Here, I found these and many more powerful responses about why we must all stand up against abortion. Please check the website and read more reactions than the five below.

- * "I was told I would feel nothing. First, I felt the ripping of the suction going through me. Thereafter...I had nightmares, chronic depression, and reoccurring bacterial infections..." ~ Christina
- * "It turned my whole world upside down into a deep dark pit of shame, despair, addictions and depression. It kills a part of your soul forever, never to be the same... never.... a deep pit of living hell on earth" ~ Rachelle
- * "The pain I suffered was the worst physical and psychological pain I have ever experienced in my life." ~ Kathy
- * "I've been depressed for years since, I've had extreme mental and emotional problems, little to no self-esteem, self-destructive behaviors, extreme anxiety, shame, feelings of worthlessness, unable to have healthy relationships, abusive relationships...I could go on and on." ~ Shanna S.
- * "Abortion clinics LIE...WOMEN NEED OPTIONS. Had I been



Fr. Peter Chineke,
Parochial
Administrator

correctly informed about the physical and emotional pain I would feel for YEARS after the abortion I NEVER would have went through with it. I would have chosen adoption..."

~ Pamela

May God continue to instill in us a special passion to discourage the sin of abortion and to stay away from every action that goes against the sanctity and dignity of human life. Amen.

— Fr. Peter



Mass Intentions for the Week

Sunday, December 3

10 am – **Margaret Hynen** †

Monday, December 4

8:15 am – **Hope Bales**

Tuesday, December 5

8:15 am – **Ronald Grason II**

Wednesday, December 6

8:15 am – **Ruth Frazer** †

Thursday, December 7

8:15 am – **Gwen Berruti** †

Friday, December 8

8:15 am & 5:15 pm – **For the People of St. Thomas**

Saturday, December 9, *No Mass*

† *Deceased*



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.

December Events

- 6** Altar Servers Meeting & Training, 6pm, in Church
- 8** Mass at 8:15am & 5:15pm;
Eucharistic Exposition & Divine Mercy
Prayer at 3pm
- 10** Cookie Sunday, after Mass
- 18** Pastoral Council Meeting at 6pm
- 24** Sun. Mass 10am; Christmas Vigil at 7pm
- 25** Christmas Mass at 10am



Parish Giving

	Collected	Budgeted
November 19	\$ 2,268	\$5,000

Year-to-Date: \$ **92,055** \$105,000

Short/Ahead: - \$ **12,945**

R/M Donations	\$ 40
Sister Parish Donations	\$ 30
Christmas Flowers	\$ 55
All Souls	\$ 10
CAMPAIGN FOR JUSTICE & HOPE	\$ 10
DECATUR CALVARY CEMETERY	\$ 30

Online giving is also available:

<https://parishgiving.dio.org/stthomasdecatu>

PARISH OFFICE

Mrs. Cynthia Hinkle, Parish Secretary

Mr. Richard Harding, Maintenance Manager

Mr. Joe Snow, Business Manager

Mr. Chris Hoffman, Communications Coordinator

Rev. Richard Weltin, Pastor Emeritus

Rev. Peter Chineke, Parochial Administrator

Open Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm ← **NEW HOURS**

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Christmas Basket Drive



Once again it is time for the parish's annual Christmas Basket Drive for Catholic Charities. Parishioners are encouraged to place donations in the special "lighted" baskets located at the back of the church. The money collected will go to Catholic Charities to purchase \$50.00 gift cards to be given to families in need. Your kindness and generosity will be much appreciated.

Christmas Card Donations



This year St. Thomas is continuing the tradition of taking Christmas gift bags to its parish members who are homebound or in senior facilities. If you have any unused or new Christmas cards, with envelopes, that you would like to donate, use the box at the back of church during the weeks of Nov. 26th & Dec. 3rd.

Keeping in Touch



A visit, phone call or even a handwritten card can brighten anyone's day. St. Thomas parish misses those who can no longer join in celebrating the Sunday Eucharist each week. If you are homebound or in a senior facility, please contact the parish office and give your name, address and phone number so your info can be added to the parish's visitation/contact list.



Please Remember in your Prayers

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

Stan Rothenbuecher, Carol Dilbeck, Rachel Flick, Kevin Henry, Jim Hertel, Ann-Marie Hillyer, Edwin Jones, Patricia Jones, Kelly McLean, Trey McLean, Christina Mooney, Lucia Mounce, Tom Mounce, Rev. Msgr. James O'Shea, Art Richard, Kay Russell, Roz Sandage, Libby Spainhour, Rev. Jason Stone, Ed Schanuel, Ron Shinall, Brenda Sullivan, JoAn Wayne, Pete Wayne, Jan Vandercar, and Tami Wittenauer. Please call the parish office or email stthomasdecatu@dio.org to add or remove a name.

Advent Ideas-HOPE: ♦How many people this past year have given you the gift of HOPE? Sending them a thank you card is a loving way of showing your appreciation for their act of kindness and that you are thinking of them this Advent Season. ♦Take a few minutes to say one decade of the Rosary per day, with the intention of bringing HOPE to others in need. ♦The Feast of St. Nicholas is celebrated on Dec. 6th. Share with your children his story. Before bed have them leave one of their socks outside their bedroom doors. Stuff them with a piece of fruit, candy cane and chocolate gold coins. (This is also fun for adults to do.)



AI and Church Documents



In his last Encyclical, *Caritas in Veritate*, Pope Benedict XVI wrote that “Technology — it is worth emphasizing — is a profoundly human reality, linked to the autonomy and freedom of man. In technology we express and confirm the hegemony of the spirit over matter.” Artificial intelligence (AI), like the wheel and the electric light, can make man’s labor much easier, thus freeing him for more intellectual and spiritual pursuits.

MagisteriumAI is a recent Generative AI that can dramatically accelerate research on religious subjects. Generative AI, or genAI, searches for facts in a database and synthesizes an answer in readable text. As Bishop Paprocki warned in *Catholic Times* this April, it is right to be cautious with AI. Artificial intelligence is no substitute for human intelligence. That’s why MagisteriumAI lists all the references used to generate an answer, all of which are documents of the Catholic Church that fall within the Extraordinary and Ordinary Magisterium, so researchers can check the accuracy of the results. Currently, over 6,000 documents can be searched.

For example, when the Pro version was asked “what did thomas aquinas write about the age of resurrected bodies?,” the short answer was “Thomas Aquinas wrote that the resurrected bodies will be restored to the state of ultimate perfection, which is in the youthful age” and *Summa Theologiae*, Supplement, Q. 81, A. 1, which deals specifically with this question, was the reference cited.

God gave man a brain because He wanted him to use it. It is only fitting that man use it to develop tools that bring him closer to God.

Coventry Carol

This is a 16th-century carol originating from Coventry. It was traditionally performed during mystery plays telling New Testament stories, including that of the Nativity. The lyrics detail evil King Herod’s orders, made at the news of the birth of Jesus Christ, to slay all young children, known as the “Massacre of the Innocents,” a preview of modern slaughter by abortion. The hauntingly beautiful carol is a lullaby of mothers to their doomed children. Listen to it online.

Lully, lullay, thou little tiny child,
Bye bye, lully, lullay.
Thou little tiny child,
Bye bye, lully, lullay.

O sisters too, how may we do
For to preserve this day
This poor youngling for whom we sing,
“Bye bye, lully, lullay?”

Herod the king, in his raging,
Chargèd he hath this day
His men of might in his own sight
All young children to slay.

That woe is me, poor child, for thee
And ever mourn and may
For thy parting neither say nor sing,
“Bye bye, lully, lullay.”



Song of the Week

“Church Pew”, Riley Clemmons, 2023

I sat down in an old church pew
Same way that I always do
Every Sunday morning since I was a
kid

And for some reason I couldn't help
Thinking 'bout the tales that bench
could tell
Of people who sat here just like this

People full of faith
People full of doubt
People all just trying their best
To figure it all out

Church pews, they've got stories
They got so much that they've seen
The best of saints, the worst of sinners
And every bit of in between

We all come for different reasons
But Lord knows we all need Jesus
And He's always saving room for me and you
Right here in this church pew

Funeral flowers and wedding rings
Users trying to just get clean
Doesn't matter why we're walking through that door

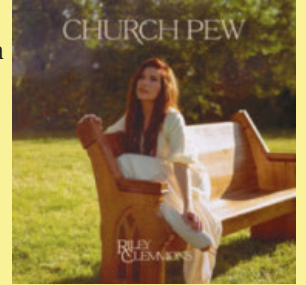
Those echoes of amazing grace
Keep on ringing through this place
And leave us different than we were before

Church pews, they've got stories...
We all come for different reasons ...

People lifting hands
People crying tears
The beautiful and broken
All are welcome here

Church pews, they've got stories...
We all come for different reasons ...

Right here in this church pew
In this church pew



Did You Know?



Only in the movies does Ebenezer Scrooge get visited by the ghosts of Christmas Past, Present, and Future all in one night. In the 1843 story by Charles Dickens, the ghosts arrive over three nights. This tale is about redemption, and has many Christian elements. The three nights might symbolize Christ's Resurrection on the third day, which redeemed us all.



January 19, 2024

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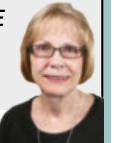
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