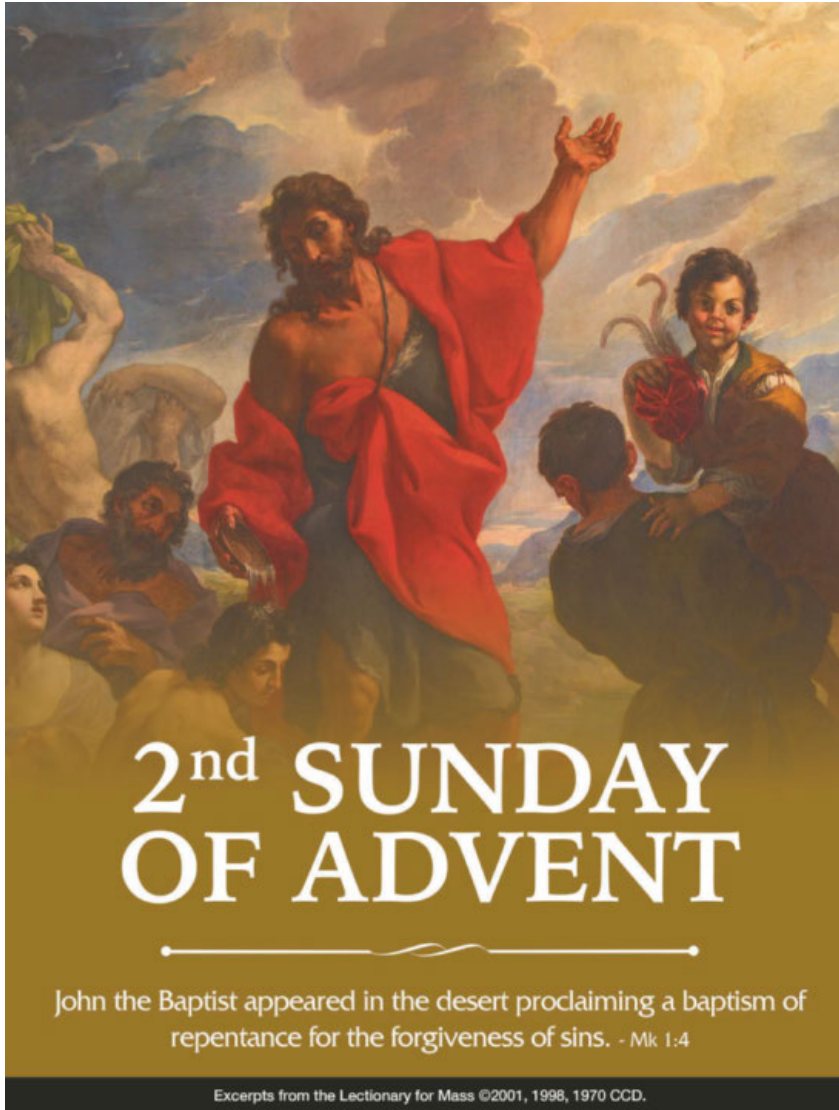


2nd Sunday of Advent • December 10, 2023



St. THOMAS the APOSTLE

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



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

We like to think we are totally free, but the bitter truth is we simply are not. Or better put, our freedom is limited on every side — by governments, corporate giants, physical and mental frailties, genetic shortcomings, and even the boundaries of time and space, and above all, the burden of our sins and pending deaths. In our day, we are perhaps particularly aware that we are not free to disconnect from the technocratic rulers of the air. We are not totally free.

In Jesus' day, everyone felt the crushing weight of the Roman Empire. You can say you're free all you want. But try not paying your taxes to Rome and see what happens. Once we feel this burden in our own lives — however it comes — we are ready to hear the stunning announcement that commences Mark's gospel, "The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." It's not a simple perfunctory introduction, but a dramatic announcement of new freedom. The word "gospel" was a political, even military, term. It meant: a great victory has been won and a new king is in charge. This Jesus — not the Roman emperor — is God's son, and he has defeated all that crushes human freedom. It's time to follow him and be truly free. This week let's refuse to submit our freedom to false rulers — especially that of sin. And let's rejoice that Christ is coming to make us perfectly free from all our oppressors.

— *Father John Muir*

The History of Advent (Part 1)

The mystery of Christmas Day has every right to the honor of preparation by prayer and works of penance; it is unknown when this season of preparation, long observed before it was called Advent, was first instituted. Most likely it began in the west and was adopted much later, near the end of the 4th century, in the east. The oldest account of the length and exercises of Advent is, from the 2nd book of the *History of the Franks* by St. Gregory of Tours, that St. Perpetuus, circa 480 A.D., had decreed a fast 3 times a week, from the feast of St. Martin until Christmas; Pope St. Gregory I reduced the period to 4 Sundays. In the capitularia of Charles the Bald, in 846, the bishops admonish that prince not to call them away from their churches during Lent or Advent, as they had special duties, particularly that of preaching. Saint Ivo of Chartres, St. Bernard, and several other doctors of the 11th and 12th centuries, wrote sermons, *de Adventu Domini*, quite distinct from their Sunday homilies on the Gospels of that season. (Fasting was an important part of early Advent and will be discussed in Part 2.)



A WORD FROM FR. PETER

Another Change to Embrace

Today, Sunday, December 3, 2023, I will announce the new change that has come to us. I have been transferred to another parish. This change will take effect from Saturday, December 16, 2023. Our bishop, Bishop Thomas John Paprocki, has asked me to go to Our Lady of the Holy Spirit Church in Mount Zion and St. Isidore Church in Bethany as their new parochial administrator. This change was sudden. However, we all knew from the beginning that my stay at St. Thomas was temporary. What we needed to know was how brief it was going to be.



Fr. Peter Chineke,
*Parochial
Administrator*

Until now, some people do not know whether I am a pastor or a parochial vicar here at St. Thomas. I am neither. I am the parochial administrator. A pastor is a priest entirely in charge of a parish. He has a longer term to stay in his assignment before being transferred to another place. A parochial vicar is a priest who assists the pastor in his parish and other ministerial responsibilities. However, a parochial administrator is a priest entirely in charge of a parish. Still, he does not have a defined term length in his assignment. The bishop can transfer him to another assignment as quickly as needed.

Priests are assigned as parochial administrators for various reasons. It can be that the bishop has a more stable assignment in mind for them, which was not ready at the time. It can also be that they are only a few years in the priesthood with little or no experience. So, the bishop assigns them to watch their performance before becoming pastor. Another possible reason a priest can be assigned a parochial administrator is that his health or other circumstances may not allow for a more permanent assignment. In this case, the bishop may deem it wise to assign him a parochial administrator instead of a pastor. However, the major difference between a pastor and a parochial administrator is that the pastor has a more defined term in office and may not be removed or transferred easily without legitimate reasons. That is not the case with a parochial administrator.

From Saturday, December 16, 2023, my assignments will include:

- Parochial administrator of Our Lady of the Holy Spirit Church, Mount Zion.
- Parochial administrator of St. Isidore Church, Bethany.
- Chaplain of Milliken University.
- Associate Episcopal Master of Ceremonies to Bishop Paprocki.

- Canon Law Student at the Catholic University of America, Washington DC.

Your new priest at St. Thomas from Saturday, December 16, 2023, is the Reverend Father Jason Stone. Father Stone is a holy and pious brother priest whom I respect for his humble personality and love for Christ and his Church. Please shower him with all the love and support I have received from you. And do not forget, it is a charitable responsibility to embrace your new priest while maintaining your relationships with our Blessed Lord Jesus Christ. Let no change affect your faith negatively or make you critical of any clergy or diocesan administration.

A Blessed Advent to you and yours, with Best Wishes for Christmas and the New Year 2024. —**Fr. Peter Chineke**

UPDATE: The Altar Servers & Pastoral Council meetings scheduled for December have been postponed until early 2024. The Christmas Vigil Mass has been moved to 5pm.



Mass Intentions for the Week

- Sunday, December 10
10 am – **Austin Nichols †**
- Monday, December 11
8:15 am – **Gwen Berruti †**
- Tuesday, December 12
8:15 am – **Lenora (Sug) Lee †**
- Wednesday, December 13
8:15 am – **Mrs. Olson**
- Thursday, December 14
8:15 am – **Margaret Redman**
- Friday, December 15
8:15 am – **Pius Chineke †**
- Saturday, December 16, *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.

St. Lucy

December 13



Parish Giving

	Collected	Budgeted
November 26	\$ 6,420	\$5,000
Year-to-Date:	\$ 98,475	\$110,000
Short/Ahead:	- \$ 11,525	

R/M Donations	\$ 40
Sister Parish Donations	\$ 35
Christmas Flowers	\$ 260
All Souls	\$ 30
First Offering	\$ 5
CAMPAIGN FOR JUSTICE & HOPE	\$ 110
DECATUR CALVARY CEMETERY	\$ 35

Online giving is also available:
<https://parishgiving.dio.org/stthomasdecaturn>

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- 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*

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Advent Ideas-Peace:

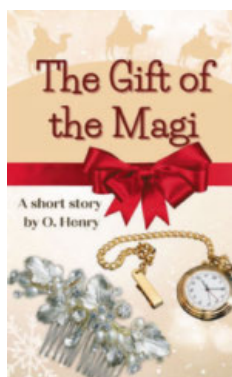


♦“Finding peace in the world starts with finding peace in your world.” Creating inner peace can be a blessing during this busy season. Start by writing in a journal. (Children will have fun making one). Find a quiet place to write something positive for the day, something you are grateful for and something you love about yourself.

Continue this till the end of Advent. Discovering the things that bring you peace is a positive step in helping others find theirs. (Younger children may like to share their journals with the family and are encouraged to do so.)

♦Write a personal prayer for World Peace and recite it each day. This can also be done as a family or with friends.

A Christmas Classic



“The Gift of the Magi,” a 1905 short story by American writer O. Henry, is a classic Christmas tale about true love. O. Henry was known for his stories about ordinary people. This story is an example of that and has a moral for us all. It has inspired many take-offs and parodies, including episodes of *The Honeymooners*, *Saturday Night Live*, *Sesame Street*, and *Futurama*, and a *Simpsons* show title.

PRAYER REQUESTS

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 stthomasdecaturn@dio.org to add or remove a name.



Did You Know?... The 3rd century was a time of crisis for the Roman Empire; there was economic trouble, plague, and leadership instability. In 238 A.D. there were 6 emperors. All of these ills were blamed on the Christians. Emperor Decius ordered the first empire-wide persecution of Christians in 249 A.D. Today, according to Open Doors, there are 360 million Christians who are victims of persecution and discrimination: more than the total world population at the time of Decius, and 1 in 7 Christians now. Africa is the continent with the most violent persecution.



St. Thomas More's Prayer

This prayer was composed in 1535 by St. Thomas More while he was in the Tower of London awaiting his execution for refusing to take the Oath of Supremacy, which stated that Henry VIII, not the pope, was head of the Church.

Give me the grace, Good Lord,

To set the world at naught. To set the mind firmly on You and not to hang upon the words of men's mouths.

To be content to be solitary. Not to long for worldly pleasures. Little by little utterly to cast off the world and rid my mind of all its business.

Not to long to hear of earthly things, but that the hearing of worldly fancies may be displeasing to me.

Gladly to be thinking of God, piteously to call for His help. To lean into the comfort of God. Busily to labor to love Him.

To know my own vileness and wretchedness. To humble myself under the mighty hand of God. To bewail my sins and, for the purging of them, patiently to suffer adversity.

Gladly to bear my purgatory here. To be joyful in tribulations. To walk the narrow way that leads to life.

To have the last thing in remembrance. To have ever before my eyes my death that is ever at hand.

To make death no stranger to me. To foresee and consider the everlasting fire of Hell. To pray for pardon before the judge comes.

To have continually in mind the passion that Christ suffered for me. For His benefits unceasingly to give Him thanks.

To buy the time again that I have lost. To abstain from vain conversations. To shun foolish mirth and gladness. To cut off unnecessary recreations.

Of worldly substance, friends, liberty, life and all, to set the loss at naught, for the winning of Christ.

To think my worst enemies my best friends, for the brethren of Joseph could never have done him so much good with their love and favor as they did him with their malice and hatred.

These minds are more to be desired of every man than all the treasures of all the princes and kings, Christian and heathen, were it gathered and laid together all in one heap.

Amen.

Poem of the Week

"Death Be Not Proud," John Donne, 1633

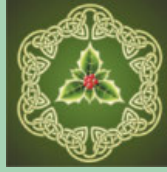
Death, be not proud, though some have called thee
Mighty and dreadful, for thou art not so;
For those whom thou think'st thou dost overthrow
Die not, poor Death, nor yet canst thou kill me.

From rest and sleep, which but thy pictures be,
Much pleasure; then from thee much more must flow,
And soonest our best men with thee do go,
Rest of their bones, and soul's delivery.

Thou art slave to fate, chance, kings, and desperate men,
And dost with poison, war, and sickness dwell,
And poppy or charms can make us sleep as well
And better than thy stroke; why swell'st thou then?

One short sleep past, we wake eternally
And death shall be no more; Death, thou shalt die.





The Wexford Carol

(Sung by Alison Krauss, with Yo-Yo Ma)

The origin of this Irish carol is unknown, but scholars think it is from the 15th or 16th century.

Good people all, this Christmas time
Consider well and bear in mind
What our good God for us has done
In sending his beloved son

With Mary holy we should pray
To God with love this Christmas Day
In Bethlehem upon that morn
There was a blessed Messiah born

Near Bethlehem did shepherds keep
Their flocks of lambs and feeding sheep
To whom God's angels did appear
Which put the shepherds in great fear

'Prepare and go,' the angels said
'To Bethlehem, be not afraid
For there you'll find, this happy morn
A princely babe, sweet Jesus born'

With thankful heart and joyful mind
The shepherds went, this babe to find
And as God's angel had foretold
They did our saviour Christ behold

Within a manger he was laid
And by his side the virgin maid
Attending on the Lord of life
Who came on earth to end all strife

Good people all, this Christmas time...
With Mary holy we should pray ...



Song of the Week

"Breath of Heaven," Amy Grant, 1992

I have traveled many moonless nights
Cold and weary with a babe inside
And I wonder what I've done
Holy father you have come
And chosen me now to carry your son

I am waiting in a silent prayer
I am frightened by the load I bear
In a world as cold as stone
Must I walk this path alone?
Be with me now. Be with me now

Breath of heaven
Hold me together
Be forever near me
Breath of heaven. Breath of heaven
Lighten my darkness
Pour over me your holiness
For you are holy
Breath of heaven

Do you wonder as you watch my face
If a wiser one should have had my place
But I offer all I am
For the mercy of your plan
Help me be strong. Help me be. Help me

Breath of heaven...
Breath of heaven...
Breath of heaven. Breath of heaven



This song reminds us that Mary is human like us. When Gabriel delivered God's message to Mary, she was a girl of only 13 or 14 years old. She still did not fully understand what God had planned. But she had faith and said "Yes" to His Will. We must follow her example.



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