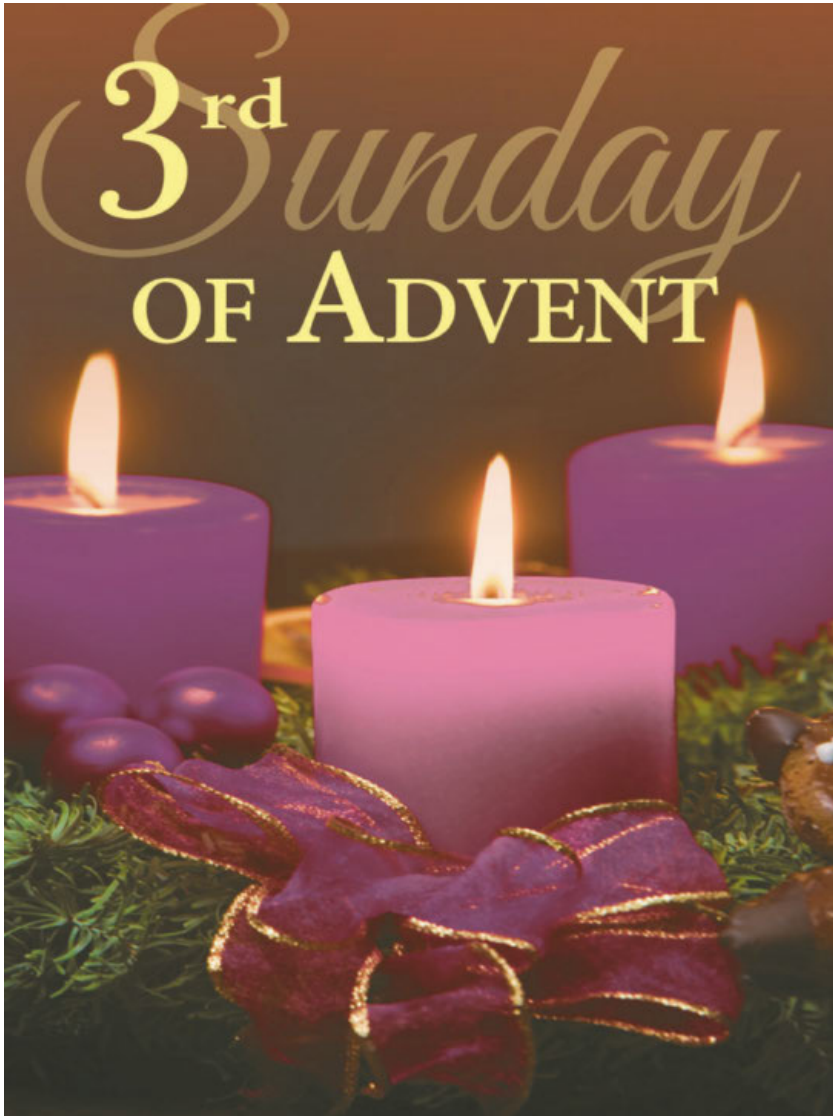


3rd Sunday of Advent • December 17, 2023



St. THOMAS the APOSTLE

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



The History of Advent (Part2)

In 567 the 2nd Council of Tours enjoined the monks to fast from the start of December till Christmas. This was soon extended, even for the laity, and it was commonly called St. Martin's Lent. Later in 582 the 9th canon of the 1st Council of Macon ordained that between St. Martin's Day and Christmas, the Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays should be fasting days, and that the Mass should be celebrated according to the Lenten rite. The 6th book of the capitularia of Charlemagne and Rabanus Maurus, in his 2nd book of *De institutione clericorum*, describe this observance. This fasting obligation, which had by degrees acquired the force of a sacred law, began to be relaxed. Fasting fell into such disuse that when, in 1362, Pope Urban V endeavored to prevent the total decay of the Advent penance, all he insisted upon was that all the clerics of his court should keep abstinence, without including others. The Greek Church still continues to observe the Advent fast, though with much less rigor than that of Lent.

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

Why do we believe in Jesus and the Catholic Church? Why should we continue to do so? We've never seen him face-to-face. We live in the same world as our atheist and secularists friends. Why do we believe in Christ if we've never seen him?

The simple, symbolic answer the Gospel presents to us this week might surprise us: we believe because of John the Baptist. Early in John's Gospel we hear: "There was a man sent from God, his name was John. He came for testimony, to bear witness to the light, that all might believe through him." The Baptist powerfully announces Jesus.

John the Baptist stands for the entirety of the old covenant, everything entrusted to the Jewish people. And yet he prophetically opens the door to something entirely new in Jesus, to the revival and fulfillment of God's promises. In every generation, and in every human life, God continues to do this. He has done it through people named Augustine, Francis, Catherine, Theresa, and countless others. In my life, the Baptist's spirit has come through persons named Eric, Paul, Mary, and Ron. I challenge you to name at least three people through whom God has announced the coming of Jesus in your life. Consciously thank God for their testimony. And let's commit ourselves to listening to the spirit of John the Baptist testify again this week so that we might more strongly believe in the light.

— Father John Muir

A FINAL WORD FROM FR. PETER

Thank You & Merry Christmas

From the depths of my heart, I say thank you to all our St. Thomas the Apostle Parishioners and friends. My stay here as your parish administrator might have been too short. Still, it has been a time of learning, growth, and continued maturity in the ministry. It was a learning experience that exposed me to some of the finest Catholics in Decatur.



Fr. Peter Chineke

I was invited for dinner by so many individuals and families—some in their homes, others in restaurants. I was also invited to games, graduations, house blessings, and other events. During these times, I enjoyed times of friendship and fantastic discussions about various topics, including faith, ministry, culture, and politics. I also shared breakfast with many of you who joined our parish Monday breakfasts.

I have enjoyed your support – St. Thomas parishioners and friends– so much. Some of you went out of your way to render various services when we were repairing the rectory. These services included cleaning, vacuuming, and fixing electrical materials and appliances. Some sponsored the carpeting of the rectory, while others made several donations to help with whatever needed to be done. I am very grateful to you all.

Some of you have intentionally ensured I had a fabulous experience as your priest. Our daily Mass sacristans and altar servers, our Sunday Mass sacristans and altar servers, members of our parish hospitality committee who took care of our donut breakfasts, members of our parish councils and other committees, our ebullient parish staff, the daily Mass and Monday breakfast people who have responded to my pastoral needs and those of our parish with great passion and dedication, and our dearest benefactors and benefactresses. You all

have made indelible impressions on me. I will forever be grateful.

For the people who got offended by the things I said or did, such as moving our tabernacle to the sanctuary and consistently condemning distractive chats inside the Church, I am sorry for how you feel.

May this Christmas be a time of spiritual encounters and renewals for us all. Amen. Merry Christmas and a Blessed New Year to you and your loved ones.

— Fr. Peter

Mass Intentions for the Week

Sunday, December 17
10 am – **Arlene Shanuel** †
Monday, December 18
8:15 am – **Gwen Berruti** †
Tuesday, December 19
8:15 am – **Ed Gordillo**
Wednesday, December 20
8:15 am – **Norm Wilson** †
Thursday, December 21
8:15 am – **Lenora (Sug) Lee** †
Friday, December 22
8:15 am – **Ruth Frazier** †
Saturday, December 23, *No Mass*
† *Deceased*

The family of Ruth Helen Frazier would like to thank everyone who showed their kindness, love and support after Ruth's passing on October 13, 2023. To all who were able to be present for her celebration of life, thank you for helping to make it a beautiful tribute to Ruth's time here on earth.



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.

Parish Giving

	Collected	Budgeted
December 3	\$ 4,938	\$5,000
Year-to-Date:	\$ 103,413	\$115,000
Short/Ahead:	- \$ 11,587	

R/M Donations	\$ 360
Sister Parish Donations	\$ 170
Christmas Flowers	\$ 170
First Offering	\$ 150
RETIRED RELIGIOUS	\$ 190
CATHOLIC CHILDREN'S HOME	\$ 110

Thank you for your continued generosity in supporting the church. Envelopes may be mailed to the parish office, or slipped through the mail slot on the office door.

Bill Pay is offered through many banks. You can schedule a weekly or monthly payment that comes from your checking account. Your bank then mails a check to the parish. If interested, you might speak to your bank. about the option.

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

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- 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. Jason Stone**, *Parochial Administrator*

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Know Your Popes

Total to date:	266
Most common name:	John, 23 (John XVI was an antipope; there was no John XX; 2 John Paul)
Longest pontificate:	1846-1878, Pius IX
Shortest pontificate:	13 days in 1590, Urban VII
Youngest:	Benedict IX, age 20 in 1032
Oldest in office:	Leo XIII, age 93 in 1903
Most Encyclicals:	41, Pius XII
Most Saints canonized:	482, John Paul II
Canonized Popes:	83
College of Cardinals:	Popes chosen from since 1378
White smoke first use:	1914, Benedict XV



For the Kids

“Jesus loves the little children
 All the children of the world
 Red and yellow, black and white
 They are precious in his sight
 Jesus loves the little children
 of the world”

— from the song “Everything
 Is Beautiful,”
 Ray Stevens, 1970



PRAYER REQUESTS

Please Remember in your Prayers
All who are Ill at Home or in the Hospital and their Families and Caregivers

Steve John, Josh Irby, 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. The 3rd candle lit (pink) is traditionally referred to as the Shepherd’s Candle. It was only when shepherds chose to accept the Good News of Jesus’ birth that they were filled with JOY. ♦JOY is used over 150 times in the Bible. Have a contest with family/friends to see who can find the most verses that use the word JOY to win a prize. ♦Invite someone to attend Christmas Mass with you. ♦Bake shepherd crook-shaped decorated cookies and share them with others. ♦Make a pizza in the shape of a shepherd’s crook and before eating read Luke 2:20, and during dinner ask the question “what would be your reaction to the angel’s message from God?” ♦Say a prayer each day thanking the Holy Spirit for giving you the fruit of JOY.

Poem of the Week

“The House of Christmas,” G. K. Chesterton, 1915

There fared a mother driven forth
Out of an inn to roam;
In the place where she was homeless
All men are at home.
The crazy stable close at hand,
With shaking timber and shifting sand,
Grew a stronger thing to abide and stand
Than the square stones of Rome.

For men are homesick in their homes,
And strangers under the sun,
And they lay on their heads in a foreign land
Whenever the day is done.
Here we have battle and blazing eyes,
And chance and honour and high surprise,
But our homes are under miraculous skies
Where the yule tale was begun.

A Child in a foul stable,
Where the beasts feed and foam;
Only where He was homeless
Are you and I at home;
We have hands that fashion and heads that know,
But our hearts we lost – how long ago!
In a place no chart nor ship can show
Under the sky's dome.

This world is wild as an old wives' tale,
And strange the plain things are,
The earth is enough and the air is enough
For our wonder and our war;
But our rest is as far as the fire-drake swings
And our peace is put in impossible things
Where clashed and thundered unthinkable wings
Round an incredible star.

To an open house in the evening
Home shall men come,
To an older place than Eden
And a taller town than Rome.
To the end of the way of the wandering star,
To the things that cannot be and that are,
To the place where God was homeless
And all men are at home.



Schisms & Heresies

A schism is a formal division or separation from the Church. The Great Schism of 1054 split Christianity into 2 divisions: Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox. A heresy is the denial of revealed truth by baptized members of the Church.

The Protestant Reformation of the early 16th century was both a schism and a heresy. It introduced the false doctrine of justification by faith alone, which led to the denial of the divinely instituted authority of the Church and divided Christians still further into Anglicans, Baptists, Calvinists, Congregationalists, Lutherans, Methodists, Presbyterians and more denominations. Other schisms and heresies include:

Arianism— the heresy denying the true divinity of Christ. In 325 the Council of Nicaea affirmed the coeternity and coequality of God the Father and the Son.

Deism— the doctrine of “natural religion” that emerged in the late 17th-early 18th centuries. It maintained that reason allows man to know that God exists, but that He is an “absentee landlord” and that supplication and prayer are useless.

Docetism— the doctrine, important in Gnosticism, that Christ's body was not human but either a phantasm or of real but celestial substance, and that therefore his sufferings were only apparent.

Donatism— an intense heresy from ~300-400 A. D. centered in Carthage that claimed the clergy must be faultless for their sacraments to be valid, and that those who came over to this sect needed to be re-baptized.

Gnosticism— a doctrine combining Christian and pagan elements that became prominent in the 2nd century. According to this heresy, *gnosis*, or special knowledge, was necessary for salvation, the world is evil, and Christ was not fully human. Gnostics believed that it was actually Simon of Cyrene who was crucified.

Manichaeism— a doctrine that flourished in the 3rd-5th centuries that the world is not governed by an all-powerful God, but by a balance of good and evil beings. It elevated Satan to a power comparable to that of God.

Montanism— this 2nd-century heresy argued that the Holy Spirit was transferred to man through Montanus and related prophets, and it promoted the desire to become a martyr.

Did You Know?

During the reign of Queen Elizabeth I it was High Treason for a Catholic priest to even enter England and anyone found aiding and abetting a priest would be punished severely. “Priest hunters” were tasked to collect information and locate any such priests. The Jesuits were formed in 1540 to help the Catholic Church fight the Protestant Reformation. Many Jesuits were sent across the Channel to England to support Catholic families. Jesuit priests would live with wealthy Catholic families in the guise of a cousin or a teacher. Sometimes Jesuits in an area would meet at a safe house; these safe houses were identified by secret symbols and the Catholic supporters and families would pass messages to each other through code. Hiding places or “priest’s holes” were built in these houses in case there was a raid. Priest holes were built in fireplaces, attics and staircases and were largely constructed between the 1550s and the Catholic-led Gunpowder Plot in 1605. Other building alterations might be made at the same time as the priest’s holes so as not to arouse suspicion. (Source: historic-uk.com)



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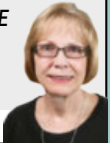
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