

4th Sunday of Advent • December 24, 2023



St. THOMAS the APOSTLE

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



4TH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

“Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son,
and you shall name him Jesus.” - Lk 1:31

Excerpts from the Lectionary for Mass ©2001, 1998, 1970 CCD

DLPI

The First Nativity Scene Was 800 Years Ago

In 1223, St. Francis, a deacon, joined his fellow Franciscans at the town of Greccio to celebrate Christmas. St. Francis realized that the chapel of the Franciscan hermitage would be too small to hold the congregation for Midnight Mass. So he found a niche in the rock near the town square and set up the altar. St. Bonaventure in his *The Life of St. Francis of Assisi* recorded the story:

“It happened in the third year before his death, that in order to excite the inhabitants of Greccio to commemorate the nativity of the Infant Jesus with great devotion, [St. Francis] determined to keep it with all possible solemnity; and lest he should be accused of lightness or novelty, he asked and obtained the permission of the sovereign Pontiff. Then he prepared a manger, and brought hay, and an ox and an ass to the place appointed. The brethren were summoned, the people ran together, the forest resounded with their voices, and that venerable night was made glorious by many and brilliant lights and sonorous psalms of praise. The man of God [St. Francis] stood before the manger, full of devotion and piety, bathed in tears and radiant with joy...”

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

Life is troubling. Who among us has not struggled with anxiety and difficulties, sometimes massive ones? I certainly have, as have many of my loved ones. If we do, does this mean that we don't trust the Lord or just need to toughen up?

I don't think so. How encouraging for us anxious and troubled souls to hear Luke describe the Blessed Mother Mary in these words, “But she was greatly troubled at what was said.” An archangel has visited her. An inconceivable promise has been made to her. Her life has become wildly unpredictable, perhaps more so than any person before or since. The first point for us: the Lord is with her precisely when she is troubled. Her anxiousness and God's presence are not mutually exclusive. Christianity is not about a trance-like robotic indifference. It's about the presence of divine love. Even in — especially in — troubled circumstances.

Our troubled soul can become our greatest treasure. What seems so troubling at first to Mary becomes the best possible thing, Jesus, the Savior and Lord, is now her son. All the difficulties and troubles remain, and yet her movement into the fullness of God is accelerated. What is troubling you right now? This scripture invites us now, this week, to hear the Lord's messenger say to us what he said to Mary, “Do not be afraid! You have found favor with God.”

— *Father John Muir*

A WORD FROM FR. STONE

Holy Days of Obligation

1. Christmas is a holy day of obligation. Confessions will be offered starting 30 minutes before each Mass so that you may receive the Body & Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ with a clear conscience. (Since the Christmas Vigil Mass is on a Sunday this year, it can be used to satisfy the Christmas or the Sunday obligation, at your option. However, you cannot use a single Mass to satisfy both obligations at once.)

2. New Year's Day (Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God) is not a holy day of obligation *this year*. When this feast falls on a Saturday or a Monday, the obligation to hear Mass is lifted.

A Christmas Day Poem

I offer you a Christmas poem by St. Robert Southwell, S.J. (1561-1595). He was one of the English Martyrs, one of the many heroic English priests who ministered to persecuted Catholics in England and was tortured and killed by Queen Elizabeth I.

*Behold a simple tender Babe
In freezing winter night
In homely manger trembling lies,
Alas! a piteous sight.
The inns are full; no man will yield
This little pilgrim bed;
But forced he is with silly beasts
In crib to shroud his head.*

*Weigh not his crib, his wooden dish,
Nor beasts that round him press;
Weigh not his Mother's poor attire,
Nor Joseph's simple dress.
This stable is a prince's court,
The crib his chair of state;
The beasts are parcel of his pomp,
The wooden dish his plate.*

*The persons in that poor attire
His royal liveries wear;
The Prince himself is come from heaven,
This pomp is prized there.
With joy approach, O Christian soul,
Do homage to thy King;
And highly prize his humble pomp,
Which he from heaven doth bring.*

— Fr. Stone



Christmas Vigil Mass 5pm
Christmas Day Mass 10 am

Mass Intentions for the Week

Sunday, December 24

10 am – **Delmer Collett †**

5 pm – For the People of St. Thomas

Monday, December 25

10 am – For the People of St. Thomas

Tuesday, December 26

8:15 am – **Tina Stone (B-day)**

Wednesday, December 27

8:15 am – **Carol Gordillo**

Thursday, December 28

8:15 am – **Austin Nichols †**

Friday, December 29

8:15 am – **Ruth Frazier †**

Saturday, December 30, *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.



	Collected	Budgeted
December 10	\$ 10,260	\$5,000

Year-to-Date: \$ 113,673 \$120,000

Short/Ahead: - \$ 6,327

R/M Donations	\$ 115
Sister Parish Donations	\$ 40
Christmas Flowers	\$ 70
Christmas Offering	\$ 90
Assistance for Needy	\$ 40
RETIRED RELIGIOUS	\$ 195
CATHOLIC CHILDREN'S HOME	\$ 45

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/stthomasdecaturn>

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Email: stthomasdecaturn@dio.org

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Christmas Basket Drive



Thank you to all who donated money for the Catholic Charities Gift Card Drive. St. Thomas was proud to present a check to Catholic Charities in the amount of **\$2,569**. Over 50 families will benefit from your donations.

Request a Mass Intention

If you would like to have a weekday or weekend Mass offered for a deceased loved one or friend, or for another intention, please call **the parish office at 877-4146**.



The typical offering for a Mass intention is \$10. Mass Intention Envelopes are now available on the table with the Rosaries in the back of the church.



Please Remember in your Prayers

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

Sawyer Hunter, Judy Gentry, 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 stthomasdecaturn@dio.org to add or remove a name.

UPCOMING EVENT: Our Lady of Lourdes is hosting a Community 55+ Luncheon on January 4, 2024. Mass will be at 11:30am with lunch to follow. If anyone from St. Thomas would like to attend, please use the sign-up sheet at the back of the church. Final count must be given no later than noon on December 27, 2023.

The 14 Works of Mercy

Corporal

Feed the hungry
Give drink to the thirsty
Shelter the homeless
Visit the sick
Visit the prisoners
Bury the dead
Give alms to the poor

Spiritual

Counseling the doubtful
Instructing the ignorant
Admonishing the sinner
Comforting the sorrowful
Forgiving injuries
Bearing wrongs patiently
Praying for the living and the dead

Do You Know This Painting? (Details next week)





Song of the Week
"Do You Hear What I Hear?,"
Gladys Knight & the Pips, 1975

Do You Hear What I Hear? (Do You Hear What I Hear?)

Said the night wind to the little lamb
"Do you see what I see? (Do you see what I see?)
Way up in the sky, little lamb
Do you see what I see? (See what I see?)
A star, a star, dancing in the night
With a tail as big as a kite
With a tail as big as a kite."

Said the little lamb to the shepherd boy
"Do you hear what I hear? (Do you hear what I hear?)
Ringing through the night, shepherd boy
Do you hear what I hear? (Hear what I hear?)
A song, a song high above the trees
With a voice as big as the sea
With a voice as big as the sea."

Said the shepherd boy to the mighty king
"Do you know what I know? (Do you know what I know?)
In your palace warm, mighty king
Do you know what I know? (Know what I know?)
A Child, a Child shivers in the cold--
Let us bring him silver and gold
Let us bring him silver and gold."

Said the king to the people everywhere
"Listen to what I say! (Won't you listen to what I say!)
Pray for peace, people, everywhere
Listen to what I say! (Listen to what I say!)
The Child, the Child sleeping in the night
He will bring us goodness and light
He will bring us goodness and light." (We want light)

MagisteriumAI Update

The Dec. 3 bulletin had a column on MagisteriumAI, a ChatGPT-like tool for researchers of Church documents. Here are updated features:

- Scholarly Mode is now available in the free version. Scholarly Mode provides access to Catholic theological and philosophical works from St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Augustine, Church Fathers, Doctors of the Church and seminal works such as the Enchiridion Symbolorum (Denzinger).
- The Douay-Rheims Bible is now available to query in Scholarly Mode.
- There are now 5,706 magisterial and 2,248 scholarly documents available to users in the knowledge base.
- 1,251 documents were added since the last update, including works by Teresa of Avila, Bernard of Clairvaux, Ignatius of Loyola, Boethius, Cyprian of Carthage, Tertullian, Athanasius of Alexandria, St. Basil of Caesarea, and Pope Francis.



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