

Feast of the Holy Family • December 31, 2023



St. THOMAS the APOSTLE

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THE HOLY FAMILY

The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom;
and the favor of God was upon him. - Lk 2:40

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

GLPI

The History of the Feast of the Holy Family

The Feast of the Holy Family is a Catholic religious festival falling on the first Sunday after Christmas. Although major feast days dedicated to each member of the Holy Family—Jesus, Mary, and Joseph—also exist, the Feast of the Holy Family commemorates their life together, and the celebration focuses on religious family life. Because of the flight of the Holy Family into Egypt (Matt 2:13-23), a feast for the Holy Family has been observed by the Copts from early times. In Western Christianity, however, veneration for the Holy Family as a group, rather than as individuals, did not arise until the 17th century and was not officially recognized until the feast day was formally instituted on October 26, 1921 when the Congregation of Rites (under Pope Benedict XV) inserted the Feast of the Holy Family into the Latin Rite general calendar. Originally celebrated on the Sunday after Epiphany (January 6), the Feast of the Holy Family was moved to the Sunday after Christmas in 1969, bringing it within the Christmas season.

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

I remember the first time my older sister asked me if I wanted to hold her newborn son. Terrified, I told her I didn't think it was a good idea. But she warmly told me, "I'll help you hold him." It struck me that she is baby's mother. She is the one who decides who is qualified to hold him. I took him in my arms and soon I began to feel comfortable with that tiny little warm cooing creature in my arms, and soon I no longer feared holding him. Now, 27 nieces & nephews later, holding a newborn child is one of the great joys of my life.

Do we sometimes think that Jesus is given only to the highly qualified, special religious people? In the Gospel of Luke today we hear about the presentation of the Lord in the temple. The newborn son of God is passed around like a baton in a relay race, not guarded like a precious jewel or a breakable china dish. We can see him going from the arms of Mary to Joseph, then to the priest performing the ceremony, then to Simeon the old man, then to Anna the old widow. Each one receiving him and then handing him to the next. A tidal wave of joy and thanksgiving follows wherever he is placed.

Believe me, you are qualified to hold Jesus in your arms. How can I say that with such confidence? Because the mother decides who is qualified. The Blessed Virgin, embodied in the Church, holds him out to you and me. She rejoices to place him in our arms to hold, and to hand him on, too. — *Father John Muir*

A WORD FROM FR. STONE

The Battle Against the Family

On the Feast of the Holy Family, I would like to offer some reflections on the family. Sr. Lucia, the last-surviving of the three children who saw Our Lady at Fatima, wrote the following to the late Carlo Cardinal Caffara: “A time will come when the decisive battle between the kingdom of Christ and Satan will be over marriage and the family. And those who will work for the good of the family will experience persecution and tribulation. But do not be afraid, because Our Lady has already crushed his head.” This was in the early 1980’s, and now we are in the midst of the battle which she spoke of. Satan knows that if he can destroy the family, he will accomplish many of his goals: depriving souls of the mutual support they need to get to heaven, sending souls to hell directly by mortal sin, drying up holy vocations to the priesthood and religious life, and teaching impressionable young souls that evil is good. But note what Sr. Lucia says: “Our Lady has already crushed his head.” She refers to Genesis 3:16, where God tells the serpent that Mary shall crush his head. Sr. Lucia speaks of this as an accomplished fact.

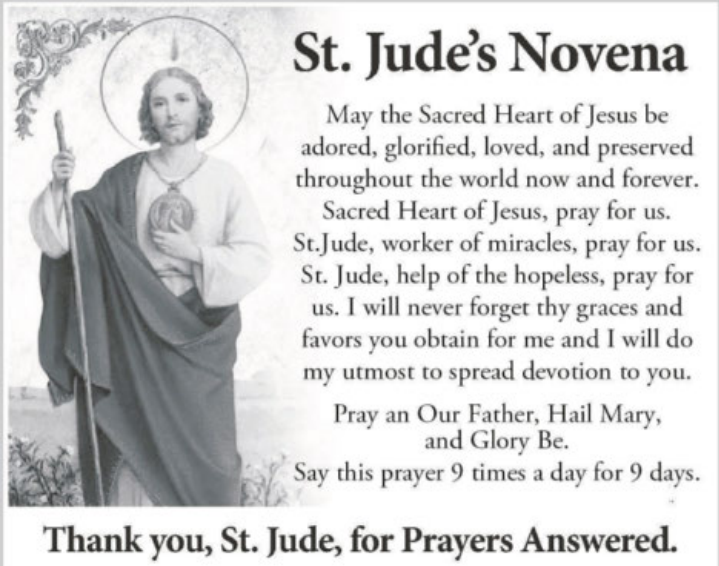
The popes of the 20th century were not blind to the developing crisis. Pope John Paul II’s apostolic exhortation “[Familiaris consortio](#)” (1981) may be found on [vatican.va](#), the Vatican website. For a more overtly theological (but no less pastoral) document, look at Pius XI’s encyclical “[Casti connubi](#)” of 1930. I also highly recommend that you read Paul VI’s courageous encyclical “[Humanae vitae](#).” If you are tempted to ask what (if I may put it so bluntly) a dead pope has to say to us moderns, I will tell you. It is a characteristic of the major writings of the greatest popes that they accurately read the signs of the times. They saw what was happening, they understood what the causes were, and they traced out what would happen in the future if the corruption were left unchecked. In reading one of these old documents, we find the pope was right about the future effects that he predicted. Based on this, we can infer that he was right about the causes and about the cures he proposed. It is a sobering exercise to read an encyclical from seventy-five years ago. Humanity has not changed much in seventy-five years, nor in six thousand, and our problems still come from

ourselves, not our circumstances.

To return to the family, let us say this directly. Satan wants you to be selfish and to think in terms of what other family members can do for you. Satan wants you to be so busy and distracted with temporalities and trifles that you forget the love and duties that you owe to each other and to God. Satan wants you to think that domestic living arrangements not intended by God are “families” and are pleasing to God and may be entered into without sinning gravely.

Against all of this, we have powerful intercessors in St. Mary and St. Joseph. Mary, after all, has already crushed the head of the serpent. We also have SS. Louis and Zélie Martin, the parents of the Little Flower, who were canonized together in 2015. Another pair of married saints comes to us from 12th century Spain: St. Isidore the Farm-Laborer and his wife St. Maria de la Cabeza. We also have saints such as St. Catherine of Genoa whose sufferings, prayers, and holy example ultimately converted her wicked husband. Let us seek their intercession to make our families holy. Let us, moreover, strive to be holy ourselves. It is not enough to be merely “O.K.” The battle has already been joined, and those who are satisfied with being mediocre will be put to flight by Satan and his minions. Let us take up our arms under the protection of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. Let us fight for our salvation and the salvation of those we love most. Let us make our families holy. — **Fr. Stone**

REMINDER: As mentioned in last week’s bulletin article, January 1, 2024 is *not* a Holy Day of Obligation because it falls on a Monday.



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 17	\$ 1,932	\$5,000
Year-to-Date:	\$ 115,605	\$125,000
Short/Ahead:	- \$ 9,395	

R/M Donations	\$ 40
Sister Parish Donations	\$ 45
Christmas Flowers	\$ 100
Christmas Offering	\$ 30
RETIRED RELIGIOUS	\$ 15
CATHOLIC CHILDREN'S HOME	\$ 15

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.

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- Sunday, December 31
 10 am – **Richard Malloy** †
- Monday, January 1
 8:15 am – **Ronnie Lee Baker**
- Tuesday, January 2
 8:15 am – **Lenora (Sug) Lee** †
- Wednesday, January 3
 8:15 am – **Maria Rasgado**
- Thursday, January 4
 8:15 am – **Joseph Rasgado**
- Friday, January 5
 8:15 am – **For the People of St. Thomas**
- Saturday, January 6
No Mass
- † *Deceased*

January Events

- 5** First Friday Adoration, 9am-5pm
- 7** Epiphany Chalk Blessing
- 2?** Donut Sunday, after Mass



Please Remember in your Prayers

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

Sawyer Hunter, 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.

Votive Candles



Please note that when you light a votive candle with a wooden lighting stick or a match, wooden or paper, sometimes a burnt piece of wood or paper breaks off into the votive candle. If this should happen, please blow out the candle, remove the fallen piece of charcoal, and re-light the candle. Why? When the candle burns all the way down, any piece of porous organic material will act as an extra wick and catch on fire. The extra heat will scorch the plastic liner of the big votive candles. In extreme cases, it will make the whole church smell like burning plastic. Thank you.

12 Promises of the Sacred Heart

Author: St. Margaret Mary Alacoque

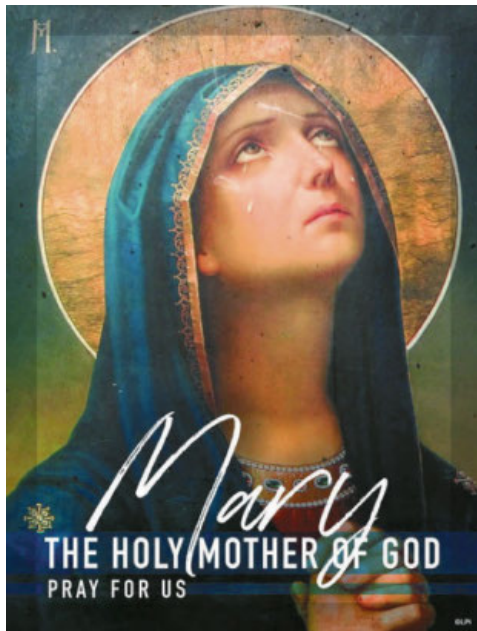


Our Lord Jesus Christ appeared to St. Margaret Mary between 1673-1675. Jesus promised to her over and over again that those who consecrate themselves to His loving Heart and fervently practice this devotion will be showered with graces and blessings. In 1882, an Ohio businessman named Philip Kemper collected these promises from her writings, and made a list of the principal ones, which he then printed and disseminated throughout the

world (an effort that received official approbation from Pope Leo XIII in 1899). These became known as the famous “Twelve Promises” of the Sacred Heart:

St. Margaret Mary once said, “I do not know of any other exercise in the spiritual life that is more calculated to raise a soul in a short amount of time to the height of perfection and to make it taste the true sweetness to be found in the service of Jesus Christ.”

1. I will give them all the graces necessary in their state of life.
2. I will establish peace in their homes.
3. I will comfort them in all their afflictions.
4. I will be their secure refuge during life, and above all, in death.
5. I will bestow abundant blessings upon all their undertakings.
6. Sinners will find in my Heart the source and infinite ocean of mercy.
7. Lukewarm souls shall become fervent.
8. Fervent souls shall quickly mount to high perfection.
9. I will bless every place in which an image of my Heart is exposed and honored.
10. I will give to priests the gift of touching the most hardened hearts.
11. Those who shall promote this devotion shall have their names written in my Heart.
12. I promise you in the excessive mercy of my Heart that my all-powerful love will grant to all those who receive Holy Communion on the First Fridays in nine consecutive months the grace of final perseverance; they shall not die in my disgrace, nor without receiving their sacraments. My divine Heart shall be their safe refuge in this last moment.



Our Lady of Perpetual Help St. Alphonsus Liguori Church, Rome



This painting of Our Lady of Perpetual Help is, perhaps, the most widely-recognized icon in the world. The history of the image is an interesting one involving theft, war and visions of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The most fascinating part of the story is that Our Lady had requested that the image be placed in a certain church located between St. Mary Major and St. John Lateran, which was the Church of Saint Matthew. The image hung there for some years. Then in 1798, the church was destroyed by Napoleon's forces, although the image was saved.

In January 1855, the Redemptorist Order purchased a villa located here for their headquarters. They were unaware of the fact that the land they had purchased was actually the location of the church and monastery of Saint Matthew.

The painting, which hangs above the altar of St. Alphonsus, is not very large, about 16" x 20". But it is of great significance to many Catholics who have sought the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary. To stand in front of the icon—quite often undisturbed by other visitors—is a wonderful experience. (Source: the catholictravelguide.com)



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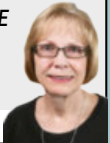
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