

# The Mustard Seed



## Letter from Our Pastor

by Father Rogelio Rosas

First of all, I want to thank you for all the love and support you have given me earlier this year when I was separated from all of you while going through the process that will allow me to continue to live in the U.S. legally. Let us all pray for justice and kindness for all our sisters and brothers who seek aid and asylum at our southern border.

The COVID pandemic has changed everyone's lives for over a year now. In 2020, no Holy Week activities took place in person. They were recorded only for parishioners to view online. Then, as things began to open, at first 50 parishioners could attend Mass by signing up online beforehand. Those numbers were gradually increased from 80 to 150 to 180. Still, however, the enforced separation has weighed heavily upon us all. Fr. Joshua and I decided to create an outreach plan to reconnect with our parishioners.

In January 2021 a team of volunteers, supplied with a script, began to contact every English-speaking parishioner or family, either by telephone or email. We also plan to also reach out to Spanish-speaking families. The goal of our outreach plan was to remind all that we ARE a Parish family, each of us part of the Body of Christ. Callers first asked how people were doing. They inquired about the way parishioners wished to be contacted, passing this information along to the parish office to update our parishioner contact records. They inquired about whether parishioners wanted to receive the Eucharist at home and/or Holy Water, whether people would be interested in weekly Zoom calls with Fr. Joshua, and in general, sought to strengthen the ties which bind us together through their expression of interest and caring.

Of the 373 active English-speaking families registered at St. Thomas Aquinas, all but 12 were able to be reached. 17 families requested the Eucharist to be delivered, and 26 requested Holy Water. It was found that 10 families have no computer, 71 phone numbers on record were no longer valid, and 49 new email addresses were added to the Parish records. 17 families had moved away, and 64 expressed interest in Zoom calls with Fr. Joshua, who has happily responded by now conducting weekly Zoom reflections and communications every Wednesday at 6 p.m.

As a result of the information gained, STA's parish records have been updated. Regular phone calls are planned, hopefully on a monthly basis. As more and more people are vaccinated, we will plan Outdoor Welcome Back Social Gatherings, one in late spring, one in summer, another in the fall. We also plan on developing a new STA parish directory, asking everyone to supply correct contact information. We want to welcome new parishioners monthly to help them register, and visiting them at home if needed. We will mail a letter or postcard to those whom we haven't been able to reach by telephone or email, and we intend to create a weekly email from the Parish with information and for prayer requests.

Part of the purpose of this letter is to familiarize you with our St. Thomas Aquinas Outreach Ministry. The bottom line is that we are here FOR you and WITH you. As your pastor, I want you to know and to feel connected with your priests and your fellow parishioners. We will also be sharing this information with our large Spanish-speaking community, so it can decide whether they also wish to do a similar outreach en Espanol. We want to strengthen our bonds together in the Body of Christ, that we may learn, serve, grow and support one another as followers of Jesus.

Yours in Christ Jesus,  
Fr. Rogelio

### Inside This Issue:

- Letter from Our Pastor..... 1
- St. Thomas Goes Solar..... 2
- Our Patron Arrives..... 3
- Chanting The Divine Mercy Chaplet..... 4
- Remembering St. Patrick of Ireland..... 5

## St. Thomas Goes Solar

by Adrienne Akers

In 2015, our Pope Francis sent an encyclical called *Laudato Si* (Praise Be to You) which focuses on the importance of preserving and sustaining our natural world, our environment. This important message emphasized the importance and realities of climate change and ties this to Catholic social teaching about the environment.

In 2019, parishioner John Nelson suggested that the parish consider looking into installing solar panels because he had solar panels on his prior home and had recently installed them on his new home. And near the end of 2019, the parish received an anonymous donation of \$50,000 for the purpose of installing solar panels -- to honor the encyclical as well as save on utility costs. After discussions with Fathers Rogelio and Joshua, John Nelson and Don Fiesinger contacted and interviewed three solar providers in early 2020. These meetings allowed them to learn as they went along — gathering information, searching the web, contacting the diocese to see if other parishes had installed solar systems, etc. Other Utah parishes that have installed solar arrays are St Thomas More Catholic Church, St Marguerite Catholic School, St Joseph the Worker Catholic Church, and St Joseph's High School.

Synergy Power, one of the solar providers that our team contacted, suggested that we look into applying for a grant from the Blue Sky program, sponsored by Rocky Mountain Power, to help cover the costs of our system. The Blue Sky Program is an opt-in program that gives Rocky Mountain Power customers an option to match all or part of their energy use with renewable energy — reducing their carbon footprint and driving demand for new renewable energy in the West. You can find additional information about the Blue Sky program at the Rocky Mountain Power website.

Chris Lucas, Synergy Power's Blue Sky Program advisor, let our team know that there was a deadline for new Blue Sky proposals in a matter of a few days. Don Fiesinger comment-



*Readying our roof for solar panels*

ed, "With Mary Garrett's hard work and support from Fr. Rogelio and our Parish Council, we were able to submit our proposal by the deadline." Truly God was with us!

On May 4, 2020, our parish learned that our grant proposal was approved and funded for "up to \$143,339" to be matched with the anonymous \$50,000 donation from a parishioner for a total of \$193,339 for the project. These two sources of money enabled the parish to install an 80 KW (DC) solar panel system. Our new system has the potential to produce 104,000+ KW hours of power yearly, which is very close to our current consumption at St Thomas. It's a little too soon to calculate the cost savings on our monthly or annual electricity bill but protecting our environment for our future is sure to be achieved.

After receiving the grant, Synergy Power worked with parish staff to make arrangements for construction over the fall of 2020. Because of our flat roof on the social hall, office, and classroom wing, the solar panels are not visible from ground level but the solar array is quite impressive -- from the rooftop. Our setup will afford the parish with substantial savings on our electric bills and make good use of the natural power afforded by the sun. You are now able to view real-time data on the solar system via an LCD monitor installed in the hallway between the gathering space and the office. Please take a few minutes to take a look at it.

Although a ribbon-cutting ceremony was planned for April 22 on Earth Day, Fr. Rogelio was out of town but rest assured, a celebration will be planned very soon. I believe that Pope Francis will be gratified when he learns of our efforts to put his recommendations from his encyclical called *Laudato Si* — Praise Be To You.



*Solar installation completed*

## Our Patron Arrives

by Amy Gomez

On March 19, our priests Fr. Rogelio and Fr. Joshua blessed the project plans for the commission of a work of art for our church grounds in honor of our beloved patron saint, St. Thomas Aquinas. Many parishioners have long cherished the idea of a beautiful visual reminder of the immense legacy of our patron. Thanks to the donations of many, Fr. Joshua commissioned an artist to hone a marble statue of St. Thomas Aquinas.



*Early drawing of statue on our patio*

We look forward to the installation of the statue on the front patio of our church, perhaps as soon as June, 2021. Parishioners Carlos Licon and Moises Mora are working on installing a base for the statue to safely support it on the patio. Carlos explained, "It will be almost life size and made out of marble. Moses is now building a base strong enough for it, so it won't tip over." In joyful anticipation of this upcoming event, we offer a brief reminder of the immense legacy of St. Thomas Aquinas to Christianity and to humanity.

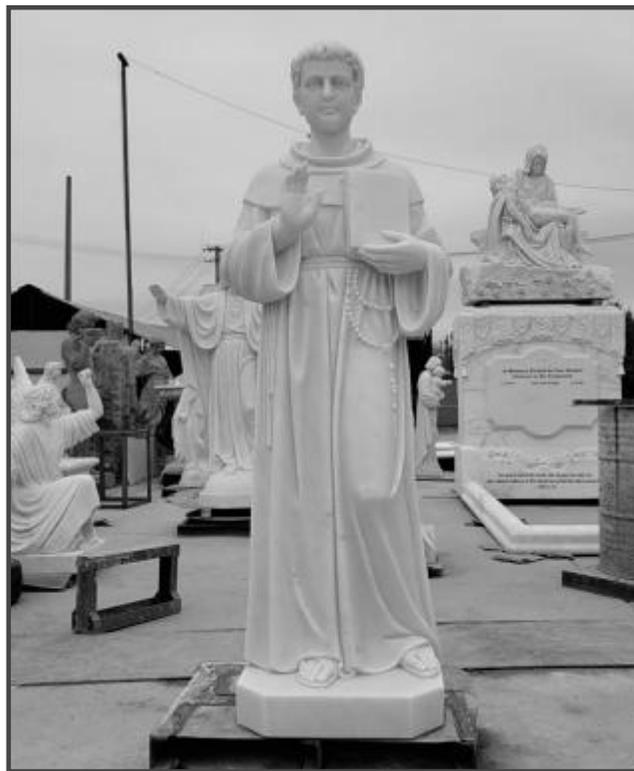
St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) lived in Europe during the late Middle Ages in the 13th century, a time of incredible achievement that would spark the European Renaissance in the centuries that followed. It was no doubt also an inspiring ambient for Thomas Aquinas whose life and work help shaped the greatness of the era in which he was a Benedictine student, a Dominican friar, a university professor, a prolific author, a Catholic priest and a Doctor Angelicus, Communis and Universalis of the Catholic Church.

In his book, "Pilgrim Church: A Popular History of Catholic Christianity," author and Catholic priest William J. Bausch captures the energy and excitement of the Renaissance shaped by great scholars like Thomas Aquinas, saying:

Look at what happened in the 13th century: the first universities were founded; scholasticism hit its stride; chivalry flourished, and the new romantic love was introduced. Towns were revived; a merchant class was starting; civic life was growing and hospitals were being built. New religious orders were founded; the gothic Cathedral came into being, and learning flourished, producing some of the greatest scholars of any age.

St. Thomas Aquinas was by far the most influential scholastic philosopher of this century and is remembered as "The Universal Teacher". His legacy continues to shape religious and secular institutions. Ultimately, the philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas was adopted as the official philosophy of the Catholic Church. His best-known written works are Summa Theologiae, a synthesis of Christian theology, and Summa Contra Gentiles, a comprehensive rational defense of Christian doctrine. His immense body of written work covered many topics, such as the value of the individual conscience, the nature of God, discerning revelation, free will, creation, human nature, happiness, virtue, divine, natural and human law. St. Thomas Aquinas was canonized by Pope John XXII in 1323 is known as the patron saint of students, philosophers, publishers, booksellers, academics, theologians, apologists, universities and schools.

Clearly as a parish, the consecration of this statue in early summer will be a wonderful way for all of us to rejoice for God's many blessings -- our priests are home and safe and parishioners are beginning to attend Mass in person, now that the Covid pandemic is easing up. We look forward to this celebration — Praise Be to God.



*Our St. Thomas Aquinas*

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## Chanting The Divine Mercy Chaplet

by Linda Bradak

I first encountered the use of chant in 1977, when friends came to chant for me following surgery. Each day following the procedure I had felt “one notch” better, yet the following day, I was clearly “three notches” improved. Tone, sound and the repetition of holy words of chant is **powerful**. We can use it; we can feel it.

You may have heard the mind described as a monkey, jumping and swinging from branch to branch, which makes settling into a meditative state to be challenging. We can also think of our mind as a puppy, needing something “to chew on.” Chant gives the “puppy mind”

*“Holy God, Holy Mighty One, Holy Immortal One, have mercy on us and on the whole world.”*

something good and wholesome to chew on, allowing our consciousness to open, deepen, soar and to merge with the Divine — which has always been the role of Gregorian chant and also more recent chants such as the Divine Mercy Chaplet.

Words are not embodied *things*, but they do have energy, power. Say these words out loud and notice how your body responds: “I just can’t stand you.” You may feel your body contract. Now say aloud, “I love you. I trust in you.” You probably can feel your body open, like a flower. Try this a few times.

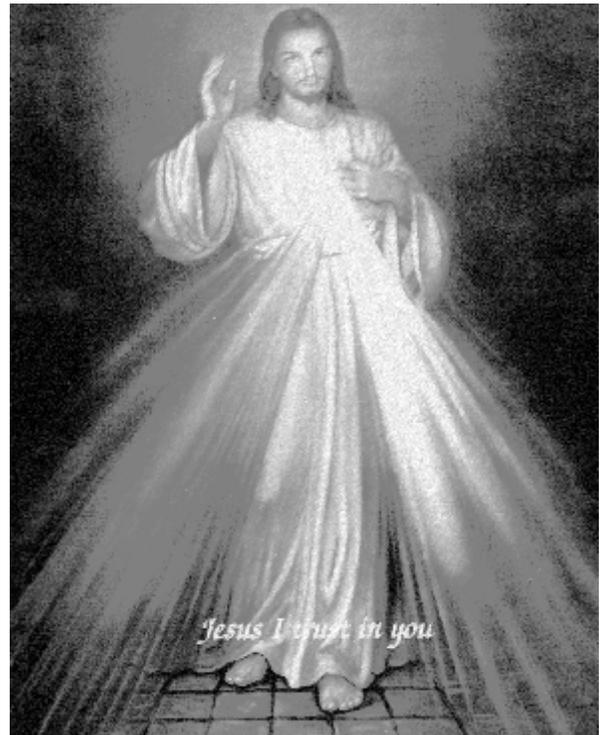
Effortless mastery in anything is gained through *repetition*, whether it’s shooting hoops, playing an instrument, or growing closer to God. In chanting, we repeat words over and over, carried along on sound. And words that are *true* carry more power than words that are false; thank God that truth is stronger than non-truth! True words repeated over and over are powerful.

We Christians affirm that our God is loving and merciful. The Divine Mercy Chaplet affirms that we can **TRUST** in Jesus. Each decade begins with the words, “Eternal Father, I offer you the body and the blood, soul and divinity of your dearly beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, in atonement for our sins and those of the whole world.” Then we repeat, “For the sake of his sorrowful passion, have mercy on us and on the whole world” ten times. At the end, we chant three times, “Holy God, Holy mighty One, Holy Immortal One, have mercy on us and on the whole world.”

God *listens* to us as we chant. We entrain with Him. I have had chant “running” in me for decades now. Generally it is at an inaudible level, though it is the last thing I hear in my mind as I go to sleep. If I am in a difficult or tense situation, “the invisible hand” turns up the volume level. For example, if I am in heavy traffic on I-15, suddenly I’ll be chanting aloud.

I nearly died recently when I choked and didn’t realize I was losing consciousness — but I could hear the Divine Mercy Chaplet in my head the whole time. I had no fear. Jesus, I trust in You. I trust that when I actually do die out of my body, it will accompany me on my way Home.

Please feel free to contact me if you’d like more information, or to chant with me at 435-787-9459 or [lindakbradak@gmail.com](mailto:lindakbradak@gmail.com)



## Remembering St. Patrick of Ireland

by Amy Gomez

Celebrating St. Patrick of Ireland's Feast Day each year on March 17 is a joyous, memorable celebration for Catholic and non-Catholic alike. We celebrate three-fold: we venerate this beloved saint, we remember the history and miracles surrounding his life and times, and we share in the secular celebration traditions.

St. Patrick's missionary effort and enduring influence through the ages make him arguably one of the most successful missionaries in history. In his autobiography entitled **Confessio/Confessions**, he tells us the story of his life, reveals his missionary zeal, wisdom and courage to defend the purity of our faith against heretics and we remember his focus on literacy. We remember his courage to travel to the remote island of Ireland c. 432-33 AD past the farthest western reaches of a falling Roman Empire which was in chaos on many fronts.

Patrick (Patricius in Latin) was a British Roman citizen and an ordained bishop. In Ireland, he found an island largely inhabited by illiterate and polytheistic pagan Celts. There he built a monastic system focused on literacy. He persevered to convert the Irish masses with great success! On his feast day, we remember his incredible legacy with awe, great joy and deep gratitude. And we remember his prayer — *May the wisdom of God instruct us. May the Hand of God protect us. May the Shield of God defend us.*

St. Patrick's approach to teaching and his thoughts on sacred scripture were very influential. He illuminated complex ideas and the mysteries of Catholic dogma and beliefs with parables, poems and scripture. According to legend, he used a shamrock as a parable to explain the Trinity. Using a shamrock, a clover with three leaves on each stem, he explained that the shamrock is similar to the idea of the Trinity: that in the one God there are three divine beings: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

St. Patrick's thoughts on Psalm 46:10 no doubt sparked the imagination and deep understanding of both the learned and the masses he was teaching to read. Based on a verse from Psalm 46:10 -- "*Be still and know that I am God,*" St. Patrick wrote the following prayer:

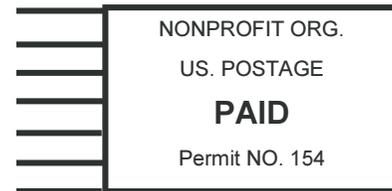
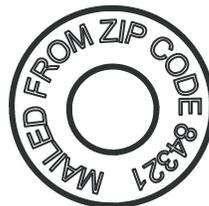
***Be still and know that I am  
Be still and know  
Be still  
Be***

Along with remembering St. Patrick's Christian legacy, we celebrate him in the secular tradition. Tip: In the Spirit of St. Patrick, you get to tell and retell the Shamrock Parable about the Trinity, year after year, because it's always a mind-bender and sure to spark a good conversation! We also get to enjoy traditions such as corned beef and cabbage, the "wearing of the green", eat chocolate gold coins, leprechaun pranks, spin the blarney, toast & sing over a pint with friends and strangers, pinch people for not wearing green, recite stories, jokes, limericks, poems, lore and legend, all in the spirit of our beloved St. Patrick.

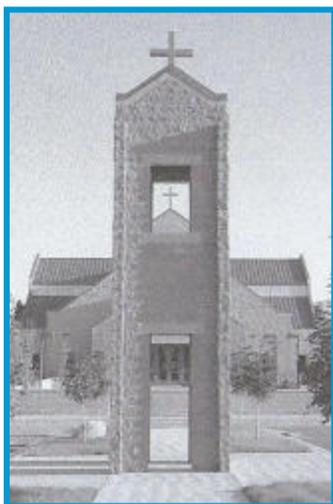
While we must now wait until 2022 to celebrate his traditions again, keep in mind his zealous spirit to evangelize is the simple and kind way of St. Patrick.



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## Saint Thomas Aquinas Catholic Church



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*Mustard Seed* is published three times a year. We invite your feedback and are always looking for volunteers. Please contact us at [adrienne.akers@gmail.com](mailto:adrienne.akers@gmail.com) if you can offer your talents to help us out.

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