

2025 9 14 – IOP homily – wk 24 OT Sun – Exaltation of Holy Cross – Giving OSV

Focus: touch people's hearts and make case for increased giving

I normally like to tie our annual (once a year) appeal for St Thomas Sunday giving to the Sunday readings. Sometimes the Sunday readings have to do with money. This Sunday does not.

This Sunday, commemorates the veneration and triumph of the cross, a symbol of Christ's sacrifice, victory over sin and death, and ultimate redemption for humanity.

The feast calls believers to embrace the cross as a source of hope, strength, and eternal life,

And recognize that even our struggles can be transformed into opportunities for deeper connection with God's love." (AI)

(pause)

But this Sunday, I'm going to focus on generosity and giving for our annual St. Thomas appeal. This is the one time of the year when we ask you to consider what you will share from your blessings from God with your church.

First, I want to focus on what your gifts this past year have made possible for St. Thomas, our community and the world.

Because of your generosity, we've been able to grow in faith and morals almost 400 students in religious education this past year.

Slide: Confirmation

Continue our outstanding music ministry and the many choirs that make it possible.

Slide: Choir

I want to now highlight our new accomplishments your increased giving made possible

Outreach to the next generation:

Slide: New Accomplishments

- **Increased support** and promotion of Scripture Safari

Slide: Scripture Safari

- **Sunday nursery** restarted

Slide: Nursery

- **Family faith activities** added

Slide: Family faith activity

Help for the poor and marginalized:

- **Almost \$100,000 raised for Haiti efforts** - Ertha's orphanage and school and St Marie Madeleine church and school both in Haiti

Slide: Haiti orphanage

- Haiti roof installation completed and added lights and electricity, and the first masses have been held and the parish church

Slide: Completed Haiti Church

- **\$18,000 raised to help rebuild from the California wildfires**

Slide: California Wild Fires

- **Holes for Hope golf outing restarted and raised \$32,000** for St. Thomas Cares program

Slide: Golf

Over 700 boxes of food was collected by 260 volunteers on harvest Sunday.

Slide: Harvest Sunday

Fixed aging and broken facilities

- **Replaced aging and broken kitchen appliances. To serve pancake breakfast, fish fries, pasta dinner, funeral luncheon**
- **Replaced broken boiler** to keep Church warm in the winter

Slide: Boiler

- **New improved video and sound for live stream for the homebound**

Slide: Video and Sound

- **Hired safety consultant** and trained on CPR and AED

Slide: Safety

- **Naperville fire department** give training on emergency response to medical crisis.
- **Last year, the Naperville police dept** gave all staff active shooter training.

Evangelization

- **Made marketing and communications manager full time**

Slide: Marketing

- **Launched Alpha**

Slide: Alpha

Impact of above efforts

Slide: Financial + Attendance results

- **5% increase in Sunday giving**
- **13% increase in one time and restricted gifts**
- **12% increase in weekly attendance.**
- **20% increase in Christmas and Easter attendance**
- **100% increase in scripture Safari attendance.**

Thank you!

Slide: Thank you

Second, I want to share with you our plans for this year

Slide: Line graph

Our parish council, staff and ministry heads have established:

- two new Parish goals - evangelization and intentional/radical hospitality

Slide: New Parish Goals

- three Parish process goals - collaboration, promotion, communication

Slide: Next generation

- We believe these are critical accomplish our goals to **reach the next generation and so continue the St. Thomas charisms.**

Slide: New people

- Here is how we hoped to accomplish that objective - by adding the following people to our staff:
 - **A full-time evangelization manager**
 - **A part-time social media and marketing assistant**
 - **A part-time young family director**

Slide: Increase support

- **Increase support for poor** to support expected increased need due to reduction in SNAP benefits/food stamps and reduction in Medicaid funding.
- **Encourage parishioners to consider St. Thomas in their estate plans thus St. Thomas Legacy Circle**
- Replace/update 40-year-old facilities as needed:
 - **New \$200,000 air conditioning system** for the church to replace our aging equipment
 - **Reupholstered chairs, and a new sound system paid for by generous donations**

To accomplish the above objectives, I humbly ask you to consider increasing your support to St. Thomas by +7%.

Slide: Parish needs (read slide)

Here is our parish needs:

Slide: +3% inflation

- +2% evangelization manger
- +1% social medical assistant, PT
- +1% young family coordinator PT

I have been reflecting on the growth of St. Thomas and the associated costs. I originally wanted to encourage you to consider increasing your contributions by 7%. However, in recognizing the incredible generosity this parish has shown in the years I have been here, I thought perhaps a 5% increase might be more feasible. Ultimately, I've decided to leave it to you to determine what amount within the 5-7% range feels manageable.

You know, in a way, our contributions serve as a vote of support... and the more financial assistance St. Thomas receives, the greater its ability to grow, touch lives, and spread the light of Christ to others.

Of course, if the 5-7% range is unattainable for you, then we simply ask you to give what you can. And if you are experiencing a season of financial hardship right now and cannot

give, that is okay. I ask those of you who can consider giving more to assist those who can't.

One of the things I cherish about this church family is how we are there for each other, knowing we all experience ups and downs.

The call for people to be more generous is never more important given what is happening in the world today.

Because of this I ask you to consider an additional way of thinking about giving.

I Ask You To Consider Thinking About Your Giving As a Disciple Of Jesus Christ. To Look At Your Giving As An Act Of Worship.

To think about the five P's of giving

Slide: 5P' s of giving

- Plan – Giving should be part of our financial plan.

The Bible Tells Us That The Earth Is The Lord's, and everything in it (Psalm 24)

As a disciple of Jesus, we need to think about being stewards of God's gifts to us as opposed to "giving my money."

- Priority – make giving to God and his church a priority, proverbs 3:9, we are called to give God our first fruits.
- Percentage giver. Become a percentage giver. The Bible talks about the tithe or 10%. I found that I gave 10% when I was married with kids. So start small, for example 1 or 2% of your income.
- Progressive– life is a journey we should be always growing and learning and becoming better the same is true of giving
- Pray – Always invite the Holy Sprit into your giving decision and follow his lead

We all struggle to get our hearts right concerning money. We need to make the source of our security God. Proverbs 3:9 - 3:10 as the Bible says where your treasure is there will be your heart . this is something I want for you not from you.

Start the in-pew commitment process. _____

Slide: Treasure