

# be the light

ADVENT 2024

ST. THOMAS THE APOSTLE CATHOLIC CHURCH

Greetings St. Thomas the Apostle community,

As we stand at the threshold of Advent, we invite you to embrace this sacred season of preparation and reflection. Advent is a time when we await the coming of Christ, a time of hope, peace, joy and love.

This year, our parish Advent focus will be on the theme of light. In the midst of the darker days of winter, we are reminded that Christ is the light of the world. His light shines in our hearts and guides us through our challenges. As we light our Advent candles, let each flame represent our growing anticipation for the birth of Jesus — a light that dispels darkness and brings hope to our lives.

We are called to be light and bring light to those in our lives. Through our prayers, acts of outreach and justice, and moments of gratitude, may we become beacons of that light for one another and for our broader community. Let us reach out to those in need, sharing the warmth and joy that the light of Christ brings.

As we journey through this Advent season together, may we reflect on the ways we can illuminate the lives of those around us and prepare our hearts to welcome the true light of Christmas.

Wishing you peace and blessings,  
St. Thomas the Apostle staff

## Advent Events

### Mid-day Meditation

Tuesdays, December 3, 10, 17  
12:00 pm

Join us in the Chapel to ponder the presence and blessings of God and to calm our spirits.

### Advent by Candlelight

Wednesday, December 11  
7:00–8:30 pm

“Tinsel, Silent & Listen”

In a busy time, take time to listen as Mary did. Register online at [stapostle.org](http://stapostle.org) by December 6.

### Lessons and Carols

Friday, December 13  
7:00 pm | Church\*

Guest Artists John Angotti, Meredith Augustin and Craig Colson will join the St. Thomas the Apostle Music Makers for this seasonal offering. Advent scriptures and music are combined in a prayerful setting that is sure to be an inspiring, faith-filled way to prepare the way for Christmas.

### Sacrament of Reconciliation

Wednesday, December 18  
7:00 pm | Church

Beginning in the Church with a communal liturgy of reconciliation, this advent offering also provides the opportunity for individual confession with parish and guest priests.

## Families, Teens and Young Adults

There are a number of ways for families, teens and young adults to prepare the way of the Lord this season of Advent

### Religious Education Students Tree Decorating

This Advent, all Religious Education classes will learn about the reason for the season.

- Fifth grade classes will have a class at St. Thomas that is dedicated to Advent (Saturday, November 23 and Tuesday, December 3). Deacon Larry and Deacon Joe will talk with the kids, and they will then make ornaments for the Christmas trees in the gym.
- First grade religious education students will make ornaments during class to decorate the tree in the Gathering Area.
- All Saints Catholic Academy first and fifth graders are welcome to bring in handmade ornaments to the RE office to add to the trees.

St. Thomas appreciates these handmade touches and the children's help in creating a beautiful environment.

### Second Grade Mass

We will celebrate the second graders at the 11:15 am Mass Sunday, December 1. Students will have the opportunity to participate in the Mass in a joyful way as we celebrate the first Sunday of Advent and our second grade students. Enjoy some pancakes in the gym after Mass to support the high school teens and then join us in the Lighthouse for an Advent Family Faith Activity (see below.)

### Advent Family Faith Activity

Join us in the Lighthouse Sunday, December 1, after the 11:15 am Mass to kick off the first Sunday of Advent. Receive a paper Advent Wreath kit to assemble as a family and enjoy a hot chocolate bar!

### Family Service Project

Join us in the Gym Sunday, December 8, after the 9:30 am Mass to create Christmas tree decorations for St. Patrick's and other nursing homes in the area.

### Stay Pray & Play

Families with young children (babies to age 4) are invited to come together in the church Nursery after 9:30 am Mass Sunday, December 8. Lisa Wehr, the Nursery Coordinator, will host an early Christmas celebration for families with little ones: Christmas songs, stories and fellowship. We hope to see you there!

### Children's Christmas Pageant

St. Thomas youth in elementary and middle school are invited to participate in this year's Christmas Pageant. Narrators, Mary, Joseph, an innkeeper, angels, shepherds, kings and a very special baby are needed to help proclaim the story of the birth of Jesus at the 3:00 pm Mass on Christmas Eve. Practices will be held Mondays, December 9, 16 and 23 from 4:30–5:30 pm in the Church. Costumes are provided. Contact Ann Cotner at [acotner@stapostle.org](mailto:acotner@stapostle.org) if interested in being a part of this special St. Thomas tradition.

### Christmas Environment/Flower Fund

You are invited to make a donation toward the Christmas Environment/Flower Fund in recognition of a loved one. The names of these individuals will be on a display board at the Christmas Masses. Please visit [stapostle.org](http://stapostle.org) or look in the bulletin for an order form. Orders must be received by Sunday, December 15.

## Donations Needed for Care Pantry Family Gift Bags

St. Thomas middle and high school students are making gift bags for our Care Pantry families. Can you help by donating new items to fill these bags? Donations are needed by December 2 and can be brought to the Gathering Area or given to Dorothy Grantham or Ann Cotner.

Suggested items include:

Chapstick, small hand lotion, gloves, mittens, hats and socks (*all neutral colors and various sizes*), small stuffed animals, small games (*like card games or Spot It that a family would be excited to receive*), gift cards (\$5 or \$10) for Starbucks, McDonald's, Dunkin', Taco Bell or Dollar Tree.

We appreciate your help!

## Joint Middle School and High School Service Project

Middle and high school students are invited to let their light shine while helping others. Come to the St. Thomas Gym Saturday, December 7, from 5:30–7:00 pm to fill Christmas gift bags for our Care Pantry families. This fun evening includes pizza, treats and decorating our Church spaces. All students grades 6–12 are welcome.

## CREW: Connect, Reflect, Energize and Witness for Christmas

Our Middle School Youth Group, CREW, is meeting Sunday, December 15, from 4:15–5:45 pm in the Gym. We will reflect on the Christmas season, connect with each other through activities and games, and enjoy food and snacks. All students in grades 6–8 are welcome. Please RSVP to Ann Cotner at [acotner@stapostle.org](mailto:acotner@stapostle.org).

## O Come Let Us Adore Him!

Join us for an evening of Eucharistic Adoration with some live worship music for our middle schoolers and high schoolers Sunday, December 1, at 7:15 pm. Open to all ages!

## Young Adult Bible Study (ages 19-39)

Come join the St. Thomas Young Adults in the basement of the rectory for faith and fellowship on Monday nights from 7:00–8:30 pm.

## Pastoral Care and Wellness

The Pastoral Care Ministry at St. Thomas the Apostle offers programs and services that focus on the total care of every individual in our community. To this end, we provide opportunities for growth in three areas that nurture the body, mind and spirit. In addition, the Pastoral Care Staff are always open to offer a listening and quiet presence, provide emotional and spiritual support and connect parishioners to resources in the parish and in the local community.

### Join us for upcoming programs:

*Finding God One Moment at a Time: The Art of Mindfulness in the Catholic Tradition*

Saturdays, December 7, 14, 21 | 10:00–11:00 am | Senior Center

*Transitions as we Age* by Nancy Kratz, Ph.D.

April 5 | 10:00am | Lighthouse

For further information please contact the Pastoral Care Team at 630.355.8980.

- Annette Kubalanza, Ed. D., Director of Pastoral Care, x124
- Nancy Kratz, Ph. D., Parish Wellness Coordinator, x104
- Susan Kearney, Behavioral Health Coordinator, x108

## Christmas Season Schedule

*Fourth Sunday of Advent*

Saturday, December 21  
4:30 pm Mass\*

Sunday, December 22

8:00 am Mass

9:30 am Mass\*

## Solemnity of the Nativity of the Lord

**PLEASE NOTE THE NEW TIMES FOR THE CHRISTMAS LITURGIES.**

*Christmas Eve*

Tuesday, December 24

3:00 pm Mass | Church\*

*This mass includes the Children's dramatized proclamation of the Gospel.*

3:00 pm Mass | Gym

5:30 pm Mass | Church

9:30 pm Choir Concert | Church

10:30 pm Mass | Church\*

*Christmas Day*

Wednesday, December 25

9:30 am Mass | Church

11:15 am Mass | Church

*Feast of the Holy Family*

Saturday, December 28

4:30 pm Mass

*Blessing of Adoptive Families after Mass*

Sunday, December 29

8:00 am Mass

9:30 am Mass\*

11:15 am Mass

6:00 pm Mass

## Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God

*A Holy Day of Obligation*

Tuesday, December 31

4:30 pm Mass

Wednesday, January 1

8:30 am Mass

(\* ) denotes that liturgy will be livestreamed

## Outreach and Social Justice

*"I am confident of this that the one who began a good work in you will continue to complete it until the day of Christ Jesus."*

— *Philippians 1:6*

During the holiday season, there will be a multitude of opportunities to complete good works, both here at St. Thomas and in the larger community. We offer some suggestions here for your consideration. Please do not feel that you need to do everything. Only you know the good works that God has begun in you. During the Advent and Christmas season, and all year through, the St. Thomas Outreach and Social Justice Office is grateful for your good works and generosity. Thank you so much!

### Our Lady of Guadalupe

On December 9, 1531, on the hill of Tepeyac in Mexico, Mary appeared to a peasant, Juan Diego. Our Lady asked that Juan build her a shrine on that spot for her to show and share her love and compassion with all those who believe. But no one would believe Juan Diego, until the miracle of the tilma!

On Saturday, December 14, at the 4:30 pm Mass, members of the St. Nicholas community (our twinning parish) will provide a re-enactment of the story of Our Lady of Guadalupe. Join us for a prayerful and hopeful experience and reception following Mass.

### Care Pantry Christmas

We will collect and distribute gift cards to our Care Pantry families. Please consider donating gift cards to Meijer, Target and Walmart in denominations of \$10, \$20 and \$25. Gift cards are due no later than Sunday, December 15.

Drop the cards off at church or send them to St. Thomas the Apostle, ATTN: Nicole. If you would rather, you can consider making a cash donation to purchase gift cards. Please make checks payable to St. Thomas OSJ with Christmas Gifts in the memo line. Be sure to include your name with your gift card donation.

### Christmas Hams and Turkeys

Hams and turkeys will be collected December 14–15 for St. Thomas Care Pantry families, the Marie Wilkinson Food Pantry and the food pantries at St. Nicholas in Aurora and St. Patrick (Fr. Dof's Parish) in Joliet. If you know someone in need of food, please contact Nicole in the OSJ Office at 630.355.8980, x113.

### Swaddling Project

Gift bags will be available beginning December 14–15 for donations for three local pregnancy centers (Birthright, the Caring Network and Waterleaf). Items requested include diapers (newborn, sizes 3, 5 and 6), pull-ups, baby wipes, baby wash or shampoo, diaper cream, baby board books, pacifiers and onesies. The centers are also requesting gift cards in amounts of \$20 or \$25 to stores such as Walmart, Target and grocery stores. If you choose to donate with a check, make payable to St. Thomas OSJ with Swaddling Project in the memo line. Return items by January 12.

### Haiti Education and Meals

When Fr. Frantzdy visited this fall, he shared that his priorities for our twinning relationship with Ste. Mare Madeleine in Duchity, Haiti, included school lunch meals and supporting education by providing teachers' salaries. If you would like to contribute toward these causes, checks can be made payable to St. Thomas OSJ with Haiti Education in the memo line. We will also offer a Haitian Christmas Card explaining these causes which you can give if you are donating in lieu of a Christmas gift.

### Transitional Housing

Last August, St. Thomas welcomed a Transitional Housing family (a mother and young daughter). Our commitment is to support our family (both helping financially and providing mentor support) for the next two years. During this time, the family will work on skills that help them to move from homelessness to self-sufficiency. Providing someone a 'hand up' is a tremendous gift. If you would like to contribute financially toward the support that St. Thomas provides to our family, checks can be made out to St. Thomas OSJ with Transitional Housing in the memo line.

## Advent/Christmas Calendar

### December

- 1** Second Grade Mass, 11:15 am
- 1** Family Faith Activity, after 11:15 am Mass
- 1** Eucharistic Adoration, 7:15 pm
- 2** Donations for Care Pantry Gift Bags due
- 3** Mid-day Meditation, 12:00 pm
- 7** Finding God One Moment at a Time, 10:00 am
- 7** Joint Middle School and High School Service Project, 5:30–7:00 pm
- 8** Family Service Project, after 9:30 am Mass
- 8** Stay Pray and Play Christmas celebration, after 9:30 am Mass
- 9** Christmas Pageant rehearsal, 4:30–5:30 pm
- 10** Mid-day Meditation, 12:00 pm
- 11** Advent by Candlelight, 7:00–8:30 pm
- 13** Lessons and Carols, 7:00 pm
- 14** Finding God One Moment at a Time, 10:00 am
- 14** Our Lady of Guadalupe, 4:30 pm Mass
- 14-15** Ham and Turkey Collection
- 15** CREW, 4:15–5:45 pm
- 15** Care Pantry gift cards due
- 16** Christmas Pageant rehearsal, 4:30–5:30 pm
- 17** Mid-day Meditation, 12:00 pm
- 18** Reconciliation, 7:00 pm
- 21** Finding God One Moment at a Time, 10:00 am
- 23** Christmas Pageant rehearsal, 4:30–5:30 pm
- 24** Christmas Eve 3:00, 3:00, 5:30 and 10:30 pm Masses
- 25** Christmas Day 9:30, 11:15 am Masses
- 28** Feast of the Holy Family 4:30 pm Mass
- 29** Feast of the Holy Family 8:00, 9:30, 11:15 am and 6:00 pm Masses
- 31** Solemnity of Mary vigil, 4:30 pm Mass

### January

- 1** Solemnity of Mary, 8:30 am Mass
- 12** Swaddling Project donations due