

Gifts

of the season

ADVENT 2025

Greetings St. Thomas the Apostle community,

As we enter this sacred season of Advent, we prepare our hearts once again for the coming of Christ — the greatest gift of all. Advent invites us to slow down, to make space for wonder and gratitude, and to reflect on the many blessings God has already placed in our lives.

This year, our parish Advent focus will center on Gifts — the gifts we receive from God and the gifts we are called to share with others. In this season of anticipation, we remember that God's generosity knows no bounds. The coming of Jesus brings hope to the weary, peace to the restless, joy to the sorrowful and love to all. Each week of Advent offers us a chance to unwrap these divine gifts more fully — to recognize how Christ is present in our midst and to respond with thankful hearts. We are also invited to become gifts for one another. Whether it is offering a listening ear, lending a helping hand or extending forgiveness, each act of love becomes a reflection of Christ's own generosity.

As we journey together toward Christmas, may we open our hearts to receive anew the gift of God's presence — and, in turn, to become a gift of hope and love to the world around us. We invite you to join us for the many events, activities and prayer experiences shared in this brochure and to journey with us to encounter Emmanuel — God with us.

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



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ST. THOMAS THE APOSTLE CATHOLIC CHURCH

Advent Events

Mid-day Meditation

Tuesdays, December 2, 9, 16

12:00 pm

Offer the gift of yourself to God in silent prayer.

Advent by Candlelight

Wednesday, December 3

7:00–8:30 pm | Lighthouse

Holy Notes in Unexpected Places

Enjoy the gift of music in an evening of fellowship, food and faith. Register online at stapostle.org by November 30.

Lessons and Carols

Friday, December 12

7:00 pm | Church*

Guest Artists John Angotti, Meredith Augustin and Tony Alonso 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.

Come warm up before Lessons and Carols with hot chocolate, sweet treats and fellowship beginning at 6:00 pm in the Gathering Area! Families are invited to enjoy the reception together. While parents attend the concert, the nursery will be open, and children ages 5 and up are invited to a movie night in the Gym. We look forward to celebrating this special evening together!

Sacrament of Reconciliation

Wednesday, December 17

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 best Christmas gift ever and how to be a gift to others.

- Fifth grade classes will have a class at St. Thomas that is dedicated to Advent (Tuesday, December 2, and Saturday, December 13). They will be learning more about Jesus' birth 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.

Advent Family Faith Activity

Join us Sunday November 30 after the 9:30 am Mass to kick off the first Sunday of Advent. Enjoy a hot chocolate bar, make a Jesse Tree craft and stay for fellowship as we prepare our hearts as a family in anticipation for the birth of Jesus.

Nursery Christmas Celebration

Families with young children (babies through age 4) are invited to come together to the church nursery after 9:30 am Mass Sunday, December 7. 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!

Lessons and Carols

Join us Friday, December 12, for a beautiful evening of music and reflection as we celebrate the season with Lessons and Carols. Guest artists John Angotti, Tony Alonso and Meredith Augustin will join the St. Thomas music makers for this beloved annual tradition.

Make Lessons and Carols a Date Night

Come enjoy a beautiful evening of music and reflection while your kids have a cozy movie night! Treats will be served to enjoy as a family around 6:00 pm followed by the performance at 7:00 pm. The Nursery will be open for children ages 0-4.

Movie Night and Pajama Party

During Lessons and Carols, the Gym will be open for children 5+, and we will be enjoying some fun activities, light refreshments and fellowship together. Children are encouraged to wear their favorite Christmas PJs, bring a blanket and watch *The Star* on the big screen. This is a wonderful opportunity to connect with one another and get in the Christmas spirit.

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 or look in the bulletin for an order form. Orders must be received by Sunday, December 14.

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 1, 8, 15, 22 and Tuesday, December 23, from 4:30–5:30 pm in the Church. Costumes are provided. Contact Christine Goba at cgoba@stapostle.org or Ann Cotner at acotner@stapostle.org if interested in being a part of this special St. Thomas tradition.

Gingerbread Houses for Care Pantry Families

The St. Thomas Faith Formation Ministry is providing care pantry families with kits to make a Gingerbread House. This special gift gives families the opportunity to spend time together in preparation for the holidays. Can you help by donating a kit (a variety of options are available at most local retailers)? Donations are needed by December 9. They can be brought to St. Thomas or Religious Education classes.

Middle School and High School “Give a Gift, Be a Gift” Evening

Middle and high school students are invited to reflect on our Advent theme and prepare for Christmas together. Come to the St. Thomas Gym Saturday, December 13, from 5:30–7:00 pm to wrap Gingerbread House Kits for our Care Pantry families. This fun evening includes pizza, treats and decorating our Church spaces, as well as time for connection and reflection. All students in grades 6–12 are welcome.

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:

PrimeTime Diamonds in the Sky Christmas Party

Tuesday, December 9 | 10:00 am | Lighthouse

This holiday event will include a delicious brunch consisting of egg casseroles, fruit, bread, favors filled with goodies and candy, beverages including coffee and water along with a chance to win a raffle prize.

For your enjoyment, a Barbershop quartet from the celebrated Chorus of DuPage will entertain us with festive music. Registration required by December 7 for this festive event. Email Phyllis Wempe at PTregistration@hotmail.com or call 630.728.3227. Register today as this program fills up quickly.

“Hope Café” A Loving Look at Loss and Grief

Tuesday, December 16 | 10:30 am–12:00 pm

For those experiencing loss and grief, the Pastoral Care team is offering the “Hope Café” where anyone can drop in for sharing, prayer and reflection with a warm drink and pastries. The Café will be open once each month. No reservation needed.

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., Wellness Coordinator, x104
- Jane Zimmerman, Pastoral Care Associate, x108

Christmas Season Schedule

Fourth Sunday of Advent

Saturday, December 20

4:30 pm Mass

Sunday, December 21

8:00 am Mass

9:30 am Mass*

11:15 am Mass

6:00 pm Mass

**Please note the new times
for the Christmas liturgies.**

Solemnity of the Nativity of the Lord

Christmas Eve

Wednesday, 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

Thursday, December 25

10:00 am Mass | Church

Feast of the Holy Family

Saturday, December 27

4:30 pm Mass

Blessing of Adoptive Families after Mass

Sunday, December 28

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

Wednesday, December 31

4:30 pm Mass

Thursday, 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*

As we enter the Advent and Christmas season, we are reminded that this is a time of giving — but also a time of being a gift. Each of us carries within us the good work that God has begun, and through our presence, our compassion and our service, we become gifts to one another and to the world.

This season offers many opportunities to share your gifts — whether through acts of kindness, donations or simply showing up with love and hope. We invite you to explore the ways you might give and be a gift through the Outreach and Social Justice initiatives at St. Thomas. Please don't feel called to do everything; rather, reflect on the gifts God has placed in you and how you are being invited to share them.

We are deeply grateful for your generosity, your spirit and your presence. You are a gift to this community and beyond. Thank you!

Our Lady of Guadalupe

On December 9, 1531, on the hill of Tepeyac in Mexico, Mary appeared to a peasant, Juan Diego. Her presence was a gift of love and reassurance, reminding us that we, too, are called to be bearers of compassion.

On Saturday, December 13, 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 a reception following Mass.

Care Pantry Christmas

We are collecting gift cards for families served by the Care Pantry as a way to brighten the holidays and share the joy of the Christmas season. Please consider donating cards from Meijer, Target or Walmart in \$10, \$20 or \$25 denominations. Donations are due by Sunday, December 14. Gift cards may be dropped off at church or mailed to St. Thomas the Apostle, ATTN: Nicole

Christmas Hams and Turkeys

Help us bring warmth and nourishment to families this Christmas! On the weekend of December 13–14, we'll be collecting hams and turkeys for our St. Thomas Care Pantry families, as well as for the Marie Wilkinson Food Pantry and our partner parishes — St. Nicholas in Aurora and St. Patrick in Joliet.

If you know someone in need of food this season, please reach out to Nicole in the Outreach and Social Justice Office at 630.355.8980, x113.

Swaddling Project

Gift bags will be available December 20–21. Suggestions of needed items to support local pregnancy centers will be indicated on the bag. Checks are also welcome (payable to St. Thomas OSJ with 'Swaddling Project' in the memo line). Please return all items by January 11. Your generosity wraps these families in love.

Haiti Christmas Cards

This Christmas, Haiti Christmas card donations will go to support the children at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Orphanage and Ecole Notre Dame di Perpetuel School, under the care of Ertha Papillon.

To contribute, please make checks payable to St. Thomas OSJ with Ertha in the memo line. Donors will receive a Haitian Christmas Card to share in lieu of a traditional gift, explaining the purpose and impact of the donation. These cards are more than paper — they are gifts of shared humanity and love across borders.

Pax Christi Advent Reflection Booklets

Are you looking for something to guide your prayer and reflection as we begin Advent? Pax Christi USA's *Entering the Night of Peace*, co-authored by Cameron Bellm and Flora X. Tang, offers poetic and thought-provoking reflections for the Advent season. These daily meditations are ideal for personal prayer or family and group discussion.

Copies are available in the Gathering Area. We invite you to take one and join us in prayer this Advent. Let this booklet be a gift to your spirit guiding you through the season with peace and reflection.

Advent/Christmas Calendar

November

30 Advent Family Faith Activity, after 9:30 am Mass

December

- 1** Christmas Pageant rehearsal, 4:30–5:30 pm
- 2** Mid-day Meditation, 12:00 pm
- 3** Advent by Candlelight, 7:00–8:30 pm
- 7** Nursery Christmas Celebration, after 9:30 am Mass
- 7** Eucharistic Adoration, 7:15 pm
- 8** Christmas Pageant rehearsal, 4:30–5:30 pm
- 9** Gingerbread House Kits due
- 9** PrimeTime, 10:00 am
- 9** Mid-day Meditation, 12:00 pm
- 12** Lessons and Carols, 7:00 pm
- 12** Movie Night for Kids, 7:00 pm
- 13** Joint Middle School and High School Service Project, 5:30–7:00 pm
- 13** Our Lady of Guadalupe, 4:30 pm Mass
- 13-14** Ham and Turkey Collection
- 14** Care Pantry gift cards due
- 14** Christmas Flower Orders due
- 15** Christmas Pageant rehearsal, 4:30–5:30 pm
- 16** Hope Café, 10:30 am–12:00 pm
- 16** Mid-day Meditation, 12:00 pm
- 17** Reconciliation, 7:00 pm
- 22** Christmas Pageant rehearsal, 4:30–5:30 pm
- 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 10:00 am Mass
- 27** Feast of the Holy Family 4:30 pm Mass
- 28** 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
- 11** Swaddling Project donations due