

*Reminders and Resources for the winter 2025 Homily Series*

**The Greatest Story Ever Told**

Week One — What is it?

**The Bible** holds the greatest story ever told, which is the remarkable life, death, and resurrection of Jesus the Christ — a story of immeasurable Love.

**Jesus** was born into poverty in the small town of Bethlehem and then raised in Nazareth, a village in Galilee. His parents, Mary and Joseph, provided a working class home wherein Jesus learned Joseph's carpentry trade. At approximately age 30, he began preaching around Galilee about the Love of God, forgiveness, and a new way of life. He taught through parables and miracles. Jesus assembled a group of twelve followers to assist him with this ministry, one of whom would ultimately betray him. Only three years after his public ministry began, Jesus was arrested by Roman authorities on charges of blasphemy. He was sentenced to death by crucifixion and horrendously killed. Before he died, he promised the disciples that the Spirit of Truth would arrive to aid them in continuing the work he had begun. Three days after Jesus died, he rose and appeared to his disciples. He gave them the Great Commission, to share the Good News of God's Love with others. Forty days later, Jesus ascended into Heaven. Shortly thereafter, the apostles and others received the Holy Spirit. The Church has been growing ever since.

**The word evangelization** means good news. Proclaiming the Good News of God's Love to others is as simple as telling one friend about another friend.

Gospel Connection (Luke 1:1-4; 4:14-21):

In today's Gospel, Luke shares how Jesus' ministry began in Galilee and that it was wonderful. He then tells about Jesus returning to his hometown and reading in the synagogue from the prophet Isaiah. Jesus was anointed by God "to bring glad tidings to the poor...to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free..." This is Good News worth sharing!

The Great Commission (Matthew 28: 19-20):

Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age.

**St. Thomas the Apostle Parish** has evangelized in many ways over the past 40 years. We are now invited to build on that momentum, to develop new ways of evangelizing.

Once you recognize God's Love in your life you will be changed for the better.

You will see God at work in the world, in everyday miracles.

The next step is to ask:

***"What will I do with this Love?"***

Resources:

- “Go,” He Said — A Pastoral Letter from Most Reverend R. Daniel Conlon to the People of the Diocese of Joliet: <https://medium.com/@dioceseofjoliet/go-he-said-95d157ae4d2f>
- The Joy of the Gospel by Pope Francis: [https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco\\_esortazione-ap\\_20131124\\_evangelii-gaudium.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html)
- *Forming Intentional Disciples: The Path to Knowing and Following Jesus* by Sherry Waddell: <https://osvcatholicbookstore.com/product/forming-intentional-disciples-the-path-to-knowing-and-following-jesus-revised-and-expanded>
- *Essential Teachings on Love* by Richard Rohr: [https://store.cac.org/products/essential-teachings-on-love?srsltid=AfmBOor2oO5f2RCQoK0WOg\\_9wCmP\\_OzYVd3xdDfIXxXKsm56pOqgwf](https://store.cac.org/products/essential-teachings-on-love?srsltid=AfmBOor2oO5f2RCQoK0WOg_9wCmP_OzYVd3xdDfIXxXKsm56pOqgwf)
- The Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity by Pope Paul VI: [https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_decree\\_19651118\\_apostolicam-actuositatem\\_en.html](https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19651118_apostolicam-actuositatem_en.html)
- *Making Missionary Disciples* by Curtis Martin: <https://www.osvcatholicbookstore.com/product/making-missionary-disciples>
- An Introduction to Alpha (a tool St. Thomas will be utilizing to offer space for exploring the deepest questions of life from a Christian perspective): <https://alphausa.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/Alpha-Catholics-Intro-Guide-2023-Updated.pdf>

**A Prayer** By Pierre-Alain Giffard, Director of Pastoral Work:

*Heavenly Father,*

*We come before you with hearts full of gratitude for the opportunity to lead others to You. We seek your divine guidance and blessings in all that we are called to do. We humbly ask for your divine intervention to help us extend invitations and gather those who seek love, meaning, and hope.*

*Send your Holy Spirit to touch the lives of those who will come, drawing them closer to you and awakening in them a curiosity to explore the riches of your truth. Open their eyes to the transformative power of your grace and the life-changing message of your Son Jesus Christ.*

*Father, we also ask that you remove any barriers that may hinder people from coming to you. Break down walls of doubt, fear, and skepticism. Soften hearts that have been hardened by past experiences or misconceptions about you. Unveil the beauty of your presence and the joy that can be found in knowing you.*

*Grant us to warmly welcome those who will come and to communicate your love to them with compassion and authenticity. Lord, we trust in your providence and believe that you are already at work, orchestrating divine encounters and preparing hearts to receive you.*

*We surrender this prayer into your loving hands, knowing that you are the one who transforms lives and brings people into fellowship with you.*

*In the name of our Savior, Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen.*