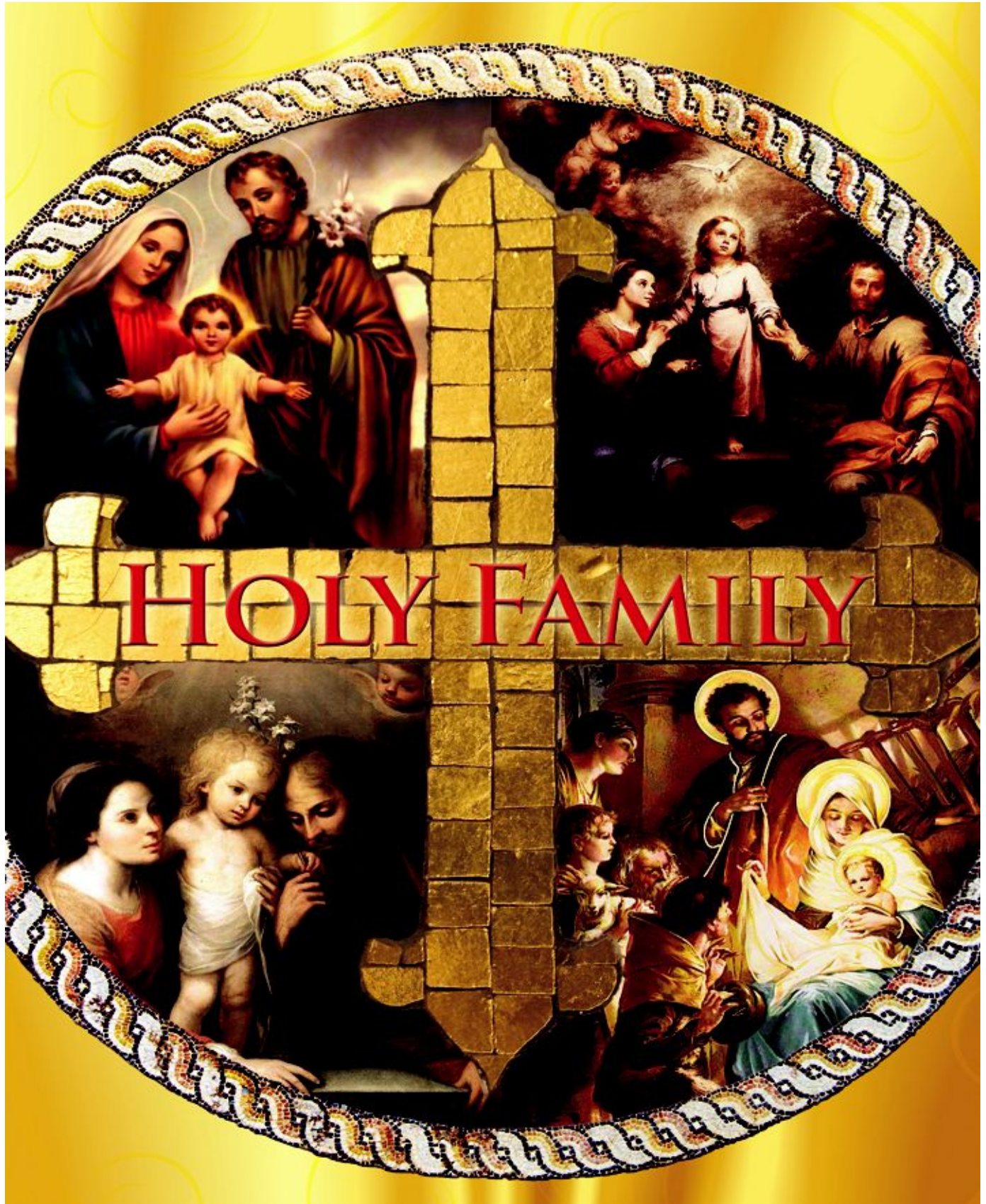




St. Thomas the Apostle Parish  
Diocese of Peoria  
904 E Lake Ave Peoria Heights  
[stthomaspeoria.org](http://stthomaspeoria.org)



### Feast of the Holy Family

Sirach	3:2-6,12-14
Colossians	3:12-21
Luke	2:41-52

What does a holy family look like? Our readings today speak of the family of Jesus that give us the example of a holy family. In the Gospel we are let in on the dynamics of the family. Jesus leaves the family caravan and his parents cannot find him. Sound familiar? Jesus did not seem to understand why there was any concern about him...he was following his Father's call. Mary and Joseph did not grasp Jesus' mission. But, Jesus listened to the urgency of his mother and went with his parents to live with them "in obedience." He "advanced in wisdom and age and favor before God and others." In other words, Jesus was willing to listen. His listening helped him gain wisdom, and thus, favor before all. Mary thought about all this, pondering it in her heart. The point of the story is that each of them was attentive to the other. In that effort, growth in wisdom, grace, and love made their way into the family. They all became more attuned to each other and God's call to them.



#### Monday, December 31, 2012

- 7:00am Nelle Cote/Bob & Beth Sparrow
- 8:00am Janette Herbers/St Thomas Choir
- 5:00pm Tony Gay/Pete & Kathryn Martin

#### Tuesday, January 1, 2013 New Year's Day

- 6:30am For the People
- 8:00am Edward Goett/Beth Washburn
- 9:30am Bart & Rose Ferguson/Mary Rose Kelly
- 11:00am Dylan Maubach & Family/Mark & Brennan Rapach & Family

#### Wednesday, January 2, 2013,

- 7:00am Cliff Bohlman/Chad & Angie Willett
- 8:00am Abbie Holzgrafe/Kevin & Lisa Schoeplein

#### Thursday, January 3, 2013

- 7:00am Dale Fitzgerald & Robby Clark/Connie Fitzgerald
- 8:00am Eva Ryan 31st Anniv/Don & Jan Smith

#### Friday, January 4, 2013 First Friday

- 7:00am Paul J Streitmater/Nancy Scurry
- 8:00am World Peace & Special Prayer Intentions

#### Saturday January 5, 2013

- 8:00am Purgatorial Society
- 5:00pm Jo Ann Gross/Maurice & Norma Joseph

#### Sunday, January 6, 2013

- 6:30am For the People
- 8:00am Patricia Adamson/Jerry & Janet Cusack
- 9:30am Helen Engelbrecht/Dennis McGann
- 11:00am Robert Naab/Curtis & Jacqueline White
- 5:00pm Dave Schuler/Mark & Sue Clark



**SIGN UP FOR FIRST FRIDAY ADORATION** will be in the gathering space this weekend.

**NEW'S YEARS MASS SCHEDULE** will be Tuesday, December 31 at 5:00 pm and Wednesday, January 1 at 6:30 am, 8:00 am, 9:30 am and 11:00 am. There will no 5:00 pm Mass.

**NO BIBLE STUDY** Wednesday, January 2 at 8:45 am in the parish office meeting room.

**CHARISMATIC PRAYER GROUP** Thursday, January 3 at 7:00 pm.

**PEACE VIGIL/EUCHARISTIC ADORATION** Friday, January 4 from beginning at 8:30 am and ending with Benediction at 8:00 pm.

**ST VINCENT DE PAUL, FOOD PANTRY AND CHRIST CHILD COLLECTIONS** will be at all Masses next weekend.

A HAPPY  
NEW YEAR

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## *Our Sympathy*

**PLEASE PRAY FOR THOSE WHO HAVE DIED THIS**

**WEEK:** Mary Burke, mother of Bridget Burke and grandmother of Thomas, John and Charles Whitten; Judy Mihm, mother of Sarah Zeller and grandmother of Gabriella, Anabelle and Christian Zeller and sister of Ed Zosky.

### St. Thomas Food Pantry

Following is the suggested list of food items:

Spaghetti	Spaghetti Sauce	Rice
Canned Fruit	Pancake Mix	Jelly
Dry Beans	Pork & Beans	Cereal
Soup	Crackers	Syrup
Beef Stew	Canned Vegetables	Noodles
Peanut Butter	Mac & Cheese	Tuna
Paper Towels	Toilet Paper	
Toothpaste	Instant Potatoes	

Thank you for your contributions to the Food Pantry.  
We greatly appreciate your generosity.

### PLEASE PRAY FOR...

Please keep the men and women in the military in your prayers:

*James Blanchard	*Ricardo DeLaCruz	*David Hodges
*Dan McDonough	*Dan Svybersky	*Scott C. Powers
*Glen Louthan	*Jeff R. Dudley	*Brian M Godsill
*Chris Lehman	*Joe Espinosa	*Alexis Moran
*Bridget Kelley	*Jason Kedzior	*Jason Stevenor
*Travis Williams	*Michael McKee	*Brian Behm
*Alex Fritz	*Joe Kuchan	*Christopher Miller
*Jason Kidd	*Tom Stimeling	*F. Michael Schachtrup
*Roseanne Milroy	*Curtis Bohlman	*Maegan Brown
*Victoria Coers	*Ryan Schatsiek	*Jim Comfort
*Scot Wettach	*Joe Moran	*Jason Blankenship
*Jacob Moody	*JoanneMcGregor	*Farrah Bramble
*Liam O'Neill	*William Kelley, III	*Mackinzie Wilts
*Erich Snyder	*Michael O'Brien	*Lt. Blake Baldi
*Drake Comfort	*NaToane Russell	*Craig Bohlman
*Mark Fagenkrantz	*Casey Redington	Jordan Good
*Fred Wilson	*Darren Hodgkins	*Anthony Alessi
*Jason Thyne	*Joshua Logan Stroot	*Jeff Good
*Nathan M. Heiser	*Ben McCabe	
*Lt. Col. James Godfrey		*William Newport

### Weekly Collection

	12/16/12	Fiscal YTD
Collections needed	\$ 23,077	\$ 576,925
Sunday Collections	\$ 24,298	\$ 561,758
Electronic Collections	\$ 1,565	\$ 39,135
Total Collected	\$ 25,863	\$ 600,893
Overage (Shortage)	\$ 2,786	\$ 23,968

We appreciate your generosity.

### Calling All Women at St. Thomas Parish!!

Join us on Friday, January 11 from 6:30-10:00 pm in the lower level of the church for an evening filled with food, fashion and friends. Enjoy light appetizers and desserts with other women of the parish before a fashion show featuring the latest spring trends and fashion accessories for variety of ages from local area businesses. This is a great activity to meet other ladies of our parish! For more information on the evening, contact Celeste Matheson at 634-1611. Event sponsored by St. Thomas School's PTO.

### Richwoods Township Rebuilding Together

#### "Christmas in April"

for

#### Peoria Heights Homeowners

Richwoods Township has entered into a partnership with Rebuilding Together Peoria to rehabilitate one or two homes in Peoria Heights in 2013.

Applications available at  
Richwoods Township  
Contact Supervisor Mike Phelan, 688-2822.  
Deadline: December 31, 2012

### FROM the DIOCESE...

With every indication that tax rates will increase in 2013 you might consider making a contribution to St. Thomas Parish prior to year end 2012. Please call your tax consultant or call Bill Engelbrecht at the Diocesan Office of Development at 671-1550/

#### Sponsor of the Week



### **Hardship Takes No Holiday, But You can Help!**

The Society of St. Vincent de Paul continues its robust program of work at St. Thomas, offering hope and assistance to people in need right here in our area. Consider a single father who contacted us needing help with rent, some unexpected medical expenses and seeking a reasonable Christmas for his three primary school aged children. Or the young single mom with an infant who while employed full-time, sought help in putting down a security deposit for her first apartment. Or the couple, both suddenly on disability, who found themselves unable to pay their car insurance premium or fuel up their vehicle.

Thanks to your generosity on the first Sunday of each month, the Vincentians here at St. Thomas are able to continue furnishing relief to the afflicted, ranging from our ongoing food pantry to distribution of Christmas baskets to one-time help for situations above. The holidays always produce a hike in requests for assistance, so at this time, we need your support more than ever! After all the Masses next weekend, January 5th and 6th, the ushers and Vincentians will be in the Gathering Space with our St. Vincent de Paul collection baskets—please dig deep and help as much as you are able.

If our passion for the poor sounds like an activity you would like to learn more about, we invite you to our next meeting on Tuesday, January 8th at 7:00 pm in the lower level of the Parish Offices.

Steve Jaeger, member

### **Peoria FIRE Foundation for Inclusive Religious Education**

This organization works to include children with special needs into an inclusive classroom environment in religious schools. There will be a fundraiser January 19th from 4:00-7:00 pm at Peoria Notre Dame High School. Chili dinner and hot dogs as well as games and a bake sale. Carry-out will be offered.

### **Christmas Collection**



As people have asked about our Christmas Collection we would like to take the opportunity to explain. The Christmas Collection is the property of the parish. Any gifts intended for one of the priests or Sister must be clearly indicated that way on the offering.

### **Annual ThanksGiving Program 2013**

Thank you to those who have responded to our 2013 Annual Giving Program. We appreciate your generosity. If you have not had a chance to respond yet please consider participating in the year's Annual Giving Program. This year's proceeds will help with the installation of air conditioning in our school and updating of controls for our current systems.

You may return your green pledge card to the Parish Office, mail it, or drop it in the collection basket at Mass. If you have questions, please call Jan Smith after January 2 at 688-3466.

Wishing you all a very Merry Christmas and most Happy New Year.



**75 Anniversary Christmas Ornaments are available for purchase. They resemble the medallion you received several weeks ago after Mass.**

### ***Thank You***

We would like to thank everyone who was so generous in their well-wishes, cards, and gifts during this Christmas season. Know that we appreciate your thoughtfulness. Know, also, that you are truly a gift to each of us.

Have a blessed New Year!!

Msgr. Watson  
Fr. Taylor  
Sr. Rachel

# Signs of 'Life' Jon M Sweeney

## Wonderful lessons from the Capra masterpiece

*Reprinted with permission from America Magazine*

We've all had those moments in December when we clicked through the channels and found **It's a Wonderful Life** nearly everywhere. Yet it would be tragic if the past over-exposure of Frank Capra's 1946 film fooled us into seeing it as anything less than a masterpiece. What's more, the film offers a profound understanding of the Gospels.

Is George Bailey a saint? Not exactly. He might just be lucky or unlucky or human.

Anxious to leave bucolic Bedford Falls, George (Jimmy Stewart) tells his father, "I want to do something *big*, something *important!*" He doesn't yet see how his father's work fits that goal precisely. Then there's Mr. Potter, as twisted as Eden's serpent, brought to life by the Shakespearean-trained Lionel Barrymore. Good and evil are presented as "opposed but almost equal" forces through these two characters. Potter wants nothing but to see goodness fail.

When George's father dies, Potter makes a motion at the first board meeting to dissolve Peter Bailey's Building & Loan and turn its assets over to the receiver, which is the bank Potter owns. Capra liked to center his dramas on pivotal moments in a character's life, and with an actor like Stewart, he had all he needed. As George rushes out the door, the chairman catches him to say that the board has just appointed George to replace his dad. No way, George says, "I'm leaving." "But, George! They'll vote with Potter otherwise!" Go to YouTube and watch the moment when Capra zooms in on George's anguished face (35 minutes into the film).

Four years later, George is still running the business with his daffy Uncle Billy, when Harry, his talented kid brother, graduates from college. Harry, it turns out, has just married and his father-in-law has offered him a job. "I never said I'd take it," Harry tells George. "You've been holding the bag here for four years, and I won't let you down." Look again at George's face (at the 37-minute mark). See the change that comes over a determined mouth, how a smile emerges, eyes brighten and the body moves forward almost unintended. Capra has us watching human virtue in action. George urges his brother to take that job in Buffalo.

Back home at a party for Harry and Ruth, George's mother urges him to call on Mary Hatch (Donna Reed), also just home from college. She has a crush on George, but it is only when her beau, Sam Wainwright, calls her from New York that a cloud of tension turns to steam; George and Mary end the scene in a passionate kiss. This is not the last time Sam will prompt George to see himself truly.

George and Mary wed on a gloomy day a few years after the great crash of 1929. As they announce to a cab driver their honeymoon plans, people run to the bank teller windows. The bank has locked its doors. So has the Building & Loan, where Uncle Billy is already drinking himself under the table. At day's end, George and Mary have given away all they'd saved for a honeymoon, and Mary has arranged for them to spend the night in an abandoned house in Bedford Falls. She has decorated the walls with posters of the places abroad George has longed to see, but never will. If Mary and George are saints, they got that way through marriage.

George and Mary consistently turn negative situations into positive ones. They find their calling in the world, to help people find affordable homes. The Building & Loan does not simply lend money; George advocates for his customers and risks his own family's financial security. We watch them help the local barkeep and his family move away from Potter's Field, which is what the townspeople call Potter's rented shacks. The name is biblical: Judas hanged himself in "potter's field...a burying place for strangers" (Mt 27:3-8).

### Potter's Invitation

With Bailey-financed homes poking up all over, a fed-up Potter invites the now 28-year-old George for a chat. His attempt to lure George to the dark side almost works. The old man offers George a job managing his properties for \$20,000 a year (about \$300,000 today), with an opportunity to travel. George looks like a cat spying tuna until he remembers who he is. And



who Potter is. For a split second George nearly lets down his guard.

George and Mary have four children. She transforms the old ghost house into a home; George, frustrated by Potter at every turn, returns from work exhausted most days. Then comes World War II. Everyone is off to fight the enemy, something George would dearly want to do, as well. But the deaf ear he acquired as a kid while saving Harry's life in icy water, keeps him home. And Harry becomes a great war hero, shooting down 15 German planes and receiving the Congressional Medal of Honor. Then comes the long, final day.

It is Christmas Eve when a bank examiner arrives at the office to review the books. Uncle Billy has misplaced the deposit, however, losing every cent the Building & Loan had. Facing scandal and ruin, George stops by the house. Mary has never seen her husband with this look of desperation. She ought to be scared—George has gone to Potter to beg him for the \$8,000 he needs. But Potter, who found the lost deposit, almost chokes on his evil chortling at George's misfortune. When Potter spits out, "You are worth more dead than alive!" George's eyes light up (at 1 hr. 34 min.).

In Capra's next turnkey moment, George contemplates ending his life. Alone at a bar he prays. Until this point, we have not heard George, a secular saint, pray. "Dear Father in heaven...if you're up there...and you can hear me, show me the way." When he hears no response, George drives his car as close to the river as he can in his drunken state, stumbles to the bridge and looks down at the swirling waters. He climbs up on the railing.

This famous scene (at 1:38) reminds me of the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, but turned on its head. In Capra's vision, Lazarus gets one more chance, in the form of a man come back from the dead, and it saves him. George's guardian angel, Clarence (Henry Travers), suddenly present, jumps into the river. George's habitual virtue sends him over the side, as he leaps into the waters to help a person in need.

"I'm the answer to your prayer," Clarence tells George as they dry off. "I wish I'd never been born!" George confides. So Clarence nods to heaven—and poof!—the world becomes a place in which George Bailey had never existed.

Guided by Clarence, George sees the effects of his hopelessness, his wish against life. The kingdom of God cannot be found in Bedford Falls without George. In fact, it isn't even Bedford Falls anymore, but Pottersville. A haunting vision of desperation, petty crime and death rears up everywhere. It is like much of what we see in our world, perhaps also because one person has given up. Clarence shows George what the world would be like if George hadn't done what he did at key moments. "Strange, isn't it?" Clarence says. "Each man's life touches so many other lives, and when he isn't around he leaves an awful hole."

### **Back From the Dead**

A few more minutes of this and George prays, "I want to live again!" At that George stands where he was before, on the bridge, missing \$8,000 and half-drunk but no longer desperate. Realizing that his life has come back to him, George sprints home, yelling, "Merry Christmas!" to every passerby. His jubilation comes across to others as courage, a willingness to see the hopeful side of a desperate situation. Little do they know: George has just come back from the dead.

Detectives arrive at George's home with a warrant for his arrest. Then Mary bursts in. She's been out looking for George, and in the process telling everyone in town what has happened. "Come downstairs," Mary says; "they're on their way!" Uncle Billy arrives first, carrying a basket of bills people have thrown in upon hearing that George is in trouble. Then everyone in town leaves some money with a smile and a "Merry Christmas, George." Bedford Falls turns out to be George's salvation.

In the Hebrew Bible and in the teachings of Jesus, salvation is not about where you go when you die. To be saved is to be lifted up and set on your feet, stopping the forces that want to catch us by the heels or pull us under.

There is one problem, however, in the generosity of salvation in the film. Ernie the cab driver reads a telegram received from London: "My office instructed to advance you up to \$25,000!" writes Sam Wainwright. Though everyone cheers, the look on George's face suggests something is off.

The uneasiness of Sam's offer has been lost on millions of viewers over the decades. Sam, though a bit goofy, is conniving and selfish. His headlong pursuit of money permeates every key moment of the movie. He made millions betting on the ground floor of plastics and on properties in Florida. Sam is the man that George is not. And when the meek are supposed to inherit the earth, it's Sam who tries to make it possible. Don't believe it. George clearly doesn't. Those people walking through the door of George and Mary's house bring enough to satisfy the couple's every need. That is the message of "It's a Wonderful Life": there is power in community.

At the film's denouement, Harry steps into the living room, someone hands him a glass and he raises a toast: "To my big brother, George. The richest man in town!" Indeed, George is that, and the riches are the sort that the likes of Sam Wainwright will never comprehend.

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Baptism class is held for all parents before the baptism of their child.  
 Please contact Sr. Rachel to schedule the class.  
 Next Baptisms: January 27 at 11:00 am Mass.

**SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION**

Saturdays: 4:00-4:45 pm & 7:00-8:00 pm  
 or by appointment with a priest  
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