



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

# ADVENT

It is a marvellous period in which the expectation of Christ's return and the memory of his first Coming — when he emptied himself of his divine glory to take on our mortal flesh — reawakens in hearts.

~ Pope Benedict XVI



### Fourth Sunday of Advent

Reading I: Micah 5: 1-4a  
Reading II: Hebrews 10: 5-10  
Gospel: Luke 1:39-45

God is present to each of us in a variety of ways. The Gospel story points out how Elizabeth is aware of the presence of God in Mary, the mother of Jesus; her presence is full of praise, joy and humility. Her response offers the challenge of becoming aware of the presence of God in our own lives. How do we recognize the presence of God in everyday events? In the hectic pace of modern life, the presence of God can be drowned out by other demands. Several years ago, a popular song stated: "Stop and smell the roses along the way." Recognizing the presence of God in creation, people and events demands that we stop and reflect God come to each of us; each of us can find God in our daily lives. Recognizing God's presence is a first step. The beauty of nature, experiencing the kindness of a friend or the joy of a child, can reveal the presence of God. Our own actions and words can bear the presence of God to others.



#### Monday, December 24, 2012 Christmas Eve

7:00am Eugene & Violet Ely by Sue McWhirter & Mr & Mrs Gary Davis  
8:00am Gerald & Kathryn Moon/Family  
5:00pm George & Betsy Kapraun/Family  
7:00pm Elizabeth Noel/Dale & Brenda Noel  
Midnight For the People

#### Tuesday, December 25, 2012 Christmas Day

6:30am Jo Ann Gross/Kathie Bartolo  
8:00am Louise Ing/Ed Ing, Ellen, Roger, Angela & Tim Umdenstock  
9:30am Thomas P Kelly 10th Anniv/Steve & Terri Baldi  
11:00am Dan Connolly

#### Wednesday, December 26, 2012

7:00am Ruth Myer/Kathy Miller  
8:00am Bob Nelson/Family

#### Thursday, December 27, 2012

7:00am Robert Whelan/Paul Stenger  
8:00am Pat Peters/Barb Butler

#### Friday, December 28, 2012

7:00am Fred & Geraldine Schreiber/Sr Shirley Schreiber  
8:00am Bernice Chance/Rolland & JoAnne Garland

#### Saturday December 29, 2012

8:00am Cliff Bohlman/Terry Salsburg  
5:00pm Dave Schuler/The Schoeplein Family

#### Sunday, December 30, 2012

6:30am For the People  
8:00am Benefactors of the Franciscan Sisters of St John the Baptist  
9:30am Dr Jay Alameda/Dennis & Patricia Powers  
11:00am John Ruskusky/Family  
5:00pm Mike Scurry/The Tomlin Family



## Christmas Mass Schedule

### Christmas Eve

5:00 pm Family Mass/Childrens' Choir  
7:00 pm Life Teen choir  
Midnight Adult choir

### Christmas Day

6:30 am; 8:00 am; 9:30 am; 11:00 am  
NO 5:00 pm Mass



**ST. THOMAS CHRISTMAS ORNAMENTS COMMEMORATING THE 75TH ANNIVERSARY** will be for sale after all Masses this weekend.

**CHRISTMAS MASSES** will be Monday, December 24 at 5:00 pm, 7:00 pm and Midnight and Tuesday, December 25 at 6:30 am, 8:00 am, 9:30 am and 11:00 am. There is **no 5:00 pm** Mass on Christmas

**CHARISMATIC PRAYER GROUP** Thursday, December 27 at 7:00 pm.

**QUILTING GROUP** Saturday, December 29 at 1:00 pm in the old gym basement.

Please remember St. Thomas Church in your will..

## *Our Sympathy*

**PLEASE PRAY FOR THOSE WHO HAVE DIED THIS WEEK:** Fred Lemoine, father of Mary Putman

### 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
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*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

	12/9/12	Fiscal YTD
Collections needed	\$ 23,077	\$ 553,848
Sunday Collections	\$ 23,514	\$ 537,460
Electronic Collections	\$ 1,565	\$ 37,569
<b>Total Collected</b>	<b>\$ 25,079</b>	<b>\$ 575,029</b>
Overage ( <b>Shortage</b> )	\$ 2,002	\$ 21,181

We appreciate your generosity.

### ADVENT WREATH



**PRAYER:** During this fourth week of Advent, we hope to be prepared for the coming of Christ into our hearts and home very soon. Help us to stay focused on the real meaning of Christmas during this busy time. Bless our family and all who are without family. Amen.

### 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





## Save the Date!

Peoria Notre Dame High School's Annual  
Benefit Dinner Auction

"Honoring our Past, Building our Future"

Saturday, March 16, 2013  
Embassy Suites Hotel

Cocktails-Dinner-Silent/Live Auction-Raffle



Take a Sneak Peek at a few of our Fabulous Live  
Auction Items

- Springtime Getaway to Martha's Vineyard  
April 20-26, 2014.  
Enjoy this one-bedroom condo located on the water.
- Shopping trip to Chicago for 14 people in a stretch  
SUV limo. Driver and \$500 in spending money for  
lunch will be included.
- Fabulous Dinner prepared by Msgr. Meridan  
for 8-10 couples.

## 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.**

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# A Light in the Cold by Mary Sweeney

**America Magazine—December 17, 2012**

As a campus minister who works with the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, I have met some wonderfully witty young people, who have a succinct way of summarizing the lessons I give to prepare them to become Catholics. One student, after hearing me speak about the Second Coming of Christ and the unknown “day and hour,” captured the idea of preparedness from her academic perspective: “You can’t cram for the Second Coming!” Well said.

More recently I was teaching the season of Advent and stated quite frankly my own prejudice in favor of spending Advent and Christmas in northern climates. A law student nodded and proposed a sports metaphor: “Right,” he said, “they should not have hockey in Tampa.” Well, yes. He understood my point of view.

I suspect that my prejudice in favor of winter as the proper setting for Advent goes back to my childhood. When my friends and I sang Advent hymns and lit the candles of the Advent wreath, the season and its rituals were still new to us, connected with all the other manifestations, religious and secular, of the season. The early darkness and cold of winter afternoons created the right atmosphere for looking longingly at sleds in the frosted Hamilton Hardware Store window, well decorated with Christmas lights. And going home in the early dark after ice skating on the frozen baseball diamond was made easier by the enticement of the fragrant Christmas tree, still unencumbered by gifts, waiting to be lit in the dark living room. It even seemed that as I looked forward to Santa’s arrival, being “nice” instead of “naughty” was less difficult in winter.

In winter there is an attraction to light and warmth; we take time to listen to the stories of loved ones and friends. In the cold of a northern Advent, the image of an infant in the chill touches our hearts. Even the crèche animals conspire to protect him from the night air.

The theology of the liturgical season suits winter. The community gathers; we stand together to sing the longing of centuries: “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel.” We hear the words of the prophet: “Comfort my people,” a cry that loses some of its urgency in brighter, warmer weather. We light candles, an additional one each week as the darkness lengthens; and with the first hint that natural light is returning—one or two minutes more in the afternoon—we welcome the Light from Light, *lumen de lumine*, as we sing in “Adeste Fidelis.” We celebrate the coming of one who entered into our human condition, as uncomfortable as that can be at times, showing us a path out of our darkness.

As people age, the cold and the dark of December may seem less welcoming, but if you flee from them, you may find yourself in an unsettling position: celebrating Advent in weather better suited to Easter. One year I spent Thanksgiving and the first week of Advent with my sister and brother-in-law at their home in Florida. Their practice is to attend Saturday afternoon Mass. We entered the parish church just as the entrance procession began and the organist struck the first notes of “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel.” My body registered the incongruity of hearing that quintessential Advent hymn as I stood in summer clothing in a sun-lit church. My first impulse was to fear for the organist’s job. Why would she play an Advent hymn in the middle of spring? My confusion soon ended when I realized that this was, indeed, Advent, but Advent in Florida. Still, it just didn’t seem right. It lacked the emotional tone that winter contributes to the season.

I am sure that those who live in a warm climate in December find many fruitful ways to celebrate the Advent season. Still, I cling to my own prejudice: Advent feels incomplete without the cold and the dark, the hymns and the hopes. It is to this world that the Word came and continues to come, bringing the light and the warmth of God’s love.

**Mary Sweeney, S.C.**, is a campus minister for graduate students at Boston College

# Preparing for Christmas

**Carrying On by Kerry Weber**

**America Magazine—December 24, 2012**

More than 25 years ago, I came home from pre-school and presented my mother with a cleaned-out baby food jar decorated to look like the face of Santa Claus. The jar contained three red and green starlight mints and bore a lopsided felt hat, vacuous felt eyes and a felt moustache and bow tie, but, inexplicably, no signature beard. It looked more like the old mascot for the Papa Gino's pizza chain than it did Père Noël. Still, my mother proudly placed it on display in our home. Every year since, she has done the same.

Given its age, the creation has held up remarkably well, save for the starlight mints, which have turned a sickly, sticky brown. Yes, the mints are still there. This is partly because we are afraid to open the jar and partly because of: Tradition!

The Weber family takes our traditions seriously, and occasionally to the point of absurdity, especially where Christmas is involved. Consider, for instance, our dedication to watching the 1978 classic "Christmas Eve on Sesame Street" every Christmas Eve. I don't recall which year, exactly, we started watching it, but I also can't recall one when we didn't. The tradition began sometime before "Sesame Street" acquired a kind of retro cool and has continued long after my siblings and I passed the drinking age.

The early viewings involved a version of the film we recorded ourselves with a Beta videotape recorder from a fuzzy PBS channel by way of an antenna. Sometime in the 1990s we broke down and purchased a legitimate copy on VHS. This is the version we currently watch because, once we pull out the old VCR and find the cords and figure out how to hook it up to the TV and rewind the tape, it still works. Like I said: Tradition!

The film's main plotline revolves around Big Bird's efforts to discover how Santa Claus gets down chimneys. Wackiness ensues. But the film's best parts are in the secondary plots and smaller moments: Kermit the Frog interviewing children of the '70s; Bert and Ernie living out their own version of O. Henry's "The Gift of the Magi"; Cookie Monster's efforts to write a letter to Santa, but instead eating every writing implement he gets his hands on.

Of course, like most films, there are a few flaws. My dad, an engineer, complains when Oscar the Grouch falls through a load-bearing wall that appears to be made of nothing more than a sheet of drywall. As a frequent rider on New York City public transit, I marvel at the width of the suspiciously spacious subway car onto which the Sesame Street residents manage to carry a full-sized Christmas tree without complaint. And we all grin at each other and mumble along with Patty, a friend of Big Bird, as the young actress sniffles through her saddest lines: "Big Bird's gone." (Spoiler alert: He's on the roof of an apartment building, looking for Santa.) Despite our sympathy, we can't help but be distracted by the fact that Patty's lips barely move when she delivers the news.

Still, for the most part, our family watches the film without irony. So when the characters walk along the sidewalks of "Sesame Street's" New York and onto the subway while singing about Christmas miracles, we Webers join in the song. (Once, on a relatively empty A train, my sister and I tried to recreate our own version of this scene, but it wasn't quite the same without the Muppets or the ability to sing on key.) And when a crowd of "Sesame Street" kids launches into "Keep Christmas With You"—a song about maintaining the spirit of Christmas throughout the year—we join in both the sung lyrics and the accompanying gestures in American Sign Language. The film isn't religious by any means, but its message of love and of belief in things we can't quite explain is not lost on a Catholic imagination.

Despite the Weber family endorsement, I seldom come across an individual who is familiar with "Christmas Eve on Sesame Street," and it rarely pops up on television. Which is why I was so thrilled last year when a friend told me about a showing of the film at a local museum. I immediately marked it on my calendar and began daydreaming of the theater as an enormous version of the Weber family living room (but with the luxury of a clearer, larger screen) filled with people who also have memorized every magical moment.

But, of the eight million people in New York City, only about 50—mostly hipsters and, appropriately, parents with young children—showed up to this Saturday afternoon screening. We settled in, scattered throughout the theater. The collective enthusiasm in the crowd barely matched that of any single member of my family. And when "Keep Christmas With You" blasted through the speakers, I started to sing along in American Sign Language, but no one joined in. This probably should have been less surprising to me than it was.

It wouldn't be hard to criticize my family's routine—five full-grown adults watching puppets—as childish. But I see it as a time when we simply come together, let go of the stresses of the season and allow ourselves to be present. We forget about the cynicisms and the blame, our faults and our fears. We aren't children anymore, but once a year, for just an hour, each of us feels childlike.

In the end I know that as entertaining as the "Sesame Street" gang can be, it's not the film itself that prompts this change so much as it is the desire to sit down and remember the importance of those things that we believe but cannot see. And in this sense, strange as it may sound, this family movie time echoes an hour we always spend together earlier in the evening, the Christmas Eve Mass—another Weber family favorite.

Sitting in a pew at the cathedral, we are reminded not only of the transformative power of one child, but also of the need to trust in the value of the childlike humility we are all called to embody. It is a time when we are asked, once again, not simply to remember Christ's love, but to take up our place in the long line of those who have come after him—proclaiming a message of joy, peace and redemption—and to continue every day, in one voice, as one family in Christ, to carry on that tradition.

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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: December 30 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  
 Confessions are held in the confessionals in the daily Mass Chapel

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