

Love



December 20, 2020

St. Thomas the Apostle
904 East Lake Avenue
Peoria Heights, Illinois
309-688-3446
stthomaspeoria.org



Advent

From Our Pastor



Last weekend, we rejoiced to celebrate Gaudete Sunday – Rejoice! Even in challenging times, let us rejoice that the birth of our Savior is near!

For my part, I am particularly grateful that we will be able to effectively and safely celebrate Masses for Christmas.

I am also grateful for the participation at Mass of so many of our parishioners who have voluntarily returned to Mass. Everyone continues to be dispensed from the obligation to attend Mass, and no one is required to come. For this reason, I was tremendously heartened to see the number of people who joined us on the Third Sunday of Advent as well as the feast of Immaculate Conception on December 8.

I have wondered if the participation of our parishioners would come back to normal as the danger began to pass. It was my fear that many would get out of the habit of coming to Mass and would not return. However, you have filled me with great hope. Even though we are not out of the woods, and even though there are many who prudently and rightly continue to take precautions by staying at home, many of you have returned to be present to Our Lord in person and to receive Him!

We have made every effort to be virtually present to all our parishioners. I have learned a lot about communicating through these modern digital platforms. Nevertheless, there is nothing quite like actually being present. We can watch and listen remotely, but we can only receive the Eucharist in person.

We continue to celebrate our regular Sunday Mass schedule and have our special schedules for Christmas and Mary, Mother of God which we observe on January 1. Our daily Masses are celebrated in the main church where everyone is able to spread out for distance. If it is safe for you and if you feel comfortable, please know that our entire parish family is welcome to gather at the table of Our Lord.

- Msgr. Gray

Readings for the Week of December 20, 2020

Sunday	Fourth Sunday of Advent 2 Samuel 7: 1-5, 8b-12, 14a, 16; Romans 16: 25-27; Luke 1: 26-38
Monday	St. Peter Canisius, Priest & Doctor of the Church Song 2: 8-14; Luke 1: 39-45
Tuesday	1 Samuel 1: 24-28; Luke 1: 46-56
Wednesday	St. John of Kanty, Priest Malachi 3: 1-4, 23-24; Luke 1: 57-66
Thursday	2 Samuel 7: 1-5, 8b-12, 14a, 16; Luke 1: 67-79 Vigil of the Nativity of the Lord Isaiah 62: 1-5; Acts 13: 16-17, 22-25; Matthew 1: 1-25 Night: Isaiah 9: 1-6; Titus 2: 11-14; Luke 2: 1-14
Friday	The Nativity of the Lord Dawn: Isaiah 62: 11-12; Titus 3: 4-7; Luke 2: 15-20 Day: Isaiah 52: 7-10; Hebrews 1: 1-6; John 1: 1-18
Saturday	St. Stephen, The First Martyr Acts: 6: 8-10; 7: 54-59; Matthew 10: 17-22
Sunday	The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, & Joseph Genesis 15: 1-6; 21: 1-3; Hebrews 11: 8, 11-12, 17-19; Luke 2: 22-40

Mass Intentions

Monday, December 21, 2020

7:00 a.m.	Robert D. Gearien/Mr. & Mrs. Ron Duckworth
8:00 a.m.	Marge McNally/Family

Tuesday, December 22, 2020

7:00 a.m.	Alan Campbell/Mary Fortune
8:00 a.m.	Michael & Whitney Axelson 10 th Wedding Anniversary

Wednesday, December 23, 2020

7:00 a.m.	Sonia Gray/Nelson Family
8:00 a.m.	Smith & Hafner Families

Thursday, December 24, 2020

7:00 a.m.	Gerald & Kathryn Moon/Family
5:00 p.m.	Florence & Jim Ryan/Family
7:00 p.m.	Francis & Marilyn Schachtrup/Pennie & Steve Schachtrup
10:00 p.m.	For the People

Friday, December 25, 2020

7:00 a.m.	Barbara Adams/Family
9:00 a.m.	Joe & Ric Olson/Phan & Tami Vu
11:00 a.m.	For all Bennet, Bautista, & Mejia Families

Saturday, December 26, 2020

8:00 a.m.	Frank Eaton/Joe & Marge Noe
5:00 p.m.	Joe Arnold/Maureen Bentley

Sunday, December 27, 2020

7:00 a.m.	For the People
9:00 a.m.	Penny Scherer/Jeanne Whalen
11:00 a.m.	Mary Rose Kelly/Family
5:00 p.m.	John Skender

Week of December 20

CENTERING PRAYER Monday, December 21, 8:30 a.m., Church

ROSARY Tuesday, December 22, 10:00 a.m., Church

ONLY ONE MORNING MASS Thursday, December 24, 8:00 a.m.

CHRISTMAS VIGIL MASSES 3:00 p.m., 5:00 p.m., 7:00 p.m., & 10:00 p.m.

CHRISTMAS MASSES 7:00 a.m., 9:00 a.m., & 11:00 a.m.



Masses and Confessions for Christmas

Advent Confessions

There will not be a penance service during Advent, but additional confession times are scheduled on the following days:

Saturday, Dec. 19, 3:00 – 4:45 PM and 6:00 – 6:30 PM

Sunday, Dec. 20, 10:00 – 10:45 AM

Monday, Dec. 21, 7:00 – 8:00 PM

Tuesday, Dec. 22, 7:00 – 8:00 PM

Wednesday, Dec. 23, 7:00 – 8:00 PM

Christmas Masses will be offered **Dec. 24**, Christmas Eve at 3, 5, 7, and 10 PM and **Dec 25**, Christmas Day at 7, 9, and 11 AM

Reservations are not required.

Seating is available in the church and in the narthex and chapel where masks are required.

On Christmas Eve at 3 and 5 PM, seating is also available downstairs in the parish hall where the Mass will also be broadcast.

Communion will be brought to the faithful in each location.

Singing will be led by a single cantor at all Masses except Christmas Day at 7 AM.

Communion will be available outside of Mass on Christmas Day from 10:00 to 10:30 AM.

Weekly Collection

	December 13, 2020	Fiscal YTD
Collections needed.....	\$20,000	\$480,000
Sunday Collections.....	\$22,749	\$360,714
Electronic Collections	\$3,399	\$81,576
Total Collected.....	\$26,148	\$442,290
Over/(Short)	\$6,148	\$(37,710)

Your support of St. Thomas Parish is important to sustain our mission. Please remember to contribute regularly with your envelopes or checks in our regular Sunday collection. Electronic contributions can be made through direct debit, or by using the Giving tab on our parish website: stthomaspeoria.org. Thank you for your support.

Our Sympathy

Paul Oltman, father of Mary Camp

Msgr. Richard Soseman

Holiday Schedules

ST. THOMAS CHURCH doors will be locked following the last Mass each day from December 25 through January 1.

PARISH OFFICES will be open on Thursday, December 24 from 9:00 a.m. until noon. The offices will then be closed through January 1. We will resume office hours on Monday, January 4.

FOOD PANTRY will be closed from December 22 until January 1. It will reopen January 4.

Thank You

Fr. Stark and I would be most grateful for the Christmas cards that we have received. Thank you for your kind thoughts and please be assured of our prayers for you and your loved ones during our Christmas Masses.



Giving Tree

Thank you to all who generously supported our Giving Tree this year.

Your kindness brightened the season for many in the Peoria area. Special thanks to the wonderful team of elves who worked to sort the gifts, pack food baskets, and deliver it all to grateful recipients.

RCIA Topics

December 23: No Class

January 6: Penance, Anointing, Funerals

January 13: Marriage, Religious life

January 20: Moral Life, virtues, sin, moral society

January 27: Prayer, Universal Call to Holiness

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Act of Spiritual Communion

My Jesus, I believe that You are present in the Most Holy Sacrament. I love you above all things, and I desire to receive You into my soul. Since I cannot at this moment receive You sacramentally, come at least spiritually into my heart. I embrace You as if You were already there and unite myself wholly to You. Never permit me to be separated from You. Amen.



Pray with the Pope

December 2020
For a Life of Prayer

We pray that our personal relationship with Jesus Christ be nourished by the Word of God and a life of prayer.

Empower Illinois Scholarship Applications for 2021/2022 School Year

The application process for an *Empower Illinois Scholarship* for the 2021/2022 school year will begin Wednesday, January 13, 2021 at 7:00 p.m.

The application is a two-step process. The first step is to reserve your place in line through the *Empower Illinois* website at www.empowerillinois.org on January 13th beginning at 7:00 p.m.

Applications are considered on the basis of the date and time this first step is completed, so it is important to complete step one as soon as possible once the process begins on January 13th. The reservation page will open at 6:30 p.m. to provide families time to complete the form before submission at 7:00 p.m.

If you would like help applying for the *Empower Illinois Scholarship*, please contact Pat at patwombacher@stthomas-school.net or at 688-3446, ext 1341, by Monday, January 11th. We will make sure that step one of your application is completed on January 13th.

Please remember: even if you received an *Empower Illinois Scholarship* for the 2020/2021 school year, you need to reapply for the next year.



The O Antiphons of Advent

The Roman Church has been singing the O Antiphons since at least the eighth century. They accompany the Magnificat canticle of Evening Prayer from December 17-23, and offer a prayerful theology using ancient biblical imagery drawn from the messianic hopes of the Old Testament. They proclaim the coming Christ as the fulfillment not only of Old Testament hopes, but present hope, as well. Their repeated use of the imperative Come! embodies the longing of all time for the Divine Messiah.

We pray the antiphons from December 17—December 23.



December 17
O Wisdom of our God Most High, guiding creation with power and love: come to teach us the path of knowledge!



December 18
O Leader of the House of Israel, giver of the Law to Moses on Sinai: come to rescue us with your mighty power!



December 19
O Root of Jesse's stem, sign of God's love for all his people: come to save us without delay!



December 20
O Key of David, opening the gates of God's eternal Kingdom: come and free the prisoners of darkness!



December 21
O Radiant Dawn, splendor of eternal light, sun of justice: come and shine on those who dwell in darkness and in the shadow of death.



December 22
O King of all nations and keystone of the Church: come and save man, whom you formed from the dust!



December 23
O Emmanuel, our King and Giver of Law: come to save us, Lord our God!

—From *Catholic Household Blessings & Prayers*/USCCB

St. Thomas Sponsor-A-Student Program

Thanks very much to all of our parishioners who have contributed to our *Sponsor-A-Student Program* during the past fiscal year. Your contribution makes a significant difference in the lives of St. Thomas and Peoria Notre Dame students. Collectively, we received almost \$177,000, available for financial assistance for our current school year. Your generous contributions provided tuition assistance to 55 families and their 84 students.

We appreciate your ongoing support of Catholic education, a priceless gift that will benefit our students throughout their lives. We are blessed to have parishioners who show such generosity to others and value the benefit of a Catholic education.

If you are interested in making a contribution to our *Sponsor-A-Student Program*, you may use the yellow envelope in your monthly envelopes, or note that you would like your contribution to be directed to our *Sponsor-A-Student Program*.

Stay in Touch

1. **Join Msgr. Gray for Mass.** Link can be found on the parish website, stthomaspeoria.org or the Parish App
2. **Bookmark the Parish Blog** which will feature regular updates (jgray.org/st_thomas).
3. **Download My Parish App** to receive push notifications (Visit myparishapp.com/download).
4. **Receive the Bulletin** and announcements in weekly emails from the parish. (Email parishoffice@stthomas-church.net to sign up).
5. **Bookmark the parish webpage** (stthomaspeoria.org).



St. Vincent de Paul Society Annual Report

The St. Vincent de Paul Society at St. Thomas is comprised of thirty-six members. This includes thirty who see clients (friends) in their homes, six who work at the Food Pantry, a finance person to manage the bookkeeping, and a manager to coordinate a complex scheduling arrangement.

We get calls from people in distress who cannot pay rent, or their Ameren, sewer or water bills, etc. They face eviction and utility turnoffs. They have payday loan debt which is an awful burden. Two Vincentians work together on each case. We are currently visiting by phone rather than in the client's home because of Covid 19. We continue to deliver food in emergency situations. Each call takes about one hour, and most Vincentians will see one or more new clients per week. About 10% of the callers are turned down. Some are repeat callers who are not able to improve their lives. Some are so far in debt that we can't help them.

We made 211 calls and helped 525 people. These numbers are down from the prior year. This could be due both to the stimulus checks and the higher unemployment checks. Demand picked up significantly in September.

SVDP helps with the cost of running the St. Thomas Food Pantry which has been growing. We served 5111 people in the recent fiscal year, for a growth rate of 6%. We continue to pick up food from the Midwest Food Bank. We now commonly get meat, fruit and dairy which require refrigeration and demand a more rapid turnover.

We often see people with the motivation to change their lives. Our *Coming Together to Get Ahead (CTGA)* program is a 16 week series of meetings designed to help these friends make a bigger transition.

Sometimes, our assistance pulls them out of a deep hole. Sometimes, we don't see it likely that our visit will bring lasting change. Our responsibility, however, is to provide assistance to the person in need, in front of us. We learn from the experience that the poor will always be with us.

These are the numbers for the year October 1, 2019—September 30, 2020:

Balance 10/1/19	\$ 2,368
Income	
Church Collections	\$68,146
Other Donations	\$17,094
Expenses	
Pantry	\$ 7,265
Miscellaneous	\$ 3,258
For those we serve	\$55,861
Balance 9/30/20	\$21,224
Balance 12/04/20	\$13,566

For your continued support of our mission, we are deeply grateful. Please consider joining our group of Vincentians. For more information, please call:

Mark Kelch 309-692-4908
 Maria Diaz 309-453-8025
 Don Smith 309-693-8062

Girls' Days

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RANDY SIMMONS TUITION ASSISTANCE SCHOLARSHIP for PEORIA NOTRE DAME

The Simmons Family and Peoria Notre Dame announce the Randy Simmons Tuition Assistance Scholarship application is now available for the 2021-2022 school year.

Current 8th graders who will be freshmen next school year are encouraged to apply. The application is available on Peoria Notre Dame's website, <https://www.pndhs.org/randy-simmons-tuition-assistance-scholarship/>

The deadline to apply is February 12, 2021.

Any questions, contact Mrs. Cindy Dermody, Peoria Notre Dame's Director of Development at c.dermody@pndhs.org or 309-691-8741.

Parish Office Hours

9:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.

The Parish Office is open Monday-Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Staff are also available by email or voicemail. To leave a message, call 309-688-3446, and at the prompt, press:

3 - Msgr. Gray

4 - Fr. Stark

0 - Terri-Administrative Assistant

1340 - Julie-Accounting

1341 - Pat-Tuition

If you have items to deliver for the Parish Office, you are welcome to put them under the door of the Office downstairs in the Church, or under the door of the main Sacristy upstairs. The Church is open from 7:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. every day.

Parish Registration

Complete this form and drop it in the collection basket, **or** mail to the Parish Office **or** Register on our website at stthomaspeoria.org. Under *About* open the *New Parishioner Registration*, complete and submit the form.

Last Name _____

First Name(s) _____

Email _____

Phone _____

Address _____

City _____ ZIP _____

Phone _____

New Parishioner _____ Change of address/phone _____



Food Pantry

Current needs are: Cereal, Crackers, Canned Fruit, Meal Helper, Pancake Mix, & Syrup

Thank you for your generosity



St. Vincent de Paul Helpline:
677-7696

St. Thomas the Apostle Parish • 309-688-3446 904 East Lake Avenue, Peoria Heights, IL 61616 stthomaspeoria.org parishoffice@stthomas-church.net			Administrative AssistantTerri Moon (x0) terimoon@stthomas-church.net		
Pastor Msgr. Jason A. Gray (x3) msggray@stthomas-church.net			Bulletin EditorPeggy Sullivan.....(x1301) peggysullivan@stthomas-church.net		
Parochial Vicar Rev. Paul Stark S.J..... (x4) paulstarksj@stthomas-church.net			Accountant Julie Streid(x1340) juliestreid@stthomas-church.net		
SacristanMother Vaclava Ballon, FSJB.....(688-3500) fsjbpeoria@yahoo.com			Tuition CoordinatorPat Wombacher(x1341) patwombacher@stthomas-school.net		
Deacon Dcn. Mark Kelsch (692-4908) Dcn. John Nelson (981-2716) Dcn. Ed Mallow (360-7735)			CCD CoordinatorAngie Robenstein.....(x1200) angierobenstein@stthomas-school.net		
School Principal Maureen Bentley (x1210) maureenbentley@stthomas-school.net			Music Coordinator Ann Horst..... (682-5507)		
Sacrament of Baptism Parents participate in a Baptism class before the Baptism of their first child. Contact the Parish Office to schedule the class.			Choir Director Erin Craig erincraig@stthomas-school.net		
Confessions Saturday 4:00-4:45pm & 6:00-6:30 p.m.			Annulment ConsultantJohn Mackoway (699-5213)		
How to Submit Bulletin Information Send information for the bulletin to parishoffice@stthomas-church.net with subject <i>Bulletin</i> . Submissions are due by Friday noon, one full week prior. Send images or logos separately as attachments. Submissions may be edited for content and length.					


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