

MANY WILL REJOICE  
BECAUSE OF HIS BIRTH.

- LUKE 1:14

# Joy



## THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

St. James the Greater  
Montague, New Jersey

St. Thomas the Apostle  
Sandyston, New Jersey

# **Rejoice Always ! Always ? Always !!**



When Saint Paul tells us to “rejoice always” (1 Thessalonians 5: 16) it might seem that he is asking the impossible. How can we *always* feel joyful ? Isn’t this too much to ask, even today on Gaudete (or “Rejoice”) Sunday ?

Not according to St. Thomas Aquinas ! He taught that “joy is caused by love” (*Summa Theologiae* II-II, q. 28). As we experience God’s love for us, we grow in love for Him—and this exchange of love is what produces joy in us. St. Paul also knew that God’s love was the secret to joy, which is why he follows up his exhortation to “rejoice always” with specific steps that we can take to experience His love more deeply.

First, *pray without ceasing* (1 Thes. 5” 17). When we open our hearts to God throughout the day, He fills us with His very self. The experience of His unconditional love and unending mercy ignites our love in return.

Second, *in all circumstances give thanks* (1 Thes. 5: 18). Gratitude also deepens our love for God, especially when we reflect on who He is and what He has done for us. And in this Advent Season, whatever our circumstances, we can thank God for sending His Son to earth to become one of us.

Finally, *do not quench the Spirit* (1 Thes. 5: 19). In his letter to the Romans, St. Paul tells us that “the love of God has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit.” (1 Thes. 5: 5). If we want more joy in our lives, we should ask the Spirit to stir up the love of God in our hearts. And when He does, we can express it by praising Him—which will, in turn, increase our joy.

Joy is not just for Gaudete Sunday; it is for every day. So each day, follow Paul’s advice: turn to the Lord in prayer, thank Him for all that He has done for you, and ask Him to fill you with more of His Spirit. Then praise Him—and let your spirit soar !

**Lord, shower me with Your love today  
so that my heart swells with joy !**

—from: *The Word Among Us*  
Advent 2023

**THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT**  
**December 17, 2023**

**St. James the Greater**

The Sanctuary Lamp this week burns in  
Memory of Robert Stinemire at the  
Request of Bill & Valerie Ricciardi

**SATURDAY, December 23**

8:00AM – Maryann & Bob Takacs  
req. by their Family

**FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT**  
**December 24**

8:00AM – Lucy Russo and Khac-Suon Su  
req. by Suzanne Laggy and Family

11:30AM – Jerry Dilger  
req. by Linda Lee

**CHRISTMAS EVE**

6:00PM – Agnes Ciesielski  
req. by Peter & Claire Riili

**ST. JAMES THE GREATER**

**\$ 624.00 – Regular Collection – December 10, 2023**

**\$ 616.00 – Online Giving**

**\$ 326.00 – Retired Fund for Religious**

**\$1,289.00 – Regular Collection – December 11, 2022**

**\$ 135.00 – Retired Fund for Religious**

**\$2,477.00 – Weekly Budget Need**

*Consider a gift to St. James Parish in your will.*

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**For On-Line Giving: log onto our website:  
saintjamesthomas.org Then go to On-Line Giving Link.**

**St. James Altar & Floral Society** If any ladies in the parish are interested in joining, please call Joan Henn at 973-293-3690 or Linda Spinapolice at 973-293-7031.



**Pilgrim Virgin of Fatima Statue/Legion of Mary**

This beautifully adorned statue is a visible reminder of the love God has shown in the Blessed Mother. Placing such a beautiful image in your home turns hearts to prayer and brings grace to those who open their hearts to any image of God's love. If you would like to have the statue of Our Lady of Fatima in your home, or need any further information about the Legion of Mary in our parishes, please contact the parish office. *Pray the Family Rosary*

**TO CHRIST THE DIVINE HEALER WE PRAY FOR:**

T.J. Albert, Phyllis Coneys, John Conrad, Sr., Melissa Cunningham, Geraldine Dayko, Audrey DeMarco, Terri Eaton, Marge Erickson, Peggy Gray, Patricia Harrington, Tracy Harriott, Patricia Hassan, Erin Hockenberry, Diane Hoos, T. J. Huffman, Charles Jensen, L. Lawson, Fred & Pat Leute, Nancy Lodema, Gerry Mahon, Sara Mahon, Teresa Mantani, Gen Miller, Richard Nowicki, Kim Osonitsch, Deacon Joe Roder, Ginny Sabia, Frances Sangiorgi, Joan Sangiorgi, Brian Scarpone, Kathleen Sibbio, Cecelia Smith, Yvonne Summers, Pastor Mike Sweeney, Richard Vergona, Walter Winkler, Ricky Wunder

**St. Thomas the Apostle**

The Sanctuary Lamp this week burns in  
Memory of Frances Demalderis at the  
Request of her Family

**MONDAY, December 18**

9:00AM – Barbara & Charles Kientzler  
req. by their son, Charles

**TUESDAY, December 19**

9:00AM – Laurie Janocko  
req. by her Family

**WEDNESDAY, December 20**

9:00AM – Carl Flexer  
req. by Ray & Mary Flexer

**THURSDAY, December 21**

No Mass

**FRIDAY, December 22**

9:00AM – Healing Intentions of Father Edward Rama  
req. by Margie Mullins

**SATURDAY, Vigil, December 23**

4:30PM – Bridie Coyne  
req. by Harry & Mary Dunleavy  
-Jimmy Reed  
req. by his Mom & Dad

**FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT**  
**December 24**

9:30AM – Agnes Ciesielski  
req. by Gerry Mahon

**CHRISTMAS EVE**

4:00PM – Patricia Butler  
req. by Teresa Rand & Family

**ST. THOMAS THE APOSTLE**

**\$1,935.00 – Regular Collection – December 10, 2023**

**\$1,287.00 – Online Giving**

**\$ 444.00 – Retired Fund for Religious**

**\$3,502.00 – Regular Collection – December 11, 2022**

**\$ 245.00 – Retired Fund for Religious**

**\$4,410.00 – Weekly Budget Need**

*Consider a gift to St. Thomas Parish in your will.*

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**For On-Line Giving: log onto our website:  
saintjamesthomas.org Then go to On-Line Giving link.**



We ask your continued prayers for the following men and women of our parish who are serving our country in the Armed Forces: George Abboud, Bryce Brigham, Saige Bruzard, Brandon Heimall, Mikey Heimall, Nicholas and Karissa Kealy, Ryan Kowal, Colton Lawrence, Joseph Mannion, Luke McDermott, Hunter Olenick, Christopher & Ana Sarao, Nicole Sarao, Marissa Snook, Peter Spinks and James Orr



### **Religious Education Classes for December**

Grades 5 & 6 and Conf. I & II – Sunday, Dec. 17 – 9:30am Mass at STC until 12:30pm at REC

Grades 1 – 4 – Tuesday, Dec. 19 – 4:00pm until 5:30pm at REC



**The Children's Christmas Pageant** will take place **TODAY, Sunday, December 17<sup>th</sup> at St. Thomas Church at 2:00PM**. Please join us as our children offer their "gift" to Jesus as they re-enact His birth. Following the pageant, join us at the front door as we light and decorate our Parish Christmas Tree, and then in the Father Lewis Center for refreshments and the Knights of Columbus Cookie Challenge.



### **Listen Up – It's in the Bible**

**Dec. 17** – John said, "I baptize with water; but there is one among you whom you do not recognize, the one who is coming after me." (John 1:26-27).

*When is Jesus among us in ways we might not recognize?*

### **Celebrate December**

This month we do a lot of waiting. Then, we do a lot of celebrating. For four weeks during the season of Advent we prepare our hearts for the coming of Jesus into the world. Then, on Christmas Day, we celebrate His birth!

**Dec. 17 ~ The Third Sunday of Advent** ~ Light two purple candles and the pink candle (Hope, Peace, Joy). **Family Activity** ~ Collect small gifts or nonperishable food for the homebound or others in need. **So this makes it the perfect day to continue to fill your Reverse Advent Bag and return it to CCD Class this week.**

**Dec. 20 ~ St. Peter Canisius**

**December 23 ~ St. John of Kanty**



### **Advent Traditions ~ The Las Posadas**

Las Posadas is a celebration that has its origins in Spain and is now practiced in Latin America. It usually consists of a procession of people with Mary and Joseph (played by a couple, sometimes even riding a real donkey) as they travel from house to house or church to church. As they go, the whole group sings a traditional song asking for lodging; at each place, they are refused until, at the last place, they are finally welcomed. Everyone enters, prays the Rosary before a nativity scene, then celebrates with a party.



### **Our Lady of Fatima Pilgrim Statue**

The beautiful statue of Our Lady of Fatima in the Sanctuary of St. Thomas is waiting to visit your home!

The purpose of the statue is a way the message of Fatima is spread throughout the world. It brings the graces of Fatima along with Our Lady's message of hope, peace and salvation. Each week, a family or a parishioner will receive this image at the end of Mass. You will be provided with a safe way for it to travel to and from your home. You may keep her in your home for the week and then return her back to church the following week before the start of Mass. Included in the box will be rosaries, prayer cards, books and holy water to help you in your prayer time. These things must be returned when you bring the statue back.

**We encourage all of our Religious Education families and all parishioners to take part in this beautiful and holy experience! There is a sign-up sheet in the Gathering Space at St. Thomas Church on the old altar near a picture of Our Lady of Fatima. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to call Mary at 862-268-1876.**

**The Sacramental Sign-In Book** for our children and teens who are preparing for the Sacraments of First Eucharist (**grades 1 & 2**) and Confirmation (**grades 7 & 8**) These Binders (**Red – Conf. Class/White – FE Class**) will be kept in the back of BOTH churches and **must be signed each week**. Joyful participation in the weekly Celebration of the Eucharist as well as on Holydays of Obligation is a requirement for the reception of these sacraments. It is also expected of all faithful Catholics!!!

**Lottery Calendar** - St. James will again be selling the Lottery Calendars for 2024. The calendars are \$20 each and are eligible to win every day in 2024. Benefit of St. James and Knights of Columbus #13935 (Milford). Tickets will be available after Masses or contact Bill Ricciardi wjr218@optonline.net. They make great Christmas presents!!!

**The Saint James Christmas Bazaar Committee** is excited to announce that it has, so far, realized a profit of \$1,775.00. This was made possible by the HARD WORK of all our donors, bakers and volunteers. Their contributions of time, talent and dedication were greatly appreciated. We will continue to sell items after the Masses for a couple of weeks for any one still interested in adding to our success. Thank you one and all and may God bless you all with an abundance of peace, joy and love this Christmas season.

### **Yoga Classes at St. Thomas Church**

St. Thomas is offering a fitness class with a mix of Yoga moves (for flexibility and calm mind) and Pilates (for strength and tone especially in your core muscles). The class is on **Wednesday nights from 6:15 to 7:15pm**. Last class is on **December 27<sup>th</sup>**. **You may join us at any time**. The class is easy to follow but a full body workout. Any questions, please call instructor Chris Dube at 862-266-8418. Bring a mat, hand held weights (1-8lbs.), water and a friend. Join for \$6.00 per class. Twenty percent of the class money will be going to our St. Thomas Parish. So, please come and try it out!

# This Week in Our Parishes

STC – St. Thomas Church or Fr. Lewis Center

SJC – St. James Church or Church Hall

REC – Fr. Gacquin Religious Ed Center

**Sunday, December 17, 2023**

*3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Advent*

9:30 a.m. STC Mass & Class Gr. 5—6  
and Conf. I and II

2:00 p.m. STC --Children's Christmas Pageant  
--Lighting & Blessing of Christmas Tree  
--The Great Christmas Cookie Challenge

**Monday, Dec. 18**

**Tuesday, Dec. 19**

1:00 p.m. STC Bible Study

4:00 p.m. REC Rel. Ed. Gr. 1 – 4

**Wednesday, Dec. 20**

6:15 p.m. STC Yoga exercises

**Thursday, Dec. 21**

**Friday, Dec. 22**

**Saturday, Dec. 23**

**Sunday, December 24, 2023**

*4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Advent*

*Christmas Eve*

\* \* \* \* \*

**Next Sunday's Readings: 4<sup>th</sup> Advent - B**

1<sup>st</sup> Reading: 2 Samuel 7: 1--5 8--12, 14

Resp. Psalm: Psalm 89

2<sup>nd</sup> Reading: Romans 16: 25--27

Gospel: Luke 1: 26--38

\* \* \* \* \*

**Choose 'N Cut.** St. Paul's Abbey, outside Newton, has thousands of Christmas Trees ready to go. **Open 7 days a week 10 a.m. till 3:30 p.m., from now till Dec. 21.** (289 Rt. 206, Newton.)

**2024 Lottery Calendars Available.** Lottery Calendars are \$ 20 each, A winner every day in 2024. They would make great Christmas gifts. Available after Masses or by reaching Bill Ricciardi at his e-mail site: [wjr218@optonline.net](mailto:wjr218@optonline.net)

**“Gaudete Sunday.”** This 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Advent bears this traditional name, meaning “Sunday of Rejoicing.” It comes from Saint Paul's advice in Philippians 4: 4: “*Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I say it: Rejoice !*”

**Today, Dec. 17<sup>th</sup>:** Both parishes are invited to join together this Sunday afternoon for a time filled with happy events **at St. Thomas, starting at 2 p.m.** **1.** *Children's Christmas Pageant*, presented by our religious ed. students. **2.** *Christmas Tree lighting and blessing.* **3.** *The Great Christmas Cookie Contest*, inviting you to submit your favorite Christmas cookie specialty. Share the afternoon with parishioners and friends.

**Christmas Mass Schedule.** For your planning, here is our **schedule of Christmas Masses:**

**Sunday, Dec. 24 Christmas Eve:**

4:00 p.m. St. Thomas

6:00 p.m. St. James

11:30 p.m. *Lessons and Carols Service at St. Thomas, followed by Midnight Mass at St. Thomas.*

**Monday, Dec. 25 Christmas Day:**

9:30 a.m. at St. Thomas

11:30 a.m. at St. James

**The Feast of Mary, the Mother of God and New Year's, is not a Holy Day of Obligation this year, because it falls on a Monday.** However, it is fitting to begin the New Year, and to celebrate this Feast of Mary, by calling down God's blessings upon our world. **Masses will follow our regular week-end schedule:**

**New Year's Eve, Sun. Dec. 24:**

4:30 p.m. at St. Thomas

**Monday, New Year's Day, Jan.1, 2024:**

8:00 a.m. at St. James

9:30 a.m. at St. Thomas

11:30 a.m. at St. James

## Blessing of Your Christmas Tree

*Lord God, let Your blessing come upon us  
as we light our Christmas tree.*

*May the light and cheer it gives  
be a sign of the joy that fills our hearts  
because You are with us.*

*May all who delight in this tree  
come to the knowledge and joy of salvation.  
We ask this through Jesus,  
Your Son and our Lord. Amen.*



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