

NATIVITY OF THE LORD

And the Word
became flesh
and made
his dwelling
among us,
and we saw
his glory, the
glory as of
the Father's
only Son,
full of grace
and truth.

JOHN 1:14



Father Rick's Reflections . . .



Looking through some of my meditation materials, I came across this reflection. It is from *The Christmas Tree Book* by Philip V. Snyder, ©1976 by Philip Snyder. I share it here for your reflection.

"We know from our study of primitive cultures that trees remaining green in the winter have long suggested special godlike powers. As Christianity supplanted older, pagan religions, the decorating of evergreens continued in various parts of northern Europe on many special occasions. The Roman Catholic church frequently banned or otherwise tried to discourage the use of the evergreen, but the age-old custom remain so deeply ingrained in the German culture that the tree eventually became transformed into a Christian symbol.

"Although the veneration of the evergreen is firmly rooted in pre

-Christian traditions, the Christmas tree has two interesting Christian traditions behind it. During the 14th and 15th centuries evergreens with apples hung from their boughs were known to have played an important role in the miracle plays presented in or outside churches on the 24 of December. In the early church calendar of saints, December 24 was Adam and Eve's Day, the occasion for a play depicting the dramatic events concerning the fruit tree in the Garden of Eden. In many cities, before the performance that actors paraded through the streets with the actor who would portray Adam carrying the 'Paradise tree.' in place of the inter-bare branches of a real apple tree, an evergreen decorated with apples was the usual substitute. Since this tree was the only prop on the stage during the play, the image left a lasting impression associated with Christmas long after the medieval plays were no longer performed. By the 17th century evergreens hung with apples were no longer considered strictly trees of temptation and were traditionally each Christmas, though as late as the latter part of the 19th century people in northern Germany still bought little figures of Adam and Eva and the serpent to put under their "Tree of Life.'

The Christmas tree also has Christian associations as old as the 10th century that link it to flowering or fruit-bearing trees rather than to the evergreen. Throughout Europe there are records and told tales concerning trees and bushes that mysteriously burst into bloom on Christmas Eve or Day. Beginning in the 16th century, references indicate

that many Germans cut cherry and other flowering branches and took them into their homes on St Andrew's Day (November 30). The branches were put in water in a warm room and 'forced' in the hope of obtaining blooms in time for Christmas.

The oldest Christmas tree to be decorated standing in a parlor as we know the tradition today is described in a fragment of a 1605 travel diary left us by an unidentified visitor to Strasbourg. The writer tells of fir trees set up and hung with paper roses of many different colors and with apples, flat wafers, gilded candies, and sugar. In early Christian art the rose was a symbol for the Virgin Mary, and the flat wafers are obviously related to the 'host,' the communion symbol for Christ. A tree decorated with such wafers or cookies with religious designs became known as a 'Christbaum.' By the 17th century, then, the age-old, winter-defying evergreen was a common sight in Christian homes honoring the Christ Child each Christmas."

Another aspect of the Christmas tree and it's connection to our faith. Some parishes have used real trees in the Church (before insurance guidelines make it almost impossible). As the tree was beginning to lose its needles, when it was removed from the Church, all the branches were trimmed away, the trunk would be cut, and a cross would be made from the tree that would be their decoration for the season of Lent. There is a song that talks about the wood of the cradle connected to the wood of the cross (tree).

(Continued on page 6)

Mission Statement of St. Thomas Aquinas

We, the St. Thomas Aquinas Parish Community, united by our love for God and one another, are called to evangelize through worship, service, life-long learning, promoting God's truth, peace and justice, and respecting all creation.

Prayers

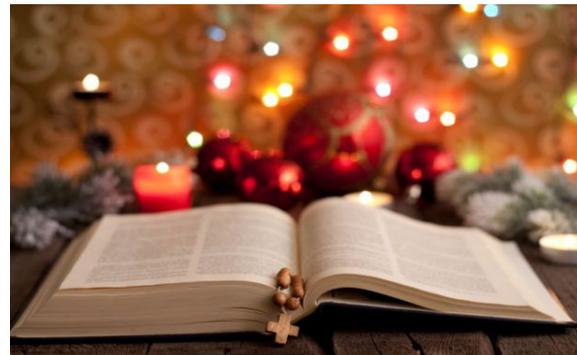
Please pray for all who have been commended to our prayer that they will respond to God's healing will, especially:

Lois B.
Linda Smith
Tessa Mary
Olivia Monsour
Larry S.
Al V.
Betty
Monica
Larry S.
Rose K.
David B.
Mandy
Larry
Ken
Peggy



And those who are homebound and in assisted/nursing facilities.

We are happy to list names of those who request prayers for one month. The list will be purged again on December 30. Please remember to contact the office 799-2460 ext. 1 when a loved one's name no longer needs inclusion on the prayer list.



Readings for the Week of December 25, 2022

Sunday

The Nativity of the Lord (Christmas)

Vigil Mass: Is 62:1-5; Ps 89:4-5, 16-17, 27, 29; Acts 13:16-17, 22-25; Mt 1:1-25 or Mt 1:18-25

Mass during the Night: Is 9:1-6; Ps 96:1-2, 2-3, 11-12, 13; Ti 2:11-14; Lk 2:1-14

Mass at Dawn: Is 62:11-12; Ps 97:1, 6, 11-12; Ti 3:4-7; Lk 2:15-20

Mass during the Day: Is 52:7-10; Ps 98:1, 2-3, 3-4, 5-6; Heb 1:1-6; Jn 1:1-18 or Jn 1:1-5, 9-14

Monday

Feast of St. Stephen, first martyr

Acts 6:8-10; 7:54-59; Ps 31:3CD-4, 6 & 8AB, 16BC & 17; Mt 10:17-22

Tuesday

Feast of St. John, Apostle and evangelist

1 Jn 1:1-4; Ps 97:1-2, 5-6, 11-12; Jn 20:1a & 2-8;

Wednesday

Feast of Holy Innocents, martyrs

1 Jn 1:5-2:2; Ps 124:2-3, 4-5, 7cd-8; Mt 2:13-18

Thursday

1 Jn 2:3-11; Ps 96:1-2a, 2b-3, 5b-6; Lk 2:22-35

Friday

Feast of The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary & Joseph

Sir 3:2-6, 12-14 or Col 3:12-21 or Col 3:12-17; Ps 128: 1-2, 3, 4-5; Mt 2:13-15, 19-23

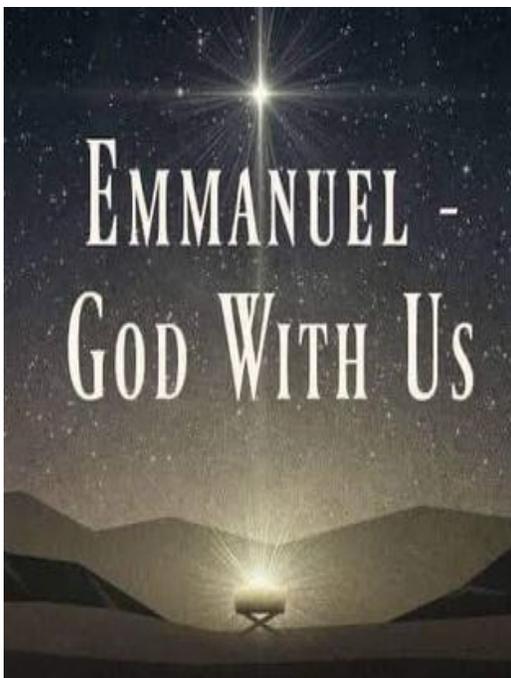
Saturday

1 Jn 2:18-21; Ps 96:1-2, 11-12, 13; Jn 1:1-18

Sunday

Solemnity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of God

Nm 6:22-27; Ps 67:2-3, 5, 6, 8; Gal 4:4-7; Lk 2:16-21



The Nativity of the Lord

Stewardship Reflections

“And the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us...” John 1:14

God made his Stewards to be in relationship with Him. He loves each of us individually. Through sin, our relationship with God was broken. He gave us Jesus to restore our relationship. Being a disciple of Jesus, we are given the model to obtain eternal life in Heaven. Christmas isn't about the material gifts we receive, it's about the love that God, Our Father, gave us by giving us His Son, Jesus—the best gift we could ever receive.

Family Perspective by Bud Ozar

This Christmas remember your task as a parent is the same as Mary's: We must not let our doubts, fears and unfulfilled expectations get in the way of our loving ACCEPTANCE of our children.



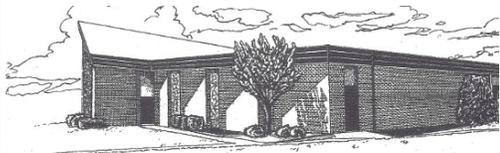
A CHRISTMAS PRAYER by Robert Louis Stevenson

Loving Father, help us remember the birth of Jesus, that we may share in the song of the angels, the gladness of the shepherds, and the worship of the wise men.

Close the door of hate and open the door of love all over the world. Let kindness come with every gift and good desires with every greeting. Deliver us from evil by the blessing which Christ brings, and teach us to be merry with clear hearts.

May the Christmas morning make us happy to be the children, and the Christmas evening bring us to our beds with grateful thoughts, forgiving and forgiven, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

In Our Parish



Tuesday, December 27

8:30 AM Mass

Wednesday, December 28

8:30 AM Mass

Thursday, December 29

8:30 AM Mass

Saturday, December 31

4:00 PM Mass

Sunday, January 1, 2023

10:00 AM Mass

Church Hours

The church is closed for adoration
December 26 through January 2.



Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God

December 31 4:00 PM

January 1 10:00 AM

St. Thomas Aquinas News

Religious give thanks.

A sister writes, "We remember the many people who believe in the Retirement Fund for Religious, thanking them in prayer for their great generosity and compassion." God bless you for donating to last week's second collection. Visit retiredreligious.org to learn how your gift supports elderly sisters, brothers, and religious order priests.

Thank You • 2023 Calendars

Our sincere gratitude to the Owners, Staff and families of Snow Funeral Home for the beautiful 2023 calendars. Thank you for this wonderful gift to our parish.

Parish Office Hours

The office will be CLOSED Friday, December 23 through Monday, January 2. Should you have business between Christmas and New Year's Day, please leave a phone message as someone will be checking messages. Thank you and Happy Holidays.

Bible Sharing • Holiday Break

There will be NO Bible Sharing on Wednesday, December 21 & 28 and January 4, 2023. Please join us on January 11, 2023 at 10:00 AM in the Parish Office Meeting Room. Have a blessed Christmas and a prosperous New Year.

Food Program Outreach • Brown Bag Bunch • Dec. 31 & Jan. 1

Please take time to help the Brown Bag Bunch with any of the following needed items: juice drink boxes/bags, packaged cookies, peanut butter, sandwich and snack size zip-top bags, snacks, pretzels, individually wrapped snack cakes, strawberry and grape jelly/jam; and mayonnaise. Monetary donations are gladly accepted. Please drop in the collection marked 'Brown Bag'.

Winter Weather

A reminder, if Saginaw Township and/or Nouvel Catholic Central Schools are delayed or closed because of weather, there will be no morning Mass.

Christmas Flowers

The Christmas Flower donation listing will be published mid January. Thank you for the beautiful enhancement to the Church and Narthex.

Welcome Visitors & Friends

If you are worshipping with us for the first time or have visited before, We Welcome You! If you are looking for a church home in this community, we invite you to consider St. Thomas Aquinas Parish. Contact the Parish Office for more information on becoming a member.

(continued from page 2)

This week, the parish offices are going to be closed so that our employees can enjoy family time. Some of the staff will be in and out of the offices doing work for the end of the year. If you need to do business with us, please call ahead

to make sure we are around and in the office. Also, because the office is closed, there will be no adoration in Church this week. Regular adoration hours will return on Tuesday, January 3.

On behalf of the staff here at St Thomas Aquinas, I want to

extend to everyone a blessed and happy Christmas season. May the light that scatters the darkness, shine brightly in your life. Merry Christmas!

Fr. Rick



Around Our Parish

Safe Environment and Code of Conduct Policies Diocese of Saginaw

In an effort to continuously improve policies and procedures to keep our children and vulnerable adults safe, the Diocese of Saginaw has updated the Safe Environment and Code of Conduct Policies.

Effective date is January 1, 2023.

WEEK 6

Safe Environment Resources

The Safe Environment and Code of Conduct policies, as well as other information and resources, are located on the Saginaw Diocese website: <https://www.saginaw.org/safe-environment-training>

If you are a victim of clergy abuse or know of someone who is, please contact the Attorney General

investigation hotline at 844-324-3374 or aginvestigations@michigan.gov and Nancy Felch, LMSW, the diocesan Victim Assistance Coordinator at (989) 797-6682 or victim.assistance@dioceseofsaginaw.org.

If you have cause to suspect a child or young person is being neglected or abused by anyone, immediately contact the Michigan Department of Health and Human services at its 24/7 hotline number: 855-444-3911.

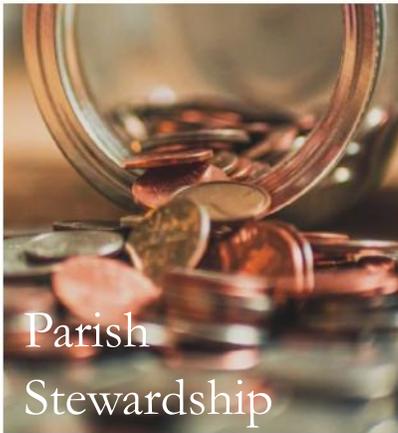
Knights of Columbus 4232 •

No Family Burger Night on December 26 & January 2, 2023.

Next Parish Benefit Breakfast—January 15, benefiting St. Dominic Parish.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.





For unto us a Savior! In response to so great a love, only the gift of my whole self will do. You have given Yourself, dear Lord; in love and thanksgiving. I commit myself afresh to you.

The Parish Financial Stewardship will be listed in future bulletins due to holiday publication dates. Thank you.

Please remember St. Thomas Aquinas in your estate planning.

Sponsor of the Week

White Orthodontics

To view the full ad see the back of the bulletin. Be sure to patronize all of our businesses as their generosity allows us to provide the bulletin to you at no cost to the Parish.

St. Thomas Aquinas Church

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Welcome to Our Parish

If you are a visitor to St. Thomas Aquinas, we want you to know how welcome you are. If you wish to become a member of our parish, please call the parish office.

Parishioner Info: If you are moving, changing phone numbers or need to update family status, kindly notify the parish office.

Parish Staff

Pastor Fr. Richard Bokinski
rickb@stasaginaw.org

Deacon Deacon Gary Patelski
gapatelski@aol.com

Pastoral Associate ..Sr. Ann deGuise, OSF
annd@stasaginaw.org

Parish Secretary Dawn Drago
dawnd@stasaginaw.org

Bookkeeper Pat Messing
patm@stasaginaw.org

Baptism & Funeral Coordinator & RCIA Director Karen Bartels
starcia@stasaginaw.org

Interim Music Director Deborah Kraklow
debk@stasaginaw.org



Eucharistic Liturgies

Saturday 4:00 PM
Sunday 8:30 & 11:00 AM
..... Winter Hours
Tuesday - Thursday 8:30 AM
First Friday 8:30 AM
(In the event of a funeral on Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday or First Friday, morning Mass will be cancelled.)

Sacrament of Reconciliation

2nd & 4th Saturday 9:00-10:00 AM
(Or by Appointment)

Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (R.C.I.A.)

Anyone seeking information about the Catholic Faith should contact the parish office for more information. Sessions meet from September through Spring.

Baptisms

Baptisms will be scheduled after the required Baptism Preparation Class. Parents are required to be practicing Catholics and attending Mass regularly. Call the parish office to register.

Marriage

Individuals must be registered in the parish at least six months before scheduling a wedding. A wedding date can only be set after meeting with the parish priest.

Care of the Sick • Pastoral Visits

Please notify the parish office when seriously ill at home, in the hospital or a nursing/assisted facility. Also, If you or a loved one has had a hospital stay and are recovering at a rehab facility or moving into an assisted living facility and wish a pastoral visit.

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