

The Good News



St. Thomas the Apostle Roman Catholic Church

Bloomfield, NJ

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Dear Parishioners,

Advent, our most joyous season is upon us! There is no better reason to celebrate together.

During Advent, as we await the celebration of the birth of our Lord, Jesus Christ, much time is spent on the gift-giving tradition of Christmas. Long lines, frazzled nerves and traffic jams often spoil the fun.

Please consider a gift for a friend, neighbor or relative that will avoid all traffic jams and lines and can provide the greatest return, both for you the giver and for the receiver. That gift is an invitation to return to the church.

Chances are good that you know someone who can benefit from this glorious gift. The best invitation can come from you personally, but perhaps the outreach program described on page 2 can help too.

If you know someone who wants to change or deepen his or her relationship with God and the church, invite that person to visit Saint Thomas during our glorious Advent and Christmas celebrations.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

Rev. Monsignor Franklyn M. Casale

Musical Notes

Each September, third grade students begin an extra-curricular activity that can be measured in notes -- not paper notes, but beautiful musical notes.

Martha Boughner of Future Musicians, Inc. introduces the youngsters to the recorder, a small instrument that resembles a flute. As the students gain in knowledge, they can choose to advance to the flute, clarinet, alto or tenor sax, trumpet, french horn, trombone or percussion instruments.

Each spring and fall, Saint Thomas School's musicians present a concert. In April, the more advanced music students are invited to join other musicians from 62 New Jersey Parochial schools for the New Jersey All-State Concert held at Caldwell College.

Last year, 14 students from Saint Thomas School performed at the New Jersey All-State Concert, including Adam Reamer, who received the Master Musician Award. William Bradley and Matthew Finamore joined Adam in the advanced musician group.

The group of students who performed at the 1993 New Jersey All-State Concert also were invited to perform at the Meadowlands Arena during a New Jersey Nets basketball game.

Grant Books Challenge

Books, books and books. That's what's happening at Saint Thomas the Apostle School, thanks to a challenge grant from the Nicholas Martini Foundation.

The Foundation recently sent the school \$3,000, the first half of the grant dedicated to the expansion and improvement of the facilities and materials of the library/media center for students in kindergarten through eighth grade. The second payment will be made in June 1994, provided the Saint Thomas community can raise \$6,000 to match the challenge grant.

The grant was requested by the Saint Thomas the Apostle School to address a need identified during the evaluation by the Middle States Association. Although Saint Thomas the Apostle School received a fine accreditation, the Association made recommendations in certain areas that needed improvement.

A primary goal is to expand and improve the facilities and material of the library/media center and to consider the introduction of a literature program for enrichment. Thanks to the awarding of this challenge grant, reaching these goals is possible.

Among the purchases made possible by this project are Newbery Medal Award win-



Reviewing some of the books acquired thanks to the Nicholas Martini Foundation grant are, from left, Monsignor Franklyn M. Casale, School Librarian Mary Ann Noepel, William J. Martini and School Principal Sister Kathleen Miranda.

ning titles, core fiction selections for the junior high school level, essay and biography selections recommended by the Middle States Review Team including Caldecott Medal and Honor books, and reference materials including almanacs, atlases, career resources, dictionaries, thesauruses, encyclopedias and language, literature and mythology books.

Nearly half of the \$6,000 match has been raised through gifts and fundraising efforts of the Home and School Association. The additional \$3,000 must be raised before June.

Anyone interested in making a financial contribution or desiring further information about the library project or challenge grant can contact Sister Kathleen Miranda, principal of the Saint Thomas the Apostle School. ♣

Unchurched Asked to Take Another Look

God cares about you very much and about the nearly 300 people who recently received a letter from the Saint Thomas Evangelization Committee letting them know our parishioners care too.

As part of an outreach program begun this fall, people have begun receiving a five-part invitation to return to the Catholic church. Knowing that many people have stopped practicing their faith, the Evangelization Committee invited members of the Saint Thomas community to submit names and addresses of people who would receive the

five-part newsletter called *Another Look at the Catholic Faith*. Additionally, the entire parish has begun praying for these people, hoping that they will accept the invitation to see what the church has to offer. An introductory letter is sent from Saint Thomas with the first newsletter.

Parishioners are invited to submit to the Evangelization Committee the names of anyone who might benefit from receiving *Another Look at the Catholic Faith*. Names should be sent to the Evangelization Committee in the the Parish Center. ♣

Synod Results Provide Insights

With the first half of the Archdiocese-wide Synod assemblies over, here are some results from our first three meetings. Attendance ranged from 145 to 80 people at the sessions, with nearly two dozen under the age of 18.

During the initial assembly, the Synod centered on *How can we as a church address the needs and concerns particular to youth?* Three issues were ranked in the following order: 1.) The lack of youth involvement in our liturgy is linked with these needs: more appeal; inclusion in planning; more openness on sex education and moral issues; increased training/knowledge in church policies and more forums or dialogue opportunities that embrace youth, parent, parish and diocesan leadership; 2.) There is a perceived lack of Archdiocesan guidelines to the parish for educational programs relating to faith and leadership in the faith and 3.) Youth don't enter parish ministries and they feel the adult Catholic community is closed to them and non-welcoming.

The second assembly asked *How can we help strengthen all stages of Christian marriage and family life?* Issues were ranked in the following order: 1.) Family support — A directory or informational booklet, showing services relating to family life, marriage, sexuality, social, economic and psychological issues should be published and distributed to all Catholic families; 2.) Single adults — Single adults do not feel welcome in the church and 3.) Divorced and single — That we, as the

church, eliminate obstacles that prevent separated/divorced members of the community from full participation in parish life.

The final assembly held this past fall at Saint Thomas the Apostle Church addressed *How can we as church help those faced with medical/moral decisions and those experiencing addiction, disability, loss and bereavement?* The assembly participants ranked these issues in the following order: 1.) Information services — On an annual basis, prepare a services directory that would be distributed to the parish, the people, and to the community and to help develop educational programs on medical and moral issues. From life experience, determine what one should expect from the parish in time of bereavement; 2.) Addiction — Prepare educational and support services to help offset the effects of addiction upon individuals and on the family. Make people aware of what is available. The parish should seek out victims and implement programs and 3.) Bereavement — All parishes should be encouraged to initiate or expand the Alone But Not Alone program and to assure long-term assistance and follow-up to determine needs on a periodic basis. Also we need to increase priests' awareness.

These recommendations, along with those made at the Synod Assemblies set for February and March, will be evaluated by the Diocesan Synod delegates who will forward them to the Archbishop for his consideration and action. †

The Seasons of Advent & Christmas

Advent is a time of waiting, holding back, listening and discovering the beauty in both the night and the day. Christmas is a festival that has many days; the Nativity, Saint John, Holy Innocents, Holy Family, Mary - Mother of God, Epiphany and the Baptism of the Lord.

The Christmas spirit springs from the delight and terror of birth; The Word made flesh - the very presence of God with and in us. The wonderful exchange - God sharing our human condition, and we caught up in God's grace - is the Church's reflection and song through the Advent/Christmas Season.

Year by year we learn what it is to *Keep Advent*: to take time with those days and nights before Christmas. And we also learn to *Keep Christmas*: to make festivals of stories, songs and deeds done year after year. Together the keeping of these seasons gives witness of how God reigns in our lives and in the world. Throughout these days of Advent/Christmas, the images of the Nativity and of the Final Coming of our Messiah are placed side by side with the Gospel we have believed; God within us NOW in our brothers and sisters.

Let us, the family of Saint Thomas the Apostle Church, be — as Mary was — a dwelling place for the Lord!

Saint Watch

Dec. 21 St. Peter Canisius, Priest and Doctor
Founder of colleges, author; leader in the counter-reformation in Germany

Dec. 23 St. John of Kanty, Priest
Professor of Theology at Cracow; Patron of Poland, known for charity to the poor

Dec. 26 Feast of the Holy Family

Dec. 27 St. John, Apostle and Evangelist
The Disciple whom Jesus loved

Dec. 28 Holy Innocents

Dec. 29 St. Thomas Becket, Bishop and Martyr
Archbishop of Canterbury who defended the rights of the Church

Dec. 31 St. Sylvester I, Pope

Jan. 1 Octave of Christmas: Mary, Mother of God

Jan. 2 Epiphany

Jan. 4 St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, Religious
Foundress of the Sisters of Charity

Jan. 5 St. John Neumann, Bishop of Philadelphia
Educator, author, promoter of parochial schools

Jan. 7 St. Raymond of Penyafort, Priest
Worked for the redemption of slaves, Patron of canonists and lawyers

Jan. 9 Baptism of the Lord

Jan. 13 St. Hilary of Poitiers, Bishop and Doctor of the Church

Jan. 17 St. Anthony, Abbot
Hermit, founder of religious life

Advent/Christmas Calendar

SATURDAY DEC. 11/SUNDAY DEC. 12

3rd Sunday of Advent Saturday - 5:30 pm; Sunday - 7:30 am, 9 am, 10:30 am, noon

SATURDAY DEC. 18/SUNDAY DEC. 19

4th Sunday of Advent Saturday - 5:30 pm; Sunday - 7:30 am, 9 am, 10:30 am, noon

MONDAY DEC. 20

Sacrament of Reconciliation/Communal Celebration, 7:30 pm This communal penance service is not general absolution. Several priests will be available for private confession at this time.

FRIDAY DEC. 24

Family Mass 5:30 pm (Children's Pageant 5 pm)

Christmas Eve Vigil Mass (Parish Center) 5:30 pm

Vigil Mass 7:30 pm

Concelebrated Midnight Mass (Christmas music 11:30 pm)

SATURDAY DEC. 25

Christmas Day 7:30 am, 9 am, 10:30 am, noon

SUNDAY DEC. 26

Feast of the Holy Family 7:30 am, 9 am, 10:30 am, noon

FRIDAY DEC. 31/SATURDAY JAN. 1

Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God (New Years' Day)

Friday - Vigil Mass 5:30 pm, Saturday - 9 am, 10:30 am, noon

SATURDAY JAN. 1/SUNDAY JAN. 2

Feast of the Epiphany

Saturday - Vigil Mass 5:30 pm, Sunday - 7:30 am, 9 am, 10:30 am, noon

Contributors

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Comments and suggestions about this newsletter are welcome. Please send your comments to the Communications Committee, which has a mailbox in the Parish Center.

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