

# ST. THOMAS AQUINAS PARISH

## THE NATIVITY OF THE LORD



### **St Thomas Aquinas Church**

#### ***Sunday Mass***

Saturday Vigil | 4:00 p.m.

Sunday | 7:45, 10:00, a.m., 12:00 p.m.

#### ***Daily Mass***

Monday - Friday | 7:00 a.m., 9:00 a.m.

Saturday | 9:00 a.m.

### **St Basil Chapel**

Sunday | 10:00 a.m.

5:00 p.m.

### **St Thomas Aquinas**

Rev. Bill Devine, Pastor

Rev. Tom Olson, Parochial Vicar

Sr. Deacon Jerry Ryan

### **Parish Office Staff**

103 Center St. Bridgewater, MA 02324

Hours | Mon.– Fri. 9:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m.

Peter Vitagliano, Business Manager

Rob Ruth, Administrative Assistant

E-mail | [stthomasaquinas@comcast.net](mailto:stthomasaquinas@comcast.net)

Phone | 508 697 9528

Fax | 508 279 1859

### **Website**

[www.stthomasaquinas.com](http://www.stthomasaquinas.com)

### **Religious Education Office Staff**

Phone | 508 697 3652

Debbie Hill, Cord. of Religious Ed.

Marie Masaitis, Cord. of Religious Ed.

### **St Basil, The Catholic Center**

122 Park Ave. Bridgewater, MA 02324

Hours | Mon.– Fri. 9:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m.

Phone | 508 531 1346

Fax | 508 531 6188

### **Chapel Staff**

Rev. Tom Olson, Campus Chaplain

Marlene DeLeon, Campus Minister

Phone | 508 531 1412

[marlene.deleon@bridgew.edu](mailto:marlene.deleon@bridgew.edu)

Rita Garufi, Administrative Assistant

[rita.garufi@bridgew.edu](mailto:rita.garufi@bridgew.edu)



Merry  
Christmas



*Excerpt from Pastoral Letter Jesus' Eager Desire: Our Participation in the Sunday Mass from Cardinal Seán Patrick O'Malley, OFM Cap.*

“Some of you have drifted away from the Church and have been waiting for a good time to return. I pray that you will consider this the time to join us on our faith journey toward Heaven. The sacred teachings of the Church offer guidance, direction and meaning in a world where so many cannot find their way. Our faith points us to Jesus, who is ‘the Way, the Truth and the Life.’



Some of you have made a choice to stop coming to Church because you have been hurt by the actions of someone in the Church or because of a difficulty with a Church teaching. From my first day as archbishop of Boston and perhaps for the rest of my days, I will always be asking the forgiveness of all those who have been hurt by the actions, or inaction, of people and leaders in the Church. Please do not let those experiences and memories separate you from the love of Christ and of our Catholic family and prevent you from receiving the grace of the sacraments. . . . A reporter [once] asked me what I would say to Catholics who do not attend Mass because they disagree with, or have questions about, Church teaching. I answered that our teaching does not change because people disagree with it; our faith comes from Christ's own teaching in the Scriptures and through the teaching authority of the Church throughout the ages. We recognize, however, that many struggle to reconcile Church teaching with social norms in American society today; to them, we say that we want to engage in a meaningful conversation with you. We want you to know that you are part of our family. We want to assure you that God loves you and waits for you at Sunday Mass. The best place to begin a conversation is by gathering with the family of believers in the worshipping community.

To those who consider themselves unwelcome at Mass because of some irregularity or moral struggle, please know that you are always loved by God and the Catholic community desires your presence with us. We are all brothers and sisters in Christ. An inability to fulfill all aspects of Christian worship or to receive Communion should not keep you from Mass. In fact, the habit of being faithful to the Sunday obligation can provide the actual grace, if you cooperate with it, to give you the strength to overcome current obstacles and find paths of reconciliation. We stand ready to help you.”



## Christmas Message

I echo the words and sentiment expressed by Cardinal Sean. It has been honor and privilege for me to serve and lead as your pastor for the past five years. Our parish's success and vitality are based not on any one priest, staff member, program or ministry....it's based on our belief in and love for Jesus Christ and allowing His spirit to lead and guide us. Our mission statement (below) which was written by the members of our Parish Pastoral Council expresses who we are and what we believe God has called us to do.



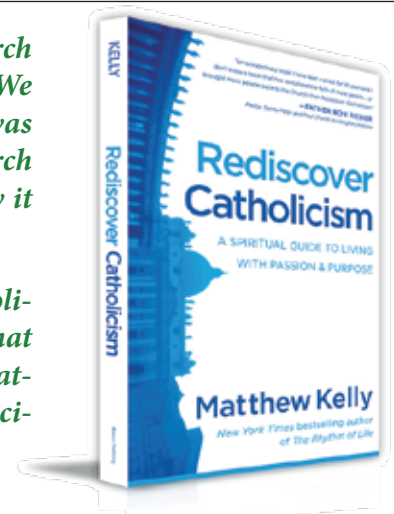
***Our Mission is to be a welcoming community of believers continually growing in our faith and in our love of Jesus Christ through worship, education, evangelization and service within our local and broader community.***

We have many committed, faith filled parishioners who over the years have taken an active part in living out of this mission and supporting the parish with their time, talent and treasures. It has been a challenge to know how to reach out to the disengaged Catholics that Cardinal Sean identified in his statement. I pray daily for the Lord to help me, give me insights and place me in situations where I can share my faith and the Lord's love for them.

If you haven't been coming to church regularly or only on Christmas and Easter I am reaching out to you and encouraging you to rediscover your faith. An easy to read and dynamic book **Rediscovering Catholicism** is being given as a Christmas gift to each family. It is being given by a member of our parish who wishes to remain anonymous. Hopefully this book will help you to have a better understanding of your faith. The two statements below are responses from individuals who have read it.

*"My son was given a copy of Rediscover Catholicism on the way out of church last Christmas. He stopped going to church regularly about ten years ago. We were away on vacation and I was amazed to see him reading it the next day. I was even more surprised the following week when he suggested we all go to church and then to brunch. I just want to say thank you. You don't know how happy it makes a mother to see her son return to church."*

*"I need to thank my father for inspiring my interest in rediscovering Catholicism. Matthew Kelly has opened my eyes and heart to a new appreciation of what it means to be a Catholic - Wanting to live a life true to my best self. I respect Matthew Kelly's approach in sharing information before teaching and his authenticity in his preachings. I have recommended his books and videos to many people, and they all have found something meaningful they connected with."*



Whether you attend Mass regularly or not, if you have any questions or would like to talk with a priest or a member of the staff I encourage you to call, email or go on line and set up an appointment. Fr. Tom Olson and I are here to listen, encourage and help bring you closer to Jesus Christ. To assist in helping people better understand their faith I will have an Open Forum on January 10th beginning at 6:30 to answer questions about the Church, Church teachings, policies, practices, faith. Hopefully you'll attend. I hope that everyone who comes to our parish will feel welcome and appreciated. The following statement which is printed in our bulletin each week reflects our desire to let everyone know they are welcomed.

***Welcome to visitors of our Parish, and to those who have recently moved into the area, and to those comfortable and nourished here - Welcome. Regardless of your status in the Church, marital state, your ethnicity, your prior religious experience, your personal history, background, or sexual orientation, we hope that you will continue to worship with us each week.***

I also hope that you'll find that our Sunday Masses are celebrated in a meaningful, prayerful, faith filled and joyful way. The ministries listed below which involve hundreds of parishioners will help you to know the breathe and depth of our commitment to deepen our understanding of our faith while reaching out to in service to others.

- Altar Guild
- Altar Servers
- Holiday Bazaar
- Baptism
- Bereavement
- Coffee & Donuts
- Candlelight Rosary Procession
- Catholic Financial Life
- Church Decorations
- Christmas Giving Tree
- Easter Egg Hunt
- Eucharistic Ministers
- Greeters & Ushers
- Lectors
- Offertory Counters
- Pregnancy Help
- Religious Education
- RCIA for Adults/Children
- Rummage Sale
- SVDP Food Pantry
- St Basil Food Pantry
- Social Committee
- Sen. Citz. Thanksgiving Dinner
- Troops & Veterans Support
- Womens Club
- VIRTUS Training
- Vacation Bible School
- Youth Group



We live in a secular world which regularly challenges our faith and values. It's during these times that we need the support of others particularly the Church in order to strengthen our faith, provide guidance and help us to understand the Lord's will. Our faith in God was never meant to be a private matter. Faith is meant to be nurtured and strengthened by the sacraments, the scriptures, prayer and the community of believers.



While this may not appear to be a Christmas message...it is. God, knowing that many questioned His existence or had little understanding of His love, did not want to remain a mystery. He took on our form and entered the world as a child in a manger. Jesus IS GOD.....made man. His entry into our world was so ordinary and simple that many failed to appreciate that Jesus is God. He did not remain a child in a manger but as Lord showed the world how deeply God loves us. The birth of Jesus Christ was the beginning of a love story that is told every Sunday throughout the year . May the joy and spirit of Christmas lead you and your family to a closer relationship with the Lord.

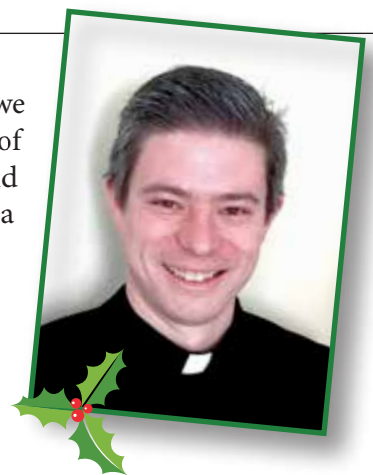
*Fr. Bill*

## Christmas Reflection

Christmas celebrates and recalls the birth of Jesus. All of us know this. However, as we get caught up in the frenetic pace and the goings-on of the so-called "holidays," many of us, myself included, often forget this piece of quite common knowledge. And so, I find myself wondering: If the Incarnation had never occurred, then would we still have had a "holiday" season? Would people still have had a reason to say to us, "Happy holidays!"

I think so.

Granted, some and perhaps many of the "holiday season's" accoutrements – for instance, the music – might have sounded (or looked) different, but we humans, I think, would still have found common cause to celebrate the things that make us "happy."



Our family and friends. Our realized dreams. Our fulfilled hopes.

However, to get back to reality and to state the obvious, the Incarnation did occur. By becoming man over 2,000 years ago, God entered into human history. By taking on our human nature, dying on the Cross for our sins, and rising from the dead, God has saved us – each of us – from death, and God has earned for us – each of us – the hope of eternal life. This hope is our greatest hope, and the object of that hope – eternal life – is our greatest happiness.

In, by, and through the Christ-child, the things about which we are happy and for which we are grateful in this world – our family and friends, our realized dreams, and our fulfilled hopes – were ordered to prepare us for eternal life in the next. For me at least, one of the things about which I am most happy and for which I am most grateful this holiday season is being ordered to Jesus as one of his ministerial priests. Because this is my first Christmas as a priest, I am this year especially mindful of He who is the “reason for the season.”

May you be similarly mindful so that especially “happy” your holiday this year will also be.

*Fr. Tom*

### From the Business Manager

As I begin to look back this year and reflect, I am reminded so much of a Christmas Carol by Charles Dickens, and how much it relates to our parish. I have seen our *parish past* and the challenges that were present. I’ve also seen the *parish present* where we have grown in size and faith. We continue on our journey together to provide outreach and a place where people can gather, pray and grow. Finally I have visions of our *parish future* with new ministries, broader reach in the community and a stronger basis in youth.



Our parish continues to grow in so many ways, and there are so many people in our parish who work together across many dynamics to make this happen. From Father Bill, Father Tom and all of the clergy and seminarians who energize our faith, to the countless volunteers and parish staff who work tirelessly to drive our ministries and run our parish operations, it is heartening to see so many who care.

So? What’s next? Where are we heading now? In a lot of other places, these would be tough questions with a lot of different and difficult answers, but not here. Our faith is getting stronger. Our wonderful and experienced committees are helping to build a better parish staff. Our improved financial stewardship is allowing us to increase our ministries & outreach, make much needed improvements and upgrades to the property. As long as we remain good stewards, work together and support the parish, our future is very bright. It all starts with YOU! With a hopeful eye to the future, have a blessed and peaceful Christmas.

*Peter V.*

### Christmas Collection - Clergy Health and Retirement Trust

The 614 diocesan priests in our Archdiocese are there for us, sharing Christ’s good news, performing good works, and building strong communities of good faith. Remember priests such as Fr. Bill Devine and Fr. Tom Olson who have made a meaningful difference in your life, and consider honoring him/them with a generous gift to today’s/tonight’s collection. Also, remember to find the Trust on Facebook by searching “@ClergyTrust.” Thank you for your prayers and generous support of our priests.



**WEEKLY MASS INTENTIONS****Monday, December 26**

9:00 a.m. Alexander Gedutis

**Wednesday, December 28**

7:00 a.m. Antonia &amp; Libania Sousa

**Saturday, December 31**

4:00 p.m. Albert Querzoli

**Sunday, January 1**

7:45 a.m. Manuel &amp; Maria Dos Anjos Melo

10:00 a.m. Claude Debord Jr.

12:00 p.m. Christopher McCarthy

**SACRAMENTS****• CONFESSION**

Every Saturday 3:00 p.m. - 3:45p.m. in the Lower Church, or by appointment.

**• BAPTISM**

Ordinarily celebrated on the 2nd and 4th Sunday of each month at 1:30 pm. Please call the parish office to speak with a priest prior to making any arrangements. Parents are welcome to attend classes during the pregnancy if it is more convenient.

**Baptism Preparation Class**

Monday, January 2 at 7:00 p.m.  
in the St Thomas Aquinas Parish Center

**• MARRIAGE**

Please call the parish office at least eight months in advance. Attendance at the Marriage Preparation Course is required.

**• ANOINTING OF THE SICK**

If you wish to receive the sacraments at home or in the hospital due to illness, handicap or age, please contact the parish office.

**WEEKLY DEVOTIONS**

Come and spend some quiet time with the Lord

**• ADORATION**

Saturdays 9:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.  
*St Thomas Aquinas - Lower Church*

**• DIVINE MERCY HOLY HOUR**

Wednesdays 7 p.m. - 8 p.m.  
*St Thomas Aquinas - Lower Church*

**Can we pray for you?**

If you would like to add someone to our *prayer list* please contact Rob at the parish office. Individuals are prayed for by name every Saturday morning during Mass.

**"A time to be born..."**

Cora Diane Derby, Ryan Katherine Ayers,  
Autumn Paisley Smith, Lincoln Wayne Ellis,  
Nora Kathleen Scully, Bradley George Childs

**"A time to die..."**

Karen Snow, Arlene Morin, Frances Couet,  
Dianne Kent, Walter H. Welch, Thelma Doucette,  
Allen Arruda, Kathleen Vacher

**"A time to heal..."**

Olga (Cassiani) Alberghini, Edward Albert, Jean Andrade,  
Christopher Barbosa, Jeffrey Bean, Jim & Jean Brennan,  
Kim (Sweetman) Carnello, Sandra Cable,  
Teresa Capachione, John Conley, Jacquie Cordaro,  
Matthew Costantino, Michael Costantino,  
Baby Mychal Joseph Cotone, Joanna Crabtree,  
Michael Crowley, Jannine Dawicki,  
Mary DeLeon, Marty Dickerman, Paul D'Olimpia,  
Andrea Fitzgerald, Lee Fuller, Joanna Gale, Jesus Galindo,  
Florence Galligan, Beverly Giuffre, Tim Johnson,  
Daniel John, Ava King, Jessica Kamaniski, Jessica King,  
Debbie Kulick, Fred Laham, James LaFranchise,  
Howard Larsen, Kevin Looney, Bob Mackey,  
Beverly Mitchell, Mary McClay, Taylor McLean,  
Kaleena McHardy, Marjorie Mello, Chase Miceli,  
Charles Monestere, Arlene Morin, Anna Nakouzi,  
Lloyd Nelson, Antonio Nunes, Tom O'Donnell,  
Bob O'Hare, Glenn O'Neil, Kevin O'Neil,  
Ann Paulino, Carolyn Perry, Elaine Phaneuf,  
Josephine Trocchi Picone, Richard Piantoni,  
Dorothy Pope, Maria Presti, Andrea Proffetty,  
Rich Quigley, Camden Rivers, Ginny Rothwell,  
Matthew Ryan, Dan Sante, Paul Segreve, Sarah Silvia,  
Deana Spingel, Linda Sullivan, Kim Sullivan,  
Donna Sullivan, Betty Tarentino, Jennifer Tosches,  
James Toy Jr., Patrice Tuffo, Peggy Yanuskiewicz,  
Don Weiner, Mary (Sweetman) Zunino,  
Alexis, Jason & Nicole Zutaut

**"A time for peace..."**

General Joseph F. Dunford, USMC  
Captain Vincent Chiappini, USA  
1<sup>st</sup> LT. Karen Chouinard Holliday, USMC  
2<sup>nd</sup> LT. Jeffrey Boyle, USMC  
Captain John Costantino, USA  
SGT, Brandon Jamieson, USA  
PFC, Christopher Ahl, USA  
CPL Kelly O'Leary, USA  
PFC Peter O'Leary, USA  
PVT D.J. Jamieson, USA