

Dear Parishioner of St. Thomas,

It is hard to believe that the new liturgical year is upon us. Our liturgical environment clearly indicates that Advent has begun and the liturgical texts invite us to prepare our heart to receive more fully the presence of Christ in our lives and in our world. As I draft this letter, I continue to be struck by a couple of the celebrations we experienced in November expressing this reality for many. On the 13<sup>th</sup> of November we welcomed 31 individuals, who are preparing for full entry into the Catholic church within the OCIA process (Order of Christian Initiation). It was a joy to accept and welcome them after they each expressed their desire to join with our community of faith. Many of them asked for our prayers and support. I assured them of our prayers and support. Mindy Sadler, Joyce Hollowell and the OCIA team continue to walk with them each week as they grow in faith. Six days later, we celebrated the Sacrament of Reconciliation for over 50 children, who celebrated this sacrament of God's mercy and grace for the first time. A number of their parents also celebrated the sacrament. Afterwards, there were many smiles among the children and their families. Indeed, we are a parish which is striving to be a people alive in Jesus Christ.

The Catholic parishes of Billings are hosting communal penance services again. You can check the Advent schedule in our bulletin. The Advent penance service for the west-end of Billings is on Tuesday, December 13<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 pm at St. Pius X. St. Thomas will host the Lenten penance service. Several priests will be available at the Advent services, so I encourage you to attend one of them this Advent. It is a great way to open our hearts a bit more to the presence of Christ.

We continue to have a great level of participation at our daily celebrations of Eucharist at 9:00 am. If it is possible for you to attend, it is a wonderful way to allow the presence of Christ in his Word and Sacrament to wash over you. It certainly is a source of spiritual nourishment for many.

The annual preparation continues for our Christmas Food basket outreach. The activity in the parish is abundant with people bringing and sorting the food, presents, knitted caps and presents. We are helping 171 families this year. Watching this unfold each year is truly a wonder to behold. This could not happen without your support. Continue to check out our website and/or Facebook page to view the pictures of our many different liturgical celebrations and activities. These wonderful faith-filled pictures are bound to lift your spirit and put a smile upon your faces.

The Feast of the Incarnation, Christmas, will be upon us soon. Make plans to attend one of our liturgies: Christmas Eve: 5:00 pm and 8:00 pm; Christmas Morning: 9:00 am.

Of course, the good things that happen at St. Thomas need your participation and support. At St. Thomas the Apostle we are blessed with so many faith-filled people. Thank you for your participation, your continued prayer, your volunteer hours and your financial support. You are a key member of the Body of Christ!

Let's stay alive in Christ,



Fr. Steve Zabrocki, Pastor

