

# St. Thomas More

Roman Catholic Church – Parish Newsletter

### In This Issue

The Body of Christ for This Time and This Place	1
Welcomed by Name	2
Liturgy of the Word for Children	3
New Orleans Revisited	4
Walk with Me	6
Serving in God's House	7
Pay It Forward	8

# THE TOWER

## The Body of Christ for This Time and This Place

— by Rev. Michael Ratajczak

**S**aul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? Upon hearing these words, Saul, later known as Paul, began his journey as a Disciple of Jesus, as the great Apostle to the Gentiles, as the one who helped the Church to see itself as the Body of Christ. (Acts 9:1-30)



*STM Faith Community Celebrates 2007 Easter Liturgy*

Saul was breathing murderous threats against the followers of the Way, those caught up with “that” Jesus, who was killed and supposedly rose from the dead. Saul, in his zeal as a faithful Jew, was out to persecute and destroy the early Church.

Then he heard Jesus, and Jesus identified Himself with His followers. He didn’t say, “Saul, why are you persecuting my followers?” He asked, “Why are you persecuting me?”

This profound revelation pointed to the reality that the Church is the Mystical Body of Christ. In a very real sense, we are the extension and the continuation of Jesus through space and time! We are Jesus for this time and this place.

The Church is people, those who are committed to Jesus and to helping one another to live his lifestyle. The Church is not just a building or a set of



*Our youth prepare to lead Holy Thursday procession.*

buildings! Every church complex in the world could be destroyed and there still would be Church, people gathering in the name of Jesus, continuing His mission and ministry.

*(Continued on page 2)*



*Easter Vigil*

St. Thomas More Parish is a very vibrant and alive parish precisely because of our parishioners and our commitment to the many ministries that we exercise in order to continue the mission and ministry of Jesus for this time and this place.

We do all this from one building that we call our “Parish Center.” If this building was destroyed for some reason, and we moved to a large tent, we would continue to *be Church* as long as we remained committed to our ministries in the name of Jesus.

We continue to move forward with the build-out of our Parish Campus, including our new worship space. As we

do so, we need to be mindful that the buildings are not an end in themselves, but rather a means to an end. The buildings will help us to better *be Church*, to better exercise our ministries in the name of Jesus.

If this is not our intention, then building a church for the sake of building a church is “vain-glory.”

As “*Our Journey Into The Future... Together*” continues, we are mindful that all that we plan to do in the way of Parish build-out is meant to be a means to an end, to better serve Jesus by continuing His mission as the Body of Christ for this time and this place!

May our Loving God always help us to keep this focus as we move into the future.

### Welcomed by Name — by Gloria Larson

**G**o, therefore, and make disciples all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. This quote from Matthew 28 is known as the Great Commission. Jesus commissioned his disciples more than 2,000 years ago to go forth and baptize all that accepted Jesus into their hearts. Today this is still true, as a family’s blessing of a new child also becomes a blessing for our Church and the world.

St. Thomas More offers families classes to help prepare both the parents and God parents for the Baptism of their children. These classes are done in a two part program. In the first class parents are encouraged to understand and reflect that they are the primary role models and are responsible to create the value system for their children.

At the beginning of the Rite of Baptism the priest or deacon asks “What do you ask of God’s Church for this child?” The response is “Baptism.” If the question were turned around it would be “What does God’s Church ask of you?” The answer would be to be practice your faith, to follow the ten commandments, and to love God and your neighbor.

These classes are an excellent opportunity for parents to



*Baptism of Terese Awori McDermott, June 2007*

grow in their relationship with God. Parishioner Wayne Zych, who has taught Baptism classes to parents and God parents for over 30 years, will tell them, “If you want your child to have a relationship with God, you need to have one too.”

God parents, who are also required to be a part of these classes, play a key part in the child’s life and are also to act as role models for their spiritual development. The role of the God parent is a life-long commitment that can be a pleasure and an honor as one watches the child grow in the church.

The second class focuses more on the Sacrament of Baptism and its significance to us through the ages. You have a great opportunity to learn about the early days of Baptism and how it has continued to be an essential part of our Christian faith.

In the class you are asked “Why do you want to Baptize your child?” These answers vary from family to family but often reflect the family’s desire to have their child become a part of their Christian Catholic community.

Time is spent exploring the name of your child, what drew

*(Continued on page 3)*



*Grace Elizabeth and Madison Anne Dearborn are baptized.*

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**Welcomed by Name** — *continued*

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you to that name, and what it means to you and to your family.

There are also other aspects to the class that are there to help you learn more about your faith, such as discussion surrounding the role models that many Saints offer us and the significance and relevance that Christian art has for us. Both



*Welcome Curtis!*

of these classes help us understand that the formation of a good Christian conscience is important in bringing up a child in the faith. As parents we have been chosen to be the child's first and best teacher.

*To begin the journey to your child's Baptism, please contact Kathleen Bell at (760) 758-4100, ext. 110.*

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**Liturgy of the Word for Children (LOWC)** — by Gloria and Christopher Larson

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*Fr. Bob McKeon blesses the children as they prepare for LOWC.*

At each Mass we all hear the Liturgy of the Word proclaimed through words and song. We then have a great opportunity to listen as the celebrant ties the readings together and weaves age old wisdom into various modern examples in which to inspire us to a better life.

The message, if at times simple, is tied to the language, culture, and events of centuries ago. It is often difficult for us as adults to fully comprehend the message sometimes hidden behind the words. Now, imagine how a child feels.

I had the great opportunity to visit the Liturgy of the Word for Children (LOWC) in the Parish Center lower level one Sunday morning and to watch how some of our catechists weave the same readings into meaningful messages for the young children of our parish.

Luke 10 reads: "After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others whom he sent ahead of him in pairs to every town and place he intended to visit." After the Gospel, catechist Mary McDannold asked, "Why do you suppose Jesus sent people out in pairs?" A little girl raised her hand and said,

"Because you always have to have a buddy with you." She then asked another question. "Why do you suppose these men were sent out into these towns?" A little boy in the front answered, "They were going to check things out in the towns like a scout would do for a baseball team."

Bit by bit the readings are broken down, and each child has an opportunity to answer questions in the words and the language that they understand and with which they can communicate.

I encourage all parents with children ages 5 to 11 to send their children to this ministry on designated Sundays and also to take the time after Mass to ask them about the discussions they had about the readings.

St. Thomas More is extraordinarily fortunate to have this ministry and to have the dedicated catechists that help make it a reality. We all benefit from this ministry by having future generations exposed to the Word of God in a way that can inspire them to have a better life.

Volunteers to teach LOWC are always welcome!

*For more information, please contact Cathy Meyer at (760) 598-7853 or Kathleen Bell at (760) 758-4100, ext. 110.*



*Catechist Mary McDannold leads the children to their Sunday session.*



*The first reading is always done by the youth.*



*STM youth stand for the proclamation of the Holy Gospel.*



*Sister Parish volunteers posed in the garden at the Center of Jesus the Lord.*

*Jesus the Lord*, where many of us stayed, to prepare our meals, clean, and do laundry. Most of the streets of New Orleans are one way and not all the street signs have been replaced, so it took some of us a while to reach our destinations. We were greeted by our home owners and made to feel very special and welcome.

The days were long, and the work dirty, but the weather cooperated. We plunged right in to pull down dry rot, moldy sheet rock, and other debris, and then moved on to replacing insulation and sheet rock and installing new supporting timbers. Before work began on Wednesday, we celebrated Mass with the school children who were so neat and tidy in their uniforms. The music was again quite lively and inspiring and at the offertory each child processed to the front of the church to present their special donations for an orphanage in Africa. The school adopted this orphanage to teach the children that even though things are bad in

**I**t was an adventure, a spiritual and emotional journey, a work party, and so much more! Thirty-seven volunteers from St. Thomas More area traveled to New Orleans the first week in February 2007 to work with families from St. Peter Claver Parish to rebuild their lives and homes.

The city looks different than when Sr. Maureen Brown and Wilma Rolland met with St. Peter Claver staff there in August 2006. The trash that was everywhere is gone (the trash contractors are very diligent about picking it up as soon as it accumulates), and many of the houses are now gutted. It gives the city an almost deserted feeling. However there is some work being done on most blocks, evidence that residents are committed to returning to their homes. The hardware and lumber yards are absolutely teeming with folks buying building supplies.

On Sunday before our volunteer's work began, we all came together to worship with the parishioners of St. Peter Claver. Mass was truly an inspiration with much highly spirited music, a homily, and a joyful congregation to send us off to our work week.



*Miss Pearl Dupree with her plumbing and tile repair crew.*

By Monday morning all our work assignments were in place for the seven parishioner's homes we were to work on. In addition to working on the homes, some volunteers remained at *The Center of*



*The Lee's house was cleared and reframed, inside and out, during the week.*

New Orleans there are children in our world who live under much worse conditions. One of our volunteers helped with an in depth presentation about Black History Month and was honored to work with the children.

By now it was taking fewer U-turns to get to our job sites and the lumber and hardware stores. By Thursday we felt a bit distressed because we had to accept the reality that we would not accomplish all we had set out to do. However, our home owners stated that they were so happy



*(Continued on page 5)*



*Garmane's team took a moment to pose beside FEMA trailer before clearing debris and prepping this house for new plumbing.*

because they had felt overwhelmed and now much was started and they had a clear view of what needed to be done and could continue what we had started.



*Miss Myrtle lived in her FEMA trailer while tile floors in her home were installed.*

Our group provided most of our meals, but every day the St. Peter Claver parishioners brought home-cooked food to the lunch area, and also invited us one evening to the school cafeteria for dinner, good conversation, and even some dancing. There were a couple of evenings when we were on our own for dinner, and

since we were within walking distance of the French Quarter, good New Orleans Cuisine was on the menu.

Some volunteers had to leave Saturday, so Friday was their last work day; others made Saturday a short work day and then had time for some leisure and again enjoyed a meal donated by a congregation from Coronado with homemade cornbread from one of St. Peter Claver's homeowners. Yes, we were in New Orleans and ate very well!

The parishioners of St. Thomas More and

surrounding area were very generous with Katrina donations, so there was enough money left after we came home to provide materials for electrical and plumbing work in one of the houses, (the work was started by a parish from Seattle making their second trip) and to provide a contractor and materials for the roof on another. Many of the STM volunteers would like to return in February 2008 and continue the work that is needed. The Katrina fund is still open, so all monies will be used to support the people of St. Peter Claver Parish.



*Homeowner, Charlie Magill, smiles for the camera with team from St. Thomas More!*

We are presently working on a pulpit exchange—our Pastor, Fr. Mike, would visit St. Peter Claver and their Pastor, Fr. Jacques, would visit St. Thomas More to share what is currently happening at each of our parishes. We are hopeful this will happen in January 2008.

There is still so much to be done.

*To step up to help or for information contact Sr. Maureen Brown at (760) 758-4100, ext. 131, or [maureenb@stmoside.org](mailto:maureenb@stmoside.org).*



*Sr. Maureen Brown got us all going with her smile each morning at breakfast!*

What an AMAZING experience the first ever P.U.S.H. Middle School Youth Group Retreat turned out to be for the thirty middle school students who attended on May 11 and 12, 2007. Some were nervous and many didn't know what to expect. By the end of the second day, however, all who attended were excited to have experienced another way to *Walk with Me*.

As the young people arrived, the registration table became busy with excitement. Waiting to welcome everyone, and



*Group picture of first STM Middle School Youth Retreat, 2007*

to distribute T-shirts and wristbands were eight of our high school teens who volunteered to be group leaders and help mentor the novice middle schoolers. *Walk with Me* opened with prayer, live music provided by Michael Wojick, Joanna Mueller, and Randi Rudolph, and a welcome talk given by Joanna Mueller regarding the theme of the retreat. Following the group talk all present played an interactive game called "Bear, Ninja, Hunter." Lots of FUN! The evening mellowed with a pizza dinner and time to get comfortable with one another.

After the group talk and activities related to the theme, *Walk with Me*, we ended the night with a movie and ice cream. Lights out at midnight—well we tried; some of the kids needed a little time to burn off the sugar from the ice cream. OK everyone. *Lights Out!*



*Fr. Mike celebrates a "teaching" Mass for the middle school youth, explaining each liturgical step.*

We then began to "Walk" the Stations of the Cross. Each child took a turn carrying

the cross from station to station, and each took a turn reading at each station.

It was time for Mass. Fr. Mike celebrated Mass and explained each step of the Mass along the way. Real Bread! Fr. Mike used a loaf of bread and each child and adult had such an amazing experience with everyone there singing, "real" bread as the Body of Christ, and a teaching Mass

to remember. The kids were quite moved as they had never experienced such a Mass before! The joy in the eyes of each child was priceless!

It was time for the closings talk, lots of music, and a closing prayer to end the retreat. As parents arrived to chauffeur them home the kids didn't want to go! Several asked when the next retreat would be and if it could be for two nights

instead of just one! It appeared that each received the message from the retreat. It takes a village to raise a child,

and we have one amazing village at STM. Many "Thanks" go out to the **High School Teens** — Colin Hamill, Bobby Mueller, Randi Rudolph, Will Mueller, Aarica Briseno, Ashley Hollowell, Kyle Schanzenbach, and Ellie Rudolph; **Music Team** — Mike Wojcik, Joanna Mueller, Michelle Mueller, and Randi Rudolph; **Parents** — Patty Rudolph, Maryanne Hawkins, Joe Garcia, and Chris Hollowell; to Smitty Smith for making the large and small crosses and the **Pastoral Staff of St. Thomas More** who support the PUSH ministry. Many photos were taken during our time together, and these may be viewed on the church website.

*For information, contact Ron or Louise Briseno at (760) 758-4100, ext. 153, or visit [www.stmoside.org/ym](http://www.stmoside.org/ym).*



*Teens hold cross for final reading of the Stations of the Cross.*



*Students carrying cross to the next station.*

You are at Mass and see a neatly dressed young man or woman in a St. Thomas More embroidered polo shirt busily carrying things around the church. Who are these young people and what do they do exactly? They are our weekend sacristans, high school students usually between 15-18 years old, who are responsible for opening our parish home before each liturgy and readying all that is necessary for our worship.

The only liturgical ministers who are paid are these young sacristans. It is both a chance for the parish to offer them employment and an opportunity to introduce the youth to adult ministry. They work roughly four hours every other weekend, and it is often their first job. Some students enjoy it so much they continue until they



*We are proud of our very capable STM Sacristans!*

stay at church over the course of many liturgies, as during Holy Week. They help wherever they are needed in big and small ways, from setting up chairs for Christmas Mass to making sure the Bishop feels comfortable when he celebrates at St. Thomas More.

One of the parish's ongoing goals is to fully integrate the entire parish community into worship. Involving our youth in the weekend Masses is an important step on this journey. St. Thomas More began this transition with youth sacristans and more recently through the involvement of the Monday Night Mass worship team. The youth who minister at the Monday Night Mass also help serve at one of the Sunday



*There is much work that is done before, during and after all liturgies by the Sacristans.*

graduate from high school. What better place to be a servant than in God's house?

Douglas Lynn, who oversees all of the Parish's liturgical ministers, says, "This is not the 'don't have anything else to do' group." They choose to be at Church working this special weekend job. In addition to being a sacristan, and very active in life and school, some even hold a second part-time job.

We should also remember another important group of volunteers who work as sacristans during the week. We are blessed to have four dedicated adult women who generously give their time in assisting at daily Mass, funerals, and other liturgies from Monday through Friday. "They are as vital as the weekend sacristans. They're wonderful," says Douglas.

Sacristans are essential in our Church's operations. "Ministerially they are very important because they set up the Church for us so that we are able to worship well and properly," says Douglas. All of our sacristans share the responsibility of setting up the credence table, which holds the articles used in the liturgy, and preparing the sacristy for the priest. The weekday sacristans also double as altar servers for daily Mass and funerals. The youth sacristans are trusted with opening and closing the building, and they



Masses each month. They participate as Eucharistic ministers, hospitality ministers, readers, altar servers, choir members, and sacristans.

We are blessed by our youth and their abundance of talent and willingness to give of themselves in ministry to the parish. The ministry of the sacristans is but one example.

*To become a sacristan or serve in another liturgical ministry, please contact Douglas Lynn at (760) 758-4100, ext. 140, or douglasl@stmoside.org.*

If you happened to catch a glimpse of a teenager sharing lunch on the island curb with a homeless man in front of the WalMart shopping center in April then you might have seen our own Joe DeLaTorre from the St. Thomas



Joe DeLaTorre

More High School Youth Ministry program completing his “Pay It Forward” project. A three-part mini-series on Stewardship, which started on April 16, included this unique project given to the High School Youth Ministry and the Confirmation candidates. Each student was given \$5 to find creative ways to help others and then wrote up what they did and turned it in by the end of the course.

The youth were asked to get creative and they sure did!

One group of students kicked in some of their own money, bought groceries, made 12 lunch bags and filled them with ham sandwiches, chips, and drinks. They even stuck in slips of paper with Bible verses in the bags. The students drove around town and passed them out to the homeless on a Saturday morning. Others carried the bill in their pocket for a while and waited for just the right moment. One homeless man was so surprised when Marco Colucci, a skateboarder, bought him a California burrito.



Marco Colucci

Gale Gibbons, who has been serving alongside her husband Jeff as one of the parish’s Youth Directors for ten years, says she wanted the students “to come up with something creative, be self-motivated and self-initiated. I wanted something that would take them outside of themselves and see that there is this God who is not only bigger than them but bigger than this whole world as well.” She wanted to take it a step further since almost every teen was already involved liturgically. “It was about getting kids to look outside their own immediate needs.

Sometimes we’re in our own little world in our local neighborhood,” says Gale.

“They stepped up and completed the project...and in such beautiful ways,” she continues. You can see for yourself by reading the

students’ unique experiences on the blue poster boards hanging in the lower level parish office hallway.

Although the project shares its name with the year 2000 movie *Pay It Forward*, the real idea was inspired by parishioner Maureen Tutino. This idea was planted in Gale’s mind when she read Maureen’s piece on Christmas Traditions in the December 2005 issue of *The Tower*. For Christmas, Maureen gives her family members \$5 each with the condition that they spend the money on someone less fortunate. She then has them write a note telling her how they shared their gift. This was the first year for this new project at STM and Gale says it is definitely a keeper. It was absolutely the highlight of the course.

As Mother Teresa put it, “We can do no great things—only small things with great love.” How can you generate the generosity of God today?

*If you are interested in donating to this program or to find out more about High School Youth Ministry at STM, please contact Gale or Jeff Gibbons at (760) 726-7236 or [galeg@stmoside.org](mailto:galeg@stmoside.org) or [jeffg@stmoside.org](mailto:jeffg@stmoside.org).*



*The joy of giving is exuberating and extends into many other areas of life!*



Roxanne Shaffer

## CHURCH OF ST. THOMAS MORE—THE TOWER

In naming our Parish newsletter we remember  
The Tower of London  
where St. Thomas More spent his last days  
and suffered a martyr’s death.



**Parish Mission Statement:**  
*“To worship God,  
teach and live the Gospel of Jesus Christ,  
and serve His people in word and deed.”*

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