

St. Thomas More

Roman Catholic Church – Parish Newsletter

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THE TOWER

The Holy Land — The Fifth Gospel By Rev. Michael Ratajczak and Chris Smith

A Disciple of Jesus does not vacation in Israel/Palestine. A Disciple of Jesus makes a pilgrimage to the Holy Land of Israel/Palestine. It is a journey of the soul that is emotionally, psychologically, and physically draining; but at the same time, it is immensely enriching.

The Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John really come “alive” after one has walked the land of the fifth Gospel. Once you have been there, you will never hear the proclamation of the Gospel again in the same way. Walking the land connects you to the written Gospels in ever new and amazing ways.

37 pilgrims from Southern California (18 from the Tri City area) and Arizona spent two weeks in the footsteps of Jesus led by Fr. Garret Edmonds, O.F.M. For most, it was a first experience; for others, it was a “command performance.” But for all of us, it was a time of spiritual renewal, refreshment and deepened commitment as followers of Jesus.



Jerusalem 2005

Something to bring back to show you have been there: a lock of God’s hair, stolen from him while he was asleep; a photograph of the garden of the spirit. As has been said, the point of traveling is not to arrive but to return home laden with pollen you shall work up into honey the mind feeds on.

— R. S. Thomas

Some of the pollen that I bring back to enrich my ministry and hopefully is helpful to you as well:

To spend time in the land of Jesus brings one closer to our Lord and Savior in thought and prayer in one’s daily life. A pilgrimage is always a reconnection to the source.

1. Jerusalem is the center of the Universe. In this historic city, despite the news of violence and terrorism, there are many, many people of different religions, races, ethnic backgrounds and political perspectives who are working tirelessly to bring about a new way of being, that will be a model for the rest of the world to follow — unity in the midst of diversity.
2. To be in Israel/Palestine, one is reminded that we are all children of Abraham—Jew, Christian and Moslem. We have so much in common in our history and in our Scriptures. And, if we so choose, we can build on our commonalities for a more peaceful time.
3. Jesus is not just a thought, a philosophy, an idea or a creation. He was, and is, one of us. He was flesh and



The Way of the Cross
Via de la Rosa

blood, walked the earth, wept, laughed, drank wine at weddings, doubted, despaired, trusted in His Father, suffered, died and rose. His humanity brings all humanity closer to the invisible God, the Creator of all.
— Fr. Mike

Our group ranged in age from 12 to 83 yrs. old, and all of our expectations were more than fulfilled by the thorough and insightful pilgrimage led by Fr. Garret. He has led over 50 groups through the Holy Land over the years, while spending time in between in the U.S. doing parish work. It is obvious that Fr. Garret enjoys this ministry, and we were fortunate to reap the benefits of his knowledge and experience.

“The Holy Land has been called the ‘Fifth Gospel’ where the good news can be encountered among the people and in the places where God chose to reveal our salvation. For me to live here and, more importantly, share with people their pilgrim journey through this land is a real blessing. I am constantly impressed with the work that God does in the lives of those who visit here by allowing them to experience anew the wondrous way that God’s love and grace has been made known in the geography and history of salvation — a revelation that continues today in the land of Jesus. Thanks to Fr. Mike and all the pilgrims for your friendship and generosity in allowing me to be a part of your pilgrim experience in the Holy Land. Peace and all good!”

— Fr. Garret, O.F.M.

The last site we visited was the area where Jesus appeared to his disciples on the road to Emmaus. The phrase on the iron gate to this area reads: *Mane Nobiscum Domine*, which means *Stay With Us Lord*.



Our first visit to the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem

While all of the sites we visited were extraordinarily meaningful, there was something that tugged a little extra at my heart in this place. It was as if Jesus was personally reminding each of us that, just because we had a wonderful pilgrimage and were now returning home to “business as usual,” He is always with us, no matter where we are. A theme I’ve discovered in many of us upon our return is that, while we are physically home, a part of our mind remains in the Holy Land. A pilgrimage to the Holy Land is a very personal decision, and there is never really a “good time” to go. It is, however, an experience we treasure! If you have the urge and the spirit is beckoning, you are encouraged to answer that call without delay. You will not be disappointed! *Mane Nobiscum Domine!*



Farewell dinner night!

Treasured Tradition By Lisa Baca

Christmas is a time of great joy, celebration, families and treasured traditions. The families of STM share some of their traditions with us this year. *Thanks to all who participated. We received so many wonderful traditions we weren’t able to fit them all in.*



Pierogi Making

Polish Tradition – “Oplatek” Shared by Joanne Robinson

This is part of a treasured Polish tradition that has been in the Robinson family for many generations. Oplatek (Oh-pwah-tek) in Latin means “Our Christmas Obligation.” On Christmas Eve, the Polish family breaks the Oplatek (wafer) as their ancestors did before them. After readings and prayers, the sacred Christmas wafers are shared with each person and good wishes, blessings, forgiveness and love are expressed. This time is for recalling blessings is a time of tears and laughter.

The Christmas Eve gathering is preceded by the traditional “pierogi making.” Family and friends gather early in December. After 8 hours, we have made a variety of pierogi with dry cottage cheese, sauerkraut, potato, and prune filling totaling 55-60 dozen. We keep the abstinence on Christmas Eve with the meal of pea soup, fish, bobalki, potatoes, the pierogi and sauerkraut. After dinner we gather by the Christmas tree and open gifts. The children are angels because they know that, “no sitting, no gifts.”

49-Year-Old Tradition Shared by Jo Lanzrath

A Christmas Eve tradition we’ve had in our family for 49 years is to read the Christmas Story from Luke. After dinner, everyone sits down to listen to the Christmas Story. It’s great, and now even our married children are doing this with their families!

Happy Birthday to Jesus Shared by Betty Nelson

About one week before Christmas our family gathers for a pot-luck with lots of food, gifts and good cheer. Early during the evening we celebrate Jesus' birthday with a cake. Everyone sings 'Happy Birthday' to Jesus and the little ones blow out the candle. Then we tell the story of Christmas using pictures of Mary, Joseph, the Baby, the angels watching over Him and the Star that the Three Kings follow to Bethlehem. As the children get older some of them think they are too old for this but before the story is over, I see them leaning in trying to hear the story being told. We are never too old to learn about Jesus' humble beginnings.



Telling the story of Jesus' Birthday

Deck the Halls with Tamales Shared by Amy Martinez

What else could there be, except making tamales and not being able to eat one until midnight on Christmas Eve? My 84-year old mother has always said that with 13 children, 39 grandchildren, 46 great-grandchildren, and 1 great-great grandchild, she could never afford to buy presents for all. So this was her gift to everyone. Tamales!

The first Saturday in December is when we gather together to assemble the tamales after extensive preparation. The day is spent with daughters, granddaughters and invited female friends working on a huge table. We spend the day laughing, talking and listening to old Mexican music. So our tradition starts in early Advent, and the fruits of our labor are enjoyed on Christmas Eve!

Ornamental Friends Shared by Diana Diaz

Every year on the last day of school before Christmas vacation, a large group of moms go to Mass, then get together and have breakfast at one of our homes and have an ornament exchange. Everyone ooooh's and aaaahhh's over each special ornament, so it takes a while, and we enjoy ourselves while sipping coffee or tea. That's our special time to enjoy and appreciate our friendships.

Advent Light Shared by Gale, Jeff, Sarah, Therese, Rebecca and Joshua Gibbons

We have an Advent tradition where we celebrate the feast day of Santa Lucia (St. Lucy). We awaken early in the morning. Every candle in the house is placed on the formally decorated dining room table and lit before serving a breakfast consisting of a French Toast Strata and an Apple Cider Syrup, sausage, fruit and sparkling cider. The story of St. Lucy is read. We then pray that we can be an instrument of God's healing love, as St. Lucy was. We also remember to be light for the world in this season of Advent.

The \$5.00 Tradition Shared by Maureen Tutino

Our family is so fortunate and with so many in the extended family (nieces, nephews, in-laws) - I decided to start a tradition of gratitude and giving. For Christmas, I give everyone \$5.00 with the condition that they take the \$5.00 and spend it on someone less fortunate. Then I have them all write a note telling me how they shared their gift. Sometimes they give it to a homeless person or a family pools their money and makes a larger donation. It helps us remember the true meaning of Christmas and how fortunate we are and share with those less fortunate.



St. Lucy

"Christmas Tradition - Italian Style" Shared by Natalie "Luce" Provinse

Mamamia, did we eat!!! Christmas is always my favorite time of the year. I remember as far back when I was little we would have the whole family at our house for the Christmas Eve Traditional Italian Feast. We would have all types of fish for dinner, antipasto salad, and cooked octopus as appetizers, then comes out the linguini with clam sauce, salads, fried shrimp, abalone, crab, lobster, and whatever else was catch of the day. Bread and wine, a must, were plentiful! After that "small meal", we would bring out the dried figs, chestnuts, mixed nuts, anise, and then started to make the espresso coffee and bring out all the Italian sweets that all brought to share. There were too many to name, but my favorite was "struffoli" – Napolitan honey pastry!

As I grew older, I was told of the tradition of the Christmas Eve dinner or "the seven fishes of Christmas Eve." No one really knew the true explanation for the "seven fishes," but there are four theories behind it: (1) The Seven Sacraments of the Catholic Church (2) The seven sins of the world (3) The seven days it took Mary and Joseph to travel to Bethlehem (4) The seven days that God created. Some say it's the seven hills of Rome, some say it's the seven winds of Italy, or the Seven Wonders of the World. Northern Italians don't really know about this custom. It is from Naples on down (where my family is from)— a Southern Italian tradition. Whatever the reason is, we love it!

Added to the special occasion of Christmas in our family, is the fact that I was born on Christmas day. My name at birth, Natalie Luce, means Christmas light. To be able to share the birthday of Jesus is most meaningful!



Happy 1st Birthday, Natalie!

Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Matthew 5:4

The St. Thomas More Bereavement Committee is headed by Sr. Maureen with a core team of 6 dedicated members who give of their time and talent to those in need of help following the death of a loved one. The entire committee, however, is much larger and includes the parish office staff and over 150 parishioners who assist with such things as receptions, clean-up, choir, and donations of food and sympathy baskets. The team is keenly aware of the importance of ministering to families in all stages of life, including death, as they journey with them, pray for them and give practical help and guidance to honor both their own faith and the faith of their loved one.



Bereavement team members greet family and friends



Ushers prepare for funeral Mass

The process begins with a call to the parish office when a family member dies. The office then notifies a Bereavement Committee team member who is always on call, day and night, 7 days a week. The team member then arranges a visit with the family and begins the planning of the funeral. Team members can do everything from suggesting cemetery references to helping the family plan the readings, songs, and program and assisting in the preparation of the Memory Table honoring the deceased. The family can be involved as much or little as they wish in the planning process. It is comforting to them to know that a team member will always be available to help.

Funeral planning can be overwhelming for the family. However, the team helps guide them throughout the entire process and explains all the various options to help the family with their decisions. Usually a Vigil Service is held the evening before the funeral. The Vigil can be held at the funeral home, in the church, or in a home. It can be as simple as a Rosary Service, or it can consist of readings and informal sharing of stories. Also, there is often a viewing of the deceased, which can help to bring closure to family and friends.

There are three options for the funeral itself: a *Funeral Mass*, a *Memorial Mass*, or a *Funeral Service*. A priest presides at the Mass but usually the Vigil or Graveside Service is led by a Deacon, a Sister, or a family member. The team helps the family sort out the many options in preparing a beautiful funeral celebration.

We must always remember that, in our faith, the time of death is also a *celebration of life*, the entrance into eternal life and a time of thanksgiving for the deceased's life on earth. The Memory Table serves as a joyful reminder of the person's life and the things he or she loved such as golf, fishing, a musical instrument or a favorite book. Another way of celebrating is with a gathering following the Funeral Service when the team and many helpers prepare a reception and serve a luncheon including salads and desserts donated by volunteers.

It is important that we take adequate time to plan as there is usually no hurry in planning a beautiful faith-filled Funeral Service for our loved one. We should be sure to give the same amount of thought and planning that we would dedicate to a wedding or a 40th birthday party.

The Bereavement Committee can also help with the preplanning of your own funeral arrangements. They will meet with you and go through the planning worksheets which will then be on permanent file in the parish office. Frequently, such arrangements include cemetery services, such as choosing a casket and a burial place in addition to planning the Mass and other related services. The bereavement team members feel blessed and honored to share these special moments which reflect on the sacredness of life with the families. To obtain more information on this ministry, please contact: Sr. Maureen Brown at 760-758-4100 ext. 131 or maureenb@stmoside.org.



Memorial setting by altar



Linda Dicus and Mary Trotta

Grief is not something that we can put aside. It infuses itself into everything we do. When we try to ignore it, it usually backfires. Mourning is an ongoing process that we must go through in whatever order that works best for us. Not everyone takes the same steps in the same order. However, nearly everyone takes those steps sooner or later. Death must be incorporated into our lives and we come out with a “new normal” which, hopefully, is a healthy normal.

Mary Trotta and Linda Dicus are registered nurses certified by the American Academy of Bereavement. They started their work in bereavement at St. Francis Parish in Vista in 1992. Fr. Peter McGuine was responsible for bringing them to St. Thomas More.

“GOOD GRIEF” is an eight-week seminar program which they present periodically in a number of churches. In addition, Mary has also started the program in Colorado where she lives for six months each year. The program is designed for people who are grieving over

the death of a loved one. Not everyone needs this program. The first year after the death is usually long and hard for most people. There are many pitfalls along the way in which they can become mired. The “Good Grief” program is designed to assist these people extricate themselves and proceed on to the next step.

The “Good Grief” team of Mary and Linda is always ready to meet with anyone who asks for personal counseling on a one-to-one basis. Often, simply a meeting or two will help the person get on the right track so that they do not require anything more. In most cases the individual is the best judge of whether he/she is in need of further counseling.

Linda also provides Alzheimer’s counseling for people who find themselves in such a caregiver situation. Linda is particularly well informed on the subject since her own husband died of Alzheimers in 1999. Families need to know that they will survive this disease with only one victim. Often just meeting with someone who has gone through the care-giving process can be very helpful. For more information on this program, please contact: Linda Dicus 760-726-5081 or Mary Trotta 760-734-1765.

In Memoriam . . .

November 2, All Soul’s Day, begins a time of remembrance. It is a time to celebrate the lives of those who have gone before us to join God in eternal life. On the evening of November 2nd, a special Mass was held to honor those who have died. The names of the deceased were listed on a banner that remained visible throughout the month of November. Family members were invited to take home a candle bearing the name of their loved one and keep the flame burning brightly, especially through the holidays as a reminder of their loved one still with them in spirit. As the year of 2005 comes to a close, we remember those who have been buried from the Church of St. Thomas More.

Receive, Lord, in tranquility and peace, the souls of your servants who have departed out of this present life to be with you. Give them the life that knows no age, the good things that do not pass away; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

~ Saint Ignatius Loyola

In honor and memory of those souls that we have lost, November 2004 — November 2005

Viola Jacobs
 Guy ‘Bill’ Stevens
 Caroline Kleekamp
 Harry Allwyn Jones
 Jennifer Treat
 Teresa Fiorentino
 Joe Coccaro
 Mary Praga
 Vance Schweitzer
 Joseph Murphy
 Robert Jennings
 Marie Jennings
 Donald McCotter

Thelma Rizza
 Ruth Lowry
 Roseanna Bartell
 William Wieland
 Mary Ellen Engwer
 James Reiter
 William ‘Bud’ Flanagan
 Thomas Bager
 Charles Kirste
 Judy Seymour
 June Ashby
 Lorraine Cormier
 Beverly Pokojni

Ida Penaflor
 Kevin Cline
 Jim Farrell
 Jim Ford
 Ella Del Favero
 Mary Ledwith
 Hank VanBogaert
 Fred Hilger, Jr.
 Walter Karpowicz
 Juan Quiroz
 Patsy Hyde
 Jean Young
 Robert Valencia



During our 20th Anniversary year, we have been blessed in many ways at St. Thomas More! Thanks to the generosity of our parish, we raised \$4.1 million in new pledge commitments to our Capital Campaign, *“Our Journey Into The Future . . . Together.”* Combined with the \$1.2 million previously raised toward our Church, we stand at \$5.3 million. The five acre land parcel adjacent to our existing property was paid in full in August. This provides us with additional space for parking and also for playing fields for our future school.

In September, we received “Preliminary Approval” from the Diocese to proceed with building our Church and the Bell Tower, the first phase of this campaign. We now begin the *many preliminary steps* to this process and will be breaking ground in 2008, which is only two years away! As a young parish, we are aware that there is much to be done. Our Daily Chapel and Memorial area, Parish Administration Building/Youth Center, Choir-Meeting room, Secondary Education Initiative and debt retirement remain in focus during this campaign as well. Fortunately our infrastructure and street costs were covered in the previous campaign, which means our start up fees will now be significantly reduced. Many thanks to the 76% of the parish who have responded to this campaign! We continue to grow and flourish as a stewardship parish. Congratulations on the level of time, talent and treasure that is shared here — Happy 20th Anniversary STM!

As the end of the year 2005 approaches, and as you review your financial situation in preparation for your IRS returns, there may be a need for greater charitable giving before the end of this year. If so, please remember the Building Fund at St. Thomas More. Your gifts are greatly needed and deeply appreciated. Thank you!

Church of St. Thomas More Concert Series 2006

A Family Festival of Christmas ~ Friday, January 6, 2006 – 7:00 p.m.

Throughout the world, families join together at Christmas to celebrate the birth of our Savior with words and music, around the hearth and at table. The Music Ministry invites you to this parish gathering, featuring lots of carols and holiday songs for the whole congregation, music by our adult and children’s choirs, and stories for all ages.

Spring Sing – An Ecumenical Celebration of Song ~ Sunday, April 30, 2006 – 4:00 p.m.

As Christians everywhere strive to put aside differences and promote the common ground of Christ’s message and teachings for the good of the world, music has become one of the most important unifiers of diverse viewpoints and beliefs. The Church of St. Thomas More’s Adult Choir hosts choirs from throughout the North County area as we celebrate our oneness in Christ through music.

Colorado Vocal Arts Ensemble in Concert ~ Monday, June 5, 2006 – 7:00 p.m.

Colorado Vocal Arts Ensemble (CVAE) is a nationally acclaimed chamber choir dedicated to the presentation of exceptional choral music. Although its repertoire is firmly rooted in the rich history of choral music, founder and Music Director Deborah Jenkins Teske often builds her repertoire around a theme, and challenges both her singers and the audience with something unusual and exceptionally creative. Former St. Thomas More Music Director, Gary De Kler is a member of the Ensemble.

We Give Thanks ~ Sunday, November 12, 2006 – 4:00 p.m.

Each year, as the days grow shorter and the leaves turn and fall to the ground, our country gathers at table and celebrates all that we have to be thankful for, ever mindful of those who are in need. In this spirit, the Adult Choir of the Church of St. Thomas More presents a concert of thanksgiving, praise, and hope — a proclamation of abounding joy giving thanks for everything God has provided for us.

Vacation Bible School Mission Project By Jennifer Gisel and Karen Oshinski

This summer, the St. Thomas More Vacation Bible School adopted the outreach project of providing school supplies to less fortunate children. It was accomplished with the cooperation of North County Solutions for Change. This organization helps homeless families, which are usually single moms with children or pregnant women. They have a brand new facility in Oceanside with temporary housing units.

On Monday of Vacation Bible School, each child was given a flyer explaining the project. On the flyer was a list of supplies, including backpacks, that are generally requested by schools. By Wednesday only a few articles had been brought in so Mrs. Bell, the Director, reminded the children of the importance of helping others who are in need. By Friday, the school supplies were overflowing two large utility wagons! At least 30 backpacks and 10 bags of items had to be carried by hand because they would not fit in the wagons. The children were very excited to see what their combined efforts were able to accomplish!



Time to sort a successful collection of supplies!

The following week, the items were sorted and delivered to North County Solutions for Change. The youngsters who would be receiving some of the supplies were so happy to be getting new things for school that one teenager said, “Looking at all these great supplies makes me want to go to school!” Another child about nine years old exclaimed, “Are these backpacks for us? They are so cool!”

What a wonderful lesson was learned by those attending Vacation Bible School, and what a tremendous amount of encouragement it will give to the children receiving the school supplies at the beginning of a new school year, as well as throughout the year.

When does life begin? For some this question is not easily answered. For God the answer is clear, 'Before I formed you in the womb I knew you and before you were born I consecrated you,' Jeremiah 1:5. For those that the question is not so easily answered, there are people who can help guide individuals to the right decision.

Our Pro-Life Ministry here at St. Thomas More is a group of over 10 dedicated individuals helping young people in North County make life the only choice. Formed in 1999, this ministry is committed to helping support the Diocese in implementing various pro-life activities. "The pro-life ministry supports a culture of life from conception through natural death," says Jane Kelleher, chairperson.

The organization that benefits the most from this group's activity is Birth Choice in San Marcos. This organization, headed by Kim Houlihan, provides free and confidential services to young women who very often have no where else to turn. Birth Choice is a Pregnancy Resource Center that provides free pregnancy testing and confidential counseling to each woman walking through their door. They offer alternatives to abortion and educate and supply referrals for adoptions. In addition to these services, they also supply young mothers with needed items for their new babies: diapers, formula and clothing.

This is where St. Thomas More steps up and helps meet their demand. 'St. Thomas More parishioners have the most generous hearts and the care and concern that you show for Birth Choice is overwhelming, says Kim Houlihan. Each year STM continues to provide staffing to Birth Choice to help with intake counseling. The Baby Food Drive, Pennies from Heaven and the Christmas Angel Crowns help supply Birth Choice with the necessities they need. In the last several years STM has literally provided thousands of packages of formula, diapers, blankets and clothing items to Birth Choice. "Without a doubt St. Thomas More provides more support to us than any other church," says Houlihan. In addition to this the Pro-Life Ministry also greatly supports Life Perspectives.

Life Perspectives raises the level of discussion by emphasizing the value of life, by asking thoughtful questions about the personal destruction of abortion and by stressing the need for practical, holistic solutions. They reach out with a pro-woman message and age appropriate curriculum. They visit elementary, middle and high schools helping students recognize their own value, the reality of unplanned pregnancies and how to help friends deal with unwanted advances or unexpected pregnancies. They also have a series of lectures designed for colleges and universities. In November, St. Thomas More participated in Life Walk, where we raised over \$2600.00 to help benefit these programs. Our continuing support of these organizations ensures that they will be able to continue reaching out to people, one person at a time. For more information on this Ministry, please contact: Jane Kelleher at 760-724-9658 or shepkell@aol.com.



STM Supports Life Walk 2005

Made one with the risen Lord! St. Thomas More Baptisms, November 2004 — November 2005



The Sacrament of Baptism

By God's gift, through water and the Holy Spirit, we are reborn to everlasting life. In his goodness, may he continue to pour out his blessings upon all his sons and daughters. May he make them always, wherever they may be, faithful members of his holy people and may he send his peace upon all, in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen

Isabella Baratti
 Natasha Cañedo
 Mylan Daley
 Ryan Rocco
 Tyler Clow
 Anna Acevedo
 Mary Rita Cap
 Luke Gonzalez
 Matthew Green
 Nathan Green
 Hannah Mendenhall

Annika Jaksch
 Mary Sarah Cleary
 Mason Hartdegen
 Krystal Kline
 Brooke Bellefeville
 Lauren Browne
 Kaitlyn Schassberger
 William Schassberger
 Paul Jin Yoo
 Georgia Smith
 Erin Briley
 Adam Carpinelli

Devin Carpinelli
 Max Carpinelli
 Adrian De Paolo
 Matthew De Paolo
 Joseph Duncan
 Jordyn Moore
 Jonathan Pelletier
 Eric Waggoner
 Fabian Del Castillo
 Austin Del Castillo
 Ryleigh Fay
 Brianna Hostler
 Bianca Romano
 Ricardo Jimenez Jr.
 Isabella Noivo

Elijah Pawelek
 Elsa Torres
 Lauren Welch
 Sophia Petraglia
 Liesl Karczewski
 David Black
 Madeline Veneracion
 Braydon Albelo
 Karlie Amicay
 Ethan Uhren
 Sophia Garcia
 Hayden Oliveira
 Melina Gradilla
 Riley Piro
 Derek McClintic

Alexander Orgill
 Melia Crimaldi
 Sean Butler
 Aaliyah Harris
 Paisley Kinnon
 Nicholas Parker
 Isaac McMickle
 Gianna Mosca
 Julian Smith
 Luis Del Valle
 Adam Lomeli
 Ryan McCarthy
 Maximilian Mendiola
 Daniel Vignolo
 Zachary Van Vechten

At the end of August when Hurricane Katrina, the most destructive and costly natural disaster in U.S. History, hit coastal regions of Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama the rest of the nation watched in utter awe and helplessness as the people of this region were torn from their homes and families. In addition to the hurricane, the disaster was amplified in New Orleans when on August 29th several sections of the levee system collapsed. With so much widespread devastation in New Orleans, many did not know where to begin in offering help.

The parishioners of St. Thomas More soon found a way to directly help those affected by this disaster on a person to person level. A few days after the storm, Gale Gibbons was contacted by Fr. Tony Ricard of Our Lady Star of the Sea Parish in New Orleans. He was contacting many of those that he had come to



Rev. R. Tony Ricard

know through working with conferences on Youth Ministry. Gale immediately shared this with several members of STM, and they approached Fr. Mike with the idea to adopt his Parish so that we could create and maintain a long term relationship with them. The idea was then presented to the parishioners of STM, and with overwhelming support a specific ministry was created to aid our new Sister Parish. Jim Dease quickly organized a campaign to raise needed funds for the victims of Our Lady Star of the Sea. In just a few weeks, over \$2,500.00 was raised and sent to the victims in the form of gift cards that they could use for basic personal and household items. In addition to the gift cards, we also have provided several lap top computers and printers so that high school students could continue working towards graduation.

“The strategy of this ministry is to work on a project to project basis,” says Gale Gibbons. STM will also come to the aid of OLSS for the Christmas Season. The Sister Parish Ministry has partnered with the Christmas Angel Ministry at STM. New donation ornaments in the shape of crosses were created specifically to aid those in OLSS.

As a result of the storm, the entire Parish was displaced and several members had been staying at a campsite. As of November 14th all those who had been refugees at this campsite have now found housing elsewhere. Fr. Tony’s rectory will be an RV, and he expects to be there for at least 6 months. They have begun working with the insurance company and are in ‘full swing of restoration.’ Christmas Mass is being planned for those parishioners who are able to attend. In Fr. Tony’s words, “Everything we know has changed. Life as we know it may never be the same. However, we are determined to persevere and make our city a better place than it was when Katrina stirred us up on August 29th, 2005.”

For further information on this ministry, please contact Jim Dease at 760-598-0889. To learn more about OLSS Parish and to follow the progress of the rebuilding of their parish, please visit Fr. Tony’s website at www.fatherTony.com.



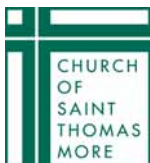
Our Lady Star of the Sea Parish, New Orleans



Collecting Donations for OLSS Parish

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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