

St. Thomas More

Roman Catholic Church – Parish Newsletter

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THE TOWER

Now is the Time! By Reverend Michael Ratajczak

During the last year and a half, since I became the Pastor of St. Thomas More, I have come to feel very much at home here. This is a very warm and welcoming Parish where the members come together for spiritual growth, family enrichment and community outreach! This is all done with a real sense of joy and enthusiasm!



Parishioners gather on upper level courtyard after Mass

Although we celebrate *Stewardship* in the month of November, we are mindful that it is a way of life that is continuously lived. Our very life and the limited time that we spend on Earth is pure gift. Coming to the realization that all is gift is the beginning of real peace and inner joy!

Once we are in that “good place,” we know that we must use the gifts of *time*, *talent*, and *treasure* as our way of giving gratitude and recognition to God for what has been given to us.

The Church of St. Thomas More is that “good place” in which we recognize our identity as Disciples of the Lord Jesus, as branches connected to the Vine. It is this connection that nourishes us and strengthens us so that we may continue the Master’s Mission and Ministry. Through our time, talent, and treasure, we build up the Church, the Body of Christ, for this time and this place.

Our Faith Community provides many opportunities in which we can, through time, talent, and treasure, gratefully give back to the Lord. I encourage every parishioner to discover and choose a ministry so that you can be involved in the life of this community utilizing your *time* and *talent*. It is in “the giving” that we shall receive!

(Continues on page 2)



Henny Jocelyn and Brenda Estigoy offer assistance during Stewardship Awareness month!

Now is the Time! Continued By Reverend Michael Ratajczak

This year a special challenge is before us as we begin *“Our Journey Into The Future...Together.”* Our new Capital Campaign will raise the needed funds for our permanent Church/Sanctuary, our Administration Building and Youth Center, the recently purchased five-acre parcel of additional land, the retirement of our debt, and \$1 million for the Diocesan Secondary Education Initiative.

As we continue to focus on *time* and *talent*, this year we call special attention to the gift of our *treasure* in order to ensure that St. Thomas More continues to be that “good place” where the Lord’s work continues.

NOW IS THE TIME. NOW IS THE MOMENT.

We are at that point at which this community has been working for the last 18 years. We are ready to take that giant step and build our permanent worship space, the place that we, the Church, will call our home!

This is an extremely exciting time! We need to pull together more than we ever have in the past. As the Lord’s stewards, in the giving of our *time*, *talent*, and *treasure*, the build out of the St. Thomas More Parish Campus will soon be a reality!

I know that you are a grateful, generous and a Faith-filled people. I know that you will respond in the manner that is needed!

God Bless you for all that you do. Remember that the Lord is never outdone in generosity!



Ministers Prayer Circle before Mass.

These Men We Call Knights By Gloria Larson



Unity, charity, fraternity and patriotism are the basic founding principles of the Knights of Columbus – and those principles still exist today.

Founded in 1852, by Fr. Michael J. McGivney in New Haven, Conn., the Knights of Columbus have grown to more than 12,000 councils throughout the United States, Canada, Mexico and several nations within the Caribbean. Fr. McGivney founded the Knights as a way of strengthening religious faith and helping struggling families. In 1997, a cause for canonization was opened for Fr McGivney. You can read more about the founder of the Knights of Columbus by visiting www.fathermcgivney.org.

The Church of St Thomas More began its council of Knights in 1997 and today has grown to nearly 100 members.

Members of the Knights participate in a variety of events and functions throughout the church and community. Each year, the Knights of Columbus participate in ‘The Tootsie Roll Drive’ with all donations benefiting local organizations helping the mentally handicapped. The Knights at St. Thomas More service numerous events throughout the year, including the Knights of Columbus Breakfasts, the weekly Friday Fish Fry during Lent and helping with the annual St. Thomas More Summer Picnics. Several members of the Knights of St. Thomas More also participate in other Parish ministries such as serving as Hospitality Ministers, Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist, and singing in our choir. The Knights support our various pro-life endeavors, as well as providing funding for information services to those seeking answers to questions about the Catholic Faith.

Who are these men we call Knights of Columbus? They are our husbands, fathers, grandfathers, uncles, friends and neighbors. They are there to serve the church – by helping with a church picnic, supporting our religious education programs or giving of themselves in a form of stewardship to the church. Sometimes they are seen and sometimes unseen; however, they are always there when we need them.

For information on becoming a member, or learning more about the Knights of Columbus, please contact Roger Northrup at 760-727-3555.



Richard Hardy and Doug Chilton ready to serve another meal!

For many of us, our morning routine is just that... routine. We get up, take a warm shower, eat breakfast, put on clean clothes and begin our day. But how often do we step back and realize how fortunate we are to have such a daily routine? There are thousands of San Diegans who would consider the simple pleasures of our daily routine a luxury. The Brother Benno Foundation was created to help the poor and homeless find the food and shelter they so desperately need.

Brother Benno Garrity, a Benedictine monk from the Prince of Peace Abbey in Oceanside, dedicated his life to feeding the poor and homeless. His long-time service to the community is remembered through the Brother Benno Foundation, which was formed in 1983. Stories of Brother Benno taking his homemade bread to those in need still resonate throughout the Foundation. Brother Benno passed away in 1992; however, his work lives on through the Foundation.



Prayer and reflection at Brother Benno's before a meal.



STM Volunteers experience the joy of helping out at Brother Benno's!

The Brother Benno Foundation provides a place for those in need to take a hot shower, eat a warm meal and change into clean clothes. It also provides transportation services to many of its "guests."

For years, the parishioners of St. Thomas More have generously supported Brother Benno's numerous initiatives. Each year, a Toiletries Drive is held at St. Thomas More to help replenish supplies used to fill "hygiene packs," which are distributed to the guests. Last year so many toiletries were collected at our Parish that it took a large pick-up truck to deliver them to Brother Benno's.

In addition, many of our parishioners volunteer to prepare and serve hot meals on the first Saturday of each month at the Brother Benno's in Oceanside. The month of March has been assigned to St. Thomas More to conduct a Food Drive for Brother Benno's. Last year, we collected two pick-up truck loads of food. This is extremely helpful in stocking the pantry to serve the many meals served throughout the year.

Brother Benno's relies heavily on the generous donations and support of St. Thomas More Church and several other organizations. As is the case with most non-profit organizations, help from parishes such as ours is key to the continued success in helping the homeless and those in need.

To raise money for its initiatives, Brother Benno's hosts a Cookie Sale every year at the Carlsbad Street Fair. Proceeds from the sale are used to purchase much-needed items for one of their support houses. St. Thomas More bakers make thousands of cookies annually for this event.

Each time there is a need, we pull together as a Faith Community to help those who are less fortunate than ourselves.

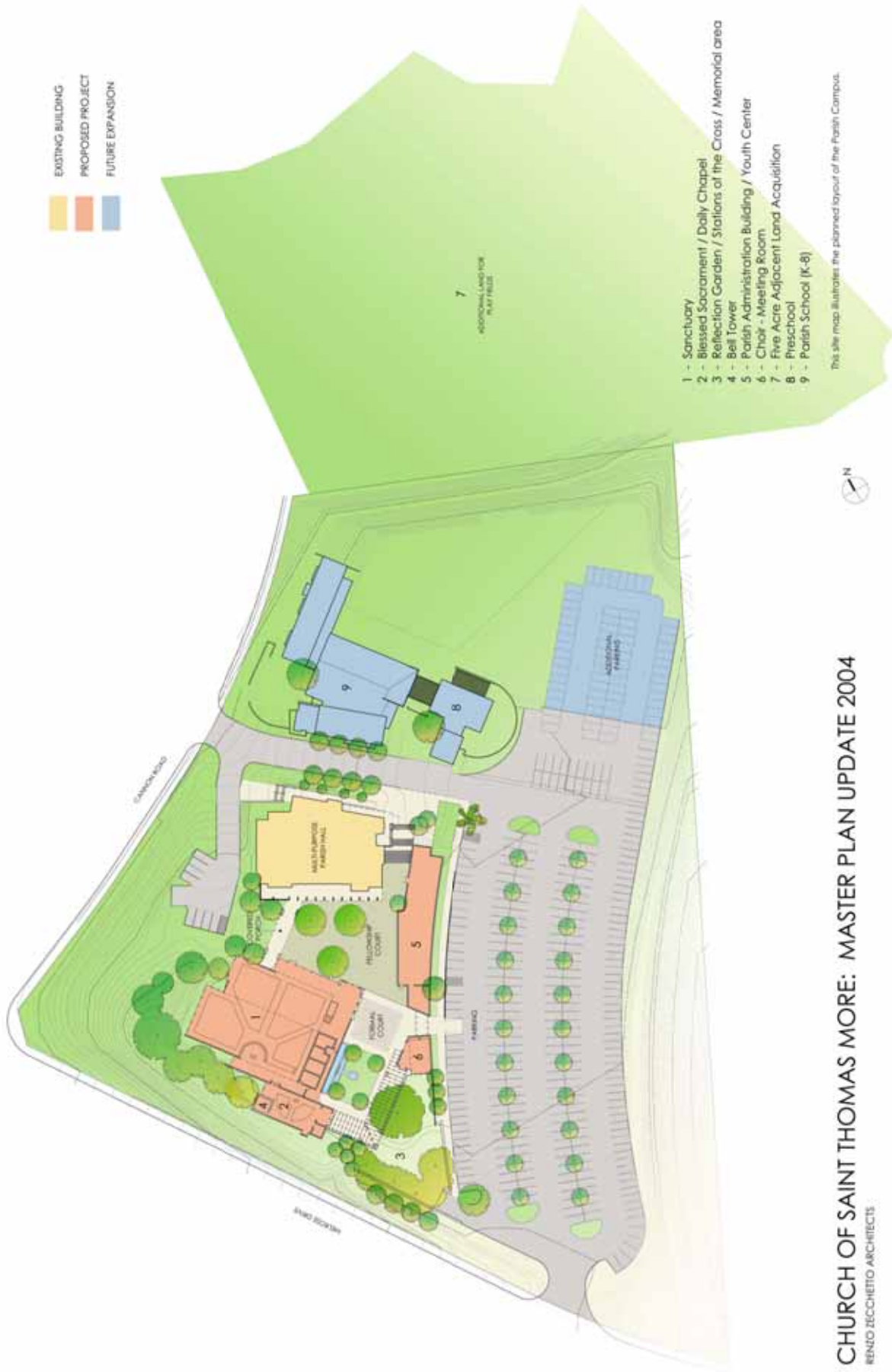
If you would like information on ways that you can help Brother Benno's through our program at St. Thomas More, please contact Deacon Tom and Patt Goeltz at 760-727-8442.

To volunteer to serve food, contact Tanya Gyves at 760-940-0574. More detailed information about Brother Benno's can be found by visiting their website, www.brotherbennos.org.

Donations to Brother Benno's can be mailed to 3260 Production Avenue, Oceanside, CA 92054.



Brother Benno's guests being served a hot meal.



- EXISTING BUILDING
- PROPOSED PROJECT
- FUTURE EXPANSION

- 1 - Sanctuary
- 2 - Blessed Sacrament / Daily Chapel
- 3 - Reflection Garden / Stations of the Cross / Memorial area
- 4 - Bell Tower
- 5 - Parish Administration Building / Youth Center
- 6 - Chok - Meeting Room
- 7 - Five Acre Adjacent Land Acquisition
- 8 - Preschool
- 9 - Parish School (K-8)

This site map illustrates the planned layout of the Parish Campus.



CHURCH OF SAINT THOMAS MORE: MASTER PLAN UPDATE 2004

RENZO ZECCHETTO ARCHITECTS



St. Thomas More Parish Center.

We are experiencing a season of growth at St. Thomas More! This year of transition has found our Development Council busy planning and coming to a consensus, with our Parish leadership and the Diocese, regarding the future plans for our campus build out at STM. Several joint council meetings were held during this decision making process. Informational Town Hall meetings were then held this past summer to share the updated plans for our Parish and to gather parishioner input regarding these decisions.

Our own Pastoral Council Chair, Linda Brault, facilitated these Town Hall meetings for us! Linda was a natural for this task, as she also does this as “her day job,” and all who attended were most impressed! A LOT of ground was covered, from the humble beginnings of our Parish in 1985, through our journey to the present, and finally to our plans for the future. Many thanks to Linda for giving such comprehensive and delightful presentations!

As Fr. Mike outlined in his opening article , *“Our Journey Into The Future . . . Together”* Capital Campaign is now underway! The new Campaign includes our beautiful new Church, as well as other related facilities that will be most helpful with our wide variety of ministry work here at STM! This is a very exciting time for our Parish! For updates on the progress of our Capital Campaign, please check out *“Our Journey Into The Future . . . Together”* link on our website at www.stmoside.org.

Parish Membership News

If you have joined STM recently, you might have spoken with Debbie Ipsen, Parish Membership Chair, or one of the 18 volunteers on the Membership Committee. This dedicated group of volunteers plays a vital role in welcoming new parishioners to STM! First impressions are lasting ones, and this group strives to help our new members become familiar and comfortable in our Faith Community upon their arrival here. “Our welcoming approach includes everything from a welcome packet, personal phone calls giving the new parishioner the opportunity to ask questions and find out more about our various ministries and finally to a formal New Member Reception,” Debbie shared.

The last New Member Reception was combined with the September Town Hall meeting and was a big success! New members learned, first hand, the history of our Parish and felt very much a part of the planning process for our future. When asked what type of things new members have to say about STM, Debbie said, “The overall response is that St. Thomas More is a very warm and friendly place to be.” Since December 1, 2003, we have had 111 new households register at STM! There are a variety of reasons people join our Parish including: word of mouth about the great sense of community here; moving into the area; simply driving by and stopping in. However you may have found us, we are glad you did!

SCRIP Committee Flourishes

From its humble beginnings in April 2002, the Scrip program at STM has grown to be an integral part of our fundraising efforts for the campus build out. Scrip is gift certificates sold by various merchants that participate in the program. Scrip is sold to us at a discount. We then sell it at face value, and the merchants donate the difference to our building fund!

The idea for this program was presented to the Finance Council in January, 2002 with a request to borrow \$10,000 from the Parish to get the program started. In just over two years, the Scrip Program not only paid back their \$10,000 loan, but recently made a \$25,000 pledge to our new Campaign, complete with a down payment of \$5,000!

“The most wonderful thing about this program is that the person purchasing the Scrip is not spending any more money on the product or service than they would if they walked into the store,” Henny Jocelyn, Scrip Chairperson, explained. “Everyone needs groceries,” she continued “and we have three major grocery stores on our list!” Albertsons, Ralphs, and Stater Brothers all give us a 4% return on our purchases! Most families spend at least \$350 a month on groceries. If 1,000 of our parishioners purchased their monthly groceries at these stores using this program, we would realize thousands of dollars each month on grocery purchases alone!

There are currently 111 merchants from which to choose and holiday shopping is upon us! Scrip gift certificates are a GREAT way to shop for relatives, friends, Christmas Angel and Huggy Buddy gifts! Many folks mail Scrip certificates as gifts, for many occasions, throughout the year to save on postage AND to give the recipients the opportunity to pick out exactly what they want from these various merchants! What a perfect way to simplify your life and benefit our building program at the same time!

The Scrip Committee consists of 11 dedicated volunteers, who are ready to help you with your “one stop” shopping after all Masses on weekends and Tuesday and Thursday , from 9-10 a.m., in the Parish Office. For more information, please call 760-758-4100, ext. 152, or check out our website at www.stmoside.org/development_council.htm (Scrip Sales).



Many parishioners buy SCRIP each week!

Theresa Jocelyn volunteers to help sell SCRIP.

Campaign Donor Listing Information

In our ever increasing effort to ensure that all donors are appropriately and accurately tracked and thanked, we will be publishing a complete list of the donors from our current Capital Campaign in the next edition of The Tower. Our ultimate goal to list everyone who has contributed to STM building efforts since they began. There will be a memorial area for donors in the next phase of our build out. Watch for more details in future publications!

What does **P.U.S.H.** mean to you? It is an acronym for **“Pray Until Something Happens”** and the name of the Middle School Youth Group here at St. Thomas More. It all started in February, 2003, when a steering committee of parents was organized to see if a middle school youth group of 6th, 7th, and 8th graders was needed in our parish. After many prayers, several meetings and presentations to the Church Pastoral Council, we were given the OK to start this group.

It was exciting to have 35 middle school youth attend our first meeting! This meeting emphasized the fact that the youth group belonged to the kids and that the parents, as Youth Ministers, were here only to assist them and run the program as directed by them. One of the first decisions made was to have a distinctive name and logo. They selected P.U.S.H. along with a design for our T-shirts and a logo.

Our first year saw an average attendance of 35 youth at each meeting. In October, 2003 we held a car wash which raised nearly \$600! Christmas presents for the children at the North County Solutions for Change family shelter were purchased with that money. In November we baked over 40 pies for Brother Benno’s and St. Francis’s Thanksgiving dinners. December found our energetic youth wrapping all the gifts they had purchased for the homeless children. The year 2003 was topped off with a Christmas party and gift exchange.



A good time was had by all at the Halloween Party!



Fr. Ken joins youth group for some Halloween fun.

Activities in 2004 included a trip to Petco Stadium for a Padres game, a bowling and laser tag night, a family beach party and a pool party. We ended our first year with a sneak preview for the incoming sixth graders and a Hawaiian luau pool party for the outgoing eighth graders. August of 2004 found this vibrant middle school youth group going full throttle to kick off their second year! The Halloween Party in October, complete with a DJ on hand, was attended by over 90 youth and 20 parent volunteers and was a huge success! All survived the Haunted Hall and saved plenty of energy for game booths and a costume contest. Fr. Ken made a special appearance, dressed as himself, and joined in the game playing and trip through the Haunted Hall!

P.U.S.H. meetings are held every second and fourth Monday, 7:00 to 8:30 p.m., during the months of August to June. Meetings begin with a game or icebreaker which gives the kids an opportunity to bond as friends. The meetings then find this group sharing their faith with a prayer and moving to the current topic of discussion. Typically, the youth break into small groups for discussion and return to the large group to discuss the topic. Games are always a hit at the end of meetings, along with covering calendar topics and the meetings end with a prayer, followed by a few snacks!

Kudos go out to the terrific parent committee, which is led by Ron and Louise Briseno as Youth Ministers and Kerry and Jack Kosmicki as Assistant Youth Ministers!

All middle school students from our parish and the community are invited to join us for *Faith, Friends and Fun!* For more information, please call Louise or Ron Briseno at (760) 758-4100 extension 153.

The Body of Christ is Alive and Well in Coastal North County! By Reverend Michael Ratajczak



Six Christian Pastors gather together on a monthly basis for prayer, support, and dialogue. We come together because we believe that a divided Christianity is a scandal, and that unity is Christ’s desire.

In these ecumenical efforts, we attempt to follow God’s Will just a bit more faithfully in our little corner of the world.

Committed to this ecumenical effort are: **Rev. Cindy Arntson**, Pastor of North Coast United Methodist Church, Oceanside; **Rev. Lynn Austin**, Pastor of United Methodist Church of Vista; **Rev. Karin Boye**, Associate Pastor of San Marcos Lutheran Church; **Rev. Mark Knutson**, Pastor of San Marcos Lutheran Church; **Rev. Lewis Leon**, Pastor of First Presbyterian Church, Oceanside; and, **Rev. Michael Ratajczak**, Pastor of the Church of St. Thomas More Catholic Church, Oceanside.

One of our upcoming community projects is the **Annual Celebration for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity**. The theme this year is, **“All things are yours...you belong to Christ...and Christ, the unique foundation, belongs to God.”** (1 Corinthians 3:1-23)

The Prayer Service will take place on **Sunday, January 23, at 4 p.m. at the United Methodist Church of Vista, 490 South Melrose Drive, Vista, California.**

A number of area Christian Churches will be participating. You are encouraged to mark your calendars and plan to attend. Watch local newspapers for more details as the day approaches. Let us, as brothers and sisters in Christ, pray, work, and socialize together. Let us end the scandal of division. Let us joyfully live God’s Will of harmony and unity among all God’s people!

“Jesus Brings Us Hope!” Mahalo! “Jesus followed God’s word!” Mahalo! “Jesus gives us courage!” Mahalo! “Jesus saves us!” Mahalo! “Jesus gives us a reason to celebrate!” Mahalo!

If you were at St. Thomas More in mid July you would have heard these verses shouted with excitement from the students at Lava Lava Island Summer Bible Camp.

Mahalo is Hawaiian for ‘Thank You’ and was the response the children gave if they heard one of the above verses. What a wonderful way to respond to the many gifts that Jesus has given us! Now, try to imagine the upper level of the Parish Center, completely transformed into a jungle with palm trees, monkeys, vines, coconuts a volcano and LOTS OF GREAT MUSIC!



Outdoor fun during Lava Lava Island Summer Bible Camp.

“The children have a growing sense of awareness of the goodness of God,” said Kathleen Bell. There is also a growing awareness of the greatness of the summer bible program at St. Thomas More. Five years ago when summer bible camps first began at our church, there were 20 students enrolled. This year and last year the programs have been filled to capacity with 150 students and a waiting list! There are Junior Crew Leaders, Crew Leaders and Station Leaders. With all of the volunteers and the students, there are 200 people strong working to make this program successful for all involved.

As a parent, one of the most precious things you can see in your life is the faces of your children singing the Praises of God. This camp’s exceptional music and the voices of the children and leaders rang through the church. Together with their leaders the children were ‘jumping up and down and spinning right around and praising His name forever’, they were ‘thankful and amazed that in His image we were made’, ‘every move they made they made in Him, every breath they took they took in Him’ and as ‘grace flowed down it covered them’. These are just samples of the beautiful and faith inspiring lyrics that the children learned during the week.



Music rings out at Lava Lava Island!

There are so many activities that parents can choose for their children during the summer months. This is one that should not be missed. There are many people to thank: all the volunteers who helped set up and tear down the ‘island’, all the junior crew and station leaders, the people who planned and carried out all the outdoor activities, the individuals who took care of the daily snacks, the people who made the music come alive, but mostly to the parents that made this the most important thing to do for that week. Mahalo!!!

For more information on the Religious Education Program at St. Thomas More, please contact Kathleen Bell at (760) 758-4100 ext 110.

The Sound of Music By Denny DiPaolo

“Let every instrument be tuned for praise!” sang the assembly on August 1, 2004, at 3:00 p.m. at the beginning of the liturgy of the blessing of our new organ. Of course, the main instruments that should always be tuned for praise are our human voices. These are the instruments God has fashioned and are the only instruments alone that can offer sincere praise. In order to help us offer our praise and thanks, we employ the use of other instruments and chief among them is the organ. Our parish has been privileged to be the proud recipient of a brand-new Allen Renaissance R340 organ.

The organ is the gift from our parishioner, Mr. Jim Kilian, who contributed the full purchase price in loving memory of his late wife, Joe Ann. The St. Thomas More parish community is deeply grateful for Jim’s tremendous generosity. This magnificent contribution is one that will serve our parish for decades to come. An engraved plaque, acknowledging Jim’s great donation, is affixed to the side of the organ console.

Our Pastor, Fr. Michael Ratajczak, presided at the blessing of the organ. Additionally, our very talented and dedicated adult choir added to the beauty of the day. As is the custom at the blessing of a new organ, a dedicatory concert was performed as part of the day’s events. Internationally renowned organist, Tom Hazleton, delighted the crowd of some 350 very enthusiastic participants who all spoke very highly of the experience. Tom performed organ compositions mostly by English composers, since St. Thomas More himself was English. The only exception to the all-English program was the famous J. S. Bach *Tocatta and Fugue in D Minor*. The organ itself is a three-manual, 53-stop, state-of-the-art instrument.



Tom Hazleton prepares to play during the organ dedicatory concert.

Christmas Angels Spread Holiday Cheer!

By Alan and Theresa Heim and Chris Smith

Santa Claus plays a mystical role in many children's Christmas dreams. Images of a jolly old man, whose belly shakes like a bowl full of jelly, bring smiles to faces of both young and old. However, many families in our local area struggle to bring *Santa* to life every year. Of course, as a Christian Faith Community, we realize that "*Jesus is the Reason for the Season.*" We, then, do as Jesus would want us to do!

Thanks to the St. Thomas More family and its Christmas Angel Ministry, nearly 500 children in North County San Diego woke up on Christmas morning, 2003, to stockings brimming with goodies! Through our dedicated efforts, we were able to deliver more than 2,450 toys, gifts and gift certificates to help local families in need. That's enough to fill 10 minivans!!!



STM volunteers prepare the tree for 2004 season!

Our beautiful tree is in the upper level courtyard after all Masses from November 20 through December 26, 2004. The tree is adorned each year with ornaments in the shape of stars, snowflakes, crowns and stockings. Each ornament has a specific type of gift request for specific ages and needs of children from birth to 17 yrs. old! Gifts are then purchased by parishioners and returned by the date specified on the specific tag. Birth Choice gifts, which are purchased specifically for infants, are traditionally returned on the weekend of the Epiphany (the first weekend in January, 2005.) We are most grateful for the incredible generosity of our Parish, as we help spread the true spirit of Christmas to as many children as possible!



Parishioners are busy selecting ornaments!

Our Parish has grown steadily over the years and so have the number of gifts that we collect for those in need. In 1997 we were collecting several hundred gifts for distribution to approximately 100 children. As the numbers above indicate, we have well exceeded that number and will certainly continue to step up to meet the ever increasing need to help children in our area!

Once again, we will collect toys, clothing, books, sports equipment and gift certificates for children. Through Catholic Charities, Casa de Amparo, Toys for Tots, N.C.S.C. (Homeless Shelter for women and children) and Birth Choice of San Marcos, our charitable donations will once again be distributed throughout the North County.

It takes a great deal of work to make all this happen! Our terrific team of volunteers helps collect, package, deliver and distribute thousands of gifts each year. The parishioners who participate in this ministry are blessed with the true spirit of Christmas giving. Their gifts of time, talent and treasure are reminiscent of the gifts the three Kings brought to our Lord more than 2,000 years ago.

If you are interested in helping with this ministry, please call Alan or Theresa Heim at (760) 727-8881.

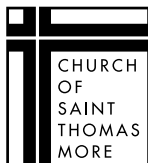
YEAR-END PLANNING — GOT DEDUCTIONS?

As the end of the year 2004 approaches, and as you review your financial situation in preparation for your IRS returns, there may be an opportunity for greater charitable giving before the end of this year.

If so, please remember the Building Fund at the Church of St. Thomas More.

Your gifts are greatly needed and would be deeply appreciated.

Thank you!



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

The Tower is published semi-annually
by the: Church of St. Thomas More
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