



ST. THOMAS ANNOUNCEMENTS

December 5, 2021

1. **Synod 2021 – 2023.** Pope Francis has asked us to be a people of “synodality” for the next two years beginning with Advent. Synodality is described as a journeying together, a time to listen to one another and to the Holy Spirit. The Holy Father said there are three words that characterize the synod: **encounter**, to draw near and be fully present to one another; **listen**, to hear one another; **discern**, let the Holy Spirit guide us. He wants everyone to listen to the Holy Spirit and each other to build a better relationship with the Lord. His goal is that we encounter one another, we listen to the heart, and we understand how the Spirit is asking us to move forward.
2. Regular attendance at Mass is what fulfills God’s commandment to “Keep holy the Sabbath Day”. The real presence of God is not in the TV but in the Eucharist in the Mass in the Church. Receiving a Certificate for Baptism, First Communion and Confirmation never make you a Catholic. Be a true follower of Jesus, and keep Him in your heart and in your life every weekend in the Mass. Our church is not infected with Corona Virus so please do not be afraid.
3. Splendor of Our Faith with Fr. Blake Britton Session 5: Medieval Age (Humanities/Art) will be at Church of Resurrection, Lakeland December 14, 2021 6:30 p.m. - 7:30 p.m. Livestream for sessions at St. Joseph and St. Anthony is on their website, and the Church of the Resurrection is on YouTube. Fr. Blake has written a book, *Reclaiming Vatican II, What It (Really) Said, What It Means, and How It Calls Us to Renew the Church*. Information on purchasing the book can be found by clicking on the following link:
<https://books.wordonfire.org/reclaimingvaticanii>.

4. Pope Francis has declared this as the year of St. Joseph, entrusting all of us to his protection. Responding to his call we have a devotion to St. Joseph every Wednesday at 6:00 pm. It begins outside at the statue and ends in the church with benediction. See pages 4 & 5 for more details.
5. To subscribe to Bishop John Noonan's E-Scroll with news from the Diocese of Orlando <https://www.orlandodiocese.org/e-scroll/>. You only have to provide your name and email address.
6. Bishop Robert Barron, an author, speaker, theologian and founder of Word on Fire, a global media ministry, is producing a new Bible series. Volume I focuses on the Gospels and can be ordered at <https://wordonfire.org/bible>. Volume II, Acts, Letters, and Revelation is to be released in 2022. There will be a total of seven volumes. If you would like to subscribe to Bishop Barron's newsletter, go to <https://wordonfire.org/#newsletter> and just provide your email address.
7. Thank you to all who made donations to the Social Hall improvement project. Any money collected over the amount needed for the roof will be used for Phase II, the renovation of the interior of the hall beginning with the kitchen. The lights in the kitchen have been upgraded to LED lights, and the lights in the hall have now been upgraded with new chandeliers and LED lights.

Catholic Trivia

St. Nicholas Day, *Dzien Świętego Mikołaja*, falls on December 6th and starts off the Christmas holidays in Poland. This holiday honors St. Nicholas, a saintly, dignified figure. St. Nicholas was the 4th-century Bishop of Myra in Lycia, what is now a province of Turkey. He had a reputation for secret gift-giving and is associated in some countries with Santa Claus.

In Poland, St. Nicholas comes as a bishop in bright vestments, carrying a golden crozier that resembles a shepherd's crook, symbolizing—like shepherds with sheep—that the religious tend their flock of people. Descending from heaven with an angel helper, St. Nicholas travels on foot, on horseback, or in a sleigh pulled by a white horse as he visits homes in the countryside.

In the weeks leading up to December 6th, children are on their best behavior and talk quietly among themselves about him coming soon. If St. Nicholas comes in person, he rebukes or praises as appropriate, before handing out holy pictures and fruit such as red apples or oranges. Polish children will be tested on their catechism and rewarded with pierniczki or honey-spice cookies in the shape of St. Nicholas. If he does not come in person, the small treats are found on the window ledge left by the saint. If the children have behaved badly, they find ashes on the ledge.

St. Nicholas acts in his traditional religious role as a protector and patron saint while encouraging Polish children to be well-behaved, as there are switches for naughty children.

On Christmas Eve gifts are brought by an angel and left under the Christmas tree, and children eagerly await the end of Wigilia, Christmas Eve dinner, for then they can unwrap their presents before going to midnight mass.



Declaration of Year of St. Joseph 2020-2021

On December 8, 2020, the Church commemorated the 150th anniversary of the decree by Pope Pius IX in 1870 declaring St. Joseph, Patron of the Universal Church. To observe this anniversary and to highlight the importance of devotion to the intercession of St. Joseph, I would like to begin with the Solemnity of St. Joseph, Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary (March 19th) to dedicate a special day and time for devotion to St. Joseph in our parish. The blessing of the new statue of St. Joseph will be after Mass on Friday the 19th.

In the Liturgy of the Church, Wednesday was always a day dedicated to St. Joseph. Votive Masses were composed in honor of him. His name is mentioned in all Eucharistic Prayers. But somehow, he still is a forgotten Saint. In our church beginning March 24th we will have every Wednesday at 6PM devotion to St. Joseph at the statue.

With the encouragement of many, I wish to invite all our parishioners to open their minds and hearts to increased devotion to St. Joseph and to implore his intercession during this challenging and uncertain time. I offer you this invitation for the following reasons.

1. We need the example and witness of St. Joseph now more than ever, for St. Joseph, the just man, was chosen by God to be the foster father of Jesus, the Incarnate Son of God. The Church everywhere is in need of the protection of our heavenly patron.
2. Joseph espoused himself to the Blessed Virgin Mary. Joseph the faithful and chaste husband is a marvelous example for all husbands and fathers and as such can help the men of our parish embrace this vocation with renewed fervor and dedication.
3. Joseph stands out as an exemplary example and model for priests. As in all times, priests of the Church today need a powerful intercessor, like St. Joseph, to remain steadfast in their pastoral duties as shepherds and teachers.

4. Joseph was a true family man, who worked hard to safeguard the Holy Family from danger and to provide for Jesus and Mary's needs, in spite of the poverty they experienced. Family life is under such attack. We can unite ourselves more closely under the mantle of Mary and her most chaste spouse, St. Joseph to strengthen family life through the sacrament of marriage.
5. The sabbath was important to the Holy Family. Joseph would have been instrumental in imparting the traditions of the Jewish faith to the child, Jesus. We can look to St. Joseph and the example he gave in this regard to help us reclaim the Christian sabbath, Sunday, as the Day of the Lord.
6. Joseph was a just man. He can be a great example to inspire all of us to live lives of reclaimed purity and innocence.
7. In this time of uncertainty, we all need more father figures, especially in the spiritual realm. Joseph did not shrink away from his responsibilities as foster father and husband but accepted them with trust and courage. We all need such father like men in our lives, both naturally and spiritually to lead us through these dark and anxious times.

These are among the most important of my reasons for inviting us to reflect, pray for the intercession of and call upon St. Joseph in this Parish during this special Year dedicated to him.

St. Joseph, pray for us

Year of St. Joseph

Pope Francis announced a Year of St. Joseph in honor of the 150th anniversary of the saint's proclamation as patron of the Universal Church by Pope Pius IX on Dec. 8, 1870. The year of St Joseph begins Dec. 8, 2020, and concludes on Dec.8, 2021.

Pope Francis had established a Year of St. Joseph so that "every member of the faithful, following his example, may strengthen their life of faith daily in the complete fulfillment of God's will."

The pope explained in the letter, entitled *Patris corde* ("With a father's heart") that he wanted to share some "personal reflections" on the spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

"My desire to do so increased during these months of pandemic, noting that many people had made hidden sacrifices during the crisis in order to protect others. Each of us can discover in Joseph - the man who goes unnoticed, a daily, discreet and hidden presence - an intercessor, a support and a guide in times of trouble. St. Joseph reminds us that those who appear hidden or in the shadows can play an incomparable role in the history of salvation. In his relationship to Jesus, Joseph was the earthly shadow of the heavenly Father: he watched over him and protected him, never leaving him to go his own way. Our world today needs fathers. Contemporary world required examples of true fatherhood."

The Apostolic Penitentiary said that, "to reaffirm the universality of St. Joseph's patronage in the Church," it would grant a plenary indulgence to Catholics in honor of St. Joseph, especially on

- March 19, the saint's solemnity,
- May 1, the Feast of St. Joseph the Worker
- Feast of the Holy Family on Dec. 29
- 19th of each month and
- every Wednesday, a day dedicated to the Saint in the Latin tradition.

The decree said: "In the current context of health emergency, the gift of the plenary indulgence is particularly extended to the elderly, the sick, the dying and all those who for legitimate reasons are unable to leave the house, who, with a soul detached from any sin and with the intention of fulfilling, as soon as possible, the three usual conditions, in their own home or where the impediment keeps them, recite an act of piety in honor of St. Joseph, comfort of the sick and patron of a happy death, offering with trust in God the pains and discomforts of their life."

The three conditions for receiving a plenary indulgence are sacramental confession, the reception of Holy Communion and prayer for the pope's intentions.