

Father Eugene Grytner, SDS
Office hrs Mon-Fri 9 am to 12 pm
1305 E. Mann Road Bartow, FL 33830

MASSES

**Daily at 8:30 am - No Mass on
Wednesday and Saturday morning.**

Saturday: Vigil Bartow: 5:00 pm

Sunday: Ft. Meade 8:00 am

Sunday: Bartow 10:30 am

Sacraments

Confessions: Half hour prior to masses.

Marriage preparation: Arrangements must be
made four months in advance.

Baptism: Last Sunday of the month.
Call Evelyn Rivera 863-370-4000
evecoult@aol.com

Sick calls – Anytime
Communion for Sick and Home Bound
Call the Church Office

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament - Every
Sunday 1:30 pm to 2:30 pm
Monday 8:30 am to 10:30 am

Religious Education Administrator
Jessica Whitmer 863-602-3837

Religious Formation – Every Sunday
Sept thru May

Preschool thru 8th - Sun 9 am to 10:15 am

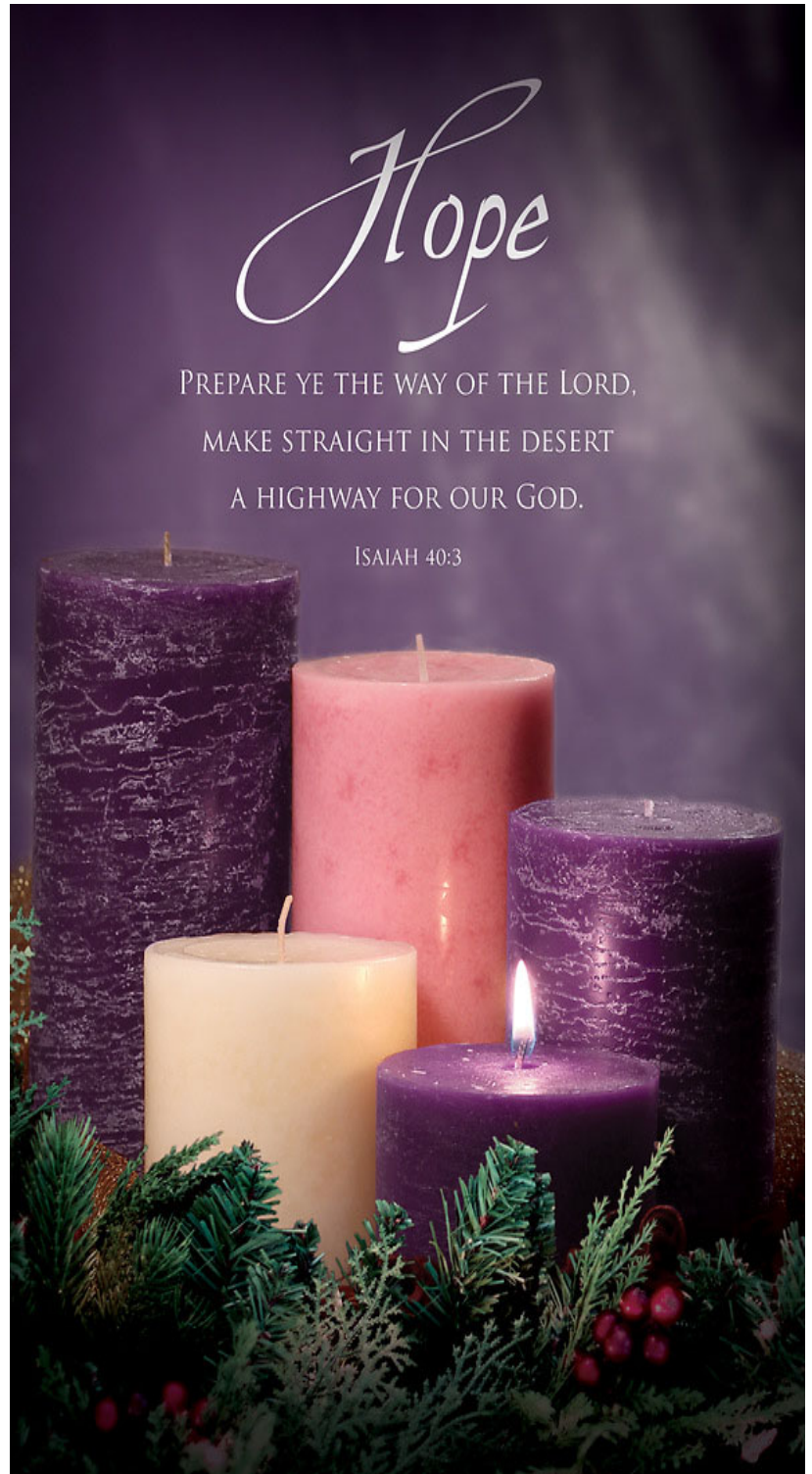
High School Sunday 9:00 to 10:15 am
(1st and 3rd Sunday of the month.)

Email: gloria121@verizon.net
Phone 863-533-8578
Fax 863- 533-5090
www.stthomasbartow.org

NEW PARISHIONERS WELCOME!
Registration forms in church or office

Remember St. Thomas Church in your will

Saint Thomas Aquinas Catholic Church
2180 S. Kissingen Ave. Bartow FL, 33830
Diocese of Orlando



1st Sunday of Advent December 3, 2023



Mass Intentions

Sat Dec 2	5:00 pm	
Sun Dec 3	8:00 am	For All Parishioners
Sun Dec 3	10:30 am	+Guadalupe Blanco By Maria & Rick Davila
Mon Dec 4	8:30 am	Donald Nooe By Sara Long
Tue Dec 5	8:30 am	Christina Kjerrumgaard By Yvonne & Bill Kjerrumgaard
Thu Dec 7	8:30 am	All Souls in Purgatory
Fri Dec 8	8:30 am	Special Intention
Fri Dec 8	7:00 pm	
Sat Dec 9	5:00 pm	
Sun Dec 10	8:00 am	For All Parishioners
Sun Dec 10	10:30 am	+Charlotte Daubert By Sharon Mason

Please Pray For.....

Stuart Andrews, Terry Ayres, Kristin Bing, Pete Byrne, Melvin Casey, Alan English, Rachel Gohlman, Delores Hart, Austin Heath, Zachary Heath, Ivette Hernandez, Jennifer Hoffer, Mark Jansen, Missy Jansen, Mark Jones, Gail Kautz, Bill Kjerrumgaard, Sara Long, Aaron Mills, Adam Mills, Zachary Mills, Scott Mize, Lacey Pate, , George Pizano, Karlee Severns, Richie Southwell, Gloria Stenger, Murphy Stidham, Debi Tuck, Laura Webb

Please pray for our deceased diocesan priests:

Dec 2, 2015 Msgr. Vidal Arboleda
Dec 5, 2008 Rev. Stephen Phillips
Dec 13, 1971 Msgr. William Mullally
Dec 21, 1997 Rev. William O'Farrell
Dec 22, 1981 Rev. Vincent Smith
Dec 22, 2010 Rev. Gerard Granahan

HOLY DAY OF OBLIGATION

The Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Patronal Feast Day of the United States of America is **December 8th**. This is a Holy Day of Obligation. Masses will take place at 8:30 am and 7:00 pm.

LECTORS	SME
12/2-5:00 pm	
Barbara Van Orsdale Toni Hoffer	Doug Van Orsdale Toni Hoffer
12/3-10:30 am	
Carrie Brown Maureen Leckie	Maria Davila Kay La Clair
12/8-8:30 am	
Martha Laurent Ann Slocum	
12/8-7:00 pm	
Maureen Leckie Pat Lowery	
12/9-5:00 pm	
Mike DeNeve Ann Spencer	Kathleen Morris Susan DeNeve
12/10-10:30 am	
Sara Long Confirmandi	Maureen Leckie Theresa Cherry

Saint Thomas Collection

11/19	Regular	\$2246.00
	Maintenance	15.00
	All Souls	5.00
	Diocesan	797.00

Saint Elizabeth Collection

11/19	Regular	513.00
	Diocesan	73.00

Next week's second collection is for the Retirement Fund for the Religious.

CHRISTMAS FLOWERS

If you would like to make a donation towards Christmas Flowers for the Church, please include your donations in the second collection.

COME TO PRAY

December 7 First Thursday of the Month is dedicated to pray for new vocations to the priesthood and the religious life, and the sanctity of life for those already called.

For Catholics, the Advent season — the beginning of the liturgical year — starts the first weekend of December and lasts until Christmas. The season of Advent is traditionally seen as "a mini-Lent," an occasion for prayer, fasting and almsgiving. All this is in stark contrast, though, with the traditional pressure to perform in these critical last months of the year.

THE FIRST GUIDE FOR ADVENT: ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST

Silence bespeaks expediency, complicity, and cowardice, and John the Baptist never kept silent, for even in the womb he announced the truth of Christ.

Few characters in the Bible, indeed in all of literature, are more intriguing than John the Baptist. From his mother's womb to his beheading, John embodied a commitment to the truth and to conversion, making him the greatest of all the prophets, as he prepared the way for God's Son by his constant calls to repentance. Although John served as a bridge between the two testaments, he was no fence-sitter and thus bravely jumped into the world of the new covenant which would eventually be sealed in Christ's Blood.

In recent years, we have heard the words "prophet" and "prophetic" bandied about quite a bit in certain ecclesiastical circles, all too often to describe those who rebel against lawful Church authority. The true prophet, however, does not stand against the Church but against a culture which has lost its identification with a divine perspective on reality. The classical prophet was not a forerunner of Madame Zelda on the boardwalk, nor a hostage to the left wing of the Democratic Party. *John the Baptist, then, was a man so sensitive to God's will and Law that he stood head and shoulders over the mass of humanity in his courage and conviction. He proclaimed his message (which was really God's message) to great and small alike, so that prostitutes heard and accepted his invitation to reform their lives while the mighty Herod, at the instigation of Salome, lopped off his head for daring to challenge his immorality.*

It is easy to condemn "social sin" and "the sinful structures of society"; it is much harder to see sin and to name it in individual persons. To rage against multi-national corporations doesn't take much courage; for a bishop to warn a governor that he risks going to Hell for his part in the killing of unborn babies, ah, then one finds a worthy successor of John the Baptist. Silence bespeaks expediency, complicity, and cowardice, and *John the Baptist never kept silent, for even in the womb he announced the truth of Christ (cf. Lk 1:44). He was bold and even brash when confronting the hypocrisy of the Pharisees ("You brood of vipers" [Lk 3:7]), like a churchman today who reminds people that they cannot take refuge in Sunday*

Mass attendance while remaining attached to sins of materialism, fornication, artificial contraception, and the like. Genuine prophets lash out against false religious security out of a love for the truth, but also out of a love for the individual who has allowed himself to become anesthetized by a false brand of religion. Granted, John the Baptist wasn't the type of fellow to be invited as religious window-dressing at a fashionable cocktail party. But he wasn't interested in making people enjoy transient parties; he was intent on preparing people for the eternal banquet of the Kingdom.

Two strange sayings in connection with John the Baptist are attributed to Our Lord in the Gospels. The first asserts that "the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent are taking it by force" (Mt 11:12). What could Jesus have meant? Exegetes and preachers have offered some ingenious interpretations over the centuries, but the one which has the most appeal for me is the suggestion that one must be passionate about God's reign over humanity — *the lukewarm and the disinterested, objective third parties do not inherit the Kingdom — only those committed enough to make of it a life-or-death matter. There is no free ride to the Kingdom; Bonhoeffer referred to "the cost of discipleship." If it cost John the Baptist his head, can we expect to get off scot-free?* Unrealistic at best, presumptuous at worst. But in our day and age, passion for religion is labeled fanaticism, rigidity, and psychosis — including by ecclesiastical leaders who are apparently embarrassed by those who hold lesser places in the Church, but with greater conviction. Well, maybe that's a problem of the age. At any rate, *passion for religion or commitment to the truth are just alternative expressions for the love of God. And if God is real, then He's not only worth living for; He's also worth dying for. So, yes, the violent like John the Baptist enter the Kingdom.*

(To be continued)



\$25 Walmart gift cards will be collected again this year to help needy children for Christmas. Please call the office to request assistance or if you know a family who might need assistance.