

## Time for Change in Your Life?

At Christmas the Church is blessed with a return of many brothers and sisters who have not yet found the time to make attendance a regular event in their lives. It is also a time for each of us to ask ourselves if we have dedicated ourselves to God in a way that is a proper response to the love demonstrated in Jesus Christ. Putting off our response is easy but it is already later than we may realize and our delay forfeits a chance to find real meaning and happiness in our lives.

### A Journey to Freedom and Joy:

God does not call us to drudgery and suffering. God calls us to freedom and joy as we find our true nature by following His precepts. We can dedicate ourselves to the secular culture that calls us to work more, spend more, owe more, to look out for number one and to blame others, or we can respond to God's loving nudge and open ourselves to what we are called to be and to how we are to live our lives in God's will.

This does not happen overnight and it does not happen if we are left alone. The Church is not an institution situating itself to control the lives of people. It is the human response to God's initiative that is found in Jesus Christ. Jesus initiated the Kingdom of God on earth. It is an imperfect Kingdom that will not come to its fullness until Christ Himself returns, but is meanwhile found in the very human response that is the Church. Here we find the Kingdom of God in God's people, the people that are proclaimed to be Holy, priestly, and prophetic and who make up the Body of Christ on Earth.

### Who We Are:

When we gather as the body of believers, we become the Body of Christ because we bring His Word to the world and strive to carry out His mission to those in need. Here at St. Thomas More we proclaim His Word that is Jesus Christ at each Mass. At the Mass we hear the Word of God and celebrate the Eucharist that brings us into communion with the real presence of Christ Jesus.

In our ministry we proclaim the Good News to the poor, be they poor in spirit or poor in material goods. We visit those who mourn, minister to the homebound, we feed the poor, offer companionship to the lonely, help the sick to heal, give sight to those who have lost the vision of hope, hold forth the value of life, and proclaim God's salvation in Jesus Christ our Lord.

### Our Leadership:

In the Gospels we witness Jesus giving the task of carrying out His mission to His disciples, calling them to baptize in His name and to proclaim the Gospel to the entire world. He empowers them to forgive sins and to Peter He gave the role of leader, to be the head of His flock during His absence. Upon that rock He built His Church.

From the time of the apostles new leaders have been trained and they have been given the same authority by the laying on of hands. We see this in the letters of Paul who brings

Timothy in to be an apostle and we find this throughout our history. Today the bishops of the Church trace their authority by that laying on of hands back to the original apostles and they are the modern apostles, carrying out the will of our Lord in their ministry. The world is divided into territories called dioceses and each is led by its own apostle, the bishop.

### The Pope:

Despite having denied Jesus three times, Jesus entrusted the leadership of the Church to Peter. Peter came to be the head of the flock in Rome and this became the center of the Church's authority as it was also the center of the world in his time. The center of the secular world has moved but the center of the Church remains in Rome. Those who follow Peter also inherit his "chair" of authority. Whoever is elected to be the Bishop of Rome takes on the authority of Peter as the leader or Pope of the Church. In taking the Chair of Peter he also leads and unites the bishops throughout the world.

### Your Parish:

Your local pastor is given authority to work within a certain territory or parish in the bishop's absence. The early bishops ministered to their entire flock but this became impossible as the Church grew larger than the bishops (modern apostles) could minister to personally. Pastors are authorized to act in the bishop's absence and pastoral associates are authorized to assist their pastor. Each priest traces his authority to the authority of the bishop of his diocese or order. The bishop holds the fullness of orders, that is, the bishop holds the fullness of the authority of an apostle.

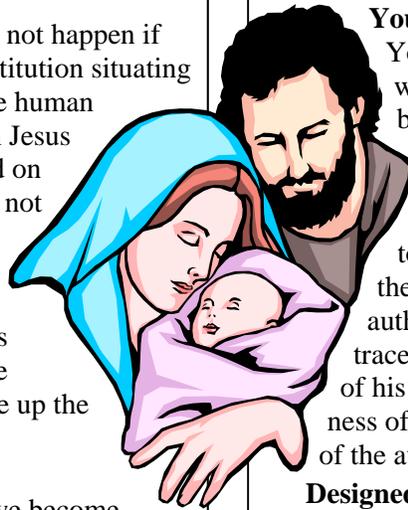
### Designed for You:

All of this is here to help you come to Christ and to help bring forth the gift of faith in your life. The Church is the people of God gathered in his name but the Magisterium or teaching authority of the Church is held by the apostles or bishops and their representatives. It is through this structure that God reaches out to you.

You will find that the laity is very active in the Church and particularly here at St. Thomas More. There are over 200 regular volunteers working to bring the Kingdom of God forth in this parish. When we gather together the priest and ministers are dedicated to bringing forth the reality of God's presence and the truth of His teachings. We are dedicated to teaching the young people of God's presence in their lives and of bringing that presence forth in people of all ages. With the help of all who gather here, we bring forth the Kingdom of God in our works to the community.

### A Decisive Time:

This can be a very important time for you if it is a time you use to make a change in your life and to turn towards God and embrace His call. It can be a very important time as well in the lives of your family and loved ones as they join you in this quest and witness God's Grace at work in your life.



### Your Invitation:

You are invited to join us in fully embracing the gift of faith. It is not always an easy journey but it is a journey of love and with great rewards. It is a journey that will make you many friends, enrich your life, enlighten your family, ease your burdens, and bring forth the joy of God's love in your heart and in your life. It is the greatest gift you will ever receive and it is waiting here for you to unwrap. Make this the beginning of a new joy in life. Make this a beginning of a new you and new hope for you, your friends, and your family. Inviting Catholics Home is a class designed for those who have been absent from the Church for a long time. Inquiry is a class that offers information on the Church the opportunity to ask questions without pressure. It can lead to the RCIA, a means to become Catholic or a full member of the Church. Your weekly attendance gives God the chance to reveal Himself to you through His Church and His presence in it.

We are open to all who have a heart for Jesus. All are welcome here for all are welcome to the Kingdom of God but there will be a judgment and at that time the witness to our faith will be the fruits of our life. God forgives all but God calls us to conversion and to accept Him in our hearts, in our minds, and in the way we live our lives. Now is the time to respond to this loving call from God who reaches out to us in Jesus Christ.



### You are Welcome:

You are welcome here. Please join us every week and look to become involved when and where you can. We are more with you amongst us. God bless you and from the entire parish, have a very Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

*Father Steven Foppiano*  
Pastor, St. Thomas More Parish



**Christian Calendars  
for 2008 are  
available in the vestibule,  
courtesy of Rose Chapel  
and Chapel of the Pines**

## Are You Registered?

In this Christmas bulletin we have included a registration form. We ask that you use this to register for the first time or to update any significant changes in your family, such as newborns or children no longer living at home. Registration helps us in many ways.



- It gives us demographic material so that we can plan for the future based on the numbers of the various age groups in the parish.
- It gives us the information required to respond to your need in a family crisis.
- It gives us the means for direct communication, including the issuance of an annual budget and income/expenses for the previous year.
- It allows us to set up an account (family number) for you so that you may receive an end of the year statement of donations for tax purposes.
- It enables you to have the option of receiving envelopes with your account preprinted on them for easy tracking of donations.

You will receive spiritual material at Lent, Easter, Advent and Christmas to help your family celebrate these special times.

Registration material is never given to sources outside of the Church. Registration material remains confidential and especially financial data is available to only a few chosen people in the Church, those who are directly responsible for recording and maintaining the data. It is never used to base service on donations. The donation information is strictly for tax purposes only. In the aggregate it is used to help us budget for the upcoming year. Our services are strictly based on need.

Please take the time to register your family. In addition to the registration forms available in the Christmas bulletin, there are always forms available in the vestibule. You may mail the registration form in or drop it in the collection basket or the basket by the forms in the vestibule.



**Visit our St. Thomas More  
Catholic Church website at  
<http://www.stmparadise.com>**

- \*Access to old bulletins
- \*Parish Schedule & Calendar
- \*Access to our strategic plan
- \*Fr. Steven's Blog at the Paradise Post, "Unveiling the Light."
- \*Writings by Fr. Steven
- \*Historical Information
- \*Parish photos

## Inviting Catholics Home



Those who feel out of touch with the Catholic Church are invited to a series of eight sessions that seek to re-familiarize you to our faith. The course is offered to those who are confused about practices and beliefs; or who are angry or hurt because of previous experiences with the Church.

If you feel disconnected with the faith community or find little meaning in traditional rituals, this course is for you. The eight sessions are conducted by the laity under the direction of Father Steven Foppiano in a non-threatening and relaxed environment. You will have the chance to express yourself and will not be pressured to return to the Church in any way.

We begin on January 17 and continue on Mondays through February 25, in the small conference room. You may attend at either 1pm or 7pm, as is most convenient for you.

Please contact Jean at 873-6958, or Cathy at 877- 3913 to reserve a place or for more information.

## Next Week: Mass of Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph

### Regular Schedule

5:00 pm Saturday (Vigil)

8:00 am Sunday

10:30 am Sunday

5:00 pm Sunday



On all holy days and days of obligation the Church reverts to the Jewish method of marking the days. By this tradition the day begins with sundown. Thus the 5:00 pm Saturday Mass is considered the Vigil and counts as a Sunday Mass. The 5:00 pm Mass on Sunday remains a Sunday Mass unless the following day is also a Holy Day of Obligation, such as Christmas when it fell on Monday this year.

## Weekly Scripture Study

Regular scripture study  
begins January 17th

Every Thursday Morning at 9:15 – 8:15

Every Thursday Evening at 7:00 – 8:15

In the large parish hall



Coffee and snacks served. These are not sequential classes. Each will be contained in itself and you can drop in any week without feeling lost or out of place. On the last week of the month Father Steven will answer any questions on scripture or the Church that may have come up during the classes. There is no fee. Feel comfortable to join us as we study and pray over the scripture of the upcoming mass each week. All ages welcome!

## Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA)



For those wishing to enter in full the Catholic Faith, the RCIA is the liturgical and catechetical process designed for adults attracted by Christ and his teaching. From the awareness of stirring of faith and curiosity within one's heart, it supports them as they seek to respond more deeply and to enter into the Communion of the Church:

...through all those stages of asking and seeking,  
...through involvement with Christian Catholic people,  
...through hearing the Gospel proclaimed and by faithful reflection and prayer on the Word of God,  
...through study and discussion about the Catholic experience,  
...through doubts and hesitations,  
...through involvement in charity and justice with those already committed to the Catholic way of life,  
...through discernment of God's call for us as individuals,  
...through the steps of commitment,  
...through the Sacraments of Initiation (Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist)

...To a life of faith, love, and justice lived in communion with Catholics throughout the world.



The following groups are associated with the Parish and use its facilities but are organized independent of it.

Saint Vincent de Paul  
Knights of Columbus  
Secular Franciscan Order  
The Marian Guild



Contact the office at 877-4501 for more information on these groups and their ministry or charism.

## Confessions are heard Saturday from 3:00 – 4:30 or by appointment



### Office Volunteers

We are always in need of volunteers with office skills and regular times to donate. Volunteers should be able to dedicate ½ a day per week, morning or afternoon, be discrete in handling office communications, be trainable at handling the phones and self-motivated. Those with specific talents may be given specific responsibilities to carry out each week. Contact Volunteer Coordinator, Pat Wallila, 877-4501.

## The ROCK Youth Ministry & Religious Education: We Are MORE!

*Everyone who listens to these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock. The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and buffeted the house. But it did not collapse; it had been set solidly on rock. And everyone who listens to these words of mine but does not act on them will be like a fool who built his house on sand. The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and buffeted the house. And it collapsed and was completely ruined (Matthew 7:24-27).*

In the spirit of building the strong foundation in Matthew's Gospel, Youth Ministry and Religious Education at St. Thomas More Parish is working towards a stronger parish-wide commitment to the religious education of young people and their families in our Catholic faith. This includes the training of young people and their families to share their faith with others, and providing young people and their families with ongoing opportunities to be challenged through service to others and discerning their vocation to appropriate parish ministry. While these are long-term goals that require the constant attention of an entire faith community, we can be confident that the ongoing programming of St. Thomas More certainly intends to move our young people and their families towards liturgy, catechism, the sacraments, and the active ministry of continuing the tradition for others. Here are some examples of the ongoing programming that occurs on campus at St. Thomas More parish – as well as some anticipated ministries that will begin in or around January 2008:

### Sundays

Children's Liturgy of the Word  
The ROCK Grades 9-12 & Mass

### Mondays

The ROCK Grades 7-12

### Tuesdays

Future RCIC and RCIT Sessions (Rite of Christian Initiation for Children/Teenagers)

### Wednesdays

Religious Education Grades K-8  
Future Confirmation Discernment Process

### Thursdays

The ROCK Grades 6-8

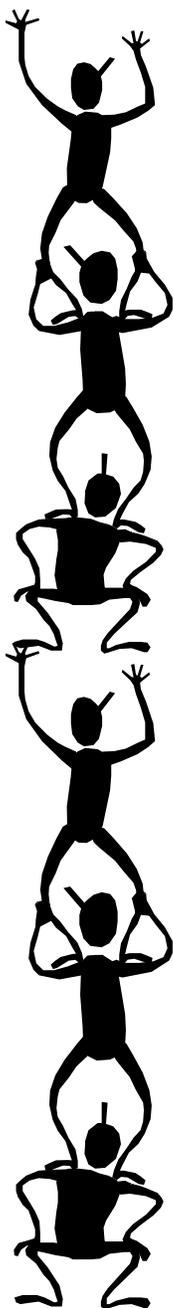
### Fridays/Saturdays

Developing ongoing opportunities for

- \*adult education
- \*family catechesis
- \*retreat experiences
- \*sacramental preparations
- \*leadership training
- \*special events
- \*community service
- \*parish & diocesan mission and vision

Other significant ministries for young people:

- \*leadership team(s)
- \*liturgy planning team
- \*retreat team



So as you can see – there are many things going on in Youth Ministry and Religious Education! Our focus is certainly the ongoing commitment to liturgy and catechesis – but there are many ways to do this – and we need all kinds of personalities from all over this parish! Consider getting involved in youth ministry and/or religious education at STM! Each young person and his/her family is called to youth ministry and religious education by their Baptism – God will keep calling – when will you answer? And who will you bring with you? Contact Colleen with questions or more information at 877-4501 or [colleen@stmparadise.com](mailto:colleen@stmparadise.com)

### Daily Mass

We celebrate weekday mass every morning, Monday through Friday beginning at 8:30am. Try this when you have a free morning! These masses are usually over within half an hour, have little or no music, a very short homily, and are very prayerful. It is a great way to make friends with God and your fellow parishioners.



### Religious Education and Youth Ministry Volunteers

Volunteers are often needed to assist with activities, teach Religious Education, and especially Children's Liturgy of the Word during 10:30 Mass! Volunteers will pass initial screening and get to receive valuable ministry training! This is a ministry to discern and pray over! Contact Colleen at 877-4554.

### Hot Lunch Fellowship Program

This social and food ministry provides a hot lunch for all who wish to gather on Wednesdays at 12:00. Donations are accepted but not required so that all can join together for fellowship at God's table. This is for the hungry, for the lonely, for those seeking community and for those just stopping in to chat with friends. Contact Al at 872-0460 to volunteer or simply stop by on Wednesday.





## Welcoming Committee

**Welcome!** Committee members help to make new members of the parish feel welcome, ensure that they receive the information they need and are aware of the ministries and activities available. This committee works off of new registration information. It is a very important part of our parish activities! Contact Priscilla at 876-1983.

## Mothers and Others

This group for women of all ages, mothers, others and their children, is for busy Catholic women who wish to share their spirituality and ministry. This group heads the Table of Plenty Food Program and other special projects for the parish. Contact Norma at 873-4913.



## Table of Plenty Ministry

This ministry of providing food works every Friday and some Thursdays to prepare groceries which are distributed to needy families. Contact Stephanie @ 877-1485



## Computer Classes

If you want to participate in our classes on computer operation, leave your name at the office and the classes will be scheduled as the number of students grows. These classes cover the basics of computer operation including internet access. If you would like to help teaching these classes, leave a message for John Pooler 877-4501.



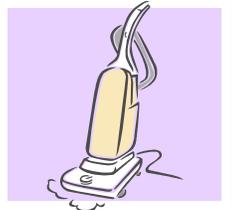
## Intercessory Prayer Group

Every Friday, after the 8:30 mass, a group of parishioners meet in the church conference room (Door is on the hall side of church.) to pray in intercession for the needs of individuals, the parish and the Church. All are welcome. Contact Mary at 876-8206.



## God's Cleaners

Every Friday morning after the 8:30 mass many parishioners meet to clean and organize the inside of the Church, including the pews, working under the leadership of the Ladies Guild. It is a great way to contribute your time and talent to the workings of the church. Both the inside of the church and the landscaping are largely maintained and kept beautiful by dedicated parishioners. For information call Jan at 872-2083.



## Breath of the Spirit Charismatic Prayer Group

Wednesdays at 7:00 pm in the small parish hall. Prayer and song filled with the Holy Spirit. All are welcome at this fun and holy group. Contact Keith at 872-8904 or Priscilla at 876-1983.



## Music Ministry

Do you have a talented voice — or even a trainable one? Know how to play an instrument? Our volunteer choirs can use you! Contact Music Coordinator Zooba at 624-1185 or 877-4501



## 50 and Over Singles Group

This social group for those 50 and over meets every Wednesday at our hot lunch meal and stay to play cards and socialize. Other activities are planned periodically. Contact Chris at 873-2935 or Priscilla at 876-1983.



## Prayerful Shawl Makers

In this beautiful special ministry, the ministers knit shawls for presentation to certain people while praying for that person. This then becomes a very special prayer shawl, made specifically for one person. Contact Norma at 873-4913.



## Ladies Guild

This ladies group is open to all practicing Catholic ladies. We meet for lunch monthly and do various ministries and fund raisers for the parish. Contact Pat at 876-9185.



## Rosary Makers

Spend your time praying while making rosaries to be blessed and sent all over the world. This group works together to make rosaries for various needs, including being made available for parishioners. Contact Loretta at 876-1484.



## God's Gardeners

"God's Gardeners" show love and commitment by keeping the church grounds as inviting and neat as we can. During the spring and summer beautiful flowers are planted and cared for. Shrubs to be trimmed Lawns are manicured. For everyone to appreciate the beauty God has afforded us. During the fall leaves are collected and special projects are always here to be done. Many hands are needed to keep up with the garden care. To be a part of "God's Gardeners" contact Greg at 228-6163.



## Ministries Available for Catholics who Attend Mass Weekly:

### Liturgy Board

For regularly practicing Catholics with some liturgy experience or willing to be trained, this group plans the major themes and liturgies for the parish, to bring out the meaning of the season celebrated or the special meaning of the Holy Day celebrated. Contact Nancy 873-9513.

### Parish Advisory Board

This Advisory Board has 12 members and works with the pastor to set the course of the parish, set future goals, evaluate performance and report on various components of parish life. New positions come up at the end of every year as three year terms are rotated out. Active and involved Catholics who are interested in serving on the Parish Advisory Board should contact Fr. Steven at 877-4501.

### Finance Advisory Board

The Finance Advisory Board works with the pastor to oversee parish finances received, comments on financial reports and makes suggestions for improvement. It approves the annual report and annual budget. This is a smaller board of 3-5 members with one membership usually coming up once per year. Contact Father Steven at 877-4501

### Counting Team

Counting Teams are rotated to count the weekly collection. Money is handled in a group setting and team members need to be reliable to maintain the integrity of the rotation system.

### Lectors (Minister of the Word)

A clear and steady voice and an appreciation for the Word of God can lead you to a ministry as a Lector. In this ministry members are scheduled to particular Sunday masses for either the first or second reading and announcements or prayers of the faithful. Training and evaluation is required. Contact Dorothy at 873-1759.

### Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion

Devotion to the mass and a clear and reverent understanding of the Eucharist can make you eligible for the ministry of helping the priest to distribute the Holy Body and Blood of Christ. Contact Barbara 877-3278.

### Ushers

Reverence for the mass and respect for all who enter our doors can lead you to this ministry of placing people in the pews, taking collections, and various preparatory tasks of Sunday Mass. Contact Mike at 877-7068.

### Greeters

Greeters are responsible to stay focused on the people entering the Church to make sure they feel welcome and are helped in any way possible. Contact Barbara at 877-3278.



### Plans for 2008 and 2009

On the coming year we will mount a campaign to raise the funds required to build the new Parish Community Center. Plans are now being drawn up by an architect who is both working off the material put together by our own Building Committee who put together our needs and is also himself visiting our various groups and watching how they work and how the new Parish Community Center can be designed to help them in their ministry.



### Listing of Giving Options

We account for various accounts in the Church separately to meet the wishes of donors.

#### Regular Account:

Used to meet the daily expenses of the parish including, supplies, fees, labor, taxes, books, training, supplies, regular maintenance, staffing, etc.



#### Catholic School Scholarship Fund

(endowment):  
Currently \$50,000 + designated for Oroville students. Others may add to it or start another scholarship. Only income is used. Applications are available in the summer.

#### Food Ministries:

##### Table of Plenty

Currently receives donations totaling over \$23,000 annually plus parishioner and corporate gifts of food.

##### Fellowship Hot Lunch

This is partially self-funded through weekly donations. Special donations make up its shortfall.

##### Holiday Baskets

Provides the resources needed to provide 160 full family meals for the needy of the Ridge.



#### New Community Center Fund:

Currently \$ 1.15 million + and growing.



#### Reach Out Account:

Used for those parishioners, especially long term members, for short term crisis needs.

#### Religious Education Fund (endowment):

Currently \$250,000 +. Anyone may add to this endowment which funds our catechetical efforts.

#### Building Repair and Maintenance

Exempt from diocesan assessment this is used for major upgrades and modernization.

#### Youth Ministry:

Used to finance team building activities and leadership training, as well as special events for young people.

