

Christmas 2022

My Dear Family of Saint Thomas the Apostle and Saint Bridget parishes,

I begin by taking this opportunity to wish all of you and your families a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. I pray that this time will be a blessing for each of you and an opportunity for your continued spiritual growth and development.

I have debated as to how I should begin this Christmas message. Should I begin with the more worrying numbers or should I begin with the positive movement that has taken place? Well, sometimes we need to filter through the coal in the stocking before we can arrive at the treats. It has been a little troublesome over this past year. Despite our best efforts, we have not been able to make substantial progress in the much-needed repairs of the Saint Bridget rectory which, as you may remember, was damaged by the storms of 2021. I have asked the assistance of others to help in finding a licensed contractor willing to take on this project. Despite their best efforts, as well, we still have found this to be a frustrating endeavor. It is my desire that after the project is complete, I will start spending a few nights each week at Saint Bridget. The second piece of coal relates to the Mass attendance numbers. For the first time in a few years, we had fewer families attending Sunday Mass in October. Some may attempt to explain this offering many legitimate reasons. Yet, I think the reasons will not suffice for this is a national trend. Christians are no longer practicing their faith, with regular Sunday worship, as did previous generations. Thankfully, we are not in a position, as in other parts of America, where Bishops, priests, and people are deciding which churches to close and which to merge.

As upsetting as the previous paragraph is for us, we have seen a more positive swing. Despite the sagging numbers, we have been slowly growing at Saint Thomas and, with the addition of the Traditional Latin Mass at Saint Bridget, we are seeing slow growth as well. Our various organizations and prayer groups are still active in fostering a communal love and appreciation for all. We are blessed by the presence of these groups and the good people involved in them. We could always use more assistance, and I encourage you to seriously consider how you can become more actively involved as a member of these groups. We have been blessed with outstanding adults who work tirelessly to mentor and educate our youth. The functions they have offered have been a bright spot for our children. We have moved closer to our monetary goal of 1 million dollars for a new parish home in Saraland. We are no longer in the neighborhood; rather we have entered the yard and are currently knocking on the door. However, due to these trying economic times, we are in the process of reworking a new design for our future location. Sadly,

a million dollars cannot buy what it once could just a few years ago. I will continue to keep you updated on our progress.

As I conclude, I would like to highlight one thing which cannot be measured. I have noticed, and you too may have as well, a deeper, richer spiritual movement occurring in our parishes. This is hard to explain, but one that I have witnessed growing this year. Our families seem more aware, more reverent, more dedicated to the miracle of our Catholic faith. Your desire for more, has driven me to pray and study harder than I did previously. Not that I or our deacons are lazy, but this movement is not based upon a popularity contest or a cult of personality. It is the work of the Holy Spirit and I humbly thank God for that. The focus, your focus, should always be on Him. As the saying goes, "He is the reason for the season" not Saucier, Bullock or Groves. I only pray that this movement finds a home in more hearts as we journey into 2023. Please be assured of my continued prayers for you and your families this coming new year. May God's blessings be upon you and remain with you forever.

