



ST. ISIDORE

CATHOLIC CHURCH



CATHOLIC SCHOOLS WEEK: Celebrating the *Gifts* and *Blessings* of Catholic Education

St. Isidore Catholic School is a special place that serves students from transitional kindergarten to eighth grade. It's a school where children are cared for, and where teachers and staff are family. Academics, excellence, service and the Catholic faith all work together to form our students.

Principal Susan Burky can't wait to take time to truly celebrate St. Isidore Catholic School during Catholic Schools Week, from Jan. 30 to Feb. 5. Mrs. Burky values Catholic education and all it can offer to our children.

"It teaches us what we are meant for and how we should live,"

she says. "This is so important during the pandemic. We know we are meant for more. We can be eternally with God in heaven. It teaches our students the meaning of life."

On Sunday, Jan. 30, the school will hold an open house following Mass, and all parishioners are invited. The highlights of the open house include the fifth- through eighth-grade science projects, the third-grade saint reports and the fourth-grade mission reports. The students all look forward to showcasing the projects they have worked hard to complete. The Student Council members will also be available after Mass with coffee, donuts and juice.

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MASS TIMES: Saturday: 8 a.m. *Bilingual* | 6 p.m. *Bilingual* / Sunday: 8 a.m. *Bilingual* | 10 a.m. *English* | 12 p.m. *Spanish*
Weekdays: Monday - Friday | 12 p.m. *Bilingual*

CONFESSION TIMES: Wednesday: 11 a.m. - 12 p.m. / Thursday - Saturday: 5 p.m. - 6 p.m.

ST. ISIDORE

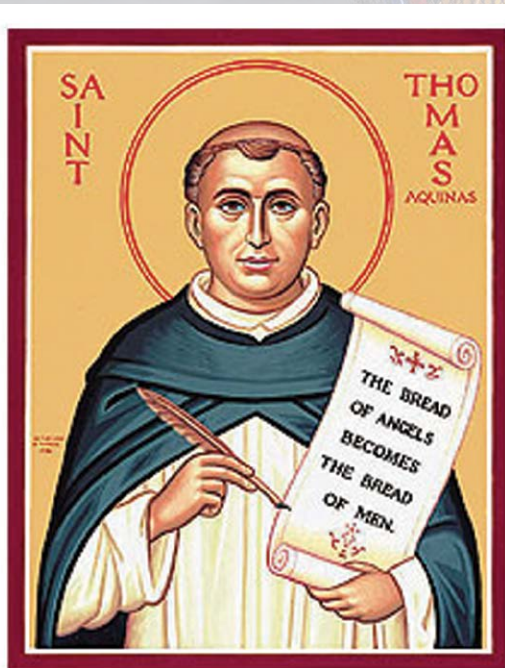
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THE GREAT CATHOLIC EDUCATOR: *ST. THOMAS AQUINAS*

Before Thomas Aquinas was even born, a holy hermit told his mother he was to be more learned and holy than any other person of his time. As a young boy, he was devoted to prayer and meditation, and his intellectual gifts were quickly recognized. When he was about 11 years old, he was sent to the University of Naples, and about five years later, he became a Dominican friar.

Thomas' parents were Italian nobility and were not enthusiastic about Thomas' choice of vocation. They went so far as to have his brothers capture him while he was en route to Rome, and they held him prisoner for two years in an effort to destroy his vocation and his virtue. After the family made one particularly heinous attempt at breaking Thomas' faith and spirit, he begged God to give him integrity of mind and body, and he was miraculously given the girde and grace of purity for the rest of his life. This gift almost certainly was essential to the remarkable clarity of his intellect.

After he regained his freedom, Thomas received the best education that was available during a time in human history that arguably represents the best the world has ever offered to scholars and philosophers. His greatest works



Thomas' greatest works arise from his total focus on knowing and understanding God, and revealing as clearly as possible the Truth of God to others. He showed that faith and reason are not in conflict, but exist in harmony.

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Thomas' *Summa Theologica* uses philosophical principles presented in scientific form to

systematically explain Christian theology. It was his last work and was left unfinished. Thomas stopped writing after he experienced an unusually long vision on Dec. 6, 1273. When he was urged to finish his *Summa*, he stated that he could no longer write, for the secrets he had been shown during his vision made all he had written "seem as straw." He died three months later.

Thomas composed more than 60 works. His powers of synthesis were truly extraordinary. He was able to sift through all that he read, distill the truth, and summarize his conclusions simply, clearly and briefly. His writing is of such genius that it transcends style and art in the beauty of its truth. His works are as relevant today as they were to the 13th century. His principles offer a remedy to such evils as socialism, communism, nihilism, as well as pantheism and spiritism.

Thomas was canonized in 1323, and was declared a Doctor of the Universal Church in 1567. In 1879, Leo XIII declared Thomas Aquinas "the prince and master of all scholastic doctors," and in 1880, Thomas was designated as patron of all Catholic universities, colleges and schools throughout the world. We celebrate St. Thomas Aquinas' feast day on Jan. 28.

A Letter From Our Pastor

START 2022 WITH A CLEAN SPIRITUAL SLATE

Dear Parishioners,

We were all taught in school that the month of January gets its name from Janus, the ancient Roman god of doors and gates. His image was always carved or painted with two faces, one looking forward and the other backward. This reflected, of course, that you can go either out a door or in through one. From this very specific function, his role was generalized to include all beginnings and new endeavors.

Because of Janus' place in the Roman pantheon, it seemed natural to the Romans to name the first month of the civil year after him. (The Church year began back with the First Sunday of Advent, you'll remember.) And although we no longer worship the pagan gods of the ancient Romans, the name has stuck down the centuries.

But we're not immune to the human instinct that moved the Romans to name the first month after Janus. His double countenance, facing forward and backward, reflects how we approach the coming of each new year.

The last week of the old year finds the newspapers and TV programs giving a glance back at the past year ("the 10 best, or worst, movies of..." and such) along with predictions of what the new year will bring. My personal favorite is always "the 10 worst predictions" for the year just ending.

Just like the secular world does — Janus-like — we both look back at our own successes and failures, happy events, and sad ones, during the year just ending, and forward to the new year as we prepare our resolutions.

When we reflect back on the blessings we've received, our hearts should be filled with gratitude — and



blessings there have been, no matter how difficult the year has been. But for most of us, there have been failures and failings, too. That calls for repentance, and perhaps a trip to the confessional — but God, who makes "all things new" (Rv 21:5), will then give us a clean spiritual slate with which we may begin the new year.

I'd also like to challenge you to include your grateful response to God as you make your resolutions for the new year.

You don't have to wait until you fill out a commitment card to decide this is the year when you're actually going to attend Mass once a week in addition to Sunday (or begin worshiping every Sunday if you haven't been doing so) or to pray the Rosary every week or to begin regular prayers with your family. Include in your resolutions how you are going to get involved in some ministry in the parish or some service to the community, and then do so. Decide to become more faithful in your financial stewardship if your treasure commitment is less than it should be. Look forward to the new year and bring Christ and His Church to the center of your resolutions. Then see what a good year it will be, with God at the center!

Have a happy, and holy, New Year.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rev. Avram Brown". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Rev. Avram Brown
Pastor



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MEET PARISHIONER LULU VACA-TORRES: *Blessed to Be Involved in the “Circle of Helping”*

Parishioner Lulu Vaca-Torres has a mission — to ensure that everyone is able to fully participate in the life of the parish. Lulu brings a unique set of gifts as well as her personal experience to all of her involvement at the parish and school.

“I’m a big advocate of language equality,” Lulu says. “I want everybody to be able to understand and participate in the community they live in.”

Lulu has been a parishioner for as long as she can remember. She and her husband, Fernando, were married at St. Isidore and raised their three daughters — Iliana, Sofia and Lucia — here. When Lulu was growing up, her parents worked on nearby farms and Lulu remembers that language was often a barrier for her family.

“My parents raised us Catholic and we came from a small town in Mexico where most of the community is Catholic,” Lulu says. “As a seasonal worker, you don’t feel part of the community as much, but being at the parish and volunteering, your faith becomes more and more embedded in your soul.”

As a teenager, Lulu remembers joining the choir at St. Isidore with her sister. Later, when Lulu had daughters of her own in the parish school, she began volunteering as part of her parent volunteer hours. Soon, however, Lulu saw specific needs and knew that she was the one who could make a change.



(From left) Sofia, Iliana, Lulu, Fernando and Lucia

“We saw the need to create the Spanish Parent Club so that we could have more participation from the Spanish-speaking community,” says Lulu.

It’s easy to spot a problem, but it takes a lot of dedication to be the person who offers a solution. Lulu realized that she couldn’t just wait for things to change when she had the ideas and the passion.

“If you don’t understand something or you want something to change, make the change,” she says.

Lulu has helped put on the Pan de Vida retreat for several years. She volunteers her time helping couples prepare for marriage through FOCUS. As an educator, Lulu has experience working with families, and she brings this passion for education to her

work with the parish. Her involvement, especially her work to bring the Spanish-speaking community into a closer relationship with the parish, has given her a deeper sense of belonging.

“Once you’re involved in that circle of helping, and have that connection with the priest, you start becoming more faithful, more aware,” Lulu says.

Lulu has found that being involved with the parish has helped her understand what resources the parish has and how those resources can be used to fill the gaps. The key is having willing and generous parishioners, like Lulu, who offer their gifts and passions to build up the whole parish family.

THE REGIONAL EMERGENCY SHELTER TEAM

Providing Essential Help for Those Experiencing Homelessness

About 13 years ago, Beverly Vignery joined her husband, Eldon, to deliver meals to those experiencing homelessness living or staying at the river bottoms, as part of a program at St. Andrew Presbyterian Church. It was there that she knew she needed to do something to help. Eldon and Beverly were instrumental in bringing this program, Regional Emergency Shelter Team, or REST, to St. Isidore about 12 years ago.

“If we are Catholic, we have to do this,” Beverly says. “It’s who we are. We have to help.”

From late November to March or April, about 12 churches across the city commit to at least a week of hosting those experiencing homelessness. The church provides the night meal and open space for them to sleep. REST provides the cots, sleeping bags, pillows, volunteers, transportation and insurance. St. Isidore commits to two weeks during the REST season.

“We’ve met so many of the people who have had maybe one unfortunate circumstance that forced them into homelessness,” Beverly says. “We love being involved and getting to know these folks. We’ve been very blessed in our lives. It’s truly a blessing to us to be able to give back.”

Guests are vetted and have to pass a drug test at Hands of Hope before they can stay at the REST church. Guests can be men, women or children. The limit is 30 people.

“The guests are so grateful to be warm and comfortable and to have a good hot meal,” Beverly says.

Eldon and Beverly want to assure parishioners that this is a very controlled situation in which to be part. REST is behavior-based and the guests leave long before school hours. Also, guests are not allowed to leave once in the care of REST.



REST members at our parish helped out pre-COVID.



This ministry was altered a bit in late 2020 and 2021 due to the pandemic. Cornerstone Churches housed everyone instead of guests moving each week. Area churches still provided the meals.

The generosity of parishioners in providing meals helps to make this ministry possible. Eldon and Beverly

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The 2022 dates for REST at St. Isidore are Feb 5-12 and March 12-19. Contact Eldon and Beverly to get involved at 530-218-2412 or evignery@stisidore-yubacity.org. Hands of Hope also collects travel-size toiletries.

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THE REGIONAL EMERGENCY SHELTER TEAM

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are so thankful for all the parishioners who are involved. It is never difficult to find families and groups at St. Isidore to make the meals. The couple is especially thankful for the young people who step up to help.

“Our parish is so wonderful and generous,” Beverly says.

Eldon and Beverly are so grateful to have the opportunity to serve those experiencing homelessness. They’ve become friends with many of the guests.

“You can’t help but feel compassion for them,” Beverly says. “Whatever you can give, they are very grateful.”

“It’s what Christ did,” Eldon says. “We are following in His footsteps. We are supposed to be Christ to everyone. We are to see Jesus in everyone.”

Beverly asks parishioners to consider ways they can serve those in need. Even though homelessness and poverty are daunting issues, we can each make a difference.

“We should be like Mother Teresa,” Beverly says. “We can’t always fix everything, but we can maybe help one person. I think that’s all we are called to do.”



REST volunteers provided help prior to the pandemic.

CATHOLIC SCHOOLS WEEK:

Celebrating the Gifts and Blessings of Catholic Education *continued from front cover*

Another highlight of the week is the spaghetti dinner on Wednesday evening — Mrs. Burky truly looks forward to this each year. It’s a way to celebrate parents and volunteers, while families can gather around a meal for fellowship. The teachers serve the meal to attendees. After the meal, students often go outside to play with their classmates.

On Friday, staff and teachers celebrate students with a fun activity day.

A number of other special events take place during the week. On Thursday, people living various vocations come present to students. The school also collects money and baby items for pregnancy resource clinic A Woman’s Friend.

The school and everyone associated with it are truly important to Mrs. Burky. She looks forward to celebrating the Catholic faith, Catholic education and all the joys that come with it during this very special week. In

these challenging times, she is glad that all members of our school community can embrace their faith.

“Our faith is greater than our fear,” she says. “God is at the forefront and He is always in control. Our faith gives us so much hope in the possibilities, and what a gift we have had with our intellect. We can adapt. We can do all of this another way.”

Please be sure to stop by the church basement after Sunday Mass on Jan. 30 for treats, and come take a tour of St. Isidore Catholic School.