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Sharing God's Blessings	
Date	Collection
May 4&5	\$1165
By May 4, CSA 2024, we raised \$2765 (56%) Thanks for your support	

**CCD Class, May 5th & 19th
 Children Mass will be on May 19th**

LITURGY SCHEDULE
SATURDAY: 5:00 p.m
SUNDAY 11:00 a.m
WEEKDAY: Tue, Wed, Thu at 5:00 p.m.
Friday at 8:00 a.m
Every 1st Saturday at 9:00 a.m
Holy Day of Obligation at 6:00 p.m
EUCCHARISTIC ADORATION:
Every Tuesday at 5:00 p.m prior to Mass
RECONCILIATION:
 •Any time 30 minutes before or after daily Mass, After Sunday Mass
Other days by appointment

Mass Intentions for the Week
Saturday May 11
For mary Bridge –Rq by Phil + Theresa

SUNDAY MAY 12
 FOR PARISHIONERS OF ST. THOMAS

Tue May 14— For Joe Boise
Rq by Phil + Theresa
 Wednesday May 15– For Jacob & Andrew Minnich
 Thursday May 16–
 For the Benefactors of our parish

Fri May 17—For Kathy Zink
Rq by Phil + Theresa

Greetings on this Feast of the Ascension
Dear brothers and sisters,
 Today in our Diocese of Wheeling - Charleston, we join the universal Church to commemorate the Solemnity of the Ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ into heaven. In some dioceses in the US and outside US, this Solemnity was celebrated on Thursday, May 9.
 This feast reminds us that our true home is in Heaven. It reminds us that during our lives we are “only passing through” on this earth. We are pilgrims on a journey. This Feast reminds us we are ‘Heaven-bound people,’ not ‘Earth-bound people.’ We have hope that One day Jesus will raise our mortal bodies and bring us to be with him in heaven.
 That was expressed in the opening prayer of this Mass: **“For the ascension of Christ your Son is our exaltation and where the head has gone before in glory the body is called to follow in HOPE.”** His presence and company day by day on earth, so that we may be in his company in heaven.
 We have this hope because Jesus himself said to us in John 14:3
“I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.”
 Jesus goes to Heaven to prepare the place for us. **So, this is our Feast as well!**
 However, while we are still waiting for that moment, The Ascension Feast also reminds us of Jesus' Great Commission to proclaim the Good News:
“Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.”
 We are called to remember that **“Jesus’ Mission is Our Mission”** (St. Anorld Jansen, SVD’s founder). You might also take some moments to reflect on the poem of St. Teresa of Avila:
*“Christ Has No Body
 Christ has no body but yours,
 No hands, no feet on earth but yours,
 Yours are the eyes with which he looks
 Compassion on this world,
 Yours are the feet with which
 he walks to do good,
 Yours are the hands, with which
 he blesses all the world.
 Yours are the hands, yours are the feet,
 Yours are the eyes, you are his body.
 Christ has no body now on earth but yours.”*
 ~By St. Teresa of Avila (1515–1582)
 Fr. Thien

HAPPY MOTHER’S DAY
 Today, we also celebrate Mother's Day.
Wishing all of our parish mothers, grandmothers, god-mother, and mothers-to-be a blessed and happy mothers’ day!
 Let us pray for all Mothers, May Mary, the Mother of the Church intercede for them, I remain, Yours in Christ,
 ~ Fr. Thien

THANK YOU
Many Thanks to Mary Hailer, Marian Agostino, Rick Allen, Marty & Kathy Bronkhurst, Tom Teubert, Louise Elwood, Dot Shimko, Phil & Theresa Peter, Fred & Kari Friend, Amber Green, Connie Moore and volunteers. For helping our Food Pantry on May 9
We served 90 families this month!

CATHOLIC SHARING APPEAL!
 Catholic Sharing Appeal Thanks to the generosity of those who have supported the CSA over the years, we’ve been able to ensure the support needed to enliven our parishes, support our Catholic schools, and expand outreach efforts is there when we need it most. You can contribute by sending your check in to the diocese, or just using the envelopes at vestibule and drop it the envelopes into the collection basket. (But please make all checks out to the Catholic Sharing Appeal.) and St. Thomas in the memo You may also contribute through the DWC Website.
 Remember, everything over 50% of our goal comes right back to us!
 Last year, CSA helped our food pantry \$10,000; our parish \$5000 for the floor of the Rectory and help Risen Lord Food Pantry \$12,000. **By May 12, CSA 2024, we raised \$2765 (56%) of our goal \$4920.**
Thanks for your support!

Walking with Moms in Need
The Pro-life mission doesn't end with saving babies from abortion. It is just the beginning. Women who choose life often need support during and after their pregnancies.
 Walking with Moms in Need is a nationwide, parish-based initiative to increase support for pregnant and parenting mothers in need. Our parish established this ministry on April 7, 2024. If you would like to support us, the donation envelop is on vestibule, or consider to donate diapers, baby wipes, baby clothes... Also, if you know any moms need help, please introduce them to us as well. **So far, we have been helping 6 moms.**

Kari Friend: 304- 690-2001;
 Kathy Frame: 304-644-6938;
 Amber Green: 304- 678-5100,
 Anita Lang: 304-880-8031.
 St. Thomas,
 Fr. Thien 304-364-5895



HAPPY BIRTHDAY
 Barbara Collins (Anita Lang's mother) - May 11
 Beata Pawlowski - May 14
 Madilyn Peters - May 16
 Rose DeProspero - May 17
 Athena Barnette May 18
May you have a Happy and Blessed Birthday!

St. Thomas Parish Yard Sale
We are going to have the second yard sale on 9:00 a.m–3:00 p.m
From 9:00 a.m–3:00 p.m
 We will need :
 1) **Donated Items to Sell** : We will be accepting donations now. They can be dropped off, or **if you have a large quantity of items or aren't able to deliver them yourself, we can arrange for them to be picked up. Please give us a stuffs that's gently used in working condition...**
Thanks.

SMALL BUT MIGHTY SHARING GOD'S MERCY AND LOVE

His tiny parish on 'Catholic Hill' in Braxton County, and his even smaller mission church in rural Clay County are proof that even if you are small in number with Christ fully alive in your heart YOU ARE MIGHTY.



Father Thien Duc Nguyen, S.V.D. (Society of the Divine Word), said his communities are "rich in kindness and love."

Both St. Thomas Parish, Gassaway, and Risen Lord Mission, Maysel, are tucked away in scenic rural areas of central West Virginia. On a "good" Sunday, St. Thomas Parish's pews are filled with 60 people; and at the mission church, 20.

While other parishes two, three, and four or more times that size are

struggling to breathe life into their social ministries and community outreach projects, Father Thien's faithful are putting all their trust in God.

Both the parish and mission run food pantries feeding hundreds each month, and both are part of a backpack program that provides weekend snacks and staples for children in the local elementary schools.

The Mission church sits in what is considered a food desert with nothing more than a convenient store in a reasonable distance for families. Needless to say, the foot traffic to the food pantry there is heavy, but what is also packed is the prayer box on the property. After every distribution day, Fr. Thien and his volunteers empty the box and add the heartfelt notes to the prayers of the faithful.

The kindness and love of the faithful in these two communities doesn't stop there.

Last month, on Divine Mercy Sunday, the Catholic families of Gassaway officially began another significant ministry - Walking with Moms in Need.

Walking with Moms in Need is a nationwide, parish-based initiative to increase support for pregnant and parenting mothers in need. Everyone who is prolife and part of a Catholic parish should know where to refer a pregnant woman in need. Walking with Moms in Need is an opportunity for Catholic parish families to "walk in the shoes" of local pregnant and parenting women in need, accompanying them in friendship and helping to connect moms with local resources.

Bishop Mark Brennan has repeatedly said, "our Church is both pro-child and pro-woman. As the prolife movement long ago realized, seeking only to limit or eliminate abortions is not enough. We must also provide support to mothers

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Q&A WITH FR. THIEN

Where are you from, and when did you come to WV?

I was ordained on May 28, 2016, at our motherhouse at Techny (Chicago), Illinois, when I was 33 years old. I am a member of the Society of the Divine Word. Our society is the 6th largest congregation and largest to focus on missionary work. I came to West Virginia in October 2016; my first assignment was St. Thomas in Gassaway.

I grew up in the Central Highlands of Vietnam. My hometown is very much like Gassaway with many mountains. My family planted coffee and black peppers to earn a living.

My home parish was founded 68 years ago. Our village is 100% Catholic. My great grand uncle was a priest. He founded the village in 1956 after we moved from the north. We would celebrate daily Mass at 4:30 a.m. Thousands of people would attend. About 60 men from my hometown parish have become priests, and we count more than 200 religious among us. I have two uncles who are priests, and my aunt and my sister are nuns. One of my uncles has 11 children, seven of whom have become nuns. Another cousin has 5 priest and a nun in one family.

You have such a merciful and giving heart. What is the inspiration behind that?

I was born not long after the war ended in Vietnam (1975). My mom and dad worked very hard to have enough food for their four children, so I understand how it is to be poor. Also, I learned from my father, who often reminded us to care for the poor. I still remember when the beggar came to our door to ask for a bowl of rice. If they came during the meal, my dad always told us to go out and invite them to join us. If they hesitated to join us, he would bring the food out for them and always give them an extra bowl of rice or corn even when we didn't have much.

Later, when I became an SVD, I learned

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before and after they give birth and to their families."

Father Thien wholeheartedly believes Walking with Moms in Need is one way we can put our words into action.

So, after Mass on April 7th, just like after every Sunday Mass, the congregation at St. Thomas Parish prayed the Chaplet of Divine Mercy. Then he brought six parishioners before the altar, blessed them, and installed them as officers of this new ministry, reminding all that Divine Mercy is a call for us to show "God's mercy - God's love to other."

"We are called to be the Divine Mercy's disciples - the devotion for Divine Mercy Sunday is not something to be celebrated just once a year, nor is it simply a chaplet or modified rosary of prayers sung or recited," he said. "Divine Mercy is meant to fill our lives and flow through us into the lives of others."

After the blessing there was even more to celebrate. Father Thien and parishioners gathered for a baptism and a baby shower to benefit two young mothers. Mothers that have benefited from the pantries and will now have the extended love and support from the Walking with Moms in Need.

Oh wait! That's not all! Those who lingered that busy Sunday also attended Father's blessing of the new baby pantry stocked with baby diapers and supplies that was opening the next day.

"We have been helping many moms with utilities, diapers..." Fr. Thien said. "We never turn anyone away," adding, Walking with Moms in Need is just a natural next step.

The new program for the Braxton County parish will also be helping grandparents. Father said that as many as 80% of grandparents in the county are taking care of their grandchildren.

"At Risen Lord Church we have been helping 106 students from Clay Elementary School weekly during the school year, and around 250-300 families who come to the food pantry every month," he noted. "At St Thomas, we have been helping 23 students at Burnsville Elementary School weekly during school year, and around 100-120 families who come for food at food pantry every month."

Ordained eight years ago on May 28th, Fr. Thien has learned it just takes one person to make a difference, just like St. Teresa of Calcutta taught, don't sell yourself short - "If you can't feed a hundred people then feed just one." That slogan is printed on the side of the pantries' box truck.

"The word mission means 'to be sent,'" Father said. "Jesus's mission on earth was to bring the Good News of salvation, and today the Church Universal continues that work. We, as the Church, are part of that mission. We form one people- bishops, priests, religious, and laity. We are bound together in communion of faith; called to a commitment of love

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that our founder's motto was "Jesus's Mission is Our Mission."

The Bible verses that I chose for my ordination was "The love of Christ compels us (me)." (2Cr 5:14) The words of Jesus always reminds me that "whatever you do to the least of my brothers and sisters, you do it to me."

Your churches are so small in numbers, how on earth do you do it?

I think we all are "call to serve not to be served (Mt 20:28)." I believe that God calls my parishioners and me to be missionaries. He put me in one of the poorest areas of WV for a reason. I always remind my parishioners that there's a reason for everything! We have a sign that reads: "Signs of the times" (Vatican II). It reminds us that we are called to find that reason and respond to it.

We're unable to do it without the help of benefactors. We have so many benefactors to thank: SVD; Catholic Sharing Appeal; Greater Kanawha Valley Foundation; Knights of Columbus (Charleston); St. James the Greater, Charles Town; WVU; and many individuals.

Without their help, we'd be unable to help as many people in Braxton, Clay, and neighboring counties. We are God's instrument, and benefactors are the channels to the poor and needy. In addition to benefactors' donations parishioners hold fundraising events. We are always mindful that if we are generous to others, God will be generous to us as well. We still need more hands to work with us.

I also thank the many SVD priests and brothers who came before me and have served the diocese since 1972. They established these ministries to reach out to the poor; and many of my brother priests in other parts of West Virginia (today) also have these ministries in their parishes. We're continuing the legacy of love and response to the call to care for the poor, the needy and the marginalized.

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with Jesus as our center and the Holy Spirit as our source of life and power. We are called to be Divine Mercy Disciples.”

Father Thien shared a quote from Pope Francis:

“Rivers do not drink their own water; trees do not eat their own fruit; the sun does not shine on itself; and flowers do not spread their fragrance for themselves.

Living for others is a rule of nature. We are all born to help each other. No matter how difficult it is...life is good when you are happy; but much better when others are happy because of you.”

To donate to St. Thomas and Risen Lord’s social ministries, please make check payable to: Saint Thomas Food Pantry or Risen Lord Food Pantry and mail to:

Saint Thomas Catholic Church
624 Kanawha St. • Gassaway, WV 26624

Final words?

As a pastor, I’m so glad parishioners of St. Thomas and Risen Lord have, as Divine Word Missionaries say, “One heart, many faces!”

During the past six years, one to five people have joined our church each year. In the past three weeks, there have been 10 people who want to start RCIA at St. Thomas. We hope that our ministries sow the “mustard seed” of love and that God will make them grow.

SMALL BUT MIGHTY

Father Thien Duc Nguyen, S.V.D., and his Catholic communities are sharing God’s mercy and love.



Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston www.dwc.org

#FaithInWV

PLAN AHEAD May 25-26

A Special collection will be held for:

Catholic Relief Services

- a pro-life organization dedicated to preserving human life from conception to natural death. Resolute in commitment to the Church and its teaching.

Guided by the Principles of Catholic Social Teaching; governed by the USCCB bishops, religious, and laity; CRS works in over 100 countries to assist people of all backgrounds, working side by side with others so they can lift themselves out of poverty, assisting during emergencies and enabling people to build the resiliency they need to stand on their own.

www.reallygreatsite.com



Last week, parish came together for a beautiful tradition: the May Crowning ceremony. It was such a special time where we honored Mary, the mother of God, and our very own mother too!

