



**SAINT THOMAS CATHOLIC CHURCH**  
 624 Kanawha St., Gassaway, WV 26624  
 304.364.5895 stthomasgassaway@gmail.com

**Pastor:**  
 Rev. Thien Nguyen, SVD  
 tdnguyen@dwc.org  
 Phone: 304-364-5895  
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**Director of Religious Education**  
 Mrs. Pat McPherson  
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More information on our parish website:  
<https://stthomasgassaway.org>

Sharing God's Blessings	
Date	Collection
May 11 & 12	\$996
By May 18, CSA 2024, we raised \$2765 (56%) Thanks for your support	

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

***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 envelope 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.

*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*



**LITURGY SCHEDULE**  
**SATURDAY: 5:00 p.m**  
**SUNDAY 11:00 a.m**

**Sunday at 8:30 a.m at Risen Lord, Clay**

**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 18, For** Flosie Warner—  
*Rq by Phil + Theresa*  
**SUNDAY MAY 19**

**FOR PARISHIONERS OF ST. THOMAS**

Tue May 21 — For Joe Bordonada  
*Rq by Phil + Theresa*  
 Wednesday May 22 - **Mass at 8:00 a.m**  
 Since Fr. Thien help Food Pantry at Risen Lord  
 – For Harvey Given Rq by Phil + Theresa  
 Thursday May 23  
 For the Benefactors of our parish  
 Fri May 24—For Christin Raynor & Dalton Sears  
*Rq by Phil + Theresa*

**GOT LIFE QUESTIONS? RCIA**

Have you or someone you know. . .  
 Expressed an interest in becoming Catholic?

Been baptized as a child, but not received the Sacraments of Confirmation and Eucharist?

Have a child older than 7 who's not baptized?

**The Order of Christian Initiation of Adults (OCIA)** is the process that prepares and initiates adults into the Catholic Church, and is designed for those who have never been baptized, those who are baptized in another Christian denomination, and those who were baptized as children but have not received the Sacraments of Holy Communion or Confirmation.

If you are interested in learning more about the Catholic faith, please let Fr. Thien know. (304-364-5895) or

*Pastoral's Pondering.*

**Greetings on this Feast of the Pentecost,**

Dear Brothers and Sisters in the Lord!

Happy Birthday, Catholic Church! Pentecost is one of the most ancient feasts in the church. Fifty days after Easter, Jesus gives to the church the Holy Spirit. Pentecost (literally: “fifty-days”) was originally a Jewish feast commemorating the giving of the Ten Commandments at Mount Sinai, which took place 50 days after the first Passover Meal. Today we celebrate the Solemnity of Pentecost, the beginning of the Church with the coming of the Holy Spirit. May we be open to the gifts of the Holy Spirit to strengthen and guide us.

The Pentecost Feast today also gives us a unique opportunity to consider how the Holy Spirit is breathing newness of life into our parish family. There are many ways to recognize the Spirit’s work in the life of our church, such as celebrate liturgy and sacraments; thru our ministries to help the needy, *Food pantry, backpack program or walking with moms in need*; but the chief significant, like the Apostles 2000 years ago, is the zeal and enthusiasm in bringing more people to Christ and His Church, to know the Good News of Salvation. Each year, the Church invites us to invite our neighbors, friends and relatives who are not Catholic and may be searching for a Church home and Christ. We welcome all people of sincere heart who wish to know God and Christ for their lives according the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church. Jesus and The Holy Spirit’s Mission is Our Mission!

Past two months, there have been 11 people who want to start OCIA at St. Thomas. Please keep them in your prayers and if you know someone wants to know more about our faith, please introduce them to us or let us know.

***Prayer to the Holy Spirit***

Come, Holy Spirit,  
 fill the hearts of your faithful  
 and kindle in them the fire of your love.  
 Send forth your Spirit  
 and they shall be created,  
 and you shall renew the face of the earth.

**Let us pray.**

O God,  
 who have taught the hearts of the faithful  
 by the light of the Holy Spirit,  
 grant that in the same Spirit  
 we may be truly wise  
 and ever rejoice in his consolation.  
 Through Christ our Lord. Amen.  
 ~ Fr. Thien

**HAPPY BIRTHDAY**

Matthew McLaughlin May 19  
 Kari Friend May 21  
 Heinrich Harman May 25  
**May you have a Happy and Blessed Birthday!**

**June's Events!**

Please check out the list of events. I encourage you to take part in these opportunities to deepen our faith and grow closer as a community of faith.

**1) June 9th, Altar Society** will held the meeting after Mass.  
**2) June 2nd - On the Feast of the Body and Blood of Christ (Corpus Christi)**, we will have a Eucharistic Procession after our 11:00 am Mass. We need for men volunteers for carry the processional canopy. Please dress nicely! Please let Fr. Thien know.

**June 16<sup>th</sup> : FATHER'S DAY DINNER** after 11: 00 am Mass At parish hall or at Old high school food ball—next to our church.

**June 23rd:** Parish and Financial Council Meeting  
 Please mark your calendar Thank you.

**Catholic Relief Services Collection Next Week**

Next week, May 25-26, our parish will take up The Catholic Relief Services Collection. Funds from this collection provide food to the hungry, support displaced refugees, and bring Christ’s love and mercy to vulnerable people here and abroad. Next week, please give generously to the collection and reveal Christ’s love to those most in need. Learn more about the collection at [ww.usccb.org/catholic-relief](http://ww.usccb.org/catholic-relief).

## 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](http://www.reallygreatsite.com)



May 5th, 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!

