



A Message from the Pastor: Christmas 2024

Christmas is the time of year that we celebrate the coming of the light of Christ into a world with no shortage of darkness. That was true 2000 years ago and it is more true today.

This is especially on my mind because we could call 2024 the year of light at St. Thomas à Becket: our long-awaited new lighting in the church is up and running and beyond my expectations. We took the opportunity when the hydraulic lift was here to change the lighting in the parish hall as well. We expect about half of that to be covered by government subsidies, and it was long overdue, as our Faith First gatherings and many other meetings and events have long suffered from the dimness at every time of year.

At the same time, we installed 'smart timers' for the parking lot lights and the apron lights, one of which now shines from dusk to dawn on the magnificent new statue of Our Lady at the office/Cahill Hall doors. That luminous statue, donated anonymously by a parish family, is crafted by material that allows it to remain outside all year round, unlike the previous statue. There are visitors who come on foot, bicycle and car, day and night, for consolation and strength from Our Lady.

The purpose of all this light is not just efficiency and beauty, of course, but a reminder of the inestimable gift we celebrate at Christmas, "the light that shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome" (cf John 1:5). In a world seemingly drowning in fear, violence, hostility, confusion, consumerism and anxiety, we need to keep our eyes fixed on that light who is Jesus Christ, our Sovereign Lord, King of Kings. Sometimes we perceive the light as brilliant, sometimes as just a pinpoint, but it is a light that never burns out, and that will never disappoint.

The light is Christ, but we help it to burn more brightly in our parish by the various activities we carry out and participate in. I am thinking of the Kids Choir, which is flourishing this year under the dynamic leadership of Kimberley Ricafort; our Catholic Women's League who, among their many projects, continues to cook delicious meals several days each week for the homeless, supported by you through our Helping Others fund and the Pillars Trust Foundation.

Speaking of Helping Others, your regular contributions added to last year's bequest have permitted us to contribute substantially more this year, when the needs are great and ever-growing, to a number of parish and other food banks around the city.

Our Knights of Columbus have increased the number of community-growing and fund-raising projects, most notably this year the Coats for Kids, which provided winter coats for 72 children. Our youth ministry, under the leadership of Amanda Davis, continues to flourish, with a new group this year for teens in addition to the Young Adults. Our altar servers team is gradually returning to pre-pandemic levels, led by Seminarian Jonathan Baker, who returned in September to continue his internship. Please keep him in prayer as he moves towards priestly ordination.

All these projects and activities, and many others too numerous to mention, thrive with the engine of our numerous volunteers and devoted staff and Pastoral Team. I really feel that each year we operate more and more as a family focused on one goal: bringing that light of Christ to all who enter our doors.

The challenge, of course, is to find ways to communicate that same light to those who do not attend: During this Christmas season and the upcoming Jubilee year of 2025, why not invite a friend, family member, colleague or neighbour to accompany you to Mass one day, or to another activity or event? There are many thousands in our parish boundaries hungering for that same light. Be assured of our daily prayers for you and your loved ones.

Seminarian Jonathan Baker, the wardens, pastoral team and staff of St. Thomas à Becket join me in wishing you good health and joy in the Lord this Christmas—in your homes, your families, your schools and places of work—and throughout the New Year 2025.

St. Thomas à Becket, pray for us.

Father Peter Sabbath, Parochial Administrator