

Cathedral OF THE *Immaculate Conception*

NOVEMBER 23, 2025 | THE SOLEMNITY OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, KING OF THE UNIVERSE



524 EAST LAWRENCE AVENUE, SPRINGFIELD, IL 62703
CATHEDRAL PARISH OFFICE: 217-522-3342
WWW.SPICATHEDRAL.ORG

FOUNDED IN 1839 | DEDICATED IN 1928 | BUILT ON FAITH, RENEWED IN HOPE IN 2009

Cathedral Weekly

VOLUME 7 ISSUE 47

THE MOST REVEREND THOMAS JOHN PAPROCKI
NINTH BISHOP OF SPRINGFIELD IN ILLINOIS

THE VERY REVEREND BRIAN C. ALFORD, V.E.
RECTOR

THE REVEREND DANIEL MCGRATH
PAROCHIAL VICAR

THE REVEREND PIUS CHIDOZIE NWIYI
PAROCHIAL VICAR

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Sunday Masses

Saturday - 4:00pm

Sunday - 7:00am, 10:00am, & 5:00pm

Weekday Masses

Monday through Friday - 7:00am & 5:15pm

Saturday - 8:00am

Reconciliation

Monday through Friday - 4:15pm-5:00pm

Saturday - 9:00am-10:00am & 2:30pm-3:30pm

Sunday - 4:00pm-4:45pm

Adoration

Tuesday & Thursday - 4:00pm to 5:00pm

Welcome to the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception!

The mission of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Springfield in Illinois is to build a fervent community of intentional and dedicated missionary disciples of the Risen Lord and steadfast stewards of God's creation who seek to become saints. Accordingly, the community of Catholic faithful in this Diocese is committed to the discipleship and stewardship way of life as commanded by Christ Our Savior and as revealed by Sacred Scripture and Tradition. (Synod Declaration 1a)

On behalf of our bishop, the Most Reverend Thomas John Paprocki, our parishioners, deacons, and priests, we welcome you to the mother church of the Diocese of Springfield in Illinois.

The seat of the diocese was moved to Springfield from Alton in 1923. In the same year, "Old St. Mary's" church of Immaculate Conception Parish was named as the pro-cathedral of the new diocese until this cathedral church was built and dedicated in 1928. Currently, our diocese comprises twenty-eight counties in central Illinois, serving over 140,000 members of the Catholic faithful.

Diocesan Victim Assistance is available. For the Diocesan Victim Assistance Coordinator, please call 217-321-1155.
Please remember that if you or a loved one is in the hospital, a nursing home or homebound, to contact the Parish Office at 217-522-3342



State of Our Hope

In October 2024, I attended a Pastor Workshop hosted by the Archdiocese of St. Paul-Minneapolis. In one of the sessions, one of the seasoned pastors from that archdiocese mentioned how he had developed the practice of offering an annual State of the Parish address the Sunday before Thanksgiving. The thought was to situate his reflections on the previous year in the context of gratitude for all of the blessings they had received, serving as a reason to be hopeful for the year ahead. Inspired by this, I offered my first State of the Parish homily last November on the Sunday before Thanksgiving, and I am happy to continue that tradition this year as well.

Included in this bulletin, you will find an insert with some numbers which highlight certain aspects of the state of the parish over the past year, including financial numbers, sacramental numbers, and Mass attendance. Though these numbers give some insights into the past year, they only provide a small part of what has taken place over the past year. As I have been preparing for this weekend, reflecting on all that has taken place, there is a word that describes what I am feeling regarding the current state of our parish, and what I expect looking forward. That word, likely not surprising, is hope.

Admittedly, my view may be somewhat biased toward this theme as it has been the underlying topic of all the bulletin articles that I have written over the past year, having offered a paragraph-by-paragraph commentary on Pope Benedict XVI's beautiful encyclical on Christian Hope, *Spe salvi*. My reason for examining this document is due to Pope Francis declaring 2025 to be a Jubilee Year of Hope, so that theme of hope has been very much front and center.

Though I will reflect more specifically on my reasons for hope for our parish in my homily for this weekend, I will highlight one here. An aspect of this past year that gives me so much hope for the future is the large number of weddings in which I have been involved. At one point, there were four weekends in a row with weddings here at the Cathedral. I had the privilege of celebrating three of those, and though I did not celebrate the fourth, I had the joy of doing the marriage preparation for that couple. In addition to the several weddings celebrated here, I also attended other weddings outside of the parish, most recently last weekend in Indianapolis for a former student of mine from the time I taught at St. Anthony High School in Effingham. Related to these weddings is the joyful news from several other recently-married couples who have shared with me that they are pregnant or have welcomed new children into their families over the past year.

During a time when it seems as though Catholic weddings and baptisms have declined, this past year has shown that that trend is not a given, but that it can be turned around. The skeptic might doubt such an optimistic view, but I see these instances as reasons to be very hopeful for the future of the Church, both here in our parish, and on a larger scale in the Church. Please pray for these young couples and for their families. They will be a key part of the future of carrying on the life of our parish that we have all been blessed to receive from those who have come before us.

Father Alford is the Rector of the Cathedral and serves in the diocesan curia as the Vicar for Clergy, Consecrated Life, and Vocations.

Mass Intentions

Monday, November 24

7am - Louis Gries
(Gregory and Marie Fleck)
5:15pm - Miles Horton
(John and Angie Wright)

Tuesday, November 25

7am - John Montgomery
(John Busciacco)
5:15pm - Raymond and Eulalia Ohl
(Angela Ohl-Marsters)

Wednesday, November 26

7am - Brother Francis Skube
(Friend)
5:15pm - Judith Ansell
(James and Billie Langfelder)

Thursday, November 27

9am - Betty Rogers
(Family)

Friday, November 28

7am - Woody Woodhull
(Rebecca Woodhull)
5:15pm - NO MASS

Saturday, November 29

8am - Barbara McGee
(McGee Family)
4pm - Patricia McGuigan-Hubbell
(Family)

Sunday, November 30

7am - Mildred Wray
(Richard Wray)
10am - James Hughes
(Family)
5pm - For The People



In his commentary on Psalm 85 (86), Saint Augustine uses a very relatable image to describe an experience many of us have when we go to pray. We experience distraction. Sometimes distraction is not our fault, and sometimes it is maybe a little bit (or more) our fault than we would like to admit! I am going to quote this longer passage because it really only works as a whole and teaches a lot about cultivating some discipline in prayer:

"Imagine a man whose friend has begun a conversation with him. He wants to reply to his friend's remarks, but then he sees his friend turning away from him and saying something to someone else. Who would tolerate such behavior? Or suppose you appeal to a judge, and arrange with him to hear you in a certain place, and then as you are addressing him you suddenly brush him aside and begin to chatter to your friend, will he put up with you? Yet God puts up with the hearts of all those people who say their prayers while thinking about all sorts of things. I will not even mention evil thoughts; I am leaving out of consideration thoughts that sometimes run on perverse lines, abhorrent to God. Simply to think about irrelevant matters is to dishonor him with whom you have begun to converse. Your prayer is a conversation with God: when you read, God is speaking to you; when you pray, you are speaking to God" (St. Augustine, translated by Maria Boulding, Exposition of Psalm 85).

Again, while that is a longer quote, I think it is an excellent image for the way we often find ourselves distracted before God. When we pray, we can consider him a conversation partner. It takes some effort and discipline on our part but holding that attention on Him and His words can be a very fruitful place to remain in prayer. I remember a friend of mine in the seminary kept a quote up on a markerboard outside his room: "Prayer consists of attention."

To speak about prayer in this way is not to make prayer a thing purely of human effort. The attentiveness is a real cooperation in the grace of God. God gives the gift of that attentiveness to his presence and his word, and for our part, we must cooperate and do what we can to keep our minds on the Lord and free of needless distraction.

Distraction, we know, is a part of prayer. I have found that one of the best ways to "fight" distraction is to make the distraction itself a part of my conversation. If all I can think about when praying is the baseball game coming on later, then I tell that to Jesus. If all I can think about is what I said to someone earlier, then I tell that to Jesus. If all I can think about is the homily I am going to give in three days, then I tell that to Jesus. You get the idea. We are incarnate creatures and the thoughts in our mind are going to be a part of our prayer. When evil thoughts do come, as St. Augustine mentions, they are meant to be ignored, shunned, or given to Jesus as something to be destroyed, not tolerated.

I find myself especially drawn to the last sentence: "When you read, God is speaking to you; when you pray, you are speaking to God." St. Augustine is speaking here particularly about the scriptures. When we read these sacred texts, God is truly speaking to us. The scriptures are a perfect way to begin this sort of conversational prayer. We can read a passage and allow God's own words to be a springboard into the conversation we have with him. That way we aren't simply searching through the scriptures for an answer to a question we have. There is nothing particularly wrong with that approach, but it is so much simpler when we allow God to speak first and we respond.

May the Lord free our minds and hearts to listen to him in his Word. Amen!

Fr. Daniel McGrath is a Parochial Vicar of the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception and serves as Chaplain of Sacred Heart-Griffin High School.

Stewardship of Treasure

November 15th & 16th

Collection numbers were unavailable at the time of publication. Please check back next weekend for these collection numbers.

Online Giving: If you would like to extend a special gift to the Cathedral, please visit our website. Our parish is grateful for your continued support. Thank you!

WEEK OF NOVEMBER 24

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
Rosary 4:45 PM Church	Adoration 4:00 PM Church	Men's Bible Study 6:00 AM School Library	NO 7 AM OR 5:15 PM MASS	NO 5:15 PM Mass	Immaculate Conception Novena 7:00 PM Church	Immaculate Conception Novena 7:00 PM Church
Spanish Bible Study 6:00 PM Parish Library	OCIA 6:00 PM School Library	Rosary 4:45 PM Church				

What's Going on Around the Cathedral?



**VATICAN II FAITH
FORMATION SERIES &
JUBILEE INDULGENCE**

SEPTEMBER 18, OCTOBER 23,
NOVEMBER 20, AND DECEMBER 11
7:00 PM
CATHEDRAL ATRIUM

Documents of Vatican II, Continued

Mark your calendars for Dec 11, as Fathers Brian Alford and Daniel McGrath cover the remaining documents of the Second Vatican Council. In the Cathedral Atrium @ 7:00pm



**NOVENA IN
HONOR OF THE
IMMACULATE CONCEPTION**

**NOVEMBER 29 - DECEMBER 7
7:00PM
CATHEDRAL CHURCH**

Novena in Honor of the Immaculate Conception

Beginning November 29th through December 7th, the Cathedral will host the annual diocesan novena in honor of the Immaculate Conception, patroness of the United States, our diocese, and the Cathedral Parish. The novena will be celebrated each evening at 7PM. Each night will be a holy hour consisting of exposition, a liturgy of the Word, homily, Rosary, and benediction with the novena prayer and the recitation of the Litany of Loreto after reposicion. Below are the themes with the accompanying readings.

Saturday, November 29 – The Hail Mary
Reverend Daniel McGrath

Sunday, November 30 – The Angelus
Very Reverend Dominic Vahling, V.J.

Monday, December 1 – Memorare
Very Reverend Brian Alford, V.E.

Tuesday, December 2 – Regina Coeli
Most Reverend Thomas John Paprocki

Wednesday, December 3 – Magnificat
Reverend Monsignor David Hoefler, V.G.

Thursday, December 4 – Salve Regina
Deacon Larry Smith

Friday, December 5 – Sub Tuum Praesidium
Reverend Pius Nwiyi

Saturday, December 6 – Ave Regina Caelorum
Father Jack Tierney, O.S.A.

Sunday, December 7 – Alma Redemptoris Mater
Deacon David Beach

SUNDAY ANNOUNCEMENTS



Thank You!

The Cathedral Council of Catholic Women extends a "thank you" to the Cathedral parishioners for their generosity in contributing to our Socktober clothing collection for the homeless. We live our faith by showing compassion and helping to meet the needs of the most vulnerable in our community - children, elderly, poor and homeless. Programs that Cathedral parishioners participate in embrace the following Corporal Works of Mercy: Feed the Hungry, Give Drink to the Thirsty, Clothe the Naked, Shelter the Homeless, Visit the Sick, Bury the Dead. As we learn in Matthew 25:40, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'

T-Shirt Fundraiser - Sacred Heart in Virden

Celebrate the canonization of St. Pier Giorgio Frassati and St. Carlo Acutis and support diocesan vocations! 100% of profits from sales will support vocations to the priesthood in our diocese! Art by Fr. Daniel McGrath! 100% Cotton Navy T-shirts (Gildan - Heavy Cotton T-shirt, Unisex) Fundraiser hosted by Sacred Heart Church in Virden, IL. For questions, contact the parish office at secretary@sacredheart.dio.org or 217-965-4545. To order, visit www.sacredheartvirden.com

Lucy's Lenses Reading Glasses Collection

If you depend on reading glasses, you know how important they are for daily life - reading, cooking, sewing, and other basic tasks are impossible with poor vision. The reading glasses you no longer use can change someone's life. In honor of the Feast of St. Lucy on December 13, the Knights of Columbus Council 16126 is hosting a Lucy's Lenses Reading Glasses Collection from December 8-14 for Hospital Sisters Mission Outreach. The glasses will be distributed to people in low-resource countries throughout Africa and Central/South America where people who are farsighted need glasses to read, but don't have access to this basic health resource. Only non-prescription reading glasses ("cheaters") are needed, all strengths. Glasses should be in good condition (no broken or missing parts), clean, and undamaged. Drop them in the Lucy's Lenses Collection box in the atrium. For questions please email info.kofc16126@gmail.com.

CCCW Happenings

With the holidays fast approaching, the Cathedral Council of Catholic Women is jumping into high gear with upcoming events:

- Our **Annual Bake Sale** benefitting the Bishop's Seminarian Fund will be held the weekend of December 13-14 after all Masses or until we run out of goodies. We appreciate donations of breads, cakes, candy, cookies, pies, and anything else to help make the holidays merry. Drop off days for donations are Friday, December 12 from 9am-6pm and Saturday, December 13 from 9am-12pm. We have been blessed over the years by generous donations from Cathedral Parish bakers and appreciate your continued support.
- **Gift Card Raffle** - We will be selling raffle tickets for a chance to win a variety of gift cards totaling \$500.00. Tickets are \$1 each or 6 for \$5 and will be available before and after Masses beginning the weekend of November 22. The winner will be drawn at our bake sale after the 10am Mass on December 14.
- **Cleaning of the Church** - In order to make our Church shine to celebrate the birth of Jesus, we have scheduled a cleaning of the pews. Monday, December 15 from 9am until 12pm, a crew of volunteers will be washing and sprucing up the pews. What we don't finish in the morning, we will return after the 5:15pm Mass (around 6pm) to finish. This is an open invitation to parishioners wishing to donate some time and elbow grease to brighten up our Cathedral for Christmas. All cleaning supplies will be provided.

Knights of Columbus Upcoming Events

Did you know that one of the benefits of membership in the Knights of Columbus is access to a portfolio of top-quality life insurance, long-term care insurance, disability income insurance and annuity products? Even if a member does not participate in the insurance program, the Knights of Columbus offers an Accidental Death Benefit for members and spouses at no cost. Join online at <http://kofc.org/join> and use council number 16126 or meet some of the members at any of the upcoming activities below:

- **November 24** - help distribute Thanksgiving Baskets at Catholic Charities, 8:30 AM - 1:30 PM
- **November 30** - 5th Sunday Rosary after the 10:00 AM Mass in the Cathedral Church
- **Special Request!** Mission Outreach is in need of new or gently used reading glasses. Look for information about a donation drive in December in conjunction with the Feast of St. Lucy, patroness for people with visual impairments

Visit our website at <http://www.kofc16126.org/> for all the details. Questions? Contact Grand Knight Larry Travis, LTRAVISJR@gmail.com, or Program Director Brian Huber, bhubie@comcast.net.

OCIA Update

Thanks be to God we are walking with 20 beautiful souls toward baptism or full communion with the Church! Please pray that our candidates and catechumens accept the invitation Christ is extending to them through power of the Holy Spirit. And please pray for the team members who are accompanying them. If you are interested in serving on the team, or in providing a meal for an OCIA meeting, please contact Vicki by emailing vcompton@cathedral.dio.org, or by calling the parish office. Thank you for your prayers!

Cathedral Meal Train

Thank you to everyone who has brought in meals for the Bishop and Cathedral Clergy over the past year! If you are interested in volunteering in this ministry, keep an eye out for available dates for the first half of 2026 (January-June). In an effort to allow multiple volunteers to participate in this ministry, we ask all volunteers to limit sign-ups to no more than 4 dates per month. We also ask that meals be delivered to the rectory by 3:00pm on the chosen dates. Entrees should feed 5 to 6 people; sides are welcome, but not necessary, and please, no desserts.

Did You Know?

That for each Sunday mass we need 2 servers, 2 lectors, 1-2 Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, 6 ushers, 4 greeters and at 10:00 Mass, 2 livestreamers? That's 15-18 volunteers for each mass! That's at least 60 volunteers every weekend! For daily Mass we need 1 server and 1 lector. That's 22 volunteers each week. To be a volunteer you need to love Jesus and love having the opportunity to attend Mass. You also need to be able to read, or smile, or walk while carrying a basket. How would you like to serve your parish? A brief training session will prepare you for service. Contact the parish office to volunteer. Your parish needs you.

The King Who Hangs Beside Us

We love to hate the bad thief.

Ancient Christian tradition has called him by the name “Gestas.” In contrast to Dismas, “the good thief” who recognized and repented of his own sins, Gestas goes down bitter and swinging. With his last breaths he taunts Jesus, poking fun at the absurdity of a deity who allows himself to be crucified by mortals. “Are you not the Christ?” he sneers.

But his final words betray an undercurrent of desperation. Of terror. In the end, Gestas just wants Jesus to save him.

It’s taken me a few hundred read-throughs of this Gospel passage to finally understand a painful truth: I am Gestas. I hang from my own cross — we all do, in this life. But I’m lucky enough that my cross is right beside Jesus, because the sacraments bring him as close to me as he was to Gestas — closer, even. How unfathomable is the mercy of God.

And yet, I am not grateful. I don’t rejoice at my proximity to my Lord, to the flesh and blood that have bought my salvation. I don’t do what I should do, and what Dismas does. I don’t say, “Wherever you are King, please, let me be your subject. Wherever you are going, please, take me with you.”

“Are you not the Christ?” I say instead. And what I mean is exactly what Gestas meant: “Get me down. Take this cross away. I don’t want it. I can’t take it.”

What a tragedy it would be, if all Christ had to offer us was an easier life.

None of this looks like anyone thought it would. The long-foretold Messiah, whose majesty and might would eradicate violence and establish peace. The guy who was going to make everything okay again. The King of the Jews. And here he hangs: bleeding and dying and doing what looks like nothing. Staring at Gestas. Staring at me. Staring at you.

What will you say to him?

Colleen Jurkiewicz Dorman

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Around the Diocese

- **St. Cabrini Nativity Festival**, Friday, December 5, 9am – 11am, Saturday, December 6, & Sunday, December 7, 2025, 10:30am– 3:30pm, Free admission and refreshments and entertainment on Saturday and Sunday. If you wish to loan your Nativity Set to St. Cabrini for the Nativity Festival, drop off is this week - Sunday, November 16, 10:30am-noon, Wednesday, November 19, 9am-noon, Friday, November 21, 3pm-6:30pm. If you have any questions, please call St. Cabrini at 217-522-8555.
- **Rejoice!** Join the Springfield Choral Society on Saturday, December 6 at 7:30pm at Blessed Sacrament Church, under direction of Jacobsen Woollen, together with members of the Illinois Symphony Orchestra, for one of Springfield’s most cherished musical traditions and Rejoice! This year’s concert weaves together the radiant majesty of Handel’s Messiah (Part I) with the luminous joy of J.S. Bach’s Christmas Oratorio (Selections), creating an unforgettable celebration of hope, faith, and renewal.
- **St. Joseph Catholic Church, Springfield, 2025 Cookie Walk with Raffle Baskets**, Sunday, December 7, 2025 After 7:30am Mass to 12:00 pm. K of C Parish Breakfast from 8:00 am to 11:00 am, lovely raffle baskets - \$1.00 a raffle ticket or 6 chances for \$5.00. The Cookie Walk will be sold in bulk and other delights packaged such as pizzelles, delicious homemade popcorn balls, etc., of an amazing variety! Proceeds benefit our Centennial Campaign. Questions - contact the parish office direct line 217-303-5805 or email: mebackes@stjoseph.dio.org
- **The 25th annual St. John Vianney Cookie Walk, Raffle and Christmas Gift Gala** will be on December 13, 2025, at the St. John Vianney Activity Center, 902 St. John Drive in Sherman, IL. Hundreds of beautifully decorated homemade cookies, candies and breads will be available for purchase. A raffle with top notch prizes from local merchants will be going on throughout the morning. Direct Sale Vendors will be available to help you finish your holiday shopping with cash and carry purchases. The jolly ole man himself, Santa, will be on hand from 8:30 -10:30 for “Selfies with Santa” with free will offerings being donated to the Holy Family Food Pantry. And for all our shoppers – complimentary refreshments will be served. Doors open at 8:30 a.m. For more information, contact Cindy Trainor (217) 414-4279.
- **“Peace in the Womb” Christmas Caroling**, December 13, 2025 at 4pm at Two Hearts PRC, 529 N Bruns Lane, Springfield. Song sheets will be provided, as well as refreshments and an open house. Sponsored by Pro-Life Action League, Locally by Two Hearts PRC Civic Committee.