

Cathedral OF THE *Immaculate Conception*

JANUARY 11, 2026 | THE BAPTISM OF THE LORD



524 EAST LAWRENCE AVENUE, SPRINGFIELD, IL 62703
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FOUNDED IN 1839 | DEDICATED IN 1928 | BUILT ON FAITH, RENEWED IN HOPE IN 2009

Cathedral Weekly

VOLUME 8 ISSUE 2

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

THE VERY REVEREND DOMINIC VAHLING
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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.



Preparing for Consecration to the Sacred Heart

Over the past couple of weeks, I have been asked by a few people if I had plans for the next series for my bulletin articles. I answered that nothing specific had come up, but I was certainly open to being nudged by the Holy Spirit, as happened with the last two series. Well, that nudge came the week after Christmas while I was with our seminarians for their annual Christmas gathering. It has been our practice to have Bishop Paprocki meet with them as a group the morning before they depart. This year, he brought up a few different topics, one of which piqued my interest. He shared with the men that at November's gathering of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, the bishops voted to consecrate our country to the Sacred Heart of Jesus in 2026 as a part of our country's 250th anniversary. This will likely take place in June, which is the month of the Sacred Heart. The idea that formed in my mind as Bishop mentioned this was to focus on the Sacred Heart for the next several months as a way of preparing ourselves for this important moment in the life of the Church here in the United States.

In 1846, the Bishops of the United States had approved the decision to place our country under the patronage of the Immaculate Conception, which was approved by Blessed Pope Pius IX in 1847. In this most recent decision to consecrate our country to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the bishops do not see any conflict, for Mary is intimately united with Jesus, and it was in light of the Incarnation of Jesus that she was given the special privilege of the Immaculate Conception. This mystery only makes sense in light of Christ, the Word made flesh, who came to us through the humanity of Mary. Therefore there is no problem with this proposed consecration.

Personally, in addition to devotion to Mary, especially in the Rosary, my other favorite devotion is to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, so I was very excited to hear about this decision. I have always been fascinated by the heart, having grown up making regular visits to the cardiologist to check on my heart which had been affected by a congenital defect to my aorta, the major artery that delivers oxygen-rich blood to the rest of the body. When I discovered devotion to the Sacred Heart in my mid-twenties, it was something I immediately was drawn to and has continued to be a rich source of reflection for my spiritual life.

In particular, I love the Litany of the Sacred Heart, a prayer which includes 33 invocations that describe various qualities of the Heart of Jesus. The number 33 is intentional as it corresponds to the 33 years in which Jesus lived among us from His birth in Bethlehem to His Ascension into Heaven following His Resurrection. Each of these invocations offer an image that invite us to reflect more deeply on the gift of Jesus's love for us.

Here is what I am proposing. Each week, I would like to reflect on one of the invocations from the Litany of the Sacred Heart. The number of Sundays between now and the Solemnity of the Sacred Heart (June 12) is less than 33, so I will not be able to touch on all of them. I need to do some more praying about which ones to include, to see if there is a pattern I want to follow, or if I want to just choose the ones that I like the best. We will see what the Holy Spirit has in mind, but in the meantime, we can pray the final invocation, which is technically not part of the 33, but which, in some ways, summarizes the whole prayer, and it just happens to be my favorite part of the prayer:

Jesus, meek and humble of heart, make our hearts like unto Thine!

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, January 12

7am - Carrie Eichen
(Marlene Mulford)
5:15pm - John & Edith Bakalar
(John Busciacco)

Tuesday, January 13

7am - Sharon Steil
(Tom Steil & Sharon Oldfield)
5:15pm - Octavia "Tabby" Diaz
(Paul J. Staab)

Wednesday, January 14

7am - Caryl Beach
(Donna & Brenda Ronayne)
5:15pm - Richard Allender
(McGee Family)

Thursday, January 15

7am - Joseph Klein
(Andrew & Cheryl Klein)
5:15pm - Edward Anselment
(Anselment Family)

Friday, January 16

7am - Valdez-Johnstone Family
(Rosario Johnstone)
5:15pm - Carrie Eichen
(Lou Ann Mack & Carl Carrigan)

Saturday, January 17

8am - Don Smargiassi
(Smargiassi Family)
4pm - For the People

Sunday, January 18

7am - Mary Ann Midden
(Bill Midden)
10am - Dan "Wade" Connolly
(Toni Bentel)
5pm - Barbara K. McGee
(McGee Family)



One of the most well-known Psalms is Psalm 23, beloved for its first words: "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want." These words and the imagery of the rest of the Psalm remind all of us that Jesus is watching out for us in every part of our lives. He is there in the good times and in the bad times, and he leads us to himself into eternal life. That is one of the reasons this Psalm is so often used at funerals - it gives us a chance to remember how Jesus shepherded us throughout our lives and continues to do so into death.

One of the primary ways that our Good Shepherd, Jesus, leads and guides us is by bringing us to the sacraments. A shepherd leads his sheep to food, water, and shelter, and nourishes and heals his sheep when they need medicine of any sort. Jesus works similarly with us. He brings us to life-giving water in Baptism, feeds us with his body, the Eucharist, brings us into the shelter of the life of the Church, and offers us healing through Penance and Anointing.

The sacraments can be seen in the different imagery used throughout the Psalm, but because today is the feast of the Baptism of the Lord, I will focus on the first image used - water. In verses two and three of the Psalm, we pray, "He leads me beside still waters, he restores my soul." One may interpret this in many ways regarding the various comforts that God gives to his faithful people in this life - the consolations in the soul during prayer, good people he places in our lives to be refreshing streams, good books, good scenes in nature, actual cool springs of water when we find ourselves thirsty, etc. - God refreshes us because of his goodness and even brings us a solace of his presence while we are suffering, or, at the very least, a recognition that we are not alone whether we feel it or not.

One way to interpret these verses that we find in the tradition and which is arguably the best interpretation in terms of its messianic fulfillment, is that the Good Shepherd leads us beside the restoring waters of Baptism. This interpretation is the one used by St. Augustine in his very short commentary on this Psalm. St. Augustine notes, "He has nurtured me beside regenerating water: this means that he nurtured me beside the water of baptism, where those who have lost their soundness and strength are made new" (Expositions of the Psalms, 22.1-2, translated by Maria Boulding). In the sacrament of baptism, our souls are restored to new life and filled with the life of God!

Really, as St. Augustine explains elsewhere, "God could have granted no greater gift to human beings than to cause his Word, through whom he created all things, to be their head, and to fit them to him as his members" (ibid. 85.1). It is the grace of Baptism that causes us to be joined into that body, which is the greatest gift God could give us. To be joined to the body of Christ is to share in his divine life - his relationships with the Father and the Holy Spirit. Before baptism, a human being is a child of God in the sense of being created by him and loved as such. After Baptism, however, a human being is a child of God as one adopted into the Son, the second person of the Trinity. This is a far greater sonship or daughter-ship than before. The Father looks on us and loves us as he does Jesus. That is a great gift.

We call this grace "filiation" - from the Latin, *filius*, meaning "son." We also call this gift, "divinization." In the sense that we are drawn into the life of the Trinity, we share the divine life of God. We don't become God himself, but he gives us a share in his divinity by adoption (see 2 Peter 1:4). Today, we celebrate the institution of this great sacrament of new life. We thank Jesus for the gift of this adoption and our ability to call out "Our Father!" Praise be Jesus Christ. 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

December 27th & 28th

Envelopes:	\$3,831.00
Loose:	\$4,608.00
Maintenance:	\$80.00
Total:	\$8,519.00

January 3rd & 4th

Envelopes:	\$6,934.00
Loose:	\$13,430.00
Maintenance:	\$1,030.00
Total:	\$21,394.00

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 JANUARY 12

MONDAY

Rosary
4:45 PM
Church

TUESDAY

Adoration
4:00 PM
Church

WEDNESDAY

Men's Bible
Study
6:00 AM
School Library

Rosary
4:45 PM
Church

Choir Rehearsal
7:00 PM
Choir Room

THURSDAY

Women's Bible
Study
10:00 AM,
1:00 PM, &
6:00 PM
School Library

Adoration
4:00 PM
Church

FRIDAY

Rosary
4:45 PM
Church

SATURDAY

Family of Faith
& Faith and
Science Series
6:00 PM
Atrium

What's Going on Around the Cathedral?



Cathedral Meal Train

Meal train dates for 2026 are now open! If you are interested in volunteering in this ministry, please visit www.spicathedral.org/cathedral-meal-train/ for available dates. 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. Please contact the Parish Office if you have any questions - 217-522-3342. Thank you!

SUNDAY ANNOUNCEMENTS



Pilgrimage to Poland with Bishop Thomas John Paprocki

Join Bishop Thomas John Paprocki and Father Jerome Koutnik on a 9-day pilgrimage to Poland, April 6-14, 2026, "In the Footsteps of St. John Paul II." Highlights include visits to Krakow, Czestochowa, Zakopane, Auschwitz, Wieliczka, and Wadowice—the birthplace of St. John Paul II. The pilgrimage features daily Mass, first-class hotels, private luxury transportation, professional guides, and all admission fees. Cost: \$4,250 per person from Chicago, IL (includes round-trip airfare, taxes, meals, and more). For details or to register, visit pilgrimtravel.info.

CTK Lenten Bible Study

Join us for a new five-week study called Life Everlasting: Heaven, Hell, Death, and Judgment. In this study, Catholic scholars Dr. Edward Sri and Dr. Jeffrey Morrow will guide us through the Church's teachings on the last things—not to fill us with fear, but to inspire us with hope. Together, we'll discover how living each day in light of eternity gives meaning to our struggles, clarity to our choices, and strength for our journey of faith. This study is designed to fit into your busy schedule, with minimal homework or reading. We will watch a 30 minute video each week, followed by light discussion. Meetings are on Thursday mornings, 9:30 AM to 10:45 AM beginning on Thursday February 19th, through Thursday, March 19th at CTK Parish. Cost of materials is \$20. Registration deadline is Sun 2/2. All are welcome! For more information and to register, please email Kristin Luker at KLuker@LukerDentalCare.com or phone her at 217-341-8753.

Congratulations!

Congratulations to Emelia who was Confirmed and received her First Holy Communion on December 16! Please keep Emelia in your prayers.

CCCW is Getting Wild with Trivia!!

Join the CCCW for an animal themed trivia night on February 7th, 2026 6pm-10pm in the Cathedral Atrium. Soda, Beer and Wine will be sold, but attendees are encouraged to bring their own snacks. Cash prizes will be awarded for 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place. \$10 per person, with 8-10 person teams. Register your team by January 30th by emailing Judith Carstens at jnjcarstens5@sbcglobal.net

Thank You from the CCCW

The Cathedral Council of Catholic Women would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to our Cathedral parishioners for their amazing generosity. Over the past few weeks you have:

- 1) Purchased raffle tickets in support of programs sponsored by the CCCW. The lucky winner of \$500 in gift cards was Erin Tozer.
- 2) Supplied baked goods or donated funds, but most of all purchased items from our annual bake sale. It was a very successful sale benefitting the Bishop's Seminary Fund.
- 3) Donated time to assist in the cleaning of the Cathedral church for the Christmas holidays. A special thank you to the entire Zimmerman family who came for the evening cleaning session and helped us finish in record time.

From the entire CCCW membership thank you the Cathedral community for your continued support of our efforts. Blessings and best wishes to your families during the Christmas season.

When Jesus Wades In

Usually, when God comes to us, we aren't ready.

We think we are. Like John the Baptist, we stand in our waters of baptism, certain of our mission. We know how it's going to go. We know what's going to be asked of us. We're sure of it.

Christ wades into the waters. And he screws up all our plans.

To be clear, I don't think John the Baptist lacks faith when he balks at the idea of baptizing Jesus. I think it is, in fact, a testament to his humility. But whatever motivated John's actions, he is — if even for a brief moment — hesitating to do the will of God. Just a few chapters after this in the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus will acknowledge that John is the greatest person "born of women" — with the caveat that even he is not perfect enough for the Kingdom of Heaven.

Not yet.

Jesus didn't give John an explanation as the two stood in the River Jordan. He merely said, "Allow it for now." John could have resisted further, demanding to understand why. He could have grown suspicious at the simplicity of Jesus' answer, at the strangeness of this request. He could have clung desperately to his version of How Things Are Supposed To Be, and in doing so, fostered doubt in his heart. He could have even stormed off, confused and angry.

He did none of these things, because John is, as Jesus says, the greatest born of women.

When the Holy Spirit descends and the voice of God declares, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased," he is referring, of course, to Jesus. But I think He would say the same of John the Baptist — and of all those who welcome Jesus into the waters, ready to do as he bids.

Colleen Jurkiewicz Dorman

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Around the Diocese

- **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
- **Feast of St. Sebastian: Men's Faith, Beer, and Bourbon Night** - Men are invited to an evening of fraternity at the Villa Maria Conference Center on Lake Springfield as we celebrate the feast of St. Sebastian. Join Father Herman Joseph O.Praem. as the night begins with Mass at 6 p.m., followed by drinks and a discussion on the joys and challenges faced by men striving to follow Christ within the Catholic Church. Tuesday, January 20: 5:30 p.m. - 9 p.m. Cost: \$10 Registration Deadline: January 16 Contact: events@dio.org. Register at: dio.org/events