



# Strengthening Our Parishes

JULY 2021



## St. Thomas Welcomes Parishioners Home

Before the COVID-19 Pandemic, St. Thomas the Apostle was one of the largest Catholic communities in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, with over 11,000 faithful congregating every weekend. Many of these congregants are immigrants, and over the years, the parish has become known for being very welcoming to immigrants. It is a haven for those that feel homesick, especially those coming from Mexico, Central and South America.

Like many parishes in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, the pandemic was difficult for St. Thomas. Many of the parishioners faced worsening food insecurity, poverty, and illness. Fr. Mario, the pastor, and his staff worked double-time to help those in need. They continued their food distribution every second and third Saturday of the month and found other ways to help.

Unable to celebrate Masses in-person, Fr. Mario, along with staff and volunteers, got to work quickly to ensure that Masses could be offered online. However, St. Thomas the Apostle is situated in one of the poorest neighborhoods of Los Angeles, and many of their parishioners did not have the means to stream Masses online. Still, with the help from staff members and El Sembrador, the Spanish-language Catholic radio and television network, Fr. Mario offered Masses to as many people as he could reach.

When Masses were allowed outdoors, the priests at St. Thomas the Apostle were hopeful that parishioners would return, but the pandemic was wreaking havoc in the neighborhood. People were scared, and less than 100 people showed up to outdoor Masses.

Thankfully, with vaccinations on the rise and infection rates declining, more people are returning to Masses. Now, with the dispensation to Mass lifting, parishioners returning to St. Thomas will find it better than it was, thanks to the *Called to Renew*. The roof in the Parish office was changed, the parish was decluttered, and the parking lot was repaved.

Thanks to the generosity and sacrifice of the parishioners at St. Thomas the Apostle, before and during the pandemic, Fr. Mario is delighted to announce that work in the parish restrooms will soon begin, as well as other projects, which were highlighted during the campaign, such as the HVAC, and the work in the Chapel.

Although there is a lot of work left to be done, Fr. Mario is thankful to his parishioners and his staff for their faith, their love, and overwhelming generosity to the *Called to Renew*. It is because of these dedicated people that so many continue to find St. Thomas a home away from home.

## AN UPDATE ON OUR CAMPAIGN

More than \$20 million has been allocated for parish projects since *Called to Renew* was launched in 2018.

**Thank you for your generosity!**

Visit [calledtorenew.org](https://calledtorenew.org) to learn more.