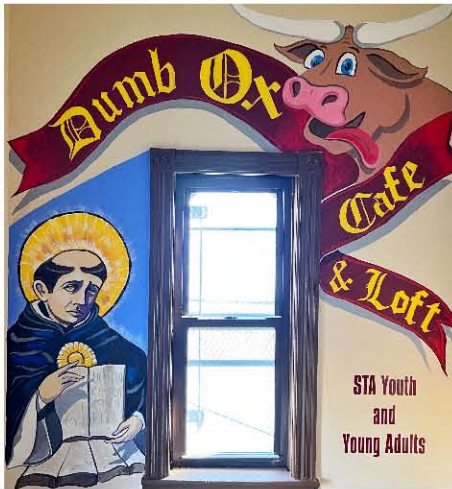


LITTLE SUMMA

"Love takes up where knowledge leaves off." ~ St. Thomas Aquinas



Chris Spinelli's mural at the Loft

A Loft to Call Their Own

What do young people like?

Father Dwayne, the pastor, asked Tatiana, the youth minister.

Brunch! She said.

Sure, young people always liked brunch Tatiana explained, but brunch for this generation of young people is on a new level. Restaurants have even extended their brunch hours to 5 p.m. Father Dwayne liked this brunch idea. It fit with his long held dream of having a café in the parish.

>> Story continues on back



The pastor enjoying a game of Uno with the youth of the parish at the Dumb Ox



Guadalupe to Brooklyn

Rosary on hand and lip, Spanish speaking parishioners processed from the parish center to the church proper carrying a statue of Our Lady of Guadalupe for the Lady's feast day, Dec. 12

The statue took a place of honor in her Son's House for a Mass celebrated in Spanish by Msgr. John to an accompaniment of a mariachi band.

After Mass, parishioners gathered for traditional Mexican and other Latin American homemade food and performances, including traditional Mexican folklore dance.

The Spanish faith sharing group organized the festivities for the fifth year in a row. Father Dwayne says he does not see how he can be more impressed. He presented them with a replica of the image of Our Lady of Guadalupe, which he acquired during pilgrimage to the shrine in Mexico. "I don't know how you are going to top this next year," the pastor told the Spanish group.

Dhalia, who helped organized the event, said she is thankful that the Spanish speaking community at St. Thomas is growing, offering a welcoming environment to Spanish speaking people in the area.

<< From front That's the story of how the Dumb Ox Café and Loft was conceived.

Hold up. Dumb Ox? Why?

It was St. Thomas Aquinas' nickname. "Because he was quiet," Tatiana said. He kept to himself, slowly thought things through and was left out. Then, of course, he became one of the most influential theologians in Christendom, earning the title Doctor of the Church and penning his masterwork Summa Theologica.

That's how a lot of young people are, Tatiana said. They keep to themselves and people sometimes don't understand their true beauty until later "when they sprout and come into their own."

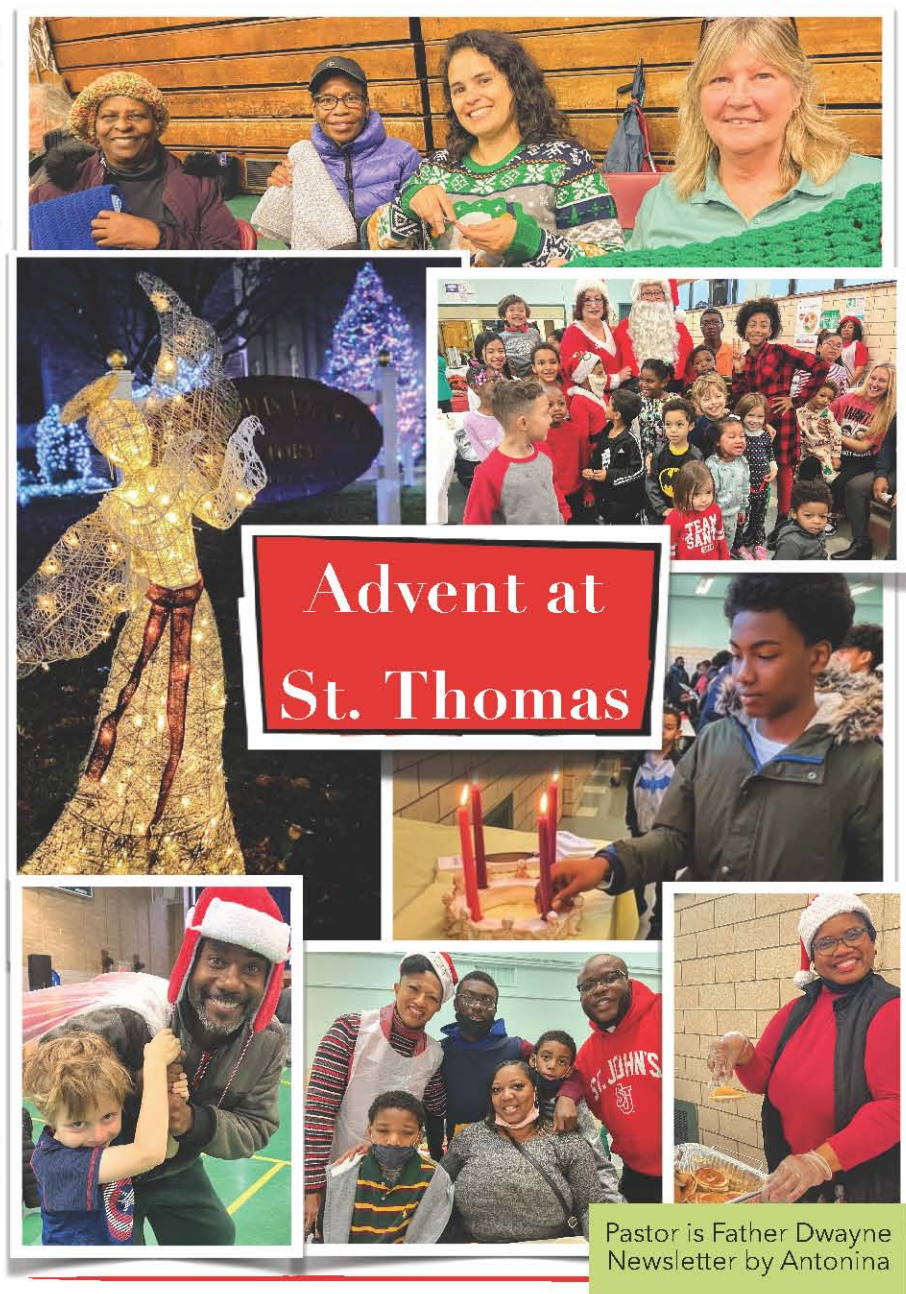
Father Dwayne hopes to offer young people a place dedicated to them where they can grow, flourish and strengthen their bonds to each other, God and His Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church. This is his way of investing in the youth and the future of the church.

Joseph, a youth group member and VBCC ambassador, was at first skeptical of a need for a dedicated space but, he soon realized it's exactly what his group needs.

"In this world that seemingly never stops, young people need to be reminded that sometimes a break is needed," he said. "This space grants us the opportunity to relax, connect, and ground ourselves."

Plans for the café started in April. But the task, Tatiana said, seemed daunting.

Thankfully being part of God's family has its perks. Adriana, a member of the youth group and a VBCC ambassador, said visiting St. Joseph's Church in Jamaica, Queens was instrumental to start setting up the Café. St. Joseph's also has a space dedicated for young people, so the group from Flatlands had a place to draw inspiration.



Pastor is Father Dwayne
Newsletter by Antonina

There was some light renovating, major furnishing (couches, beanbag chairs, game systems, professional coffee maker) and certain sprucing up to do. Chris Spinelli, the local artist, volunteered his services and painted a mural of Saint Thomas along with a depiction of the saint's nickname around a window in the space.

Soon it was opening day, Dec 11. The youth invited the whole parish to see their new space. It's located in the old choir loft of the little church. So many people showed up for the opening that the youth organized showings for ten people at a time for fear of the loft falling. The guests got into the spirit of the space and took selfies and made TikToks.

As parishioners waited their turn they could enjoy refreshments and buy some Dumb Ox merchandise.

"The cafe means a lot to me because this church means everything to me," Adriana said. "The church creating a safe space for the youth is really important because it gives them a space to be comfortable and make new friendships in their faith community."