



DIocese OF ARLINGTON
YOUTH, CAMPUS, &
YOUNG ADULT MINISTRIES



SAINT
THOMAS
MORE
CATHEDRAL

ENCOUNTER ST. THOMAS MORE CATHEDRAL

Discover your Cathedral church like never before! Encounter the life of St. Thomas More and the historic faith of Northern Virginia Catholics. Be inspired in the Cathedral where many men have been ordained and bishops have preached the saving Gospel of Jesus. Enter for the thousandth time or the first time, explore the art and meaning of the mother church of the Diocese of Arlington and encounter the heritage of faith it represents.

This document provides a general overview of this experience, however, please go to www.tinyurl.com/cathedraencounter on your portable device (or scan the QR code below) for links to the full experience.



THINGS TO SEE

Christ the Redeemer Statue – Standing tall overlooking Route 50 in Arlington, Our Lord Jesus stands with arms outstretched in compassion. Christ the Redeemer reminds us of the ever present love and mercy of Our Lord, welcoming visitors to the Cathedral.



Sancta Trinitas Bell Tower – Dedicated in 1982, the bell tower calls worshippers to prayer and tolls for the Angelus. The six bronze bells were imported from the Netherlands.



Depicted on the **Cathedral Doors** are the Four Evangelists, flanked by our Diocesan patron saints, St. Thomas More and St. Elizabeth Ann Seton. We are reminded of the Heralds of the Good News along with our local patrons, as we enter this place of prayer.



Ceiling Decoration – Jam-packed with symbolism regarding the life and death of Thomas More – don't forget to look up and contemplate the art on the ceiling!



Stained Glass Windows of St. Thomas More – Depicting significant moments in the life of More, these three panels are situated above the main entrance of the Cathedral.



Nave Windows – The windows in the nave (the main body of the church) convey terrific meaning. If facing the altar, the windows on the left share instances from the Old Testament and the windows on the right depict episodes from the New Testament. These windows are similar in size as the windows in the Tower of London where Thomas More was held captive.



Sanctuary and Cathedra – A must see is the Bishop's seat or cathedra, which is a sign of his teaching authority. The cathedra is located prominently behind the altar, with Bishop Burbidge's Coat of Arms displayed above.



Transepts Windows – Located in each of the transepts, (the sections of the church with pews on the left and right side of the altar) are windows which gloriously convey the Baptism of Jesus and the blessedness of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton.



Made by a German artist, the **Stations of the Cross** were saved from a church in Germany at the time of World War II, brought to the U.S.A., and placed in the Cathedral in 2015. Why not pray the Stations? Or at least stop at one or two of them and reflect on what Our Lord has done for us.



The Oils and the Sacred Chrism – These are located behind the sanctuary. The Oil of Catechumens, the Oil of the Sick, and the Sacred Chrism are blessed by the bishop at the Chrism Mass and distributed throughout the Diocese. They are used in various services and sacramental rituals. The Chrism Mass occurs once per year, typically on Holy Thursday of Holy Week. The Mass serves as an expression of unity for priests of the Diocese and the bishop.



THE IMPORTANCE OF A CATHEDRAL

The entire world is divided up by the Catholic Church into geographical regions. Each of these 2,898 regions is called a “diocese.” The cathedral of a diocese is the official “mother church” of that diocese—because it is the specially designated church for the bishop. It serves as a symbol of the authority of the bishop over his local flock and as a sign of unity for all other churches in the diocese. The bishop’s seat, which is a sign of his authority, is enthroned in the cathedral. The word “cathedral” comes from the word that means chair in Latin: *cathedra* (pronounced “CATH-eh-druh”). The bishop’s cathedra is an actual seat in the cathedral church.

BRIEF HISTORY OF ST. THOMAS MORE CATHEDRAL

Initially a part of the Diocese of Richmond, Virginia, the Parish of St. Thomas More was founded in 1938, to serve the growing population of Catholics in Arlington. The first Mass celebrated in the church building was November 27, 1938, by Fr. Edwin Lee, the first pastor of the parish. Newly canonized at the time - Thomas More was chosen as patron. This civil servant and lawyer would be a fitting patron for a parish (and, as Divine Providence would have it: [Diocese](#)) so close to our nation’s capital and federal administration. In 1949, work began on what is now known as Burke Hall (the basement of the Cathedral.) With the growing population of the region, it was designed to be a transitional church as well as the foundation for a new, larger church above. The current church (now Cathedral) was completed in 1961 and was dedicated on December 9 of that year. With the founding of the Diocese in 1974, and the selecting of the Church of St. Thomas More to be the Cathedral, the bishop’s cathedra was installed.

ST. THOMAS MORE

Thomas More was born in London in 1478. He was educated at Oxford. He became a lawyer. In his mid-twenties, he lived near a Carthusian monastery. The monks influenced his personal piety and strong faith. Thomas married Jane Colt and together they had four children. After Jane’s passing, he married Alice Middleton. Thomas was an affectionate father, regularly writing his children letters while he was traveling for business. Thomas was elected to parliament. A faithful civil servant, More gained the respect and admiration of King Henry. More was known as being intensely loyal to the king. In 1521, he was knighted. Sir Thomas More became Lord Chancellor of England in 1529. More became at odds with the king when Henry requested that More support Henry’s desire to divorce from his wife, Catherine. More was pressured to support a request for an annulment that was to be sent to Pope Clement VII. More refused to sign and did not attend the coronation of Anne Boylen, Henry’s next wife. This angered Henry, who had More arrested and imprisoned in the Tower of London. More was later beheaded on July 6, 1535. His final statement has echoed through the centuries—he declared that he was “the king’s good servant, but God’s first.” He was canonized by Pope Pius XI in 1935.



Listen to the following podcast on St. Thomas More before you go to the Cathedral: Talking Catholic Podcast Talking Saints – St. Thomas More: www.tinyurl.com/podcaststm

BEFORE YOU GO

1. Plan your trip by visiting the Cathedral’s website (www.cathedralstm.org) and consider attending Mass or Confessions.
2. Before heading out on your trip, take some time to learn about the importance of a diocesan cathedral, the history of this Cathedral, and the life St. Thomas More. Check out the Encounters website for this and more. Watch these videos – here’s a short video on the life of St. Thomas More: www.tinyurl.com/videstm, and here’s a video on the history of the Cathedral parish www.tinyurl.com/cathhistory. Watch *A Man for All Seasons*, the 1966 Academy Award Winning film about St. Thomas More!
3. Gather whatever you think you may need. Traveling with children? Bring snacks for the kids. Perhaps a rosary or spiritual reading for a time of prayer in the Cathedral?

A PRAYER OF ST. THOMAS MORE

Lord, grant me a holy heart that sees always what is fine and pure and is not frightened at the sight of sin, but creates order wherever it goes. Grant me a heart that knows nothing of boredom, weeping and sighing. Let me not be concerned with the bothersome thing I call "myself". Lord, give me a sense of humor and I will find happiness in life and profit for others.

-St. Thomas More

TYING IT ALL TOGETHER

"We, though many, are one body in Christ" (Romans 12:5). In our Diocesan Cathedral we can experience the unity of our local Church. The Mission of Jesus bears fruit in our Diocesan community – served and lead by our Bishop, Michael Burbidge. Let us remember to pray for our brothers and sisters of faith here in our local Church – and around the world – and for our Bishop as he guides us. Perhaps reflect on these questions:

- What was the most inspiring thing you encountered in this Cathedral visit?
- Do you view your Diocesan Church any differently after today's visit? If so, how?
- Does anything particularly inspire you about the life of St. Thomas More?
- Thomas More was devoted to the ways of God above all else in his life, undergoing even martyrdom, for the sake of Christ. Do you approach Church teaching with similar conviction?
- Before I-395 was constructed, Route 50 was a main thoroughfare into DC. Reflect on what it means to have Christ Our Lord stand with arms outstretched in love over thousands who daily travel to and from our nation's capital.
- How might you grow in your relationship with Jesus as a result of this visit today?

OTHER PLACES TO STOP ON THE WAY HOME!

- Stop at **Pupuseria Doña Azucena** for dinner – right across street from the Cathedral! www.tinyurl.com/pupusadona. Delicious authentic Salvadorian pupusas and other foods
- Want some great pizza? **The Italian Store** has some of the best in the area: www.italianstore.com.
- Fun with kids: **Nook** at Ballston Quarter www.playatnook.com/locations/hook-ballston-quarter , **Scramble** indoor play in Alexandria www.goscrumble.com/ , or the **National Children's Museum** in D.C. www.nationalchildrensmuseum.org

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All other photos taken by OYCYAM staff.

