

**December 17, 2023**  
**3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Advent**  
**THE FAITH COMMUNITY OF**  
**ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI**

*Mission Statement: St. Francis of Assisi is a Roman Catholic worshipping Community of Faith, dedicated to the concept of putting "Christ first" in our hearts, lives, family and community, with the hope that our world can become a better place and that we can all be made worthy to enter into the Kingdom of God. Our ministry is centered on the Sacraments and our acts of Faith, Hope and Charity.*



**Pastor – Fr. Anthony Francis Spilka, OFMConv.;**  
**Permanent Deacon Bruce Becker**  
**St. Francis of Assisi, 120 Barron Avenue**  
**Johnstown, PA 15906**  
**Rectory Phone – 814-539-1632**  
**Activity Center – 814 – 539-3518**  
**Fax: 814 – 539-5888 Email – [sfassisich@atlanticbbn.net](mailto:sfassisich@atlanticbbn.net)**  
**Facebook – [St. Francis of Assisi](https://www.facebook.com/stfrancisofassisi)**  
**Oremus Ministry (Prayer Chain) – 814-539-1632**  
**Web Site: <http://www.stfrancisofassisijohnstown.com>**  
**Parish Secretary – Megan Billow-Berchick**  
**Office Hours – 9:00AM to 3:00PM – Mon. thru Thurs.**  
**Parish Council President – Gary Woodruff – 248-1776**  
**Finance Council President – Robert Bimeal**  
**Cemetery Council President – William Heim – 254-2942**  
**Director of Religious Education – Deacon Bruce Becker**  
**Men's Club President – Philip Scott**  
**Rosary Society – Cecilia Neiderer**  
**Gabriel Project – 814-418-1813**

**MASS SCHEDULE – Monday – 9:00AM, Tuesday – 6:15PM, Wednesday – Saturday – 9:00AM**  
**Saturday Vigil– 4:00PM, Sunday – 7:30AM & 9:30AM**

**[Alternative to Abortion – Precious Life Inc. \(814\)269-4391; Domestic Violence Hotline – Victim Services \(814\)288-4961;](#)**  
**[Suicide Prevention Hotline – \(814\)535-8531 or 1-877-268-9463; St. Vincent DePaul \(814\)535-8521](#)**

**Baptism** – Parents are expected to be registered members of the Parish and to attend a class for new parents in preparation for the Baptism of their child. It is encouraged that this be done prior to the birth of the child. Please call the Rectory to make early arrangements.

**Reconciliation** – The Sacrament of God's merciful love and compassion is celebrated Tues at 5:45 PM and Sat 3:15 PM at St. Francis of Assisi. Communal Penance Services – Advent and Lent.

**Anointing of the Sick Communal Celebration** 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Advent and 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Lent.

**Marriage in** accordance with Diocesan directives, arrangements must be made at least 9 months before the marriage date. All couples are required to attend Diocesan sponsored Pre-Cana sessions and to participate in the FOCCUS inventory. Call the Rectory for information and schedules.

**Christian Initiation (RCIA)** – Those who are interested in becoming Catholic, as well as those who are interested in learning more about their Catholic Faith, may call the Parish office for more information.

**Parish Membership** – We are always happy to welcome new parishioners. You may register at the Parish Office. Registration, the practice of stewardship (the regular use of envelopes) and regular participation in the Eucharist indicates active membership and eligibility to act as a Godparent or Sponsor. Your stewardship of time, treasure and talent is essential for the common good and provides a stable income for the Parish, enabling us to prepare a budget.

**Ministry to the Sick** – If you or someone you know are unable to attend Mass and would like to receive the Sacrament of Penance or Holy Eucharist please contact the Parish Office to schedule a visit.

**First Friday** – Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament from 9:30AM – 5:30PM.

**Rosary Society** – First Monday of the Month – 6:00PM in the Church

**Men's Club** – First Thursday of the Month – 6:30PM in the Activity Center

## **2024 CHRISTMAS MASS SCHEDULE**

**Sunday, December 24 – 4:00 PM**

**Monday, December 25 – 12:00 AM Midnight**

**Monday, December 25 – 10:00 AM**



**CHRISTMAS & NEW YEARS** - Sign-up sheet is in the Main Vestibule for Ministers, Lectors and Altar Servers on Christmas Eve, Christmas Day and New Years.

**CHRISTMAS CHURCH DECORATING** - Will be on Sunday, December 24<sup>th</sup> after 9:30AM Mass, all help is greatly appreciated!

**GOB SALE** - St. Francis will be holding a Gob Sale on Saturday, December 23<sup>rd</sup> at the Activity Center from 9:00AM to 12 Noon. Gobs are \$2.00 each.


**OPLATEK** - Is now available in the Main Vestibule of the Church. Please use the envelope provided for your donation and place in the Candle Money Box or in the Collection Basket.

**2024 OFFERTORY ENVELOPES & CALENDARS** - Are in the back of the Church. If you need to pick yours up, please contact the Parish Office between Monday - Thursday from 9:00AM - 3:00PM.

**CCD CLASS** - This **Sunday, December 17<sup>th</sup> will be CCD Classes** at the former Convent, at 123 Barron Avenue. Classes will be off for Christmas Break and will resume on January 7<sup>th</sup>.

**CONFIRMATION PREP CLASSES** - 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> Grade Confirmation Classes will be December 17<sup>th</sup>. **9<sup>th</sup> Grade is from 4:00-5:45 PM** and **10<sup>th</sup> Grade is from 6:00-7:45 PM**. The next Confirmation class for 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> Grades will be January 21<sup>st</sup>. The next class for 11<sup>th</sup> Grade will be January 7<sup>th</sup>.

**A FESTIVAL OF LESSONS AND CAROLS** - will be presented on **Sunday, December 17 at 3:00PM**. Plan on joining us as we prepare for the birth of the Christ Child.

**PITTSBURGH PENGUIN TICKETS** - Two Pittsburgh  **Penguin Hockey** tickets are being chanced off for the game on **February 14<sup>th</sup>**! Chances are 3 for \$5.00. Chances will be sold before and after Masses. The winning ticket will be pulled on February 4<sup>th</sup>.

**CONTRIBUTIONS LAST WEEK:** Loose - \$132.00; Adults - \$2,747.55; Monthly - \$281.00; Candles - \$210.00; St. Vincent DePaul - \$25.00; Thanksgiving - \$10.00; Immaculate Conception - \$577.00; Retired Priest - \$155.00; Christmas - \$340.00; Christmas Flowers - \$65.00; Donation - \$180.00; Online Giving - \$281.00 - Total Collection - \$5,003.55.

Donations in Remembrance of Dr. David C. Johns - \$150.00

**WHAT'S NEW?** - What does the 13<sup>th</sup> Station depict? Jesus is taken down from the Cross. What does the 14<sup>th</sup> Station depict? Jesus is placed in the Tomb. What event/action comes between these 2 Stations, although not considered an official Station? Jesus is placed on the lap of His Mother. What statue beautifully depicts this event? The sculpture by Michelangelo - The Pieta. An anonymous parishioner donated a statue of the Pieta to the Parish and after wondering where to place it, one day while I was in church praying the Rosary, I looked over at the Stations and then realized how beautiful it would look between Stations 13 & 14. And so, there it is!!

## **Background on the Gospel Reading**

This Sunday's Gospel invites us to continue our reflection on the person and mission of John the Baptist. Today we depart from the Gospel of Mark and read a selection from the Gospel of John.

The Gospel for today combines a brief passage from the prologue to John's Gospel with a report about John the Baptist. As in Mark's Gospel, the Gospel of John contains no birth narrative. Instead, John's Gospel begins with a theological reflection that has come to be called the "prologue." This prologue places the story of Jesus in its cosmological framework. It speaks of Jesus' existence with God since the beginning of time. In John's Gospel, Jesus is presented as the fulfillment of the Old Testament and the culmination of the Word, the Light that is coming into the world's darkness.

Following this prologue, John reports on the ministry of John the Baptist. We learn about the attention that John the Baptist received from the Jewish authorities. Messengers from the Jewish Priests, the Levites and the Pharisees question John about his identity and the meaning of the baptisms that he is performing. John's Gospel uses these questions to establish the relationship between Jesus and John the Baptist. John the Baptist is not the Messiah, nor is he Elijah or the Prophet. In John's denials, we hear echoes of the kind of Messianic expectations that were common in first-century Palestine.

The only affirmative response that John the Baptist gives is when he quotes the prophet Isaiah. Upon answering the next question, John announces that the Savior they seek is already among them, but as yet unrecognized. John's response highlights for us an important Advent theme: Jesus has already come into the world as our Savior. During Advent, we pray that we will be able to recognize Jesus' presence in our midst. Advent also reminds us that Jesus will come again to fulfill the promise of Salvation. We pray that we will continue to be watchful as we anticipate that great day.

The third Sunday of Advent is also called *Gaudete Sunday*. *Gaudete*, a Latin word which means "rejoice," is taken from the entrance antiphon for Sunday's Mass. This theme is echoed in today's second reading from the first Letter to the Thessalonians. It is a reminder that Advent is a season of joy because our salvation is already at hand.

### **December 17, 2023 – Third Sunday of Advent**

Today we celebrate the Third Sunday of Advent, Gaudete Sunday. 'Gaudete' is a Latin word meaning 'rejoice'. The Christian steward should be characterized by a spirit of rejoicing. The more we embrace the Stewardship way of life, the more we will be filled with joy.

We can become like John the Baptist, in today's Gospel passage from the Book of John. We read this description of the prophet: "A man named John was sent from God. He came for testimony, to testify to the Light. ... He was not the Light, but came to testify to the Light." This is our calling too, to testify to the Light, our wonderful Savior, by the way we make use of the time, talent and treasure He has entrusted to our care. Our actions and our priorities themselves give testimony to all that God has done in our lives. What a privilege!

When God Himself is the source of our joy, it cannot be taken away from us. There is still time, this Advent season, to clear away any 'clutter' in our lives that may take our focus away from Him. Let us strive to detach from any of these things so that we can be free to truly rejoice in God on Christmas Day.

**PLEASE PRAY FOR THOSE WHO ARE SICK OR HOMEBOUND**

James Edward Adams, Kathryn Barczak, James Bauer, Sally Becker, Richard Bender, Galynn Brady, Sister Carol Jean Czarnik, Clara Dudash, Verne Esposito, James Golby, Alicia Junghans, Tyler McKinley, Rick McKinley, Rowen Ream, Alexandra Rice, Carly Rice, Doug Rice, Rose Rice, Gary Singel, Betty Spisak, Joanna Stone, Carol Sobecky, Leona Sutt, Joe Torchia, David Watson, Sheila Weppner, Mark Wojno, Nancy Wojno, Faryn Wolff, Barbara Yesh.

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**SALUTE TO THOSE SERVING IN THE MILITARY AND A REMEMBRANCE IN OUR PRAYERS**

*May God bless these brave men and women who serve God and Country.*

**Ensign Adam Guarino, USCG; Master at Arms 2<sup>nd</sup> Class Izeke W. Pinkas, Fallon, NV; Lt. Col. Joshua P. Higgins, US Army; Petty Officer 1<sup>st</sup> Class Paul Rambish, US Navy, Coronado Naval Base, San Diego; Lt. Col. Melinda Rovon Corallo, Travis Air Force Base, California; PFC; Lance Corporal Jacob Taylor, USMC; Private 1<sup>st</sup> Class Zack Taylor, US Army; Trista L. Urban, PFC, Army National Guard; Jared N. Dull, HM3, US Navy, Quantico, Va.; Stefanie Kollar, TSgt. Air Force, Hurlburt Field, Fort Walton Beach, Fla., Fr. Don Fullerton, USS Enterprise, Sgt. Bryan Maxwell Porath, Major Aaron Donahey, US Army, Poland.; Petty Officer 1<sup>st</sup> Class Heather L. Dovala, Great Lakes, IL.; Sgt. Jarod Pisarchik, Army National Guard; LCDR Kara Yingling, San Diego; LCDR Shannon Yingling; S/SSgt Devon Gilbert, Kadena Air Force Base, Okinawa; Senior Airman Daniel Christner, USAF, 193<sup>rd</sup> Special Operations Wing; Lt. Col Steven Thomas, USAF, deploying to the Middle East; Captain Colin Harrington, US Army, Bethesda, MD; 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Ryan Powers, USMC, Camp Lejeune, NC; Senior Airman Anthony Rosage, USAF; Fort Gordon, GA; Sgt. Adken Torchia, US Army, Fort Drum, NY;; Capt. Kenneth Yacynych, US Army, Fort Hood; Sgt. Elliott Mulvehill, USMC, Ginowan, Japan.; Kasey Meredith, O.C.S., USMC, Quantico, VA; Cpl. Aunna Yingling, US Army; Petty Officer 2<sup>nd</sup> Class, Gage Pollino, US Navy; Pvt. 1<sup>st</sup> Class Daylee Ragno, US Army, E-3 Paratrooper, Fort Bragg, NC; SPC Morgan Rullo, ARNG Camp Buehring, Kuwait; Fr. William Appel, Navy Chaplain; Jonathan McClain, Warrant Officer, U.S. Army, Fort Drum, NY; Tech Sgt. Daniel Bracken; Senior Airman Jeremy Williams**

*To add a name to our Salute to those in the Military, please call 539-1632. If a person is no longer serving on active or reserve duty, please call the Parish Office to remove his/her name.*

**A PRAYER FOR OUR DEPLOYED MILITARY:** Heavenly Father, inspire those who are overseas for the cause of peace. Send Your Son, Jesus Christ, as the Prince of Peace. Bless the men and women of our military who respond to the needs of peacekeeping. Keep them safe from harm. Let them be models of discipline and courage and bring them home safely to their loved ones. We ask this in Your Name. Amen.

Did you know that it is a custom in Johnstown to wear something RED on Fridays to honor our military?

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**COMMUNITY NEWS**

**PRO LIFE VIGIL - is held weekly on various days and various times across from the Planned Parenthood on Franklin Street in Johnstown.**

**PRAYER FOR OUR NATION** — God our Father, Giver of Life, we entrust the United States of America to Your loving Care. You are the rock on which this nation was founded. You alone are the true source of our cherished rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Reclaim this land for Your Glory and dwell among Your People. Send us Your Spirit to touch the hearts of our nation's leaders. Open their minds to the great worth of human life and the responsibilities that accompany human freedom. Remind Your people that true happiness is rooted in seeking and doing Your will. Through the intercession of Mary Immaculate, Patroness of our land, grant us the courage to reject the "culture of death." Lead us into a new millennium of life. We ask this through Christ Our Lord. Amen.

