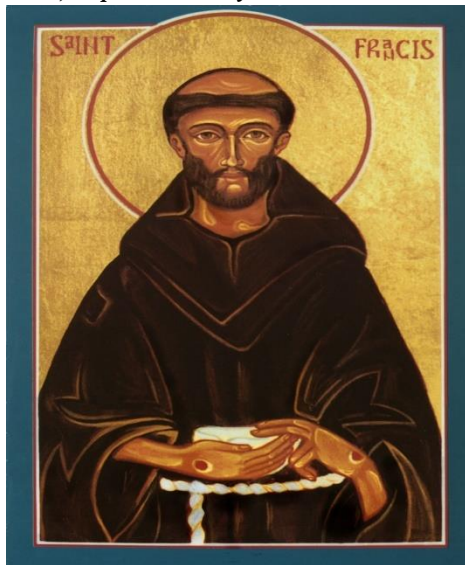


December 24, 2023
4th Sunday of Advent
THE FAITH COMMUNITY OF
ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI

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
Facebook – [St. Francis of Assisi](#)
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 2nd Sunday of Advent and 3rd 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



PARISH OFFICE CLOSED – On Monday, December 25th and Tuesday, December 26th in Observance of Christmas and the Birth of our Lord!

PLEASE REMEMBER THAT DURING INCLEMENT WEATHER – St. Francis Parish Office will follow the Johnstown School District's and/or Bishop McCort's schedule. If there is a 2 hour delay, the Parish Office will open 2 hours late (11:00 AM), and all meetings/ activities will take place. If school is closed or has a virtual/remote learning day the Parish Office will be closed and all meetings/activities will be cancelled. If there is an unscheduled early dismissal the Parish Office will close early and all meetings/activities will be cancelled. **Please note, scheduled Mass WILL BE celebrated regardless.**

ROCKING CHAIR PROPHET BOOKS – The Rocking Chair Prophet Books are in the back of the Church. These books were donated by an anonymous Church member. **There is 1 book for every family.** Please enjoy reading!!!

2024 OFFERTORY ENVELOPES, CALENDARS & MINISTER GIFTS – Are in the Parish Office. If you need to pick yours up, please contact the Parish Office between Monday – Thursday from 9:00AM – 3:00PM.

ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI YOUTH EVENT – St. Francis of Assisi Parish is hosting a Youth Event for High School students in grades 9 – 12. The Youth Event will be held on Saturday, January 20th from 6:30 PM – 9:30 PM in the Parish Activity Center at 134 Barron Ave, Johnstown, PA 15906. The event features a six-piece band, a variety of games, snack and beverages! Admission is \$2.00 per person!!

LESSONS & CAROLS THANK YOU – To Father Anthony Francis for providing such a beautiful tradition to prepare for Christ's coming. Gratitude to Jack Fabry who played organ so beautifully and to Cecilia Neiderer and Dawn Svirsko who did a lovely job leading the singing. So appreciated are the lectors who proclaimed God's word joyously: Barb Bimeal, Chris Goch, Dolores and Joe Fatula, and Cecilia Neiderer. Finally, much thanks to those who attended as a way to truly experience this sacred season of Advent.

CONTRIBUTIONS LAST WEEK: Loose – \$97.00; Adults – \$2,323.40; Monthly – \$395.00; Candles – \$126.50; St. Vincent DePaul – \$180.00; Immaculate Conception – \$46.00; Retired Priest – \$63.00; Christmas – \$100.00; Christmas Flowers – \$5.00; Catholic Charities – \$50.00; Donation – \$530.00; Online Giving – \$291.00 – Total Collection – \$4,206.90.

WHAT'S NEW? – What does the 13th Station depict? Jesus is taken down from the Cross. What does the 14th 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 we read the story of the Angel Gabriel's announcement to Mary about the Birth of Jesus. This story is found only in Luke's Gospel. On this Fourth Sunday of Advent, the Liturgy shifts our attention from John the Baptist to Mary, the Mother of Jesus. Both John and Mary serve as important figures for our reflection during the season of Advent; they both played instrumental roles in preparing the way for Jesus. Last week we reflected on John the Baptist's announcement that the Savior was among us, although not yet recognized. This week we reflect upon Mary's example of faith and obedience to God, traits which permitted her to receive the Angel's message that God's Son would be born as a human person, as one of us.

We are familiar with the story of the Annunciation, and it is fitting that we recall how God announced the birth of Jesus as we make our final preparations for our celebration of the Incarnation. The angel Gabriel visited Mary, a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph. Mary greeted the Angel's news with awe and wonder and asked how it could be possible that she could give birth to a child. In his reply, the angel Gabriel announced the seemingly impossible reality: the Child to be born would be conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and would be God's own Son. The angel reported to Mary another miracle; her relative Elizabeth was also pregnant despite having been thought to be unable to have a child. Mary's response to the angel, which is called her *fiat*, is an example of complete faith and obedience to God.

The story of the Annunciation calls to our attention God's wondrous action in human history. God chose a human person to give Birth to His Son so that all humanity would know God's Salvation. Mary, already full of God's grace, was able to cooperate in this great plan for our Salvation. Thus Jesus was born as One of us, fully human and also Fully Divine. This is the mystery we prepare to celebrate at Christmas, the Mystery of the Incarnation. In the model of Mary, we pray that we will be people of faith who recognize God's saving plan for us and are able respond with obedience.

December 24, 2023 – Fourth Sunday of Advent

Our God is mighty, all-powerful and Love itself. The only proper response is to worship Him and live our lives as a grateful gift for all His goodness to us. But how can we possibly live up to this task? Only by relying on God, as St Paul tells us in the Second Reading, from his letter to the Romans. Paul instructs us to go to "Him Who can strengthen you... Jesus Christ." The truth is, once we recognize that all we have is a gift from God, the next step is to acknowledge that we need God's strength and wisdom to guide us in the best use of those gifts for the building of His Kingdom. Hopefully, we are making time during Advent to go to God in prayer and through the sacraments to obtain the strength we need to live as His disciples and the guidance to know we are indeed following His will with the gifts He has entrusted to us.

In fact, our aim should be to make the words of our Blessed Mother our own. We read in today's Gospel passage from Luke the wonderful words of her 'fiat', her 'yes' to God's plan. "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word." These are among the most beloved words in the Gospel. But the next sentence is also important for the Christian steward. After Mary's fiat, we read "Then the angel departed from her." Our Blessed Mother was left with a lot of unexplained details about God's plan for her. Yet, she followed God's will perfectly! She gave herself and her life fully to God as a gift. She trusted in her Heavenly Father to guide her at each step, and He did. She was the first disciple. We are called to follow her example as disciples today.

The Christmas, let us resolve to make our whole life a gift to the One Who has given us everything. It is the work of a lifetime. But He will give us all the help and strength we need to do it.

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 Czynnik, 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 Sobacky, 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 Guarno, USCG; Master at Arms 2nd Class Izeke W. Pinkas, Fallon, NV; Lt. Col. Joshua P. Higgins, US Army; Petty Officer 1st 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 1st 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 1st 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, 193rd Special Operations Wing; Lt. Col Steven Thomas, USAF, deploying to the Middle East; Captain Colin Harrington, US Army, Bethesda, MD; 2nd 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 2nd Class, Gage Pollino, US Navy; Pvt. 1st 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.