

True Advent



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Columbarium Update

See page 7

Our Mission Statement

Inspired by our patron, Francis of Assisi, we seek to proclaim the reign of God by growing in Holiness through our experience of Christ in word, sacrament, and one another, offering Hope to those who hunger for human dignity, and extending Hospitality to all.



The Catholic Community of St. Francis of Assisi

11401 Leesville Road, Raleigh, NC 27613 919-847-8205 www.stfrancisraleigh.org



GOING, GOING, GONE: THE GREAT DEPARTURE FROM CATHOLICISM, PART VIII:

Departures from Catholicism in the U.S. are outpacing arrivals at an estimated 6-to-1 ratio. How do we stop the bleed, especially with regard to our youth and young adults? This is the last in an eight-part series describing some of the major factors contributing to this phenomenon, and what are some positive steps we as a community of faith can take to remediate this departure. These articles are by no means the last or exhaustive word on this important topic but have been offered to raise awareness of major issues we are currently facing and propose some possible ways to address them. If you are just joining this series and would like to read it in its entirety, you will find the previous articles here

[Click here for part 1](#)

[Click here for part 2](#)

[Click here for part 3](#)

[Click here for part 4](#)

[Click here for part 5](#)

[Click here for part 6](#)

[Click here for part 7](#)

In this final article, I would like to look at how critical it is for us to become better at sharing our faith with others even in the midst of the obstacles we find ourselves facing as an institutional Church and invite you to join me on our quest to make a difference at St. Francis.

Pope Francis is big on inviting all of us to see ourselves as missionaries. When we hear that word, many of us think about going to some remote corner of the world to bring the Christian faith there. Pope Francis has a different vision. He believes that by virtue of our baptism, all of us are missionary disciples, called to share the good news of our faith with others by word and deed in our homes, where we work, and where we recreate. Among the challenges we face in becoming better missionary disciples, two stand out. First, according to one national study, only 21% of adult U.S. Catholics believe sharing the good news of our faith by word and deed should be a priority. Another national survey of Christians from all denominations found that Catholics are the least likely across all Christian traditions to share their faith. This implies there is largely a lack of missionary impulse by these adults who have the potential to influence a lot of people, especially our younger members. Strengthening our missionary impulse will be an increasingly high priority for me as your pastor and I pray this will become more normative among our adults in the coming years.

The second large challenge is tied to obstacles that have emerged both within our Church and its relationship with the modern world. Here are the two biggest obstacles we currently face. 1) While we have made great strides to rid our Church of the ordained who have sexually abused minors and adults, we still have some way to go in putting this firmly behind us. But we are making significant progress. 2) While lay ministry has flourished over the past 50 years and women have been placed in greater

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[Click here to view the St. Francis
of Assisi Annual Report](#)

The parish offices will be closed
from December 24, 2022 through
January 3, 2023

MAY THEY REST IN
PEACE AND PERPETUAL
LIGHT SHINE UPON THEM:

+Carol Ware

Mother of Bonnie Farlow and
Cindy Metcalf

+Maria Cristina Cortez

Mother of Cristina Cortez

Through Faith Direct you can support our parish using an electronic funds transfer from either a bank account or credit/debit card.

To access, start here:



You can mail your contribution to us at:

St Francis Of Assisi
11401 Leesville Road
Raleigh, NC 27613

You can give online through:



<https://www.stfrancisraleigh.org/faith-direct/>



Text-to-Give: 919-629-1199

Additional Online Giving Methods:

www.stfrancisraleigh.org/treasure/

Weekly Envelope Schedule

December 11 Weekly
December 11 Retirement for
Relig/Aging with Grace
December 18 Weekly
December 25 Christmas
December 25 Diocesan Priest
Retirement
January 1 New Year's Day/
Mary Mother of God

PRAYER REQUESTS FOR DECEMBER 10 TO DECEMBER 18



MASS INTENTIONS

Saturday December 10, 2022
Saturday, 5:30
+Thomas Casey
Requested by The Fleischmann Family

Sunday December 11, 2022
Sunday, 7:15
+Bach Mai Thi Le
Requested by Gary and Hanh Boyar, Hung and Trinh Pham

Sunday, 9:00
+Jean Castiglione
Requested by The Gerard Family

Sunday, 11:45
+Pablo Marques
Requested by Lillian Glorius

Sunday, 5:30
For the Parishioners of St. Francis

Monday December 12, 9am
+Frances Mary Slobodzian
Requested by Stephanie Slobodzian

Monday December 12, 7 pm
+Enrique Villareal
Requested by The Misko Family

Tuesday December 13, 9am
+Douglas Warden
Requested by Jim and Nancy Falanga

Wednesday December 14, 9am
+Thomas and +Rosemarie Gambini
Requested by The Gayle Family

Thursday December 15, 9am
+Dolores Chandler
Requested by Regina Duffy

Friday December 16, 9am
+Maureen Duffy
Requested by Regina Duffy

Saturday December 17, 2022
Saturday, 5:30
+Luke Michael Blanton
Requested by The Misko Family

Sunday December 18, 2022
Sunday, 7:15
All Souls in Purgatory
Requested by Theresa Rakshys

Sunday, 9:00
+Angela and +Ernest Hendrickson
Requested by The Gerard Family

Sunday, 11:45
+Virginia McGuinness
Requested by Richard McGuinness

Sunday, 5:30
For the Parishioners of St. Francis

PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL

+Violeta Bracamonte-Sommer
Requested by John Sommer
Remembrance

+Robert Ducatte
Requested by Michael and Julie Ducatte
Remembrance

+Patricia Mullen
Requested by Kathryn Noblitt
Remembrance

Recent Death
+Carol Ware
Mother of Bonnie Farlow and Cindy Metcalf
Remembrance

+Maria Cristina Cortez
Mother of Cristina Cortez
Remembrance



Daily Mass at 9:00am is held in the chapel on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday. The Wednesday Daily Mass is held in the church.



Weekly Reconciliation

The Sacrament of Reconciliation for individuals is celebrated most Saturdays of the year between 4:00-4:45pm in the main church. There are normally two priests present. We recommend that you arrive well before 4:45pm so we may accommodate you.

Mass Intentions

One of the spiritual works of mercy is to pray for the living and the dead. Requesting a Mass is a most wonderful way to exercise this spiritual work of mercy. Our register for Mass intentions for 2023 is open. You may make your request(s) by going to our website (<https://www.stfrancisleigh.org/mass-intention-prayers/>) or by calling the parish office at 919-847-8205 during normal business hours M-F.

At a Glance

This week's events are shown in red.

December 12

Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe

7:00pm Misa en Español in the church

December 14

Good Grief Support Group

10:00am in large conference room of Anthony Hall. The topic will be Taking Care of Yourself.

December 14

Corral Riding Academy

7:00pm - Learn how to become involved with tutoring and/or other services to at-risk adolescent girls at [Corral Riding Academy](#). Click for [Event Registration](#)

December 15

Coffee with Clay

9:30-10:30am in the Assisi Cafe

December 22

Lessons and Carols

7:00pm in the church

December 25

Christmas

December 25

Oak City Cares

Help during the holiday season.

<https://bit.ly/BreakfastatOCCDecember252022>

January 4

Revelation Bible Study Deadline

Registration open through January 4. Limited to 20 participants. 2 sessions.

Tuesday Evening: 7:00-8:30pm

January 24 through March 21.

Wednesday Morning: 10:00-11:30am

January 25 through March 22

<https://litpress.org/Products/6709/Revelation>

January 5

Coffee with Clay

In the Assisi Cafe after Daily Mass

January 6-8

Project Rachel

Weekend retreat January 6-8.

www.rachelnc.org. Cost is \$200.

January 7

Habitat for Humanity

The following are our St. Francis Habitat Saturdays where we need volunteers:

January 7 (a wall build), January 21 (a wall build), March 4, and April 22.

[Catholic Coalition](#). To sign up for the Apostles Build on January 21, please go to the link at [Apostles Build](#).

January 17

Book Group Opportunity

Dignity and the Death Penalty: Evolution of Catholic Teaching (Alice Hugh Brown, author) Meets online Tuesday evenings, January 17 through February 21, from 7pm to 8pm. For more information or to register: [Complete this short Google Form](#). Registration is required.

[For a complete list of SFA contacts Group Opportunities, Volunteer Opportunities and Ministries, click here.](#)

THE SEASON OF ADVENT

Advent began on Sunday, November 27, 2022

Our Lady of Guadalupe

Monday, December 12th at 7:00 pm **Misa en Español**

Lessons and Carols

Thursday, December 22nd at 7:00 pm



"Coffee with Clay" in the Assisi Café



Join Monsignor Clay for
coffee and conversation from
9:30-10:30am, after Daily Mass.

Thursday, January 5th
Thursday, February 9th
Thursday, March 9th



Knights of Columbus Used Cell Phone Drive

The St. Francis Knights of Columbus Council 9709 will be conducting a used cell phone drive to benefit InterAct of Wake County (www.interactofwake.org). InterAct provides support services for victims of domestic violence. The used cell phones we collect are used to call 911 emergency services. All cell phones are required to have this capability with or without a cell phone service provider.

This event will be happening for the two weekends following Christmas before and after every mass on 12/31, 1/1 and 1/7, 1/8. The Knights will have a manned collection table in the Stewardship area of the church.

When donating, please data wipe (reset) your phone before donation. We cannot turn over any phones that still have data on it. If you're not sure how to do this, contact support@kofc9709.org or leave your email address and phone number with the phone. Also, we are just collecting the phones, accessories such as chargers are not necessary. Thank you from your Knights of Columbus!"



RALEIGH DEANERY ADVENT PENANCE SERVICES

December 13:	11:00am:	Our Lady of Lourdes, Raleigh
December 13:	6:30pm:	St. Catherine of Siena, Wake Forest
December 14:	6:30pm:	St. Michael, Cary
December 15:	7:00pm:	Our Lady of the Holy Rosary, Louisburg
December 20:	7:00pm:	Holy Name of Jesus Cathedral, Raleigh
December 21:	12:30pm:	St. Catherine of Siena, Wake Forest
December 21:	7:00pm:	St. Raphael, Raleigh



Feed the Need

Hope and hospitality for parish families in times of need.

As we reflect on what is most important during this Holy season, we are grateful for the continued support of the St. Francis community for the Feed the Need ministry. Since the inception of this program, you have generously supported our ministry to provide hope and nourishment to parish families who were facing significant life events. Because of your unwavering support, we have provided homemade meals and a listening ear to nearly 200 families in need.

We must take the time to recognize and express gratitude for Susie Bahaman one of our volunteer leaders over the past almost 10 years.

Susie has devoted an incredible amount of time to help organize this program to share the graciousness of our parish. The entire committee is appreciative of her guidance as we continue on this important ministry.

Feed the Need Ministry program highlights:

- The Giving Tree to provide gift cards to help us service our families.
- Cooks who use their time and talent to prepare Caring Casseroles and homemade meals for our families.
- Caring Connections drivers who faithfully deliver meals to those who cannot drive.

If you know of a parishioner who may need some help or if you would like to become involved in this ministry, please contact Beth [Gaudette](#), Coordinator of Care and Wellness at 919-764-4815



Our Lady of Guadalupe

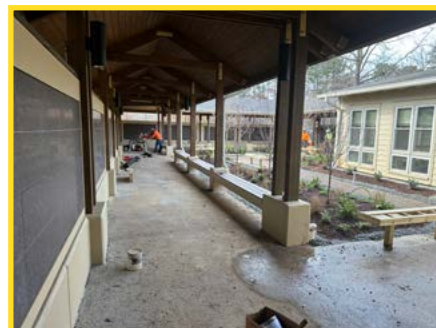
Join us on
Monday, December 12, 2022
at 7:00 pm
for a **Mass in Spanish**

EDUCATION MINISTRIES

St. Francis Memorial Garden and Columbarium Then and Now



Original construction of Memorial Garden 1995



Columbarium expansion in progress

Back in 1994 when St. Francis was expanding and needing to build a larger church, those insightful planners investigated including a memorial garden and columbarium in the planning. It had only been in 1963, 30 years prior, that the Church approved cremation, and a Catholic columbarium was rare. In fact, our columbarium was one of the earliest Catholic columbariums built in the United States.

Historically, a cemetery was part of a church and often located on the church grounds. In fact, many churches in Europe as well as rural United States built their cemeteries directly along the path entering the church. Our memorial garden follows that design. Those entering our church pass through the memorial garden and can pay their respects to those interred in our columbarium. The memorial garden serves a reminder to our community of the mystery of life,



Our Columbarium today

death, and the resurrection. There is also the profound symbolism of passing through the garden on our way to Mass, coming through death to life, through the waters of Baptism and the table of the Eucharist.

In 1996, our beautiful church, along with the memorial garden and columbarium, was dedicated. The columbarium included 632 full-sized niches, which could accommodate one or two full sized urns. For families faced with the tragedy of a miscarriage, a stillbirth, or the death of a child, the parish also

included 32 small niches. Our memorial wall displays plaques inscribed with the names of St. Francis parishioners buried elsewhere, as well as the names of our parishioners' deceased immediate family members.

With cremation gaining in frequency, the number of available niches began to dwindle, and planning began for a new section of the columbarium. After some significant delays in constructions, we are pleased that the newest section of the St. Francis columbarium should be ready in January 2023, adding an additional 616 full-sized niches.

In June, we stopped pre-selling niches due to the limited number of niches available for purchase. We will begin the pre-sale of niches as of January 17, 2023. Those who are already on the waitlist to purchase will be given purchase priority.

Effective January 1, 2023, columbarium pricing will be:

	Parishioner Rate	Stewardship Rate
Single niche	\$6,600	\$3,300
Double niche	\$7,920	\$3,960

If you are interested in purchasing a niche, please contact Trish Adamkowski (trish.adamkowski@stfrancisraleigh.org).



Bereavement Ministry:

Good Grief Support Group meeting will be on December 14 at 10:00am. The meeting will be in the large conference room of Anthony Hall. The topic will be Taking Care of Yourself.

EDUCATION MINISTRIES

Dawn Smith, Principal

Celebrating St. Nicholas



On December 6, we celebrated Saint Nicholas who was the inspiration for Santa Claus. Students were surprised to find a few presents left in their shoes following a quick and quiet visit while they were in class. Upon hearing sleigh bells they entered the Kindergarten and First grade hallway to find that he left each student a present of gold chocolate coins and a candy cane.



As you explore school options for your child's education next year, I welcome you to become a part of The Franciscan School Community. More information regarding our school and the admissions timeline can be found on our website at www.franciscanschool.org/ or contact Principal Dawn Smith at dawn.smith@stfrancisraleigh.org

EDUCATION MINISTRIES

Heidi Hobler, Preschool Director

Advent Wishes

May this season of waiting for the Lord's birth fill you with joy, hope, and peace.
May your faith deepen in anticipation for the coming of our Savior!



Registration for the 2023-2024 school year is opening on January 12!
Please visit our website to learn more about how your child might become part of our amazing preschool family!

www.preschoolatstfrancis.com



How is Your Heart?

This is a tough type of year for many, as we both rejoice with those with us but also remember our family and friends in spirit.

In addition, this time of year can also be a time of frustration and internal sadness for each of us.

Not seeing eye to eye with someone, an old gripe or a relationship gone sour, Advent is a reminder that Christ is going to be born and when we greet Jesus, we want not only our spiritual and financial affairs to be in order, but also the affairs of the heart.

While we continue to celebrate old and come up with new traditions with family and friends this Advent season, I'm encouraging myself and giving myself grace to purify my heart in anticipation of Jesus.

To forgive, to let go, to love.

What about you?

Pax et Bonum
Chris

Always God's Children:

The monthly AGC ministry meets via Zoom in October through April on the second Sunday of the month. You are welcome to join us online from 3:00 to 4:30 pm. Contact Beth Gaudette, Director of Parish Life, at beth.gaudette@stfrancisraleigh.org if you have any questions and also to request the Zoom link.



Interested in learning more about a new service opportunity at St. Francis? Join us for a virtual info session on December 14th about a variety of volunteer opportunities at [Corral Riding Academy](#), a faith-centered mission aimed at "ending the cycle of intergenerational trauma and systemic marginalization in our community?" We will be talking mainly about tutoring opportunities, but if that is not your thing, don't worry, there will be many other ways you can get involved.

So please join our info session! There is no commitment to serve by attending, just an opportunity for you to learn more. You can register on Realm or by clicking this link: [Event Registration](#), or [HERE](#) if you do not have a Realm account.

Justice and Peace Advent Reflections

Trevor Thompson, Director of Justice and Peace

Although we are half way through the season of Advent, there are two Advent reflection resources made available through the Ignatian Solidarity Network that I wanted to spotlight. These resources bring the stories and themes of Advent and Christmas to the challenges and struggles of living in the contemporary world, especially for those who long for justice and peace in our land.

The first Advent resource is called "Advent Simplicity Challenge." If you sign-up to take this challenge, you will receive a daily calendar filled with inspiration to live simply and intentionally while healing the earth this Advent. In a season that can mistakenly be focused on gifts and consumption, this set of reflections will help us explore ways to live simply as we hopefully prepare for the coming of Jesus and the restoration of the earth. You can sign-up for this at <https://ignatiansolidarity.net/advent-simplicity-challenge/>.

The second set of Advent reflections is called "Posadas" ("Inns"), and this is a family-oriented daily Advent virtual experience of music, art, prayer, reflection, and action that links the experience of the Holy Family with that of migrants around the world in search of shelter and protection. If you register at the link below, from December 16 through Christmas Eve, you'll receive via text or email a link to the day's short video. The program includes supplemental resources, and this year there's a special emphasis on highlighting opportunities to protect DACA and end the use of Title 42 at the southern border. Register at <https://ignatiansolidarity.net/posadas-2022-registration/>.

Book Group Opportunity on Catholic Teaching and Death Penalty

Trevor Thompson, Director of Justice and Peace

Starting in January, the St. Francis Office of Justice and Peace is beginning a 6-week virtual study group that turns a spotlight on the death penalty in order to appreciate the evolution of Catholic teaching on this topic.

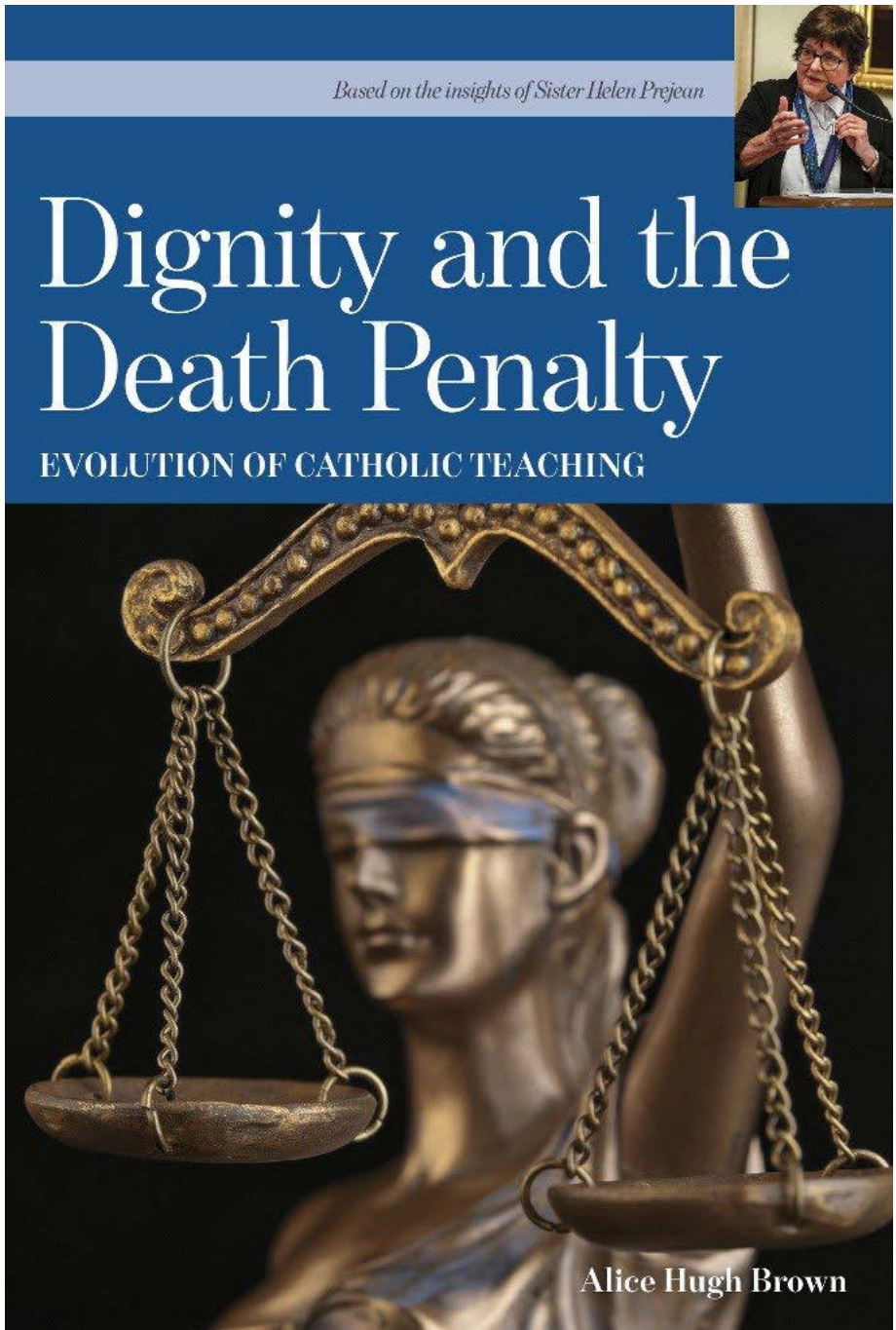
Sister Helen Prejean, author of *Dead Man Walking*, once wrote, "If we believe that murder is wrong and not admissible in our society, then it has to be wrong for everyone, not just individuals but governments as well." *Dignity and the Death Penalty: Evolution of Catholic Teaching* (Alice Hugh Brown, author) is a 2021 publication based on decades of experience and insights from Sister Helen. This slim volume, heralded by the Catholic Mobilizing Network, is an excellent means of bringing to light the evolution of Church teaching and to illuminate Pope Francis's 2018 statement, "The death penalty is inadmissible, and Catholics should work for its abolition."

Join a parish-wide book group for information and dialogue on this very current topic. We will meet online Tuesday evenings, January 17 through February 21, from 7pm to 8pm. This book study will be facilitated by: Marianne Norris and Ellen Zaytoun, St. Francis parishioners and members of the Raleigh Diocese's Catholics for Abolition in North Carolina.

For more information or to register:
[Complete this short Google Form.](#)

*Registration is required.

This study group, the book, and its subject promise participants a prayerful and perceptive six weeks together!



Project Rachel Post Abortion Healing Retreat

If you desire healing from a past abortion, you are invited to experience the love of Jesus Christ at a Project Rachel weekend retreat January 6-8, 2023, in the Raleigh area. The weekend retreat is strictly confidential, for both women and men and includes discussions, spiritual exercises, the sacrament of reconciliation, a Memorial Service, and a Mass of the Resurrection. Participation offers a beautiful opportunity to experience God's love, forgiveness, and compassion. For more information or to register for the retreat, contact Project Rachel at project.rachel@raldioc.org or call 919-852-1021. The website is www.rachelinc.org. Cost is \$200 for lodging, meals, and all retreat materials. If you have a financial burden, assistance is available.



Volunteers Needed!

Can you help provide a hot, home-made breakfast for the Guests of Oak City Cares on Christmas Day?

Just like Jesus, Mary and Joseph, the guests at Oak City Cares are experiencing homelessness on Christmas Day. At St. Francis, we have the honor to bring them joy of Christmas by providing a special holiday breakfast. To do that, we need your help! We need hot breakfast casseroles, hot cinnamon rolls, and hot tater tots. We also have a few open slots for individually wrapped cookies, and even a few slots left to serve!

This is a great opportunity to share our gifts with those who need to experience the joy of Christ's birth.

We will provide the breakfast casserole recipe and cinnamon rolls can be store bought. All you have to do is bring your hot food to the church from 10:00-10:15 (right after the 9:00 Mass on Christmas Day) and we'll do the rest! Click on this link for specifics and to sign up to provide a hot dish for Christmas breakfast:

<https://bit.ly/BreakfastatOCCDecember252022> or reach out to Ann Lassiter at 501-258-4607 or aiclassiter@sbcglobal.net for more information.

Thank you for your generous spirit and support of the over 100 guests we serve every month at Oak City Cares!

Oak City Cares Leadership Team

Ann Lassiter, Diana Melo-Cabanas, and Codi Southerland



Society of St. Vincent de Paul

In today's Gospel Jesus tells us that the good news can be seen, touched felt and heard through the lives of God's people. We are now charged to take up the ministry of Jesus. We can't just ask people to take our word for it; our actions must speak for us.

The work of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul helps convey the good news of Jesus through its dedication to providing hope to the financially challenged.

For instance, a single father with custody of his 7-year-old and 5-year-old children had just started a new job and had to wait a week to get a paycheck. He had gotten behind on rent and was served an eviction notice.

With help from SVdP, as well as the Friendship Fund at First Presbyterian Church, he was able to pay his rent plus have some money to help with his vehicle expenses so he could get to work. The father helped, too, by selling some of his clothes to Plato's Closet to get more funds, and the SVdP members were amazed at how hard he is working to hold things together.

SVdP can help the father and others like him because of its amazing volunteers. Right now SVdP is in desperate need of a someone to maintain its resource sheets. This is the information volunteers use to make referrals to neighbors. The job requires basic computer skills and a few hours a month. These are essential for efficiently helping our neighbors. Free training!

Contact Cathy Smith at smithtcr@gmail.com.



Christmas Eve Mass

Únase a nosotros a la misa especial en español el sábado 24 de Diciembre a las 7:30 pm.
Nace Cristo nuestro Salvador!



Have a GREEN Christmas!

- Use reusable gift bags – and reuse them!
- Substitute time shopping for things, for times shared together year-round.
- Send email instead of paper cards.
- Have children leave donatable toys for Santa to take when he leaves new ones for them.

For more information on this and other Care for Creation activities visit:

stfrancisraleigh.org/care_for_creation

Or to connect with us go to: stfccreation@gmail.com



Register for Cross Step



Cross Step Program (pre-k faith formation) at a Glance

Did you know that St. Francis has a faith formation program for preschool-aged children? During the 9:00 am Sunday Mass, we teach children ages one (and walking) to age four about the weekly Gospel readings and participate in fun, interactive activities that focus on Catholic doctrine and traditions.

This past week, the children were taught all about the season of Advent and how we spend this important period of time anticipating the birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ. The children learned about the importance of preparing for Christmas by using an Advent Wreath, and they proceeded to decorate their own paper Advent wreaths.

Let us help your children to take their first STEPS on their walk with God!

Interested families can register their children for the 2022-2023 year in REALM.

Contact Andrea.Javier@stfrancisraleigh.org for more information.

Cross Step Program Seeking Classroom Staff

Interested in sharing your faith with young children in a fun-filled and loving environment?

The Cross Step program is currently seeking part-time employees to lead our Parish's preschool-aged faith formation classes. No teaching experience is necessary, just the desire to have fun and share God's Word. Sharing a couple hours of your time on Sundays can forever transform a child's faith-journey!

Contact Andrea.Javier@stfrancisraleigh.org for more information.

Interested in volunteering? We could use your help as well!



Wedding Coordinator Ministry!

The good news: weddings at St. Francis have picked up! We need more volunteers to help with weddings! If you are interested in assisting the bride and groom at their rehearsal and on their special day, please reach out to Tim Hetzel to learn more: tim.hetzel@stfrancisraleigh.org.



High School Basketball:

The Parish High School Boy's Basketball league registration will open Monday afternoon on 12/12. This parish league is open to both parishioners and non-parishioners of the community. The boys league is for grades 9-12 For questions contact: Mary.Arleth@stfrancisraleigh.org

For more information and registration, please see: <http://www.stfrancisraleigh.org/high-school-basketball-leagues-2/>

True Advent



Msgr. Michael



Fr. Jim

From the Latin *adventus* meaning “coming,” Advent, often characterized as preparation for Christmas, can be overlooked in the run-up to Christmas. However, as Father Jim Sabak says, “it is not ‘preparation for Christmas’ that is too trite and shallow. Instead, it is a season under stress; it’s multi-layered.” Offered by Monsignor Michael Clay, “Advent is largely lost in contemporary American culture, which is a real tragedy as it’s so beneficial for our spiritual well-being. It is a countercultural season of waiting, pondering, being still, and being patient.” These insights beg the question, how should Catholics view Advent? We spoke with our two resident Catholic scholars, Reverend Jim Sabak, O.F.M. and Monsignor Michael Clay, who gave us their reflections on how they view Advent.

Monsignor Clay mentions that “the season focuses traditionally on the two comings of Christ. It begins with a focus on the Lord’s second coming and moves progressively to prepare our hearts, minds, and souls for the celebration of the Lord’s first coming in Bethlehem commemorated on December 25th.” Father Jim agrees and adds that Advent “has a dual character: from the first Sunday of Advent until December 16th, we focus on the second coming of Christ at the fulfillment and end of time; from December 17th to December 24th, the

focus is on Jesus’ birth in Bethlehem.” He points out that “more time in Advent is spent looking to the future, Christ’s return, than it is looking back to the event of Jesus’ birth in time and history.”

Monsignor Clay laments that in addition to the “normal culture of non-stop ‘go-go-go,’” December is overlaid “with non-stop ‘ho-ho-ho.’” He adds, “we often find ourselves exhausted by the time we get to December 25 rather than in tune with the joy that the birthday of our Savior is meant to instill within us.” Monsignor worries that we are losing sight of Advent as an essential and joyful precursor to the great day of Christ’s birth and the brief following Christmas season.

Father Jim also feels that the faithful need to know of the complexity and joy of Advent. He says Advent is “a season under stress, and deals with darkness and light, dread and hope, judgment and grace, terror and promise, endings and beginnings.” Complex because it’s a one-of-a-kind season and deals with all those things that make us human, but essentially a season of joy, expectation, and hope. He points out that Advent is very Franciscan and that its meaning is found in the prayer texts of the Sunday Masses during Advent. For example, the first preface before Mass used until the 16th is:

For he assumed at his first coming the lowliness of human flesh, And so fulfilled the design you formed long ago,

And opened for us the way to eternal salvation,

That, when he comes again in glory and majesty, and all is, at last, made manifest,

We who watch for that day may inherit the great promise in which we now dare to hope.

The preface speaks of the reason for Christ’s coming, which is not the result of a man and a woman eating an apple at the beginning of time but was a part of God’s plan all along. Father Jim points out that God was not forced to do anything, and he didn’t come because human beings are sinful and horrible; it is because God planned it to happen. As Father Jim pointed out, this belief is the thinking of the great medieval Franciscan scholar John Duns Scotus (1265-1308). Scotus believed the thought that original sin is more significant than original goodness was a great mistake! Father Jim feels that this makes Advent a great season of knowing that God acts first to help us not to be afraid of anything that seeks to stand in the way of our hopes and dreams. “Advent is,” he says, “about remembering that God comes to save us because we need to be saved, to come to a fuller understanding of ourselves as human beings. We must remove all

Continued from previous page

those things we put upon ourselves that prevent us from embracing and loving who we are." According to Father Jim, the Franciscan view of Advent highlights God's love and hope for all of us.

So how can we celebrate Advent meaningfully with our families? Monsignor Clay opines, "there has been a slow-but-steady erosion of hallowing (keeping holy) time, daily, weekly, and seasonally, for quite a while." "Look at what has happened to Sunday," he points out. It was "a traditional day of rest and renewal in the past to thank God for all our blessings; a time to invoke God's protection as we undertake our upcoming week, and to bask in the truth that God infinitely loves us." Father Michael offers that during Advent the taking of family time for "hallowing" seems like an effort worth retrieving. He proposes we focus on a "third coming" of the Lord during the season of Advent: in the present. "In each moment of our lives," he confidently states, "the Lord is present to us." Becoming aware of God's constant presence requires us to practice waiting, pondering, being still, and being patient. He says that "one practical way to do this during Advent is to take three minutes to sit still and focus on a lighted candle." He suggests we "use the time to clear our mind and focus on the light, inviting Christ who is our light into your hearts and mind and asking simply that that light may scatter whatever darkness you may encounter during the day."

Advent is not just a season of preparation; it is a season of contemplation of the joy and happiness of our faith. A season to recognize God's love for us and how we are the focus of his plan for the world he created. So add time for "hallowing" to your Advent, a time to reflect and remove all those things that prevent us from embracing the joy of the season and loving who we are in God's eyes. You can be confident that God is making time for you, now and at all times; you as an individual, not just the "collective you." To embrace Advent, take some short time each day to recognize your essential role in his plan. Have a joyful Advent Season!



Our 2023 Building Season



There's always something meaningful about picking up a hammer and nail and being part of a house building project with Habitat for Humanity. The St. Francis of Assisi Habitat Ministry is preparing to kick off the next building season.

We are involved in two building projects. One is where we work alongside several Protestant congregations in a project called Apostles Builds, and the other is with other Catholic communities in Wake County called Catholic Coalition Builds. With each building project, we also work alongside the family who will eventually move into the home.

****No matter your skill level, we would like to have you helping with our projects.****

The following are our St. Francis Habitat Saturdays where we need volunteers: January 7 (a wall build), January 21 (a wall build), March 4, and April 22.

Currently, volunteers can only sign-up for the wall builds in January, but mark your calendars for the later dates. Habitat wall builds are exciting and fast paced where volunteers work to build all the interior and exterior walls for a new Habitat home. Once the walls are loaded onto a truck, you will go to the build site to help raise the walls and witness the start of a better future for a local family. Join us!

To sign up for the Catholic Coalition build on January 7, please go to the link at [Catholic Coalition](#). To sign up for the Apostles Build on January 21, please go to the link at [Apostles Build](#).

leadership roles in parishes and dioceses, we still have many miles to travel to become known as a Church that values women as true partners in ministry across the board. Pope Francis is taking institutional steps to elevate women to leadership. He has set up two consultations during his pontificate to explore the possibility of a women's diaconate. He has recently opened instituted ministries, pre-requisites for diaconal ordination, to women. He has also placed more and more women into leadership roles in governance of the Church in Rome, one example being the recent appointment of women to the committee at the Vatican that processes the appointment of bishops. There are other areas where a wide range of perspectives are in need of greater openness to dialogue. Pope Francis has begun a process, a synodal process, in the hope of creating space for us to engage one another in dialogue to see how we might together find a way forward on these various perspectives.

While these issues are real, frustrations are a fact, and developments are occurring, we have also been called by the Lord to share the good news of our faith with others and to lead others to Christ, especially our young people. The Church will never be perfect. But as the saying goes, "We strive for the perfect while we live with the imperfect." Indifference and cynicism are understandable consequences emerging from frustration with any institution, especially a global one that claims to have something important to say about things eternal and our well-being. Nevertheless, I invite you to join me in doing what we can and not get too caught up in what we still need to do.

Someone who has been studying the hearts and lives of youth for many years puts in fairly stark terms what he has learned about today's youth that cries out for attention. His most important insight is this: Youth sense they have been abandoned by adults. Abandonment is a

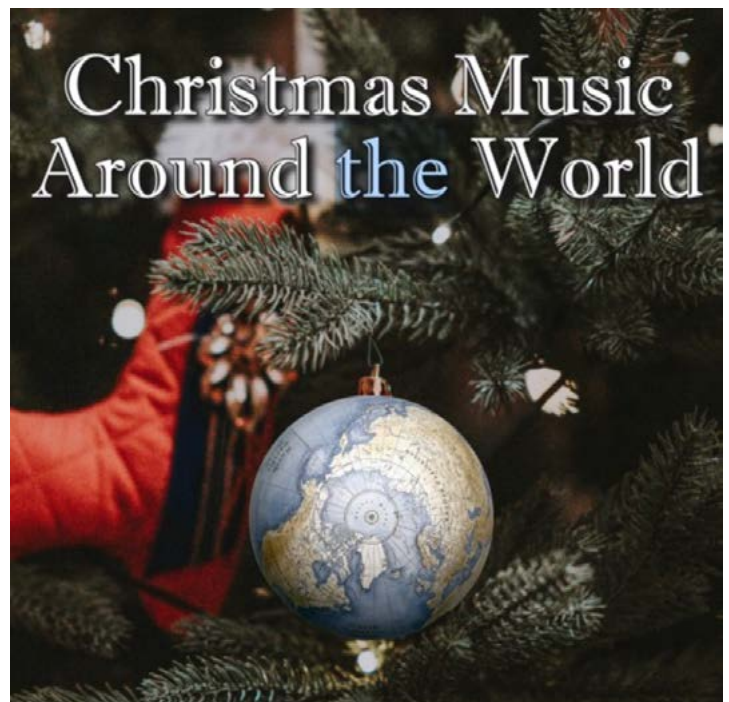
major issue. Youth need adults, especially their parents, who care and are willing to mentor them. They don't want to be seen as a commodity that is shipped out to someone else for attention. I invite parents to step forward about developing their faith so our young people increasingly have a sense that their faith matters and that we are here to help them. I invite other adults to join us in accompanying our youth and young adults.

Someone has said that a friend is someone who has seen us at our worst and still loves us. Jesus Christ is that kind of friend and proved it by dying for us, seeing us at our worst, and still loving us. My goal is to help us discover and deepen this friendship with our best friend, Jesus Christ, and to show both those within our community and beyond what a difference that friendship makes for us and for them. Will you step forward and join me?

Fr. Michael



Click image above to view Episode 24



[Click to listen](#) to a collection of Advent and Christmas music from various continents, countries, and cultures, celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ, our true Prince of Peace. - Jim Wahl

Third Sunday of Advent







December 11, 2022

Those whom the LORD has ransomed will return
and enter Zion singing,
crowned with everlasting joy.

— Isaiah 35:10a

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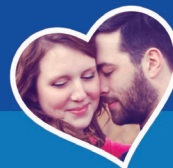
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