

December 10, 2023

Second Sunday of Advent



RECORD NUMBER OF NEW CATECHUMENS AT CELEBRATION:

Last Sunday evening at the 5:30pm Mass, 8 unbaptized teens/adults and 6 unbaptized children became catechumens as part of their progress through the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (R.C.I.A.). The R.C.I.A. is a multi-step formation process that includes benchmark steps celebrated in public rituals that mark their progress on this faith journey. The rite we celebrated with them last Sunday is the former inquirers' first public commitment toward becoming a Christian. By celebrating this rite, they became auxiliary members of the Church and may now be married with Catholic rites as well have funeral rites although they are not yet baptized. This is the most people I've been privileged to see become catechumens in a single liturgy in my 43 years as a priest. It was an amazing and joyful experience for me.

Marisa Ferrara, our Elementary Faith Formation Coordinator, has done a fantastic job of developing a year-round children's catechumenate (the term we use to describe this formation process). We have over 30 children currently in formation. The RCIA team, under the leadership of Jacob House, has likewise served us well in leading over 60 older teens and adults through the R.C.I.A. over the past 12 months.

This speaks well of who we are and how we are perceived by those who are not currently Catholic. That so many want to become part of the Catholic faith through our parish is an incredible sign of vitality. Don't underestimate how the witness of your life, both on and off campus, inspires others or at least makes them curious to know more about who we are and what motivates us to live our lives in the way we do. Don't hesitate to invite people to consider the Catholic faith whether they are unbaptized or baptized in another Christian tradition, or would benefit from completing the sacraments of initiation if they were baptized in infancy as Catholic but have not celebrated the holy eucharist and/or confirmation.

Our next inquiry session for older teens and adults will begin on Wednesday, January 3, at 6:30pm in Founders Hall. Please have potential inquirers contact Brooke in our Faith Formation office to get registered or to answer questions.

Fr. Michael

Bishop's Annual Appeal Update: As of Monday (12/4), the following are the BAA totals for our Parish as reported by the Diocese:

Goal:	\$473,565		\$509,088	
Pledge Total:	\$514,505	108.6%	\$520,392	102.2%
Received Total:	\$514,205	108.6%	\$479,720	94.2%
Participating Families:	1,168	21.2%	1,456	28.5%
Total Families:	5,500		5,100	

To date we have exceeded our goal by \$40,940

Become a part of the TFS School Community: As you explore school options for your child's education next year, we welcome you to become a part of The Franciscan School. 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.

FRAUD ALERT:

SFA employees, including our priests, only communicate with parishioners using our **stfrancisraleigh.org** domain. If you see anything other than this, please delete the email.

A click away  If you are receiving a paper copy, visit the parish website at www.stfrancisraleigh.org.

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The Catholic Community of St. Francis of Assisi - 11401 Leesville Rd - NC 27613 - Tel: 919-847-8205

Friday, December 15th at 6:30pm



Living Stations of the Creche

Join us on **Friday, December 15 at 6:30pm** for the Living Stations of the Creche. This year we celebrate the 800th anniversary of Creche in the town of Greccio.

A gift from St. Francis.

There will be a display in Fellowship Hall of Fr. Jim Sabak's 50 Creches. We will have music and refreshments. This is a fun event for ALL ages.

Scan for a special message from Fr. Jim



Dec 10- Fiat Franciscus (Young Adult Ministry)

3:30pm. Come join other young adults on December 10 from 3-5pm in Founders Room (Anthony Hall) for fellowship and a white elephant gift exchange! Please sign up to bring an appetizer and a gift. Everyone in their 20s and 30s as well as young family members are welcome!

Contact Brian Herhold, Brian.Herhold@gmail.com

[Registration Link.](#)

Through Dec 10: Advent Giving Trees

Share the spirit of the Christmas season with families in need by supporting the St. Francis of Assisi Advent Giving Tree. Please remember to Return gifts by the date on the tag to: Community Center Lobby: Monday-Friday from 8am-2:30pm OR In the Stewardship Center: Before or after Mass on the weekends and during the week through December 10. You can still make a Financial donation through Faith Direct. Click on the link below.

<https://membership.faithdirect.net/givenow/NC674/40890>

The following organizations will be beneficiaries of our financial donations this year: Helen Wright Center, Ronald McDonald House in Durham, Helene Foundation, St. Vincent de Paul Ministry. Contact Ashley.Watson@stfrancisraleigh.org.

Dec 10 - Always God's Children

A confidential setting for those who identify as LGBTQ+, along with family and friends. This gathering provides a safe place to pray together, share our experiences and talk over our concerns. Contact Kathy Sales, kathy.sales@stfrancisraleigh.org.



Matters of Faith

Click the icon to watch our short 3-minute video as our youth reflect on the question: "Why did God create me and what purpose do I have in life?"

[Click to enlarge](#)

Advent begins on Sunday, December 3, 2023

Reconciliation Service
Wednesday, December 6 at 7pm at St. Francis
Tuesday, December 19th at 11am at St. Luke's

Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary
Friday, December 8th at 9 am (with TFS), 11:45 am, & 7 pm

Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe
Monday, December 11th at 9:00 pm **Misa en Español** | Chapel

Living Stations of the Creche | Celebrating 800 years of the Nativity in Greccio
Friday, December 15th at 6:30pm | Begin outside of Chapel

Fourth Sunday of Advent
Sunday, December 24th at 7:15am and 9am

ADVENT & CHRISTMAS SCHEDULES

The Season of Christmas Schedule

Sunday, December 24th Christmas Eve
4 pm Mass in Church (also Live-Streamed)
4 pm Mass in Gym
4 pm Mass in Fellowship Hall
10 pm Mass in Church (also Live-Streamed)

Monday, December 25th Christmas Day
9 am and 11:45 am Mass in Church

No Daily Masses for December 26 and 27

Sunday, December 31st Feast of the Holy Family
Regular Sunday Mass Schedule

Monday, January 1st at 9am in Chapel
NOT a Holy Day of Obligation

[Click to enlarge](#)

ADVENT 2023 PENANCE SERVICES
RALEIGH DEANERY

DECEMBER 04: ST. EUGENE (WENDELL) AT 7PM

DECEMBER 05: ST. BERNADETTE (FUQUAY-VARINA) AT 7PM

DECEMBER 06: ST. CATHERINE OF SIENA (WAKE FOREST) AT 10AM

DECEMBER 06: ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI (RALEIGH) AT 7PM

DECEMBER 07: ST. BERNADETTE (FUQUAY-VARINA) AT 11AM

DECEMBER 07: ST. ANDREW (APEX) AT 7PM

DECEMBER 13: OUR LADY OF LOURDES (RALEIGH) AT 11AM

DECEMBER 13: ST. MICHAEL (CARY) AT 7PM

DECEMBER 15: ST. MICHAEL (CARY) AT 11AM

DECEMBER 18: HOLY ROSARY (LOUISBURG) AT 6:30PM

DECEMBER 19: ST. LUKE (RALEIGH) AT 11AM

DECEMBER 19: HOLY NAME OF JESUS CATHEDRAL (RALEIGH) AT 7PM

DECEMBER 20: ST. RAPHAEL (RALEIGH) AT 7PM

Dec 10 - St. Vincent de Paul

This is our explanation of St. Vincent de Paul, how it operates and helps neighbors and why it matters. [Click to watch short video](#). Contact Sharon Winzeler, swinzeler@gmail.com.

Dec 11 - Our Lady of Guadalupe, 9:00 pm Misa en Español | Chapel

December 15 - Living Stations of the Creche, 6:30pm.

Come experience the living Stations of the Creche, Friday, December 15, 2023 6:30pm to 8:30pm. Celebrating the 800th year of St. Francis' living nativity of Jesus' birth. Contact James Wahl, [Click here for video](#). We are in need of signups for each of the stations. [Click here to sign up](#). Contact jim.wahl@stfrancisraleigh.org.

Dec 16 - Corral Riding Academy Saturday on the Farm, 9:30am

CORRAL Riding Academy is a faith-motivated nonprofit that serves adolescent girls in high-risk situations through a long-term, holistic program of equine therapy and education. Join us as we do hands-on projects to support the Kildaire campus and have the opportunity to learn more about CORRAL's mission and programs! Families welcome! [Registration link](#). Contact Donna Schwede, donna.schwede@gmail.com.

Dec 19 - Reconciliation Service at St. Luke's Tuesday, 11:00am

Dec 25 - 2nd Collection for Priest Welfare & Retirement

There will be a 2nd collection taken during all the Christmas Masses for the Priest Welfare & Retirement. Contact Rob Neppel, rob.meppel@stfrancisraleigh.org.

Parishioner Owned Businesses Ad Page

Support our local parishioner-owned businesses

To advertise email: diogenes.ruiz@stfrancisraleigh.org

Link: <https://www.stfrancisraleigh.org/parishioner-businesses/>

Jan 23 - Mar 13 Adult Virtual Bible Study - Isaiah Part 2, 10:00am

Join us for our next VIRTUAL BIBLE STUDY- ISAIAH PART 2- as we continue to reflect on the majesty of God and the divine plan for Israel's restoration. Part Two of our study covers Isaiah 40-66, emphasizing the majesty of God and the divine plan for Israel's restoration. [Information link](#). Registration: [Tues PM Virtual](#) / [Wed, AM Virtual](#) Contact Barbara Efrid, Cindy Cardello and Diane Rosendahl, Sunshine27915@gmail.com

Feb 1 - The NC Opportunity Scholarship has expanded

A loving, Christ-centered education just became more affordable for all families. Families can apply now at any income level to receive awards varying in amounts from \$3,000 to \$7,000 to use towards tuition in our Catholic schools. Registration will be open February 1 through February 28. <https://www.ncseaa.edu/k12/opportunity/>. Contact Dawn Smith, dawn.smith@stfrancisraleigh.org.

Feed the Need - Our Feed the Need ministry provides temporary meal assistance to members of our community who are facing life transitions including job loss, new baby, grief, hospitalizations, illness etc. If you (or someone you know) would benefit from meals made with love during a life transition, please [click here](#) to complete the form, or email feedtheneedsfa@gmail.com and a ministry member will be in touch.

Stephen Ministry - The upcoming holidays can be filled with stress and anxiety. Stephen Ministers offer prayerful and emotional support by listening with their ears and hearts to your concerns. Email stephenministry@stfrancisraleigh.org or call 919-847-8205 x234 and leave a message. Contact Kathy Sales, kathy.sales@stfrancisraleigh.org.

Employment Opportunities:

Director of Liturgy/Sacraments.

See our website: <https://www.stfrancisraleigh.org/jobs/>

Contact Trish Adamkowski, trish.adamkowski@stfrancisraleigh.org

If you can't access information through the hyperlink because you do not use the internet, please call the office to get information. (919) 847-8205

Community Stories



The Christmas Crèche, 800 Years of Tradition and History

Mike Watson

Do you remember setting up a nativity as a child? Do you recall putting the stable, the shepherds, the animals, and Mary and Joseph in place but waiting until Christmas to put baby Jesus out? Did you know that this beloved Christmas tradition was started by our patron St. Francis 800 years ago this Christmas? Before 1223, the faithful heard about the birth of Christ in Mass as described by the priest in Latin, which many may not have understood. St. Francis asked a friend to borrow his donkey and ox and set up a nativity scene in a cave just outside Greccio, with a costumed person playing Mary and Joseph and perhaps a wax figurine as Jesus. Accounts differ on whether a figure represented Jesus. Father Jim Sabak, our resident Franciscan, said, "It wasn't a Christmas pageant, more of a representation of the birth, but without Christ because it wasn't proper to impersonate Jesus." However, other reports indicate Francis used a figurine to represent the baby Jesus. In either case, what is reported is that a miracle happened in Greccio that day. The infant Christ, whether a doll or an apparition, appeared in the crib to be cooing and moving. "People fell to the ground in wonder and amazement," according to reports, said Father Jim.

The crèche is an enduring tradition for the Franciscans, and it would be hard to argue that anyone embraces it more than our Father Jim. At last count, Father Jim has collected about 140 crèches; some 50 or so of them were gifted to him by friends and parishioners, and some he has purchased himself, but not all are 'full crèches.' "A 'full crèche,'" according to Jim, "is Mary, Joseph, Jesus, wise men, shepherds, a cow, a donkey, sheep, an angel, and stable/shelter;

about 20 pieces total." However, there is no limit, and many contain the whole tableau: shepherds, upwards of 50, all in different poses; thousands of sheep in various poses are available, as are pigs, steer, and elk; the animals can run the gauntlet. Says Jim, "A crèche builds from the culture where it was created to make it relevant for their culture. It can include geese, ducks, dogs, chickens, turkeys, and quail; the whole of creation." Jim jokingly laments, "I don't have one from Australia, so no platypus or kangaroos, but the tradition is just goats and sheep." Still, it takes an entire room to store his collection. He sets up about 15 or so in the house, then sets some up at the office at the Diocese, about 20-25 sets in total.

His biggest crèche has 120 pieces, and he has organized his collection by country and artist. Angela Trippi, a Sicilian artist, makes clay figures, giving each a unique face, which is his most expensive. Jim remembers, "I did a program with her on Francis and the nativity that she so enjoyed she sent the initial pieces to me. I then purchased follow-on pieces. They can run at about \$300 per piece! Fontanini is the one with the largest figures and is the one Father Jim gifted to St. Francis Parish on the 25th anniversary of his religious profession. It is Italian and modeled after Southern Germany and Northern Italy wood carvings. One of these artistic centers is Val Gardena, where Fontanini was born. This set has about 13 pieces made out of resin but based on the wooden carvings from the area. Why did he start? "I collect them for the art and for the fact that when you look at the nativity, you see the uniqueness," he says. "Mary, Joseph, and the kings are always similar,

but the townspeople add uniqueness to each set." He adds, "The best are the Santons of Provence France painted clay figures. You need to have a thief, a baker, an astonished man, a woman with a basket, and some people doing their jobs and not paying attention. Some are not recognizing what's happening, but it still happens to those people."

At St. Francis parish, we are celebrating the 'Centenary of Francis' from 2023 through 2026 in coordination with the Padre Pio Fraternity, the secular Franciscans in central North Carolina, one of the largest such groups in the country. This 'Centenary' marks several events in St. Francis's life that have their 800th anniversary over the next few years. This year, we commemorate the establishment of the 'Rule' for the Franciscans and the crèche at Greccio; next year marks the anniversary of the stigmata appearing on Francis; the canticle of the creatures in 2025; and then his death in 1226 the following year. We will honor these events in Francis's life here at St. Francis of Assisi Parish, starting this year with the 'Living Stations of the Crèche,' and you can participate! December 15th at 6:30, we will begin in the Labyrinth and move throughout campus. Jim Wahl, the parish Director of Liturgy and Music, will coordinate the event with the Secular Franciscans. It will be a processional event with 12 'stations' throughout campus, ending in the church. For those interested in helping, signups for each station began on November 15th and can be found on the 'St. Francis Serves' website. If you sign up for a station, the details for each station are in the description, but please note that each station may require multiple individuals to represent the characters at that station. Practice for the 'Stations' will be held on December 12th.

Following the 'Living Stations of the Crèche,' there will be refreshments and a display of over 50 of Father Jim's crèche collections in Fellowship Hall. What better way to commemorate our patron and celebrate the Christmas season than to participate in and attend a unique program offered by only St. Francis of Assisi parish? Join in the fun!



**St. Francis TV
Episode 35
Advent 2023**

Jim Wahl talks about the many celebrations happening at St. Francis during this Advent season. [Click here to watch.](#)



**Fr. Jim Invites You
[Click to watch](#)**



Volunteer Spotlight: Sarah Hoffman

"Faith calls me to serve my neighbors in need and recognize the gifts God has given me," says Sarah Hoffman, adding, "St. Francis offers many opportunities to do that with a commitment to community and family, and I embrace that whole-heartedly by including my family in acts of service with other parishioners." Family is essential to Sarah and her husband, David. Their three boys have always been included in their ministry volunteering because it defines, as she says, what our calling is as Catholic Christians.

"Seeing my children interact with those we serve has been the most rewarding aspect of service," she shares. The Helen Wright Women's Center is one of the ministries where the Hoffmans have volunteered for the past eight years. Serving meals at the center impacts those receiving the service but also profoundly affects the boys. "The women there are always welcoming, kind, and thankful that we are there to serve a simple meatloaf meal. They speak generously with my kids, encourage them, and are so warm," says Sarah. "My sons are touched deeply by these interactions."

There are many opportunities to serve at St. Francis, and there is something for everyone, including some for the youngest family members. To emphasize this point, Sarah says, "My youngest has been going to the women's shelter since

he was 2!" As a long-time and prolific volunteer, her advice to someone looking to get involved is simple: "Take a look at the long list of ministries on the website, pick one, and give it a try. Everyone I've met during a service activity has been more than kind and welcoming." Sarah and her family are serving in those ministries, which they resonate with, but she points out, "There are many needs to fill and options to serve. You can always find one that speaks to your heart and gifts."

Sarah continues her involvement at The Franciscan School as a parent and the chairperson of the School Advisory Council and at the Parish in several ministries, including Helen Wright and Brown Bag Ministry; she is thankful for the service opportunities provided by each. "The chance to serve is one of the primary drivers we felt drawn to St. Francis and The Franciscan School," she mentions. Continuing, she adds, "The fact that this parish offers so many ministries and areas to be of service made me know that this was where I could find community and like-minded people who want to use their gifts to further the kingdom of God. When we go out to a shelter or the senior apartment complex, people see us as Catholic Christians doing good work, proclaiming the gospel with our hands and our lives."

Volunteer Opportunities

Eucharist Ministers

We need Eucharist Ministers to join our EM to the Homebound Ministry. If you are an EM and would like to volunteer to bring communion to Homebound Parishioners or would like to find out more about this ministry please contact Shannon Hoffman.

shannon.hoffman@stfrancisraleigh.org.

Dec 24- Oak City Cares Christmas Eve Brunch

- Donations Needed See what last items are needed to provide meals for Oak City Cares guests as we share our gifts with those in need. Check date: Dec. 24. [Registration link](#). Contact Jim Caravello, jimcaravello23@gmail.com.

Funeral Mass Coordinators Needed

We are in great need of additional Mass Coordinators for funerals. The commitment is 1-2 times a month for approximately 2 hours to set up and assist during and after funerals. This is a daytime commitment that volunteers can do according to the needs of their schedules or calendars. All volunteers must be trained Eucharistic Ministers. No mass coordination experience is necessary, and 1-2 training sessions are provided. For more information please contact Dina DaRe at dina.dare@stfrancisraleigh.org or 919-847-8205 ext. 242.

Explore all the volunteer opportunities at St. Francis through St. Francis Serves



[Click here for a walkthrough on how to use our website for volunteer ministry and service, St. Francis Serves.](#)

Click here for [mobile training](#) on St. Francis Serves. Contact Dina DaRe at dina.dare@stfrancisraleigh.org.



There are many ways to give to St. Francis.

Use the QR code for e-giving made simple through Faith Direct.

To learn about all our giving options, [click here](#).