



**Pruning as a Metaphor for the Christian Life:**

“I am the vine and my Father is the vinegrower. He prunes away every barren branch, but the fruitful ones he trims clean to increase their yield.” This passage from John 15:1-2 came to mind as I was walking around the campus on Thursday and saw the dramatic change to several bushes that had been severely pruned back. We are blessed to have a very attractive campus thanks to the great work of Gregg Mason, a parishioner, and his wonderful staff. This is certainly the most beautiful church campus I’ve ever seen but our master landscaper decided it was time for some serious pruning.

It was startling to see some of our bushes cut back almost to the ground. The bushes look like sticks poking out of the ground with little vegetation. At first, I thought it was a bit much but then John 15:1-2 came to mind and I understood anew both the importance of pruning bushes, even dramatically at times, and how it is a metaphor for our life as Christians as I saw a sign near one area of pruned bushes that read “Shrub Rejuvenation in Progress.”

Our campus bushes have grown steadily and have lasted many years due to the meticulous care of our landscapers. But no matter how meticulously they have been cared for, the day comes when a serious pruning is required or else it becomes necessary to uproot entire bushes and plant new ones, a very costly expense, to keep things beautiful. It’s much

cheaper to do a serious pruning so the core of the bush can produce new growth and continue to live for many more years.

God prunes us in the same way, not because we are no longer bearing fruit but so we will bear even more fruit. All of us go through phases and experiences in life that resemble pruning. I have discovered that when I’ve gone through this, it is meant to be a way for me to grow in a way the Lord needs me to grow and mature in the ways of God. The first time this happened, I was fearful because I wasn’t sure that what was being cut away would ever grow back. It felt like a real loss (because it initially was). But I learned that the pruning was necessary in order to be rejuvenated and, in the process, I gained better clarity, purpose, and greater alignment with God’s will for me. Painful? Yes! But very worthwhile. As I’ve gone through subsequent prunings, I’ve learned increasingly not to look back at what I’ve lost because now I know that beautiful fruit awaits.

Sometimes the pruning includes cuts and wounds that I haven’t completely recovered from but the new life that has emerged is so wonderful that the scars have become an afterthought. As you see our shrub stumps around the campus, ponder how the Lord has pruned or is pruning you to bear greater fruit. While it will be painful, it will ultimately result in something much better than what existed before the pruning. The Lord promises you this!

-Fr. Michael

**April 14 - Coffee and Donuts**, 8:15am and 10:15am in Clare Fellowship Hall after Mass.

**April 14 - Always God’s Children**, 3:30-5:00pm. A confidential setting for those who identify as LGBTQ+, along with family and friends. Provides a safe place to pray together, share our experiences, and talk over our concerns. Contact Stacey Shine at [stacey.shine@stfrancisraleigh.org](mailto:stacey.shine@stfrancisraleigh.org).

**April 18 - Daily Mass Coffee Connections!** Join us Thursday, April 18 at 9:45am for Coffee after daily Mass in Padua. It will be a time to visit with fellow parishioners to celebrate as we continue to walk this journey of faith together as a community dedicated to our Franciscan heritage. Contact Stacey Shine, [stacey.shine@stfrancisraleigh.org](mailto:stacey.shine@stfrancisraleigh.org)

**April 19 - Women’s Ministry Line Dancing Social** 7:00-9:00pm  
Join Women’s Ministry for low-key line dancing lesson, laughs, snacks, and fellowship. Barbara Iland will teach us some fun dances with lots of time to practice and laugh. No experience or boots are required! Please bring something salty or sweet to share and your own water bottle. Questions? Contact [sfawomensministry@gmail.com](mailto:sfawomensministry@gmail.com). [Click to Register.](#)

**2023-2024 Fiscal Year Offertory Status**

	Week 41	YTD Through Wk 41	YE Total	
2023-2024	\$38,701.50	\$3,196,581.49	\$4,196,509.05	Goal
2022-2023	\$52,611.50	\$3,153,469.77	\$4,036,294.79	Actual
Difference	<b>(\$13,910.00)</b>	\$43,111.72	\$160,214.26	
% Increase	<b>-26.4%</b>	1.4%	4.0%	
Current Projected Shortfall:		<b>\$105,033.26</b>		

**Interesting Financial Factoid:** Did you know that our Parish has 5,400 registered families? Of that total, half the registered families make regular identifiable contributions to the Church. As Fr. David had envisioned, imagine what more we could do in “welcoming all who come to our doors, and reaching beyond our parish boundaries to serve the needy,” if we had the financial support of all our families.

Please note we have Text-To-Give and QR Code options for people who would like to make a one-time donation to the Church. Your support is appreciated by the ministries that serve our community. Thank You. [Please Click Here to Give](#)



Scan the QR code to give

**Text-to-Give:** From your smartphone screen, create a new message. Click the “To:” field and enter 919-629-1199. Enter the dollar amount then tap the link to complete your gift. Register your credit/debit card.

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

A click away If you are receiving a paper copy, visit the parish website at [www.stfrancisraleigh.org](http://www.stfrancisraleigh.org)

[Website](#) / [Realm](#) / [St. Francis Serves](#) / [Prayer Request](#) / [Listing of Prayers of the Faithful](#)  
[KBL series](#) / [Bulletins](#) / [Employment Opportunities](#) / [St. Francis TV](#) / [Giving](#) / [Feed the Need](#)  
[Staff](#) / [Parishioner Business Ads](#) / [Franciscan School](#) / [Preschool](#) / [All Ministries](#)



**April 20/21 - Migrant Ministry Clothing and Toiletry Drive**

Our Migrant Ministry is collecting toiletries and clean men's clothing including long sleeve shirts, pants, hats, belts, men's boots and shoes sizes 8-11. Toiletries include toothbrushes, toothpaste, razors, shaving cream, deodorant, laundry detergent, bar soap, clean towels & washcloths. Learn more about Migrant Ministry and drop off in Welcome Center. Contact MaryLou Holloway, [miholly10@gmail.com](mailto:miholly10@gmail.com).

**April 20/21 & 27/28 Our Lady of the Rosary Food Drive**

On April 20/21 weekend we need volunteers (families, adults & youth) after each Mass to handout bags with the Our Lady of the Rosary food donation list. On April 27/28 weekend we need volunteers (families, adults, youth) to collect and load a truck with the OLR food donations. Please bring your filled bags with you to mass on the weekend of April 27/28. [Click here to sign up to assist with bag distribution](#) at one of the weekends. [Click here to sign up to assist with food collection at the truck and to see the list of food needs for OLR Food Drive](#). Contact Mark Baumgartner, [markbaumga@gmail.com](mailto:markbaumga@gmail.com).

**April 21 - Earth Day Celebration!**

Join us in Fellowship Hall for our Earth Day Celebration after the 9am and 11:45am Masses. Show your care for our common home and learn methods to take an ecological approach at home. Stop by various topic tables and plant your own pollinator-friendly native plants. Volunteers are also needed! [Register here](#). Contact JaVon Hansknecht, [javon.hansknecht@stfrancisraleigh.org](mailto:javon.hansknecht@stfrancisraleigh.org).

**Apr 21 - Volunteer at the Earth Day Celebration!** 9:00am - 3:00pm.

Help run one of our Soil, Seed, or Water Stations at this year's Earth Day Celebration after the 9am or 11:45am Mass. There are two possible timeframes to assist us in Fellowship Hall and youth are welcome to volunteer as well. All sign-ups are on St. Francis Serves! Contact [javon.hansknecht@stfrancisraleigh.org](mailto:javon.hansknecht@stfrancisraleigh.org).

**April 21 - Recycle "Anything With a Plug"** 8:30-11:30am. Drop-off

electronics and home appliances in the Community Center parking lot to be recycled by "Anything With a Plug Recycling"! Help keep items out of the local landfill. Please check their website for items they accept and do not accept before bringing your items. Drop-off at traffic circle next to the Chapel. [Click here to see what is accepted](#). Contact Contact Person JaVon Hansknecht, [javon.hansknecht@stfrancisraleigh.org](mailto:javon.hansknecht@stfrancisraleigh.org).

**April 24: 50+ Adult Group Potluck Lunch** 11:30am. Join us in Clare

Fellowship Hall. If last names starts with, then bring: A thru C = Main Dish, D thru L = Dessert/Bread, M thru Z = Salad/Side Dish. Coffee, soda and water will be provided. Contact Pat Gerney, [pgerney@gmail.com](mailto:pgerney@gmail.com).

**April 28 - Volunteer Celebration**, 10-11:30am.

For all you do throughout the year, it's time to tell you that we are so grateful that you're here. Join us after 9am Mass in Fellowship Hall to celebrate ALL of our Volunteers. All Are Welcome | No Registration Required. Contact: [Stacey.Shine@stfrancisraleigh.org](mailto:Stacey.Shine@stfrancisraleigh.org).

**Parishioner Owned Businesses Ad Page**

Support our local parishioner-owned businesses

To advertise email: [diogenes.ruiz@stfrancisraleigh.org](mailto:diogenes.ruiz@stfrancisraleigh.org)

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

**Through April 30 - DivorceCare Spring Series**, 6:00-7:30pm.

Don't go through the pain of separation or divorce alone. Join the DivorceCare group where you'll find caring people who understand and provide practical counsel. <https://www.divorcecare.org/groups/178060> Contact Bill Morgan, [dejanuts@yahoo.com](mailto:dejanuts@yahoo.com).

**May 11- Women's Ministry Nature Immersion and Hike**,

9:00-11:30am. Join Women's Ministry for a nature immersion experience, also known as an "awe walk," where we will connect with God through nature and one another. Participants are welcome to stay after for a hike and some fellowship. Register in Realm. Contact [sfa.womens.ministry@gmail.com](mailto:sfa.womens.ministry@gmail.com) for more information. [Register here](#).

**May 17 - Altar Server Celebration**, 5:30-8:00pm.

Join us as we celebrate our current Amazing Altar Servers with an evening of fun games, awards, pizza, prizes and ICE CREAM!! We will also invite this amazing group of youth to explore other service opportunities within our Faith Community. [Register here](#). Contact John Price, [johnprice25@hotmail.com](mailto:johnprice25@hotmail.com).

**June 1- July 28: Summer Men's 18+ Adult Basketball League**

This is open to Men age 18 or older. Registration is TEAM BASED. Players will form their own teams and submit a team registration. There will also be the ability to register as a free agent. Games will be held on Saturdays and Sundays in June and July. [Info and registration](#). Contact [Mary.Arleth@stfrancisraleigh.org](mailto:Mary.Arleth@stfrancisraleigh.org).

**June 3-July 25: Youth Volleyball League Registration.**

Registration is open for Coed League for children of all skill levels - rising 3rd graders through rising 9th graders. Teams have an hour practice on Mon. or Wed. Games are held on Thurs. nights. For more Information and to Register: <https://www.stfrancisraleigh.org/athletics/> Contact: [Mary.Arleth@stfrancisraleigh.org](mailto:Mary.Arleth@stfrancisraleigh.org).

**June 10-14, June 17-21, July 8-12, July 15-19, July 22-26**

**Camp Francis** is our popular summer camp, and has lots of cool opportunities in athletics, technologies, arts and various enrichment areas! Camps are half day or full day based on age for the 2024-2025 school year. (Rising K-Rising 8th grade) Contact Ashley Watson, [Ashley.Watson@stfrancisraleigh.org](mailto:Ashley.Watson@stfrancisraleigh.org) Contact Phone 919-847-8205 ext. 444 Registration Link: <https://www.stfrancisraleigh.org/camp-francis/>

**Camp Francis Explorers Counselors in Training**

An opportunity for teens (rising 9th-12th grade) interested in developing leadership skills and working with children. They will work with other C.I.T.s and Camp Staff. They are to look at themselves as role models for the campers they will be working with. For information and to apply. Contact Ashley Watson, [Ashley.Watson@stfrancisraleigh.org](mailto:Ashley.Watson@stfrancisraleigh.org).

**June 17 - 21 Mercy Camp**

8:00am-3:00pm . Rising 6th – 9th graders! Come join us for Mercy

**July 8 - 12 Mission Mercy**

8:30am-9:00pm. Rising 10th graders through College Freshmen! Join us for Mission Mercy!

For more information and to register for Mercy Camp or Mission Mercy visit: <https://www.stfrancisraleigh.org/service-camps/> Contact Becky Cawley, [becky.cawley@stfrancisraleigh.org](mailto:becky.cawley@stfrancisraleigh.org).

**Employment Opportunities:**

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

Contact Trish Adamkowski, [trish.adamkowski@stfrancisraleigh.org](mailto:trish.adamkowski@stfrancisraleigh.org)

# Faith & Poverty

A BIBLICAL RESPONSE

Join a JustFaith  
Small Group!



Explore God's call as we seek to answer:

1. What tools does my Catholic faith have to offer regarding huge questions around poverty and injustice?
2. In light of poverty and other forms of human suffering, what is the Good News of the Gospel?

**"Faith and Poverty: A Biblical Response"** groups will meet for two hours weekly, for eight weeks total, in a group of 8 to 15 people. You are invited to a lively and challenging process of spiritual transformation through prayer, discussion, books, videos, a retreat, and immersion.

**All groups will run from the week of May 6 through the week of June 24.**

Click a link below to join its Realm group!

[Mondays, 4pm-6pm \[virtual\]](#)

[Tuesdays, 7pm-9pm \[virtual\]](#)

[Wednesdays, 6:30pm-8:30pm \[in-person\]](#)

[Thursdays, 10am-12pm \[in-person\]](#)

[Thursdays, 1pm-3pm \[virtual\]](#)

**In-person groups will meet on our parish campus. All participants will be responsible for purchasing their own [program books](#).**

## FROM FRANCIS TO FRANCIS: A SPIRITUAL JOURNEY TO ASSISI & ROME

Under the Spiritual Leadership of: **Msgr. John A. Wall**  
& **Rev. John M. DeGuzman**

Group Coordinator: Ms. M.J. Bettman

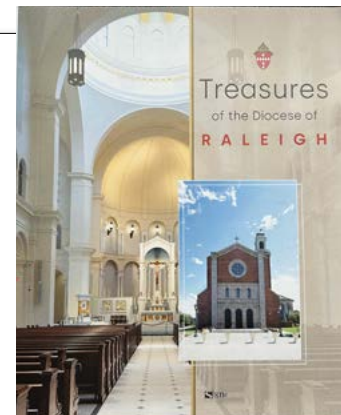
**10-Days: October 22 to 31, 2024**

*Land Only Itinerary – Airfare Not Included*



Click image for more information / Email: [2024rometrip@gmail.com](mailto:2024rometrip@gmail.com)

**Upon the advice of our landscaping contractor** who keeps our campus looking so lovely, and due to the age and shape of some of our older shrubbery, during the next several weeks "rejuvenation pruning", also called renewal pruning, will be taking place. This involves cutting some shrubs almost down to the ground sometimes leaving only 6 to 24 inches. Generally done every 3 – 5 years, this extreme method of pruning can rejuvenate an overgrown or misshapen shrub. Although the shrubs will temporarily lose their present shape and size, the process is meant to ultimately lengthen the life, health, and appearance of the shrubbery.



"Treasures of the Diocese of Raleigh" is a 325 page collectable volume commemorating our Diocese 100th Anniversary, featuring St. Francis and the history of Catholicism in North. [Click here to learn more.](#)



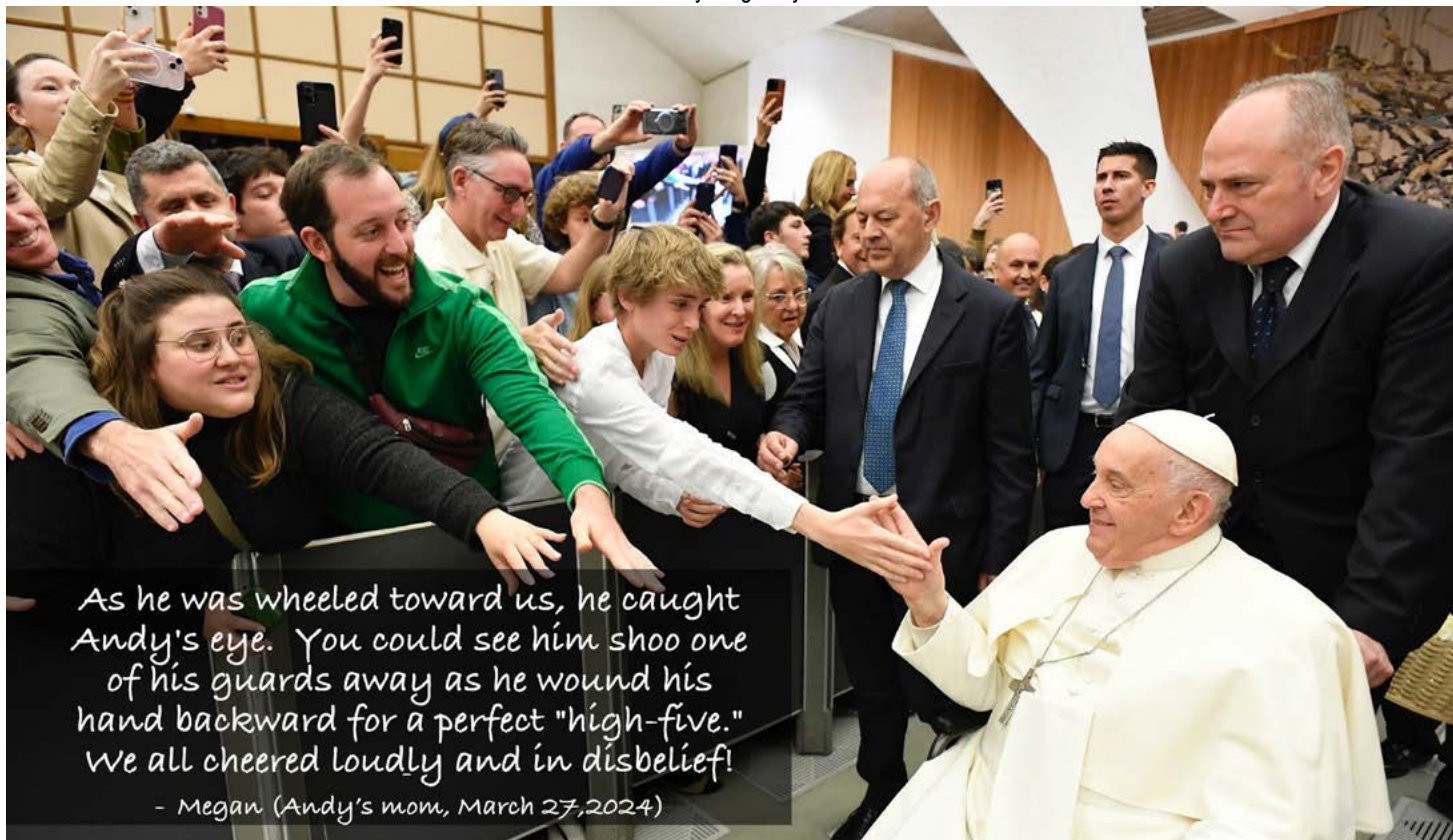
## Mercy Camp June 17 – 21

*Rising 6th – 9th graders! Come join us for Mercy Camp! In fun and meaningful ways, you'll do direct service to folks in need in our community and learn about our Christian call to loving service while making new friends! You won't want to miss it!*

*For more information and to register visit: <https://www.stfrancisraleigh.org/service-camps/>*

# Filled with Faith and the Joy of the Moment

by Megan Lyman



We began planning our trip in Fall 2023, and our guide scheduled our Vatican Day for Thursday. When we met, I requested to change to Wednesday so we could go to the public blessing. When I said I would phone in to get tickets, they understood how important it was for us to go. I was so excited to go during Holy Week.

Everyone packed something special to wear to the Blessing. Andy had selected a linen shirt he had purchased in Murano a few days before. We woke up very early on March 27 to meet our guide at 6am. When we arrived the Vatican by 7am, it was very cold and rainy. Because of the rain, they held the blessing inside, rather than outside (a first stroke of luck). We were given our precious yellow tickets and moved through security. We found seats on the aisle about 6 rows back (a second stroke of luck). Our Pope

entered from the side at about 9am, taking great effort to walk to his seat. The crowd was exuberant and joyful. The blessing was beautiful. There were interpreters of seven languages (eight with Italian) and the crowd was so excited when they heard the Word in their language.

The reading was 1 Corinthians 13: 1-7 (I believe). And the Pope's reflection was beautiful. We all said the Our Father together and the blessing concluded (it was only about 40 minutes). Our Pope then sat in his chair and met all of the people with special requests across from us. There were newly married couples and all manner of people. He took his time with all, giving Easter candy eggs to the children. When they began to wheel him over to our side, it was clear that he was not going to be spending time with many people. He had stopped shaking hands and

receiving gifts from people. As he was wheeled toward us, he caught Andy's eye. You could see him shoo one of his guards away as he wound his hand backward for a perfect "high-five." We all cheered loudly and in disbelief! Andy was shocked and we stood there a good while before we packed up our things and went back out into the rain. Filled with faith and the joy of the moment.

Andy is our fourth child. He truly embodies the phrase "to know him is to love him." He has such a positive energy and charisma that has always been felt by those around him (much to the chagrin of his siblings and even his parents sometimes!). Attending Cross Train Faith Formation on Sundays is never a chore for him. He thrives with the fellowship and is a faith filled young man.

## Bishop's Annual Appeal

The following are the BAA totals for our Parish as reported by the Diocese

	2024 Campaign (4/4/24)	2023 Campaign (3/29/23)
Goal:	\$473,612	\$473,565
Pledge Total:	\$391,695 82.7%	\$378,846 80.0%
Received Total:	\$346,449 73.2%	\$329,458 69.6%
Participating Families:	931 16.7%	932 16.9%
Total Families:	5,400	5,500
To-Go:	\$81,917	

2024 BAA Goal is \$473,612



Go to [givetobaa.org](http://givetobaa.org) and follow the prompts to make a one-time donation, set up a pledge or become a SUSTAINER with a recurring gift. Make sure to select Saint Francis of Assisi as your parish affiliation. [Click here to give](#). Contact Stacey Shine, [stacey.shine@stfrancisraleigh.org](mailto:stacey.shine@stfrancisraleigh.org).