# The Fourth Sunday of Advent –Christmas Eve

## Mass Intention

**SUNDAY, December 24–Fourth Sunday of Advent Christmas Eve**
8:00 A.M. For the People of St. Francis
9:30 A.M. The Kos Family
11:00 A.M. Dr. Arthur Gualtieri
12:30 P.M. Rino Del Carro
Calogero Giuseppe Filomena
Nancy Manganaro

4:00 P.M. Fabrizio Yepez

6:00 P.M. For the People of St. Francis

**MONDAY, December 25– The Nativity of the Lord**
8:00 A.M. Christmas Novena
9:30 A.M. Ivan Zgaljic
11:00 A.M. Cesar Hernandez Sr.
12:30 P.M. Antonio Bruno
Armando Sacramone
Piraneo Angela Carmela
Graci Gerlando
Laura Maffei
Nancy Manganaro
Benedetto Iccari

**TUESDAY, December 26–Saint Stephen**
9:00 A.M. Christmas Novena

**WEDNESDAY, December 27– Saint John, Apostle**
9:00A.M. Christmas Novena

**THURSDAY, December 28– The Holy Innocents**
9:00 A.M. Christmas Novena

**FRIDAY, December 29 – Saint Thomas Becket**
9:00 A.M. Christmas Novena

**SATURDAY, December 30– Christmas Octave**
9:00 A.M. Purgatorial Society
Christmas Novena
John McCann Jr.
Lee McCann
Emil Sorrento

5:00P.M. For the People of St. Francis

**SUNDAY, December 31– The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph**
8:00 A.M. Christmas Novena
9:30 A.M. Maria Messina
11:00 A.M. Dr. Arthur Gualtieri
12:30 P.M. Rino Del Carro
Antonio Bruno

## Today's Readings

### Fourth Sunday of Advent-Christmas Eve

2 Samuel 7:1-15, 8b-12, 14a, 16
Romans 16:25-27
Luke 1:26-38

## Readings for the Week

**MONDAY:** Isaiah 52:7-10
Hebrews 2:1-6
John 1:1-185:17-26

**TUESDAY:** Acts 6:8-10; 7:54-59
Matthew 10:17-22

**WEDNESDAY** 1 John 1:1-4
John 20:1a, 2-8

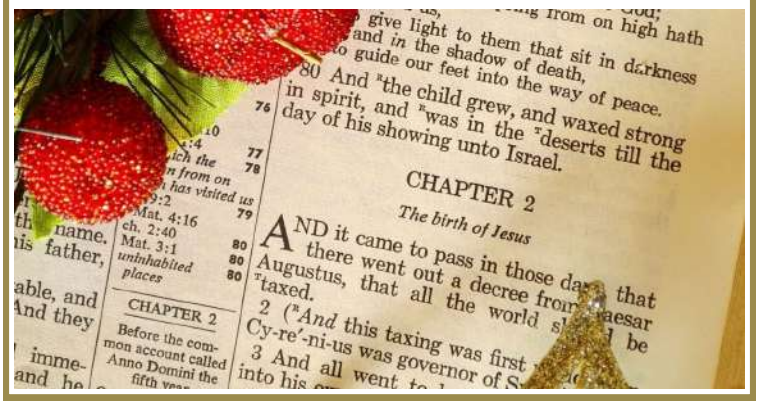
**THURSDAY:** 1 John 1:5-2:2
Matthew 2:13-18

**FRIDAY:** 1 John 2:3-11
Luke 2:22-35

**SATURDAY:** 1 John 2:12-17
Luke 2:36-40

### The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph

Genesis 15:1-6; 21:1-3
Hebrews 11:8, 11-12, 17-19
Luke 2:22-40



# FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

My Dear Parishioners,

For some people, Christmas has become merely a secular holiday, one filled with bright lights, lots of gifts, and good wishes, but nothing spiritual. Decorations are strung about and holiday music is played for weeks in advance to help people get into the Christmas spirit. Retail stores offer all sorts of sales to entice customers to purchase that perfect gift. Parties are held in anticipation of the big day.

Christmas arrives. Family and friends gather to wish one another well, to open gifts, and to share a festive meal, but what happens when the day is over? What are the fruits of all the decorating, shopping, cooking, and visiting? If there is no faith element to one's Christmas joy, one could easily find oneself broke, feeling let down, and exhausted.

When we move beyond the secular understanding of this day and embrace the real reason for the season, we will celebrate the birth of Christ with a sense of awe and joy. The Christ child, comes down from heaven, and fills our hearts with hope and wonder. Each time we celebrate Christmas we are drawn ever more deeply into the mystery of salvation in Christ.

The beginning of today's Gospel eloquently describes the nature of this mystery. The Word of God, the Son of God, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, through whom all things were created, became ***flesh!*** The King of kings was not born in a palace or a mansion; rather, he was born in a manger in Bethlehem into a family of humble means. Who would have ever thought that the Savior of the world would have a carpenter as his foster father? God's ways are truly not our ways!

Our celebration of Christ's birth today invites us to open ourselves more deeply to God's majestic plan of salvation. Jesus, born an innocent and beautiful baby to the Blessed Virgin Mary, is the world's true light. As strong as our faith may be, there is always room for growth. There are always areas of our lives hidden in the darkness of sin which need to transformed by the love and light of Christ.

We can claim Christ as our Light by inviting him to abide in our hearts. We make room for Christ in our hearts by fostering a close relationship with him in prayer, by reflecting upon Sacred Scripture, by receiving the sacraments, and by sharing his light and love to others in the world. The more room we make in our hearts for Jesus, the more we will experience the blessings of peace, joy, and the fulfillment that is bestowed upon the faithful. There is no greater gift that God could have given the world than his son, Jesus. May each day of our lives proclaim glad tidings of the King of kings.

Merry Christmas to you and your families!

***All God's Blessings,***
***Msgr. Maresca***

# Pope John XXIII's Christmas Prayer

O sweet Child of Bethlehem, grant that we may share with all our hearts in this profound mystery of Christmas. Put into the hearts of men and women this peace for which they sometimes seek so desperately and which you alone can give to them. Help them to know one another better, and to live as brothers and sisters, children of the same Father. Reveal to them also your beauty, holiness and purity. Awaken in their hearts love and gratitude for your infinite goodness. Join them all together in your love. And give us your heavenly peace. Amen.

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## *Tuesday, December 26, 2023*
## *The Feast of*
## *Saint Stephen*

"As the number of disciples continued to grow, the Greek-speaking Christians complained against the Hebrew-speaking Christians, saying that their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution. So the Twelve called together the community of the disciples and said, 'It is not right for us to neglect the word of God to serve at table. Brothers, select from among you seven reputable men, filled with the Spirit and wisdom, whom we shall appoint to this task, whereas we shall devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.' The proposal was acceptable to the whole community, so they chose Stephen, a man filled with faith and the Holy Spirit…" (Acts 6:1-5). Acts of the Apostles says that Stephen was a man filled with grace and power, who worked great wonders among the people. Certain Jews, members of the Synagogue of Roman Freedmen, debated with Stephen, but proved no match for the wisdom and spirit with which he spoke. They persuaded others to make the charge of blasphemy against him. He was seized and carried before the Sanhedrin. In his speech, Stephen recalled God's guidance through Israel's history, as well as Israel's idolatry and disobedience. He then claimed that his persecutors were showing this same spirit. "…you always oppose the holy Spirit; you are just like your ancestors" (Acts 7:51b). Stephen's speech brought anger from the crowd. "But he, filled with the holy Spirit, looked up intently to heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God, and he said, 'Behold, I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.' …They threw him out of the city, and began to stone him. …As they were stoning Stephen, he called out, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.' …'Lord, do not hold this sin against them'" (Acts 7:55-56, 58a, 59, 60b).Stephen died as Jesus did: falsely accused, brought to unjust condemnation because he spoke the truth fearlessly. He died with his eyes trustfully fixed on God, and with a prayer of forgiveness on his lips.

## *Wednesday, December 27, 2023*
## *The Feast of*
## *Saint John, Apostle & Evangelist*

The vocation of John and his brother James is stated very simply in the Gospels: Jesus called them; they followed. For the three former fishermen—Peter, James and John—that faith was to be rewarded by a special friendship with Jesus. They alone were present at the Transfiguration, the raising of the daughter of Jairus and the agony in Gethsemane. John's friendship was even more special. Tradition assigns to him the Fourth Gospel. John's own Gospel refers to him as "the disciple whom Jesus loved" (see John 13:23; 19:26; 20:2), the one who reclined next to Jesus at the Last Supper, and the one to whom Jesus gave the honor of caring for his mother. Jesus gave James and John the nickname, "sons of thunder." While it is not known exactly what this meant, a clue is given in two incidents. In the first, as *Matthew* tells it, their mother asked that they might sit in the places of honor in Jesus' kingdom—one on his right hand, one on his left. When Jesus asked them if they could drink the cup he would drink and be baptized with his baptism of pain, they answered, "We can!" Jesus said that they would indeed share his cup, but that sitting at his right hand was not his to give. It was for those to whom it had been reserved by the Father. On the first Easter, Mary Magdalene "ran and went to Simon Peter and to the other disciples and told them, 'They have taken the Lord from the tomb, and we don't know where they put him'" (John 20:2). John recalls, Peter ran side by side, but then "the other disciple ran faster than Peter and arrived at the tomb first" (John 20:4b). He did not enter, but waited for Peter and let him go in first. John was with Peter when the first great miracle after the Resurrection took place—the cure of the man crippled from birth—which led to their spending the night in jail together. John is traditionally considered the author also of three New Testament letters and the Book of Revelation. His Gospel is a very personal account. He sees the glorious and divine Jesus already in the incidents of his mortal life. At the Last Supper, John's Jesus speaks as if he were already in heaven. John's is the Gospel of Jesus' glory.

## *Thursday, December 28, 2023*
## *The Feast of*
## *The Holy Innocents*

Herod "the Great," king of Judea, was unpopular with his people because of his connections with the Romans and his religious indifference. He was insecure and fearful of any threat to his throne. He was a tyrant capable of extreme brutality. He killed his wife, his brother, and his sister's two husbands, to name only a few. Matthew 2:1-18 tells this story: Herod was "greatly troubled" when astrologers from the east came asking the about "the newborn king of the Jews," whose star they had seen. They were told that the Jewish Scriptures named Bethlehem as the place where the Messiah would be born. Herod cunningly told them to report back to him so that he could also "do him homage." They found Jesus, offered him their gifts, and warned by an angel, avoided Herod on their way home. Jesus escaped to Egypt. Herod became furious and "ordered the massacre of all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity two years old and under." The horror of the massacre and the devastation of the mothers and fathers led Matthew to quote Jeremiah: "A voice was heard in Ramah, sobbing and loud lamentation; Rachel weeping for her chidren…" (Matthew 2:18). Rachel was the wife of Jacob (Israel). She is pictured as weeping at the place where the Israelites were herded together by the conquering Assyrians for their march into captivity. The Holy Innocents are few in comparison to the genocide and abortion of our day. But even if there had been only one, we recognize the greatest treasure God put on the earth—a human person, destined for eternity, and graced by Jesus' death and resurrection.

## Prayer for Holy Innocents

We remember today, O God, the slaughter of the holy innocents of Bethlehem by King Herod. Receive, we pray, into the arms of your mercy all innocent victims; and by your great might frustrate the designs of evil tyrants and establish your rule of justice, love and peace; through Jesus Christ ur Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the union of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

**Remember in your prayers all those in our parish who are sick, that they may find health and comfort:**

**Jack Orlando, Steven Joyce, Judy Hanley-Brickner, John Wrenn, Augustin Cisneros, Thomas Leiter, James Nunez, Vincent Wytak, John & Carol Ross, Jeffrey Hyans, Marie LoVolpe, Jessica St. Preux, Al Ciani, Alesha Moses, Nancy McCaffrey, Connie Fontana Christopher Wojtalik, Theresa Pacheco, William Goss, Luke Pacheco, Vincenza Papa, Jim Schneggenburger, Anthony Criscuolo, Samantha O'Sullivan, Marilyn Miller, Pat Gravino, John Carmody, Rosario Duran, Vivian Papa, Joel Steinmann, Anna Governali, Tim Graham, Antonio Postiglione, Mario Tamburello, Christopher Araimo, Charles Principato, Jim Kreitler, Humberto Cordova, John Schakir, Margaret Culhane, Benedicto Randazzo, Angelo Niakas, Peter Lopez & Catherine Caravana, Alex Human, Carol Simonsem and Aubrey Madden**

**Also remember in your prayers all the deceased of the Parish. Please remember to continue to pray for vocations to the priesthood, religious life, diaconate, and married life.**

Pray for Vocations

## *The Fourth Sunday of Advent*

## *December 24, 2023*

**"He gave power to become children of God"**

Consider a vocation as a priest, deacon or in the consecrated life.

Contact the Vocation Office at (718) 827-2454 or email:vocations@diobrook.org

## Memorials for the Week of December 24, 2023

### *ALTAR CANDLES*

**In Loving Memory of**
***Giacinta Ciancio***

**Requested by:**
***Rosa, Tino & Josephine Del Greco***
***1st Anniversary in Heaven***

## *FOCUS:*

### *God is the font of all blessings and salvation.*

Today's readings make evident to goodness of the Lord and that He is the source of all blessings. The Lord promises to build a house for David-one that will last forever. And from the linage of David comes Jesus, God Himself, to dwell among us. He is our shelter, our bodies are His temple, and His kingdom endures forever. We will soon celebrate the feast of His Incarnation and Nativity, while awaiting still, with joyful hope, the time He will come again.

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament takes place before the 9:00AM Mass. The Blessed Sacrament will be exposed at 8:00AM each morning, Monday through Saturday, giving parishioners an opportunity for private prayer before the Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. At 8:30AM the rosary will be prayed by parishioners before the Blessed Sacrament. At 8:50AM the Blessed Sacrament will be reposed. Jesus calls us to perseverance in prayer. "Pray without ceasing." "Watch and pray." Eucharistic adoration helps us discover the Real Presence of Christ.

What a wonderful way to begin our day praying before the Blessed Sacrament in silence or praying the Holy Rosary.

Please make every effort to take advantage of this time with the Lord. We are living in challenging times and we all need the Lord to strengthen our faith and give us the courage to live each day.

*"The angel said, 'Do not be afraid. Look, I bring you news of great joy, a joy to be shared by all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; He is Christ the Lord."*
*(Luke 2:10-11)*

# The Priests, Deacons & Staff of St. Francis of Assisi wish all our parishioners a Blessed Christmas.

## ADVENT GIVING TREE

**Thank you to all who participated in this years Advent Giving Tree project. We received 500 Gifts to give to the programs who asked for help this Christmas.**

**I want to thank Marybeth, Kelsey & Nick, Kara Clouss, Elianna P., Liam P., Fiona L., Colette L., Louis M., Rocco and Deacon Nick for packing up all the gifts and distributing them to the organizations who came this past weekend to pick-up.**

**Thank God we as a parish have been blessed to bring Christmas cheer to those who have little or nothing.**

**May the Lord bless us for our efforts.**

Christmas Flower Envelopes can be returned in any collection. Please be sure to write the name(s) legibly. The list of names will be printed in the Bulletin. Thank you.

Christmas Mass Remembrance Envelopes can be returned in any collection. Please mark the envelope with the name(s) of those you want remembered, living or deceased, in the Christmas Novena of Masses. Those envelopes will be placed on the altar for the Novena of Masses.

Mass Attendance for the
Weekend of December 16th and 17th, 2023:

| | |
|---|---|
| 5:00pm | 98 |
| 8:00am | 43 |
| 9:30am | 141 |
| 11:00am | 95 |
| 12:30pm | 50 |

Total in attendance: 427

## ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI SCRIPTURE STUDY

**"The Words I have spoken to you are spirit and life." John 6:64**

***Dear SFA Friends and Family***

The Scripture Study group will be on winter recess until January when we will begin a new study. The new study will be announced at a later date.

**"Glory to God in the Highest and Peace to His people on earth" (Luke 2:14)**

## *MERRY CHRISTMAS*

Wishing you Joy and Peace.

The Gospel readings and study will be conducted using the Little Rock Scripture Study program. Study booklets will be provided.

If you are interested in joining the study group or would like further information, please contact us through The Rectory at **(718) 728-7801.** Please be sure to leave your name and contact information.

**Come Join US**
Grow in Knowledge and Love of Scripture.

All are Invited … **ALL ARE WELCOME!**

## *Parish Mission Statement*

***St. Francis of Assisi Parish is a Catholic community that is centered in Jesus, gathers in worship and witnesses the Gospel message. The parish values and welcomes each person's gift of time, talent and treasure. As a faith-filled community, we are committed to minister to the spiritual, educational and material needs of all people.***

## *St. Francis of Assisi Parish Weekly Offering*

Thank you for your continued generosity of giving each week. Your weekly offering helps us pay our monthly bills.

| | |
|---|---|
| **Sunday 12/17/23:** | **$3,520.00** |
| ***My Gift to My Church*** | ***$5,405.00*** |

*School parents must use church envelopes.*

CATHOLIC CHARITIES Brooklyn & Queens
ESTABLISHED 1899

The second collection on Christmas Day is for Catholic Charities of Brooklyn & Queens.
Please be as generous as your means allow.

Thank you for your continued support.

## *Parish Office Schedule*

*Saturday, December 23rd–9:00AM to 2:00PM*
*Sunday, December 24th–Closed*
*Monday December25th –Closed*
*Tuesday, December 26th –Closed*

*The office will reopen on Wednesday, December 27th at 9:00AM*

*Please Note: There will be no evening hours on December 27th and 28th.*

*Saturday, December 30th–9:00AM to 2:00PM*
*Sunday, December 31st–Closed*
*Monday, January 1st–Closed*

*The Rectory will reopen on Tuesday, January 2nd at 9:00am.*
*Regular office hours will resume on Tuesday, January 2, 2024.*

Annual Catholic Appeal 2023
DIOCESE OF BROOKLYN

Thank you to all who gave to this years Annual Catholic Appeal. Our goal was $41,679 and as of Monday, December 18th, we have pledges amounting to $42,467. Paid is $40,356.72. this amount is from 106 families in our parish.
I realize everyone has financial responsibilities, but your generosity to support this appeal is truly a sign of your love for our parish.
Also, all monies received over goal will come back to our parish and placed in the operating account of the parish.
Please know you are remembered each day in prayer.

***Msgr. Maresca***

## *Welcome to Our Church*

If you wish to register as a parishioner of St. Francis of Assisi Church, please stop by the Rectory Office during regular business hours. There you can pick up a census card which can be filled out at that time or returned by mail or in the Sunday Collection Basket. You can even download the census card on line. Just check our website at: ***stfrancisofassisiastoria.org***
You will then begin to receive weekly offering envelopes.

## *Associated Vincentian Charities of Brooklyn*

For each car, truck or van, running or not, The Associated Vincentian Charities of Brooklyn will give back to St. Francis of Assisi $50/100 per vehicle. Maybe you don't have a vehicle, but a family member, friend or neighbor has an old or neglected vehicle in their driveway that they would like to donate.

Call the Society of St. Vincent de Paul at **(718) 491-2525.**

# Worship Schedule

***Confessions*** **-**

Saturday, December 23rd
4:00-4:30PM

***Mass Schedule*** **-**

Saturday, December 23rd
9:00AM & 5:00PM

***Christmas Eve***-Sunday, December 24th

8:00AM, 9:30AM, 11:00AM & 12:30PM (Italian)
4:00PM ~ Family Mass
6:00PM ~ Christmas Mass

***The Nativity of the Lord***-Monday, December 25th

8:00AM, 9:30AM, 11:00AM & 12:30PM (Italian)

***New Year's Eve***-Sunday, December 31st

8:00AM, 9:30AM, 11:00AM & 12:30PM (Italian)

**NO** 5:00PM Mass

***Mary, The Holy Mother of God*** -Monday, January 1st

9:00AM & 11:00AM

# CALENDAR OF EVENTS

## THIS WEEK

### December 24—December 30

***Sunday, December 24***
**Mass Times**
8:00AM
9:30AM
11:00AM
12:30PM (Italian)
4:00PM Christmas Eve Pageant & Family Mass
6:00PM Christmas Vigil

***Monday, December 25***
**Blessed Christmas to All**
**Mass Times**
8:00AM
9:30AM
11:00AM
12:30PM (Italian)

***Tuesday, December 26***

***Wednesday, December 27***

***Thursday, December 28***
10:00-11:30AM-Legion of Mary

***Friday, December 29***

***Saturday, December 30***

## NEXT WEEK

### December 31—January 6

***Sunday, December 31***
**Mass Times**
8:00AM
9:30AM
11:00AM
12:30PM (Italian)
**NO VIGIL MASS**

***Monday, January 1***
**Rectory Office & Academy Closed**
**Mass Times**
9:00AM
11:00AM

***Tuesday, January 2***
6:30PM AA Meeting

***Wednesday, January 3***

***Thursday, January 4***
10:00-11:30AM-Legion of Mary
6:00PM-I.A.C.A.

***Friday, January 5***
9:00AM School Mass

***Saturday, January 6***
9:00AM Anointing Mass
6:00PM Youth Group Meeting

# Come Home to St. Francis of Assisi for Christmas

JOIN OUR PARISH FAMILY AS WE CELEBRATE MASS EACH WEEKEND

Masses: Vigil on Saturdays 5pm

Sunday: 8am, 9:30am, 11:00am, 12:30pm (Italian)

*Let us worship together and give thanks and praise to God.*

Colon-Msgr. Higgins Council 309 Knights of Columbus generously presented the school with a new 8 foot American Flag set.

The SFA Community thanks the Knights for their kindness and support!