# Third Sunday of Advent

## Mass Intentions

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|---|---|
| ***Sunday, Dec. 14*** | *Third Sunday of Advent* |
| *8:00AM* | **Holy Name Mass** |
| *9:30AM* | **Mary & Nick Pandone** |
| *11:00AM* | **Giuseppe Carlino** |
| | **Eduardo Cubillos** |
| | **Mary Ellen De Simone** |
| | **Brigid Xanthos** |
| | **Jerzy Masluk** |
| | **Terrance McLaughlin** |
| | **Antonio & Angela Iadovito** |
| | **Liberato & Elenora Manocchio** |
| ***Monday, Dec. 15*** | *Reconciliation Monday* |
| *9:00AM* | **Marie Salamone** |
| ***Tuesday, Dec. 16*** | *Weekday* |
| *9:00AM* | **Joseph Salamone** |
| ***Wednesday, Dec. 17*** | *Weekday* |
| *9:00AM* | **Mary Di Pietro** |
| ***Thursday, Dec. 18*** | *Weekday* |
| *9:00AM* | **Victor Salamone** |
| ***Friday, Dec. 19*** | *Weekday* |
| *9:00AM* | **Joseph Ewy** |
| ***Saturday, Dec. 20*** | *Blessed Virgin Mary* |
| *9:00AM* | **Purgatorial Society** |
| *5:00PM* | **Raymond Loud** |
| ***Sunday, Dec. 21*** | *Fourth Sunday of Advent* |
| *8:00AM* | **For the People of St. Francis Of Assisi** |
| *9:30AM* | **John Richinick** |
| *11:00AM* | **Margaret & Amelio Mignanelli** |
| | **Fabrizio Yepez** |
| | **Cesar Fernandez** |
| | **Victoria Marino** |

## Today's Readings

### Third Sunday of Advent

***Isaiah 35:1-6a,10***
***James 5:7-10***
***Matthew 11:2-11***

When John the Baptist heard in prison what the Messiah was doing, he sent word by his disciples and said to him, "Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?" Jesus answered them, "Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them. And blessed is anyone who takes no offense at me."

As they went away, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John: "What did you go out into the wilderness to look at? A reed shaken by the wind? What then did you go and see? Someone dressed in soft robes? Look, those who wear soft robes are in royal palaces. What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. This is the one about whom it is written, 'See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you.' Truly I tell you, among those born of women no one has arisen greater than John the Baptist; yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he."

### Readings For The Week

| | |
|---|---|
| ***Monday*** | ***Numbers 24:2-7,15-17a*** |
| | ***Matthew 21:23-27*** |
| ***Tuesday*** | ***Zephaniah 3:1-2,9-13*** |
| | ***Matthew 21:28-32*** |
| ***Wednesday*** | ***Genesis 49:2,8-10*** |
| | ***Matthew 1:1-17*** |
| ***Thursday*** | ***Jeremiah 23:5-8*** |
| | ***Matthew 1:18-25*** |
| ***Friday*** | ***Judges 13:2-7,24-25a*** |
| | ***Luke 1:5-25*** |
| ***Saturday*** | ***Isaiah 7:10-14*** |
| | ***Luke 1:26-38*** |

### Fourth Sunday of Advent

***Isaiah 7:10-14***
***Romans 1:1-7***
***Matthew 1:18-24***

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

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

Awyn Profit
Jack Orlando
Steven Joyce
John Wrenn
Augustin Cisneros
James Nunez
Vincent Wytak
John & Carol Ross
Jeffrey Hyans
Marie LoVolpe
Jessica St. Preux
Al Ciani
Alesha Moses
Nancy McCaffrey
Christoper 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
Rick Simonsen
Aubrey Madden
Madison Millett
Leonardo Di Marco
Michelle Yashita
The Polychronakis
Family
Angel Garcia
Geraldine Catoggio
Assunta Di Benedetto
Bob Bala
Anthony Fiorino
Joseph Klos

## Advent Candle Memorials

**In Loving Memory of Lucia, Ralph, and Domenick Borgia**

**In Loving Memory of Rose and Denis Sweeney**

**In Loving Memory of Suzanne Diguglielmo**

**In Loving Memory of Paul, Esperanza, and Joycelin Eiaw**

# FOCUS:

## Lord, come and save us.

Jesus' actions speak for themselves: The blind see; the lame walk; the poor receive the Good News. John the Baptist need not look for another, for God has arrived in human flesh, bringing the kingdom of God with Him. Today, we carry on Jesus' work, allowing our words and actions to embody the love of God in the world.

## St. Francis of Assisi Scripture Study

**On Winter Recess Until January 8th**

Dear SFA Family & Friends,
The Scripture Study Group will be on Winter Recess until January 8, 2026. Mark your Calendar and join us in the New Year as we continue our study of Hebrew Chapters 1-4: **God's Son and God's Word**.

**"How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the one bringing good news, announcing salvation, saying to Zion, "Your God is King!" (Isaiah 52:7)**

***Grow in Love & Knowledge of Scripture.***
***All are invited and all are welcome.***

The Gospel readings and study are conducted using the Little Rock Scripture Study program. Study booklets will be provided. If you are interested in joining the Study Group, please call the Rectory Office at (718)-728-7801.

# *From the Pastor's Desk:*

My Dear Parishioners,

Today we celebrate Gaudete Sunday- Rejoice Sunday. The rose candle on our Advent Wreath, signifying joy, burns bright as we fill this sacred space in joyful song because our God draws near.

Both the first reading and the Gospel provide us with the reason for rejoicing- God is coming to save us. When Jesus comes, as he said in the Gospel, *the blind regain their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have the good news proclaimed to them.* These acts are miraculous not only in their physical healing, but in their ability to be a healing balm in our deepest need.

Even if we do not have any of the physical manifestations Jesus mentions, we are blind, lame, deaf, impoverished and in need of cleansing in our heart and spirit. These words of sacred Scripture are talking about our liberation. They are speaking to each of us – life in Christ is a life lived in liberation from that which is hindering us from being fully alive- fully aware of God's grace, mercy and gift of life offered to each of us every day.

Obviously, our deepest needs are not the perfect present or the details of the office Christmas party, but rather can be summed up in the four candles we light as we progress through Advent: **HOPE, LOVE, JOY, PEACE!**

These needs are attended to as we gather as a community of believers – as we offer our songs, our prayers and our gifts. These needs are soothed and satisfied as we come forward to receive holy Communion and are nourished and strengthened by Jesus himself. After being nourished and strengthened by the Eucharist, we are charged to leave Mass to "Go in peace to love and serve the Lord." Ultimately, these needs are fulfilled when we place our trust, first and foremost, in Christ. In doing so, we seek guidance and inspiration from the Holy Spirit, not in our capacity to buy things that we think will make others happy.

We give presents and celebrate parties because we care about those in our lives. So consider this year to give gifts that really speak to the deepest needs of those whom you care about. Offer the gifts of hope, love, joy or peace in the form of a visit, a call or a helping hand. And let this Advent season be a time of dedication and attentiveness. As Saint Paul reminds us, *make your hearts firm, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.*

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

# Lighting of the Parish Christmas Tree

Saturday, December 20, 2025
Following the 5:00PM Mass

**This year Jan Hengl will be lighting our Christmas Tree.**

Jan Hengl has been a member of St. Francis of Assisi for over 55 years, having moved into the Parish as a newlywed. Over the years, she has been active in different aspects of our community.

Initially asked by Fr. Sivillo to join the At-Home PreCana team, she and her husband John were a host couple from the program's inception until its end.

In the years when her three daughters attended the school, she served as treasurer of the Home School Association, co-chair of the Parent Commitment Program and managed the collection of tuition. Jan was a Brownie Troop leader and Girl Scout coordinator. Until she took a permanent position as a teacher at Holy Trinity School in Whitestone, she taught second grade CCD and served in the Confirmation program.

Jan is currently a Eucharistic Minister.

## Advent Candle Lighting

**The Season of Advent has begun. It is a four week period of waiting and preparing for the Feast of Christmas. During the Season of Advent, one of the beautiful signs we have in our church is the Advent Wreath. The wreath, which has four candles, is placed in the church and each week a candle is lit to remind us of our waiting and preparing for the Birth of Christ.**

**You are invited to be part of the Candle Lighting Ceremony. You can sign up individually or as a family. The Candle Lighter should sit toward the front of the church and at the beginning of each Mass, the priest will call you up to light the Candle(s) for that week of Advent.**

**There is a sign in the back of the Church. Any families, individuals, or groups are invited to sign up at any of the Masses to light the Advent Wreath.**

**Join us as we renew our desire, anticipation, and hope for Christ's coming again.**

Reconciliation Monday is
December 15, 2025.
3:00PM to 5:00PM & 6:00PM to 8:00PM

This is a perfect way to prepare your heart to "make room at the Inn" this Christmas for our Lord Jesus Christ.

## Eucharistic Adoration Monday through Saturday 8:00AM to 8:50AM

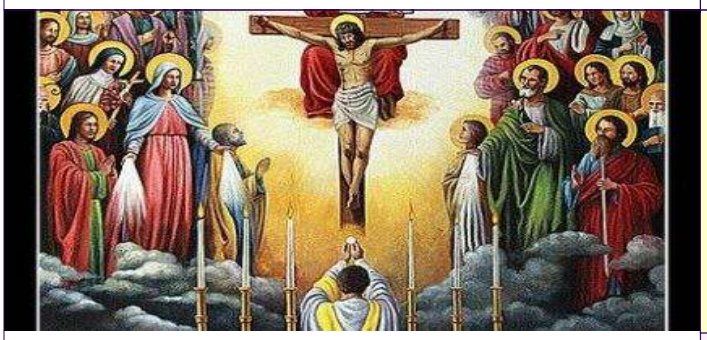
Eucharistic Adoration takes place Monday through Saturday, from 8:00AM to 8:50AM. As Pope St. John Paul II has said, "Christian life is expressed in the fulfilling of the greatest Commandment, that is to say, in the love of God and neighbor, and this love finds its source in the Blessed Sacrament….Eucharistic worship is therefore precisely the expression of that love which is the authentic and deepest characteristic of the Christian vocation. This worship springs from the love and serves the love to which we are all called in Jesus Christ. A living fruit of this worship is the perfecting of the image of God that we bear within us….We must always have this reality before our eyes."

We encourage everyone to make an effort to spend time in the presence of our Lord. The Blessings are countless.

## Receiving Holy Communion

For those who have difficulty walking up the aisle to receive Holy Communion, may I suggest that you sit in the front row on either side to save yourself some steps. The priest, deacon, or minister will come down to you in the pew and give you Holy Communion. However, if for some reason you need to sit towards the back of the Church, please let the usher know and they will inform the priest, deacon, or minister, and we will come back to you to give you Holy Communion when we finish those in line.

Thanks,
Msgr. Maresca



***The December Lector & Minister Schedule*** **can be found by scanning this QR code, and then selecting the month you wish to view.**

## 2025/2026 Mass Book

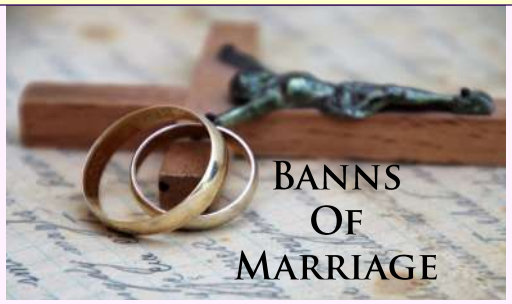
**The 2025 Mass Book is open for the remainder of 2025 and the 2026 Mass Book is now open.**

**Masses:**
Masses are $20.00.

**The Purgatorial Society has an enrollment for one year:**
Purgatorial Mass Cards are $30.00.

**Memorials:**
Altar Bread,
Wine,
Sanctuary Lamp,
or Altar Candles
are $75.00.

Altar Flowers are $100.




*2nd Announcement:*
*Paul Xikes*
*St. Francis of Assisi*
*Astoria, NY*

*&*

*Paola Sirica*
*St. Francis of Assisi*
*Astoria, NY*

## 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 12/6-12/7** | **$4,227** |
| **Immaculate Conception 12/8** | **$882** |

**School Parents must use Church Envelopes.**

## Mass Attendance For
## December 6/7, 2025

| | |
|---|---|
| **5:00PM** | **120** |
| **8:00AM** | **43** |
| **9:30AM** | **265** |
| **11:00AM** | **136** |

**Total: 564**

## Christmas Gift to My Church

**Next Weekend, December 20th and 21st, we will have a Second Collection for "Christmas Gift to My Church."**

**In the past, you have been most generous in supporting our Parish and the many programs and services we offer. God has blessed us in so many wonderful ways. We have received many gifts, but the BEST gift we have been given is the gift of Jesus. His unconditional love, His care, and concern for each of us is priceless!**

**Please take some time to prayerfully reflect on what you are able to give in appreciation for all God's gifts.**

Annual Catholic Appeal 2025
DIOCESE OF BROOKLYN

The Annual Catholic Appeal for 2025 has begun in our Diocese. Our goal this year has been lowered to **$37,511.** This year the theme is: **JUBILEE OF HOPE, RENEWAL OF FAITH, AND CHARITY.**

I ask you to prayerfully reflect on what you can contribute to help us reach our goal. The Annual Appeal allows Bishop Brennan to continue to carry out the mission of the Church here in Brooklyn and Queens. So far we have pledged **$31,104** towards our goal.

I am grateful to those who have contributed in the past and thank you for your generosity and support. If you have not contributed, I ask to make every effort to help us reach our goal.

I share with you the words of Jesus to his followers: "The measure you measure with will be measured back to you."

Thank you for all your effort.
God Bless,
Msgr. Maresca

## Christmas Flowers & Christmas Mass Novena

You may return your Christmas Flowers and Christmas Mass Novena envelopes in any collection.
Please write legibly so we are able to identify those you wish to remember.

The Christmas Flower Remembrances will be printed in the Bulletin.

The Christmas Novena Mass Envelopes will be placed on the Altar during Christmastide at all Masses.

*There will also be envelopes available at the back of the Church.*

# Calendar of Events

## This Week

### December 14 - December 20

**Sunday, December 14**
**8:00AM Holy Name Mass**
**9:30AM Children's Liturgy**
**Altar Server Installation**
10:40AM CCD Class - School

**Monday, December 15**
**Reconciliation Monday - Church**
**Confessions 3:00PM-5:00PM & 6:00PM-8:00PM**

**Tuesday, December 16**
**6:30PM School Christmas Show - MCH**
6:30PM AA Meeting - Rectory Basement

**Wednesday, December 17**
3:00PM Drama Club - MCH
3:00PM Christmas Pageant Rehearsal - Church
6:00PM ACA Support Group - St. Joseph Room
7:45PM Bereavement Group - St. Joseph Room

**Thursday, December 18**
**6:30PM School Christmas Show - MCH**
10:00AM Legion of Mary - SFR
6:00PM IACA - SFR

**Friday, December 19**
**3K/PreK Winter Celebration - MCH**

**Saturday, December 20**
**Parish Christmas Tree Lighting -**
**Following the 5:00PM Mass**

## Next Week

### December 21 - December 27

**Sunday, December 21**
**9:30AM Children's Liturgy**
**Pre-Confirmation Name & Robe Measurement**
10:40AM CCD Class - School

**Monday, December 22**
12:00 NOON Golden Age Christmas Party - MCH
3:00PM Children's Choir - Church
7:00PM Adult Choir - Church

**Tuesday, December 23**
**11:00AM School Christmas Mass**
6:30PM AA Meeting - Rectory Basement

**Wednesday, December 24**
**School Closed, & Rectory Office Closes at 3:00PM**
**3:30PM Children's Choir Concert - Church**
**4:00PM Parish Christmas Eve Pageant and Family Mass**
**6:00PM Mass with Bishop Massa**
6:00PM ACA Support Group - ZOOM
7:45PM Bereavement Group - ZOOM

**Thursday, December 25**
**School & Rectory Office Closed**
**Masses at: 8:00AM, 9:30AM, and 11:00AM**

**Friday, December 26**
**School & Rectory Office Closed**

**Saturday, December 27**
**School & Rectory Office Closed**

## Rectory Office Hours for Christmas & New Years

***Wednesday, December 24, 2025*: Rectory Office Closes at 3:00PM**
***Thursday, December 25, 2025*: Rectory Office Closed**
***Friday, December 26, 2025*: Rectory Office Closed**
***Saturday, December 27, 2025*: Rectory Office Closed**

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***Wednesday, December 31, 2025*: Rectory Office Closes at 3:00PM**
***Thursday, January 1, 2026*: Rectory Office Closed**
***Friday, January 2, 2026*: Rectory Office Closed**
***Saturday, January 3, 2026*: Rectory Office Open 9:00AM—2:00PM**

# Come And Adore Our Lord
# At St. Francis Of Assisi
# This Advent and Christmas.

## *Confessions*

Weekly on Saturdays from 4:00PM-4:30PM
And
Reconciliation Monday: December 15, 2025
Times: 3:00PM-5:00PM, & 6:00PM-8:00PM

*Christmas Tree Lighting on the Great Lawn*
Saturday, December 20, 2025 Following the 5:00PM Mass

## *Schedule of Masses*

*Christmas Eve - Wednesday, December 24, 2025*
3:30PM Children's Choir Concert
4:00PM Parish Christmas Eve Pageant & Family Mass
6:00PM Mass with Bishop Massa

*Christmas Day - Thursday, December 25, 2025*
Masses at: 8:00AM, 9:30AM, & 11:00AM

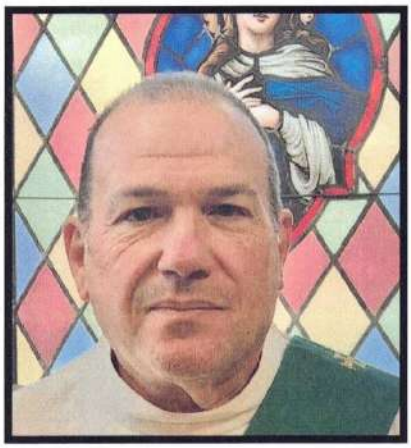
*New Year's Eve - Wednesday, December 31, 2025*
Vigil of the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God (Holy Day of Obligation)
5:00PM Vigil Mass

*New Year's Day - Thursday, January 1, 2026*
Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God (Holy Day of Obligation)
Masses at 9:00AM & 11:00AM

**For as in one body, we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them.**

**~ Romans 12:4-7**

**Deacon Giovanni Messina: A Servant's Heart at St. Francis**



For nearly five decades, Deacon Giovanni Messina has called St. Francis of Assisi home. A parishioner since 1978 and ordained a permanent deacon in 2019 by Bishop DiMarzio, he embodies steady, prayerful service rooted in love for the parish family. His journey has moved from altar boy to lector and extraordinary minister of Holy Communion to the diaconate, proof that vocation often unfolds step by step. "While the faces have changed," he reflects, "the feeling of family remains at the core of St. Francis."

Deacon Giovanni's first duty each day is prayer. "My 1st daily responsibilities are my prayers," he shares, a rhythm anchored by the Liturgy of the Hours, "especially Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer." Alongside the priests, he helps ensure the daily Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, inviting the parish into the quiet, transforming nearness of Jesus.

Beyond the church walls, he keeps one eye on the Gospel and one on the world, quite literally. As a co-owner in his family business, he handles everything from proposals and payroll to site visits and bank runs. The balancing act is real: "By the nature of our Ordination we have one foot in the secular world and one foot in the religious world." Formation impressed upon him that "our first and foremost obligation is to our family," and wise time management keeps that balance intact.

He still returns to a singular, defining moment: prostrating on the cathedral floor at his ordination while the Litany of the Saints was chanted. "It was at that moment that I felt the 'weight and burden' of what was about to happen. But… all the Holy men and women that were being invoked would be my strength to endure and assist me on this journey."

What brings him the greatest joy? The sacraments that mark the beginning of new journeys. "Being able to administer the Sacraments of Baptism and Matrimony brings me great joy," he says, welcoming a new soul into the Body of Christ and witnessing two souls joined in covenant. And his mission is clear: service "through a combination of liturgy, preaching and acts of charity," proclaiming the Good News and standing with those in need. "I have always tried to have a listening ear and a supporting shoulder… In the words of Mary: 'Behold, I am the servant of the Lord."

The parish gives thanks for Deacon Giovanni's faithful presence; open, steadfast, and deeply devoted to Christ and His people.

**Have a suggestion for someone we should highlight? Please email sfaparishcouncil@sfaacademy.org**

Growing in FAITH™

Discovering **hope** and **joy** in the Catholic faith.

December 2025

**St. Francis of Assisi Parish**
Msgr. Ralph J. Maresca V.F., Pastor

## One Minute Meditations

### St. Lucy

St. Lucy was born into 4th century pagan Syracuse, Sicily, and is one of the most famous martyrs of the early Church. Her family arranged for her to marry a pagan, but since she had consecrated her virginity to Christ, St. Lucy refused him. Offended, he betrayed her to the authorities for her Faith. She was questioned and tortured, but all attempts to discourage her failed. She was finally executed. She is the patron saint against eye problems.

### The three comings of Christ

This season of Advent, we celebrate the three comings of Christ: in glory at the end of time, in time when He was born in Bethlehem, and His coming in our own lives and hearts. Advent is a time of "busy stillness," of preparing and waiting, like Mary certainly did, for the arrival of the Savior. This Christmas, let's renew our "Yes" to God's request to dwell in our hearts and be "born" in the daily living of our lives.

"The King comes as a helpless infant, born of insignificant parents in a small town of a distant outpost of the Roman Empire. He will conquer through the finally irresistible power of love, the same power with which he made the universe." Most Reverend Robert E. Barron

# Find peace before Christmas by slowing down

The busyness leading up to Christmas can be exhausting, but the Advent season invites us to pause. It's a time to breathe, reset, and prepare our hearts for the coming of the King. Advent is a built-in gift, a chance to slow the pace and lift our eyes to what matters most.

**Renew a sense of the holy:** Advent is a chance to wake up the soul. When we lean into our Faith with intention, the season stops feeling rushed and starts feeling radiant. Light the Advent Wreath and let its glow steady your heart. Go to Confession and feel the weight lift as mercy takes over. Spend a few quiet minutes before Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament and let His presence ground you. Pray the Joyful Mysteries, the "Christmas mysteries" that still speak powerfully to our lives today.

**Tune out the noise:** Advent becomes richer when we clear space for God to speak. The world buzzes with distractions, but your soul needs room to breathe. Build small pockets of silence into your day and let stillness sharpen your awareness of God's presence. Reach for a spiritual book instead of a scroll through your feed. Cut back on the constant stream of news that crowds the mind. When the noise quiets, the Holy Spirit has space to guide, steady, and renew you.

*"Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel" (Isaiah 7:14).*

**Streamline and prioritize:** Choose what draws you closer to Christ. When your heart is ordered toward what matters, even the cooking, decorating, singing, and gift-giving gain a deeper beauty. You may decide to attend fewer events, keep the décor simple, or choose more modest gifts. Far from taking away joy, this clears space for it. You move through the season with more peace, more purpose, and a heart in step with Jesus.

## Why Do Catholics Do That?

# Why do Catholics believe Jesus is God?

Every Christmas, we remember that Jesus, the Son of God, took on our humanity without losing His divinity. It is a mystery, yet we hold it with confidence because God, who is Truth, has revealed it.

During His earthly life, Jesus spoke and acted with divine authority. He said, *"The Father and I are one"* (John 10:30). He forgave sins, clarified the Law, and worked miracles. His Resurrection stands as the clearest confirmation of His identity, showing that His claim to be God was real. As man, He could suffer and die. As God, He rose and conquered death.

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# The most meaningful gifts of Christmas aren't wrapped

We know that the most valuable gifts are often the ones we cannot wrap. Alongside whatever you give your loved ones this year, do not let Christmas pass without offering these gifts as well:

**Your time:** Being present with the people we love is one of the simplest and strongest ways to show care. A short visit, an unhurried coffee, or an evening without phones can mean more than any item we put under a tree. When we give someone our attention, we affirm their worth.

**Your forgiveness:** Forgiveness does not excuse the hurt. It frees you from the weight of anger and resentment. It also gives the other person room to grow and seek healing. Letting go is often the first step toward real peace. In many ways, forgiveness is a gift you give yourself.

**Your gratitude:** Giving thanks to God at Christmas is more than a warm sentiment. It is a heartfelt response to the depth of His love.

Look at the Crucifix, the Nativity, or the Eucharist and consider the humility behind such a gift. Our gratitude matters to God (see Luke 17:17–18). So after attending Mass on Christmas Day, take a moment to say, "Thank you." It is a small act that carries real meaning.

## from Scripture

## Matthew 2:13-15, 19-23, Obedience is trust in action

By the time Mary gave birth to Jesus, Saint Joseph had already formed a habit of steady obedience to God. So when the angel spoke to him in a dream and instructed him to flee to Egypt, Joseph acted without delay. He trusted that God would care for him and for the family entrusted to him.

This trust is even more striking when we consider the circumstances of Jesus' birth. Mary and Joseph had traveled from Nazareth to Bethlehem during the final stages of her pregnancy. Whether by foot or by donkey, the trip would have been long, uncomfortable, and exhausting. When they finally arrived, they found no suitable place to stay and settled among animals. Soon after, they faced the threat against Jesus' life and fled to Egypt, living for years in a foreign land without the support of relatives or friends. Through every hardship, Joseph relied on God to protect his family.

The Holy Family was perfect in love, yet not spared from difficulty. Mary and Joseph met each challenge with faith and allowed God's Word to guide them. We can follow the same path.

## Feasts & Celebrations

**December 6 – St. Nicholas of Myra (4th century).** St. Nicholas had a very generous heart and always gave to the poor. He is credited with saving three girls from being sold to pay their father's debt. St. Nicholas is also the patron saint of children.

**December 8 – Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary.** We commemorate that Mary was conceived in St. Anne's womb without original sin, preparing Mary to be the Mother of God. Though given to Mary, this special grace was for our sake. Pope Pius IX declared this doctrine in 1854. This year, it's considered a holy day of obligation.

**December 9 – St. Juan Diego (1548).** St. Juan Diego was visited by Our Lady at Tepeyac Hill, Mexico. She requested a chapel be built and sent him with roses to the bishop as a sign. When St. Juan emptied the roses before the bishop, his cloak retained the image of the Blessed Mother.

**December 29 – St. Thomas Becket (1170).** Thomas enjoyed power and riches as a close friend of England's King Henry II, who appointed him chancellor of England. In 1162, King Henry had St. Thomas named Archbishop of Canterbury. St. Thomas refused to allow the King to regulate Church matters and was exiled. He fled to France for safety. Thomas returned to England and was martyred.

## Q & A

## Why is it said that Mass brings us closer to God than anything else?

At every Mass, Jesus is really and truly present in the Eucharist in His Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1374). In this moment, the Sacrifice of Christ is made present to us in a mysterious but real way. His self-giving is the greatest act of love, and our participation at Mass is our strongest response, our way of saying, "I love you, too."

Worshipping together also strengthens our faith in the God who is everywhere yet unseen. Faith grows in community. It grows through the physical actions of the Mass as well. When we sit, stand, bow, and kneel, we express with our bodies what we believe in our hearts.

Finally, the Real Presence of Jesus on the altar draws us into a closeness to God that we cannot find anywhere else in this life. Nowhere do we meet Him more directly than when He feeds us with His very life. In the Eucharist, He is as present to us as He was to Mary and Joseph in Bethlehem and to His apostles in the Upper Room.

**Our Mission**

To provide practical ideas that promote faithful Catholic living.

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(Unless noted Bible quotes and references are from the *Revised Standard Version* and the *New American Bible - Revised*)

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# 2025 Advent Calendar

| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 30 November<br>Light the first violet candle on the Advent wreath, symbolizing Hope. Reflect on the source of your hope in Christ and what it means in your life. | 1 December<br>Be intentional. As soon as your alarm goes off, rise and kneel before a crucifix. Offer your day—and this entire season—to God with purpose and reverence. | 2<br>Decide how you will draw closer to Christ this Advent—through intentional prayer, acts of penance, charitable giving, or participation in the Sacraments. | 3<br>Read Luke 1:26–38, where Mary's "Yes" made way for the coming of Christ. Ask for the grace to respond with your own "Yes" to God's will in your life. | 4<br>Set out your empty nativity scene as a sign of anticipation of the coming of the King. Gradually add the remaining figures throughout the Advent season. | 5<br>Attend First Friday Mass, in honor of Jesus' Sacred Heart. "O Sacred Heart of Jesus, make my heart like yours." And He will. | 6 St. Nicholas of Myra<br>Call or visit your parish office and ask who needs help this Christmas. Then do something about it — quietly, as St. Nicholas did. |
| 7<br>Light the second violet candle for Peace. Pray for the *"peace which surpasses all understanding"* (Philippians 4:7) for yourself and whoever needs it most. | 8 Immaculate Conception<br>God preserved Mary from sin so that she could be the mother of Jesus. Attend Mass and pray for our country. It is a holy day of obligation. | 9<br>Make a small sacrifice today, offered solely to God. It is even more meaningful if it's done in secret, as encouraged in Matthew 6:18. | 10<br>Prepare your heart and soul to welcome the King. Participate in the Sacrament of Reconciliation and encounter the mercy of God. | 11<br>Advent is a busy season for parishes. Consider calling or emailing your parish office to ask how you can offer your time and support. | 12 Our Lady of Guadalupe<br>Mary's miraculous image reveals a profound mystery of Christmas (John 1:14). Take time today to pray for expectant mothers and the gift of new life. | 13<br>"If you have two shirts in your closet, one belongs to you and the other to the man with no shirt" (St. Basil the Great). Donate gently used clothing you don't need. |
| 14<br>*Gaudete Sunday*<br>Light the rose candle for Joy to mark the halfway point to Christmas. | 15<br>Offer the alms of patience when you're irritated, a smile when you're weary, and a kind word in place of judgment. You will touch hearts in ways you'll never fully realize. | 16<br>Harboring unforgiveness burdens the heart and disrupts inner peace. Pray for the grace to let go, so you can move forward in freedom and healing. | 17<br>Only nine days remain until Christmas. Place a lamp or candle in a window as a sign of welcome for the Christ Child. | 18<br>Visit the Blessed Sacrament, where Jesus fulfills His promise to remain with us (Matthew 28:20). Take this time to renew your faith in His unwavering love. | 19<br>Today, refrain from recreational screen use between 12:00 p.m. and 3:00 p.m. Offer this sacrifice for those who struggle with screen-related addictions. | 20<br>Share the joy of the Gospel—gather a group of friends and go caroling to bring the Good News to others through song. |
| 21<br>Light the final violet candle, symbolizing Love—awaiting the coming of Christ, the ultimate expression of the Father's love (John 3:16). | 22<br>The King is coming—prepare to welcome Him. Take time to ready your home as a reflection of the joy and reverence in your heart. | 23<br>Discern which Advent practices you feel called to carry beyond Christmas. Which ones deepened your relationship with God? Which ones strengthened your capacity for charity? | 24<br>*Rejoice!*<br>Tonight, place the Christ Child in the manger and rejoice! | *"In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be enrolled. This was the first enrollment, when Quirinius was governor of Syria. So all went to be enrolled, each to his own town. And Joseph too went up from Galilee from the town of Nazareth to Judea, to the city of David that is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David, to be enrolled with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. While they were there, the time came for her to have her child, and she gave birth to her firstborn son. She wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn"* (Luke 2:1-7). | | |

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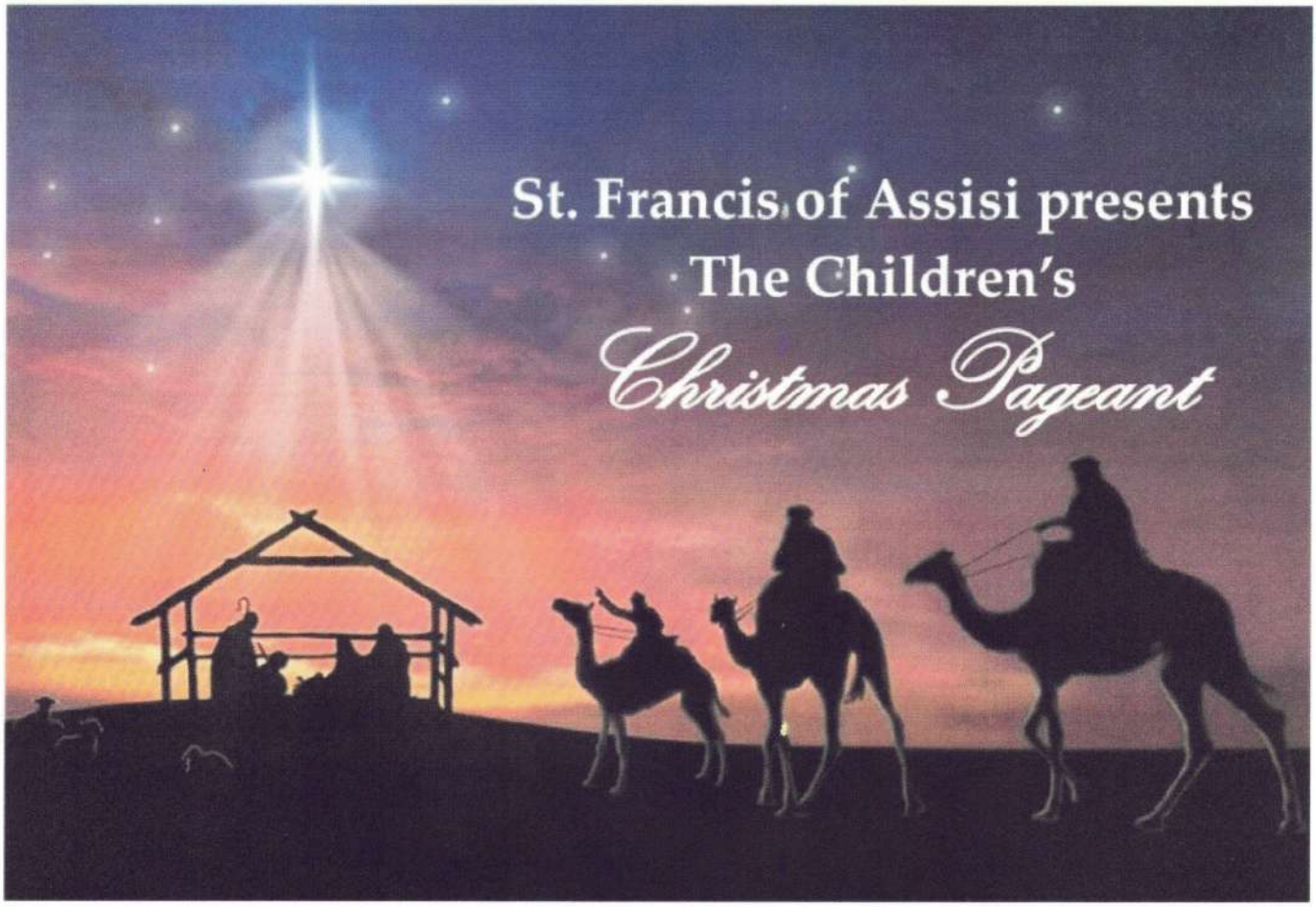
## CHRISTMAS FLOWERS

Our Christmas Flowers not only add to the beauty of our Parish during this Season of Peace, Hope, Joy, and Faith, but they also help us to remember our loved ones who have been a part of so many St. Francis of Assisi memories of the past. We appreciate your generosity in helping to make those memories!

## Christmas Flowers Donations To Date: $900

**Please consider making a Donation to help defray the cost of decorating the Church. Additional envelopes can be found in the back of the Church.**
**Names for Memorials will be published in the Bulletin during Christmastide.**




## Pageant Performed at Christmas Eve Family Mass
## December 24th at 4:00pm

If you would like your child to take part in this special liturgy, or if you have any questions,please email Mr. Dan Higgins at DHiggins@sfaacademy.org by **Tuesday, December 9, 2025**
Make sure to leave your child's name, grade & parent's cell number. We are also in need of narrators (Grade 6 and above) for our pageant.

**REHEARSALS ARE SCHEDULED FOR:**

Wednesday, December 10, 2025, 3 - 4:00pm
Wednesday December 17, 2025 3 - 4:00pm
All school age children, including Pre-K 3 and 4 year-olds, are welcomed to participate!
Rehearsals will be held in the church.

*"And you will have joy and gladness; and many will rejoice at His birth"*

# Advent Giving Trees

The Advent Giving Trees will be setup in the front and back of church and decorated with colored Tags on Saturday, November 22, 2025.
Each color Tag identifies the charity that will receive the gifts.

Please **tape the Tag to the unwrapped gift** purchased and place it under the Giving Tree before or after any one of the Masses.

Yellow Tags—Catholic Charities
Blue Tags— Hour Children
Green Tags—Marguerite's Pantry
Red Tags—Transfiguration

## ALL GIFTS SHOULD BE RETURNED BY SUNDAY, DECEMBER 21, 2025.

**Pictured Above: Our Youth Group worked together with Mrs. Kubina to decorate the Christmas Trees.**

# SFA 2026 BRAZILIAN JIU JITSU

$100 FOR THE SEASON

SPACES ARE LIMITED! EMAIL WILDCATS.SFA.JIUJITSU@GMAIL.COM

1/8, 1/15, 1/22, 1/29, 2/5, 2/12, 2/26, 3/5, 3/12, 3/26

**3:30PM-4:30PM @**

**Monsignor Campbell Hall**

## St. Francis of Assisi Church – Bereavement Support Group

"The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit." – Psalm 34:18

**Wednesday evenings**
**Resuming September 10, 2025**
**With a new time of**
**7:45pm – 8:45pm**

**St. Francis of Assisi Church**
**Rectory Meeting Room**
**21-17 45th Street**
**Astoria, NY 11105**

Please enter through
The basement back door.
(Accessible by the side gate. Follow the signs)

**If you are grieving the loss of a loved one, you are not alone. St. Francis of Assisi Church invites you to join a compassionate and supportive bereavement group. Together we will reflect, share, and find comfort through prayer and community. This group is open to all—parishioners and non-parishioners alike.**

**Come as you are. All are welcome.**

Contact Carol Hickey at SFAparishcouncil@sfaacademy.org
or inquire with the rectory for more information.

## ADULT CHILDREN OF ALCOHOLICS/ DYSFUNCTIONAL FAMILIES

## Reclaiming Ourselves: Feel, Talk & Trust in Astoria

**Wednesdays 6:00PM –7:15PM**

**Join us anytime.**

**All are welcome.**

**St. Francis of Assisi Church**
**St. Joseph Room in the Rectory**

## The Legion of Mary

**The Legion of Mary is a prayer group consecrated to the Blessed Virgin, who is our Mother in the order of grace. Members entrust themselves to Mary to sanctify souls and to better a troubled world, for she is a sure path to Christ. In the words of Pope St. Leo X, we pray that Mary may "restore all things in Christ."**

**Members meet every Thursday at 10:00AM in the Rectory Basement.**
**Everyone is welcome to come and join in the Mission and the Fellowship.**

DO YOU LOVE TO SING?
WE HAVE CHILDREN'S AND ADULTS' CHOIR ON MONDAYS IN THE CHURCH!

3:00PM CHILDREN'S CHOIR
7:00PM ADULT CHOIR

## THE GOLDEN AGE CLUB
## MONDAYS FROM 12:00PM TO 3:30PM

If you are 65 years of age or older, we have a great community and we would love for you to join us! Bingo is played each week, and some members play Cards or Pockeno.
Refreshments are served as well. We celebrate all Holidays and Birthdays!
We are celebrating our 54th Year Anniversary Mass and Luncheon in November.

## IACA - Italian American Catholic Action
## Meeting on Thursdays at 6:00PM in the Rectory Basement

**Religious Education Registration**

Those who have not yet registered for Religious Education classes can do so Sunday at the School. Classes have begun but registration is open.

***For any questions, please contact Sr. Francesca via email or phone:***
***dre@sfaacademy.org  718-278-0259 ext. 121***

## Catechist Needed

We are currently in need of a Catechist for our 7th Grade Class.

If you are interested, please contact Sr. Francesca at
***718-278-0259, ext. 121, or dre@sfaacademy.org***

OCIA
Order of Christian Initiation for Adults

***Are you someone, or do you know someone who:***

*...has expressed interest in becoming Catholic?*

*...was baptized as a Catholic as a child but never received the Sacraments of Reconciliation, First Communion, or Confirmation?*

The Order of Christian Initiation for Adults (OCIA) focuses on learning about the Church and teachings of the Faith to prepare individuals to receive the Sacraments of Baptism, Reconciliation, First Communion, and Confirmation during the Easter Season.

**For more information, please contact Sr. Francesca at 718-278-0259, ext. 121, or dre@sfaacademy.org**