

DECEMBER 21, 2025 FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT



ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI CATHOLIC CHURCH
 7717 RIVER ROAD - TOWNSEND, TN 37882
 865 - 448 - 6070
 WEBSITE: STFRANCISTOWNSEND.ORG
 E-MAIL: STFRANCISTOWNSEND7717@GMAIL.COM

MASS & CONFESSION SCHEDULE

WEEKDAY MASS: Monday, Tuesday, Thursday & Friday at 8:30 AM **(NO MASS ON WEDNESDAYS)**
WEEKEND MASS: Saturday 4:00PM (Vigil Mass) The Rosary is prayed 35 minutes before each Weekend Mass
 Sunday 9:00AM
HOLY DAYS: Vigil Mass 6:00 PM (evening before); Holy Day Mass 9:00 AM (day of)
CONFESSION: Saturday before Mass: 3:00 - 3:40 PM (Church confessional)
 Sunday before Mass: 8:15 - 8:40 AM (Church confessional)
 By Appointment: 865-448-6070

PARISH MINISTRY TEAM

<p>PASTORFr. Antonio Giraldo DEACONDc. Jim Schmall OFFICE MANAGERSKatrina Allocco & Lesa Schmall BOOKKEEPERKathleen Halligan LITURGY/MUSIC DIRECTOR.....JoAnne Romer-Aylward DIR. OF RELIGIOUS ED.Julie Dew OCIADc. Jim Schmall ART & ENVIRONMENTMichele Girard & Norene O'Donnell</p>	<p>GARDENS & GROUNDS..... Ilene Rainwater FACILITIES David Girard SOCIAL MEDIA/WEBSITE JoAnne Romer-Aylward PASTORAL CARE..... Suzie Fay ST. CLARE GIFT SHOP Camilla Sorrell COLUMBARIUM Bob Eberhardt WELCOMING, EVENTS & All Parishioners SOCIALS TEAM (WEST) PARISH ASSOCIATIONS: ST. VINCENT DE PAUL SOCIETY: Debbie Eberhardt COUNCIL OF CATHOLIC WOMEN: Ilene Rainwater</p>
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NEW PARISHIONERS: Please contact the pastor or ask an usher for a registration form, and then place the completed form in the offertory basket or mail it to the church office. For more information call the church office at 865-448-6070.

PARISHIONERS: Please report any change of contact information to the parish office via e-mail, mail or phone.

BAPTISM: Parents are required to attend the Baptismal Prep Class. Your family must be registered in the parish.

MARRIAGE: Contact the office a minimum of six months prior to the wedding for planning and preparation.

ANOINTING OF THE SICK: Anyone entering the hospital or in serious ill health is encouraged to be anointed.

BULLETIN DEADLINE: Please email Microsoft Word articles to sfbulletin7717@gmail.com with the subject of "Bulletin Announcement" by Tuesday 12:00PM. All submissions are subject to further editing.



How can St. Francis of Assisi be of assistance/service to you & your loved ones?
 Please contact Suzie Fay with our Pastoral Care Ministry at 423-829-5466 or the Parish office at 865-448-6070.

MASS INTENTIONS

Mon 12/22 8:30 AM Fr. Antonio Giraldo
Tue 12/23 8:30 AM Philip Peychal †
Wed 12/24 **NO MORNING MASS**
4:00 PM (Christmas Eve) Parishioners of SFA
Thu 12/25 **9:00 AM** (Christmas Day) Parishioners of SFA
Fri 12/26 8:30 AM All Souls in Purgatory
Sat 12/27 4:00 PM Ann McCluskey †
Sun 12/28 9:00 AM Dang Thi Sinh † Isave Elizabeth †

To schedule a Mass intention, please contact the Parish Office via phone or email or in person during office hours. Mass cards are available at the church office. Please specify whether the Mass Intention is for a living or deceased loved one. The usual requested donation for a Mass intention is \$10.00 in the Diocese of Knoxville.



PRAYER REQUESTS: (Homebound, sick or recovering parishioners, friends and relatives):
 Pat Sanders, Doreen Mancuso, Naomi Nwadike, Amy Frink, Claire Cheadle, Elise Martin, Paul Fain, Joyce Fain, Emmanuel Nwadike, Julie Schirack, Marcus Bolte, Stephanie Romer, John & Maria Bermudes, Michael Slater, Rocky Brach, Marion McCaughey, Sue Wood, Sue Corsini, Bill Irby, Teresa Williams, Jeffrey Garrison, Ann Day, Ed Welsh, Thomas Fay, Dale DuRussel, Suzie Fay, Robert Schumacher, German Giraldo, Jean Claude Augustin, Christopher Schiel,

Joyce Schiel, Connor Dietrich, Mrs. Irene Seyle

SANCTUARY FLOWERS: If you would like to donate to the altar flowers fund in memory of or in honor of someone, contact the Parish Office via phone or email. The cost is \$40.00 for 1 week. Thank You!



SANCTUARY CANDLE: If you would like to donate to the sanctuary candle fund in memory of or in honor of someone, please contact the Parish Office via phone or email. The cost is \$15 for 1 week. Thank You!



ST. CLARE GIFT SHOP

OPEN
 after weekend Masses
 and by request/appointment
 after daily Mass



12/24-26/2025
12/31/2025
1/1/2026

ACTIVITIES THIS WEEK IN OUR PARISH

Mon 12/22
Tue 12/23 **6:00 PM** **NO OCIA - Shea Hall**
Wed 12/24 4:00 PM Christmas Eve Vigil Mass
Thu 12/25 9:00 AM Christmas Day Mass
Fri 12/26 Parish Office Closed
Sat 12/27 4:00 PM Vigil Mass
Sun 12/28 9:00 AM Sunday Mass



JOSEPH WAS A MAN OF COMMITMENT

The Gospel reading for this last Sunday of Advent focuses on the forgotten person of the Nativity, St. Joseph. There is the story of a school Christmas pageant in which the boy who was to play Joseph became ill and couldn't come. They didn't replace him and nobody noticed. Nobody missed Joseph. So, it can happen today. Yet, Joseph is important.

The customs around engagement, betrothal, and divorce in this reading may seem confusing because they reflect a very different culture, where marriage happened in separate stages. The first stage was the engagement. This happened when a boy and girl were very young and it was done by their families. Back then, marriage was considered too significant to be guided solely by emotions. The parents made the engagement. The second stage was the betrothal. Here is where a couple accepted and ratified the engagement their parents had made. They could walk away before the engagement, but to separate after the engagement required a formal legal procedure. A year later came the solemn marriage, which was final. Joseph and Mary were in the middle stage where Joseph is told not to fear about taking Mary as his wife. That is the background of today's Gospel reading.

Joseph was a man of commitment. He truly loved Mary, would not subject her to the demeaning public divorce process and was ready to separate quietly. He was reassured, however, by God's word and never looked back. He was committed to Mary and to Jesus.

We are known by our commitments. It has been said that our character is revealed not by the number of options we leave open in our life but by the commitments we embrace. Joseph could have walked away from his commitment to Mary and Jesus, even after this dream, but he didn't. Christmas is a good time to renew our commitments to our families, our vocation, our work and our Church. Maturity is indeed defined not by the number of options we leave open, but by the commitments we keep even when it isn't easy.

The last point to make about Joseph is his role as protector of the Holy Family. It was not an easy world in those days as it isn't now. People in Bethlehem and later in Nazareth weren't simply walking through the streets singing "What child is this?" It was a violent and brutal world in which Joseph protected Mary and Jesus during those early years. We can imitate Joseph's role as protector in two ways.

The first way to preserve Christmas is by remembering its core message: it marks the birth of Jesus Christ, who came to save us. It's important not to let Christmas become just a festive event, but to protect its spiritual significance. Secondly, we must safeguard the true Christmas story and avoid letting speculative media reports overshadow it. The truth of Christmas deserves protection.

Joseph is a powerful model for us at this time of year. He is a model of adult commitment which our culture desperately needs and a reminder to us to renew those commitments that shape our life and our soul. Joseph was also the protector of the Holy Family who reminds us to protect the spiritual meaning of Christmas, that it is about Jesus Christ, and to protect the truth of the Christmas account. Christmas is not just about a beautiful story that warms our heart. It is about a solid fact that can save our soul.

St. Joseph, defender of life, pray for us! Help us to imitate your faithful trust and courage.



Image courtesy of Respectlife.org

CATECHISM

CORNER



BY: Julie Dew

Here we are – already – the Fourth Sunday of Advent! During this Corner we will “talk” about the Nativity Scene.

St. Francis of Assisi, the patron saint of animals and founder of the Catholic Church’s Franciscan Order, began the Christmas tradition of nativity scenes (also called creches or manger scenes) because he wanted to help people gain a fresh sense of wonder about the miracles that the Bible records from the first Christmas.

Up until Francis set up the first nativity scene in 1223, people celebrated Christmas primarily by going to Mass at church, where priests would tell the Christmas story in a language that most ordinary people didn’t speak: Latin. Although churches sometimes featured fancy artistic renditions of Christ as an infant, they didn’t present any realistic manger scenes. Francis decided that he wanted to make the extraordinary experiences of the first Christmas more available to ordinary people.

Francis, who was living in the town of Greccio, Italy at the time, got the Pope’s permission to proceed with his plans. Then he asked his close friend John Velita to loan him some animals and straw to set up a scene there to represent Jesus Christ’s birth in Bethlehem. The nativity scene could help people in the area imagine what it may have been like to be present on the first Christmas long ago, when they came to worship at Christmas Eve Mass in December 1223, Francis said. FYI the animals ate the hay afterwards! Nothing was wasted!

The scene, which was set up in a cave just outside Greccio, featured a wax figure of the infant Jesus, costumed people playing the roles of Mary and Joseph, and the live donkey and ox that John had loaned to Francis. Local shepherds watched over their sheep in nearby fields, just as shepherds in Bethlehem had watched over sheep on the first Christmas when the sky suddenly filled with angels who announced Christ’s birth to them.

During the Mass, Francis told the Christmas story from the Bible and then delivered a sermon. He spoke to the people gathered there about the first Christmas and the miraculous impact that placing their faith in Christ, the baby born in a simple manger in Bethlehem, could make in their lives. Francis urged people to reject hatred and embrace love, with God’s help.

In his biography of Francis (called the Life of St. Francis of Assisi), Saint Bonaventure described what happened that night: “Francis stood before the manger, full of devotion and piety, bathed in tears and radiant with joy; the Holy Gospel was chanted by Francis, the Levite of Christ. Then he preached to the people around the nativity of the poor King; and being unable to utter His name for the tenderness of His love, He called Him the Babe of Bethlehem.”

The first nativity scene presentation proved to be so popular that people in other areas soon set up living nativities to celebrate Christmas. Eventually, Christians worldwide celebrated Christmas by visiting living nativity scenes and praying at nativity scenes made of statues in their town squares, churches and homes. People also added more figures to their nativity scenes than Francis was able to feature in his original, live presentation. In addition to the baby Jesus, Mary, Joseph, a donkey, and an ox, later nativity scenes featured angels, shepherds, sheep, camels, and the three kings who traveled to present gifts to the infant Jesus and his parents. learnreligions.com

I think nativity scenes are a great way to evangelize and show people the real meaning of Christmas and help them understand why this time of year is so important, don’t you?



Image courtesy of Howstuffworks.com

WE HAVE FORMED!

OVER 6,000 PARISHES AND 1.6 MILLION INDIVIDUALS ARE USING FORMED TODAY! INCLUDING ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI, TOWNSEND!

Formed.org is a digital library with over 1000 resources, all teed up and ready for you and your family to stream. I'd like to thank Father Antonio and Julie Dew for helping us get this wonderful resource for our parish.

Formed offers inspirational Catholic videos, courses, audio talks, books, and movies that give you great Catholic teaching in your life and for the best of all - it's right here for your use, already paid for, downloadable, and easy to access.

It's Free! All you have to do is go to Formed.org and enter our parish name or zip code, and you are signed up. The zip code for Townsend is 37882. Anytime, anywhere, any platform - personal computer, tablet, smartphone, smart tv - all kinds of advice on difficult subjects of the faith and living a moral life in a damaged world. If you are already signed up at another parish you can reach out to the support group at custom-er.service@augustineinstitute.org. They will help you switch from your old parish to ours.

Again, Formed offers resources for adults, teens, children, parents, widows, those who are suffering from addiction, those who are searching, and for those who feel their faith life has grown stagnant. Truly, there is something for everyone.

Moving forward we will use it at the parish level for OCIA, Sacramental Prep, Bible Study, etc. The app is available on the new smart tv in the PRC and available on line in Shea Hall!

One last thing...we live in a busy world, and it can feel hard to find time to do something to take a step forward in your faith. Formed is an easy way to listen on the go while you are driving, exercising, or watching TV as a family. We encourage you to JUST PRESS PLAY. Try it out today. And then come back next week and tell Father/Deacon what you think about it. Peace, Deacon Jim.



OCIA AT ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI



If you or anyone you know are interested in exploring the Catholic Church as your church home or you have been sitting in the pew next to your Catholic spouse for years wondering what you have to do to become Catholic, or you are a practicing

Catholic just wanting to learn more about your faith, please join us! Classes are held every Tuesday in Shea Hall at 6:00 PM. For more information please contact Deacon Jim: 901-493-2123 or sfadeacon7717@gmail.com

**NOTE: NO OCIA Classes on December 23rd or 30th.
Tuesday classes will resume on January 6th.**

DIOCESAN JOB OPENING



The Diocese of Knoxville Chancery Office is seeking a Coordinator of Youth Ministry and an Administrative Assistant to the Office of Youth and Young Adults. Please see the diocesan website for detailed job descriptions at <https://dioknox.org/employment> Send cover letter and resume to Maura Lentz at mlentz@dioknox.org.



THE SOCIETY OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL

In today's Gospel, we hear that Jesus will be named Emmanuel, which means "God is with us." The mystery of the birth of Jesus is supremely a mystery of love. May each Christmas find us more and more like him: more humble, more holy, more happy and more full of God. Your gifts to the Society of St. Vincent de Paul help those who are poor and suffering to find Emmanuel and come to know that "God is with us."

Have you considered answering the call to serve the poor by joining the Society of St. Vincent de Paul? Contact Debbie Eberhardt at 865-312-0141 for more information.

SVDP meets the 1st and 3rd
Wednesdays of the month at 5:00 PM
in the PRC. All are welcome!

Thank You
for your continued support of SVDP!

SVDP DECEMBER "PRODUCT OF THE MONTH" LAUNDRY SOAP & DRYER SHEETS



Some general reminders and guidelines about donating to SVdP:

- For those who use preprinted church contribution envelopes, the SVdP envelope (which is marked for the beginning of the month) can be placed in the collection basket **ANY** time of the month. If you are not using preprinted church contribution envelopes and want to place your donation in a weekend Mass collection basket, please put your donation in an envelope (of any kind) marked SVdP to make sure it gets into the SVdP account.
- Please make any checks out to: **St. Vincent de Paul** (not St. Francis of Assisi).
- Donations can also be placed in the St. Vincent de Paul Poor Box, located in the Narthex, to the right of the exit doors (just above the holy water station). Ushers can show you the location.
- Feel free to reach out to us with any questions.



HELP FILL OUR SVdP PANTRY

Are you a BJ's Member? If so, would you like to help fill our SVdP pantry too? Below is a list of products we use from BJ's (but of course we will take any non-perishable item!). These are some of the items we have identified as being a good value:

Canned Chicken	Paper Towels	Toothbrushes	Bar Soap	Ramen Noodle Soup
Macaroni & Cheese	Saltine Crackers	Toothpaste	Kleenex	Chips (individual size)
Peanut Butter Crackers	Bath Tissues	Canned Tuna	Microwave Popcorn	Canned Vienna Sausages

Please place your purchased items in the St. Vincent de Paul food basket located in Shea Hall.

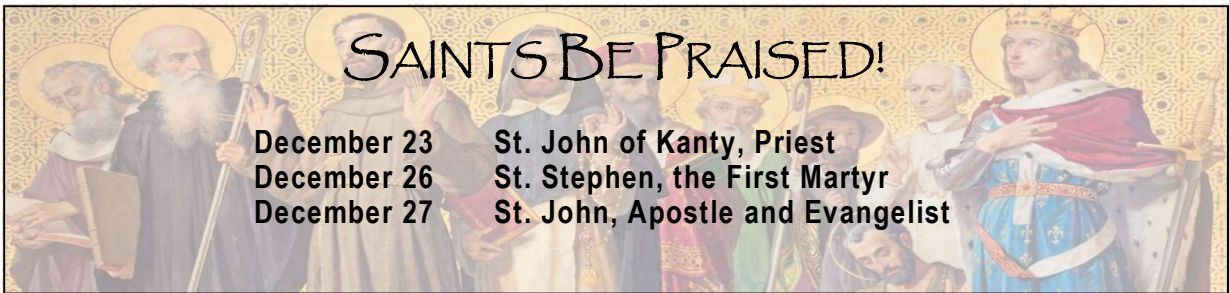
Thank You for always being there to help us help others!

Christmas Party 2025 !




UPCOMING EVENTS

DATE	EVENT	DETAILS
4/18/2026	CCW Spring Event - 9AM-3PM St. Mary's Church, Athens, TN	Online: N/A E-Mail: ajschaef21@gmail.com Phone: 901-485-1965; OR 423-715-2579 (Brenda Ratcliff)
April, 2026	Catholic Men's Emmaus Retreat St. Augustine Catholic Church Signal Mountain, TN	Online: N/A E-Mail: N/A Phone: 423-414-4532 (Michael Hart)



SAINTS BE PRAISED!

December 23 St. John of Kanty, Priest
December 26 St. Stephen, the First Martyr
December 27 St. John, Apostle and Evangelist



END OF THE YEAR DONATIONS

Per IRS RULES: If you are considering a 2025 donation to St. Francis of Assisi Church for tax purposes, checks must be dated 2025 AND received at the parish office no later than December 31st.

If you are mailing in a donation, the envelope MUST BE POSTMARKED no later than December 31st.

Checks or cash received or postmarked after December 31st will be recorded as 2026 gifts. Thank you for considering our beautiful little church on the river as a recipient of your financial gift!




Thank you St. Francis of Assisi Parishioners!

We now have 28 households participating in the Kroger Community Rewards Program, and during the months of September, October, and November those households have earned the church

\$60.55

If you are not yet participating in this wonderful program, please visit Kroger's website and get started! Direct your browser to <https://www.kroger.com/i/community/community-rewards> (Our NPO number is XP941).

You shop. Our church gets "free" money!

Christmas Season 2025 Mass Schedule

Wednesday, December 24	8:30 AM	No Morning Mass
	4:00 PM	Christmas Eve Mass Prelude Program begins at 3:40 PM OFFICE CLOSED
Thursday, December 25	9:00 AM	Christmas Day Mass OFFICE CLOSED
Friday, December 26	8:30 AM	Daily Mass
Saturday, December 27	4:00 PM	Vigil Mass: The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph
Sunday, December 28	9:00 AM	Mass - The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph
Monday, December 29	8:00 AM	Daily Mass
Tuesday, December 30	8:30 AM	Daily Mass
Wednesday, December 31	6:00 PM	Vigil Mass: Mary Mother of God - Holy Day of Obligation OFFICE CLOSED
Thursday, January 1	9:00 AM	Mary Mother of God - Holy Day of Obligation OFFICE CLOSED
Friday, January 2	8:30 AM	Daily Mass
	9:00 AM	Adoration and Healing Service
	NOON	Benediction and Closing of Adoration
Saturday, January 3	4:00 PM	Vigil Mass: Feast of the Epiphany
Sunday, January 4	9:00 AM	Mass: Feast of the Epiphany
Monday, January 5		Return to normal Mass schedule



Christmas Flowers

The Christmas Flowers that will decorate our altar this year during the Christmas season have been donated by several parishioners in memory or in honor of someone they know.

In Memory of:

*Ted and Violet Jastrab
John and Theresa Peacock
Tom & Rita Gaudern
Walter & Sue Fallat
Ernest & Mary Floyd
Raymond & Mary Smith
Janice Floyd Hibbs
Brian Floyd
Joe & Betty Tkatch
Frank & Betty Czerniewski
Bernard & Loretta Eberhart*

*Raymond & Joann Nieman
Ray & Rita Polak
Cam King
Jesse & Gloria Colvin
Ralph & Irene Meyerkord
Joe & Julia Sendra
Leroy & Harriet Burrell
Norman Weiland
Ralph & Herma Peychal
Marion E. Ganley
Lois & Elmer Szekely*

*Edward Szekely
George Szekely
Lois Zehnder
Douglas DuRussel
Philip Peychal
Evelyn Provenzo
Nicholas C. Provenzo
Charles Fiorella
Jeanne Vilardo*

In Honor of:

*Fr. Antonio Giraldo
Dc. Jim Schmall*



Daily CATHOLIC WISDOM



The best present is presence.
Maybe during Advent, God is calling you to forgo some of the frenzy -
do less shopping and pray more;
attend fewer holiday events and do more volunteer service;
run around less and spend more time just being,
watching, and waiting along with Mary, John the Baptist, all the saints,
and the entire Church
for the surprising revelation of Jesus -
His presence, love, mercy, and life.



*- Bishop Donald Hying
from his book, Love Never Fails: Living the Catholic Faith in our Daily Lives*