

MARCH 15, 2026 4TH SUNDAY OF LENT

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

PASTORFr. Antonio Giraldo	GARDENS & GROUNDS Ilene Rainwater
DEACONDc. Jim Schmall	FACILITIES David Girard
OFFICE MANAGERSKatrina Allocco & Lesa Schmall	SOCIAL MEDIA/WEBSITE JoAnne Romer-Aylward
BOOKKEEPER Kathleen Halligan	PASTORAL CARE Suzie Fay
LITURGY/MUSIC DIRECTORJoAnne Romer-Aylward	ST. CLARE GIFT SHOP Camilla Sorrell
DIR. OF RELIGIOUS ED.Julie Dew	COLUMBARIUM Bob Eberhardt
OCIADc. Jim Schmall	WELCOMING, EVENTS & All Parishioners
ART & ENVIRONMENTMichele Girard & Norene O'Donnell	SOCIALS TEAM (WEST)
	PARISH ASSOCIATIONS:
	ST. VINCENT DE PAUL SOCIETY: Debbie Eberhardt
	COUNCIL OF CATHOLIC WOMEN: Ilene Rainwater

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 3/16 8:30 AM John Peychal
Tue 3/17 8:30 AM Edward Welsh
Wed 3/18 **NO MORNING MASS**
Thu 3/19 8:30 AM L.A. Fain +
Fri 3/20 8:30 AM Maria Barrita
Sat 3/21 4:00 PM Craig Stevenson +
Sun 3/22 9:00 AM Marianne Horan +

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): Amy Frink, Pat Sanders, Doreen Mancuso, Claire Cheadle, Paul Fain, Joyce Fain, Julie Schirack, Marcus Bolte, Stephanie Romer, John & Maria Bermudes, Michael Slater, Marion McCaughey, Sue Corsini, Bill Irby, Teresa Williams, Jeffrey Garrison, Ann Day, Ed Welsh, Dale DuRussel, Robert Schumacher, German Giraldo, Jean Claude Augustin, Connor Dietrich, Sofia Graziano, Mark Reddan, Terry Keran, Beryl Quinton, Obed Sexton, the Gruber Family, Betty Gonzalez, Carmen Milton, Edgar Miller, Carolyn & Bruce Haverkos, Marlene Doerrer, Monica Meyerkord

SANCTUARY FLOWERS: During the Lenten season, we change our sanctuary floral decorations from fresh cut flowers to dried floral arrangements to reflect the dry period of Jesus' 40 days in the desert.



If, after the Lenten season 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!

ACTIVITIES THIS WEEK IN OUR PARISH

Mon 3/16	9:00 AM	Church and Hall Cleaning
Tue 3/17	6:00 PM	OCIA - PRC
Wed 3/18		
Thu 3/19		
Fri 3/20	5:00 PM	Stations of the Cross
Sat 3/21	4:00 PM	Vigil Mass
Sun 3/22	9:00 AM	Sunday Mass
		No Greater Love
	10:30 AM	Lenten Study Group - PRC

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



SEEING AS GOD SEES

Last week we encountered Jesus and the Samaritan woman. As baptized people, we are reminded of our obligation to evangelize and share the first proclamation: God loves us. We continue to hear that Jesus meets people where they are in life, and this week with a man who was born blind. This story is not so much about the blind man being healed, but about seeing as God sees. And, to be honest, the way that God sees is not usually the way that humanity wants to or is capable of seeing: it can be challenging. This gospel invites us to consider unbelief to faith, from darkness to life.

Pope Francis reminded us that our task as Christians is to “heal the wounds,” and that the church should be seen as a “field hospital.” We are fortunate enough to see differently because of our faith. Without it, we are not able to interpret our life with God. When good things happen, our faith allows us to see them as blessings. When challenges come, our faith allows us to humbly relearn what it means to be a person of faith and what trusting in God means. A few years ago, we faced one of the biggest challenges in our time, not only as a nation but world-wide – the corona virus. These days we are at the brim of the most dangerous threats in human history – the threat of nuclear war. We are offered an invitation to show a strength which comes from our faith. We are given opportunities to respond in love and in mercy. Our faith gives us the strength we need to face struggles and challenges.

If we are sincere about asking God to open our eyes, then we must also be willing to change the way we live our lives so that it reflects the way God sees.

It is interesting that the Pharisees, rather than being happy for the man who was blind but can now see, seem to want to find fault, especially with Jesus. It is the Sabbath, and Jesus spits and makes clay to heal the blind man. They see this as Jesus working on the Sabbath, something that is not allowed. The Pharisees say Jesus must be a sinner. The man who was blind thinks Jesus is a prophet because Jesus healed him, and no sinner could do that. The man asks the Pharisees if they want to be Jesus’ disciples too. Of course, that leads nowhere. But after all, Jesus gave sight to the blind man. That is what matters.

But what about us? What is this incident teaching us, or telling us, or asking of us? We too are anointed, in baptism and in confirmation. In a sense, we too, are healed now, not from literal blindness, perhaps, but from not seeing what it is our loving Father wants us to see: the Light.

In this story, nobody was able to see the way that God sees: the apostles, the man born blind, his parents, and the Pharisees. This brings us to a place where we are invited to search our hearts. Are there any places of darkness in your life that needs God’s light to shine into? We read in the Ephesians that light produces every kind of goodness and righteousness and truth. What does that mean in your life, in what you do, in what you can come to do?

May we use this season of intensified prayer and reflection wisely, so that we do not see as the Pharisees do, but as God sees with Christ shining his light upon us, illuminating our hearts towards a genuine faith. Let us all live as children of light, as people of light.



CATECHISM**CORNER**

BY: Julie Dew

FASTING

Welcome to the Fourth Sunday in Lent! This Corner, our “talk” will be on fasting! We read recently in the Gospel of Matthew when Jesus spent forty days and forty nights fasting before his public ministry. Remember Lent is a time of spiritual preparation, self-examination, and penance leading up to the celebration of Easter. Catholics use this time to imitate Jesus’ forty days of fasting in the desert. So, what benefits will I receive from “fasting?”

Fasting brings many spiritual benefits according to Catholic teaching and Scripture. Jesus commands fasting as a practice expected of His followers (Matt 6:16-18; Mark 2:18-20). It is not merely about gaining time for prayer or physical detoxification but about spiritual growth. Fasting helps us prioritize spiritual goods over bodily needs, teaches self-denial even amid discomfort, and expresses our humility and dependence on God (Col 1:24). It also signifies our willingness to share in Christ’s sufferings and to reform our lives (Ezra 8:21). Thus, fasting is a form of penance that deepens our relationship with God by fostering interior conversion and spiritual discipline (CCC 1434, 2043). – *catholic.com*

Our Patron Saint, St. Francis of Assisi had some very extreme forms of fasting, but as I was researching the information about this, I came across the following that I wanted to share.

St. Francis Fasting:

Fast from judging others; feast on the Christ indwelling in them.

Fast from emphasis on differences; feast on the unity of all life.

Fast from apparent darkness; feast on the reality of light.

Fast from words that pollute; feast on phrases that purify.

Fast from discontent; feast on gratitude.

Fast from anger; feast on patience.

Fast from pessimism; feast on optimism.

Fast from worry; feast on trust.

Fast from complaining; feast on appreciation.

Fast from negatives; feast on affirmatives.

Fast from unrelenting pressures; feast on unceasing prayer.

Fast from hostility; feast on nonviolence.

Fast from bitterness; feast on forgiveness.

Fast from self-concern; feast on compassion for others.

Fast from personal anxiety; feast on eternal truth.

Fast from discouragement; feast on hope.

Fast from facts that depress; feast on truths that uplift.

Fast from lethargy; feast on enthusiasm.

Fast from suspicion; feast on truth.

Fast from thoughts that weaken; feast on promises that inspire.

Fast from idle gossip; feast on purposeful silence. (From slife.org)

Gentle God, during this season of fasting and feasting, gift us with your presence so we can be a gift to others in carrying out your work. Amen.

I have some more suggestions to help you with your 3 disciplines of Lent:

FAST from certain activities or habits that consume your time or energy.

PRAY the Rosary today

GIVE Donate to a local charity or soup kitchen.

(Hint, hint: how about our St. Vincent de Paul Society’s food bank?)



E-MAIL AND TEXT SCAM ALERT

We have received word from the Diocese that parishioners have been receiving E-Mails and Texts purportedly sent by Priests, Deacons, or other Clergy asking for urgent financial assistance. Additionally, within our OWN parish, parishioners have reported receiving emails and texts from Fr. Antonio with a similar message. If you have received correspondence like this, please DO NOT respond to it and report it to the Church or Diocesan office. Our diocesan

office has asked that we share that **no priest or deacon will ever contact you by email or text asking for your assistance.**

To report a suspicious email or text to the Diocesan office please contact Mara Lentz at mlentz@dioknox.org or 865-862-5734. To report a suspicious email or text to the Parish Office please call 865-448-6070 or send an email to StFrancisTownsend7717@gmail.com.



ST. FRANCIS WORDS OF WISDOM - JUBILEE YEAR 2026



Sanctify yourself and you will sanctify society.



*- St. Francis of Assisi
1181 - 1226*

STATIONS OF THE CROSS FRIDAY 3/20/2026 - 5:00 PM

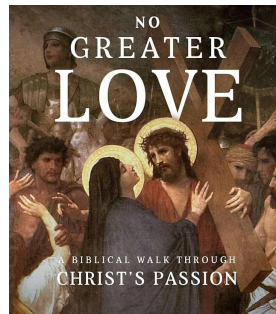
FACILITATED BY THE EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS OF
HOLY COMMUNION MINISTRY
MEATLESS LENTEN SUPPER TO FOLLOW



Praying the stations of the cross - especially on Lenten Fridays - is a beautiful, spiritual experience and a wonderful way to enhance your Lenten journey. Please plan on joining your parish family in this beloved tradition.

For more information please see the Lenten schedule inserted in this week's bulletin, on the website, and on the bulletin board in Shea Hall. There may also be some copies on the table in the church vestibule.

This year, since Pope Leo has declared 2026 as a Jubilee Year for St. Francis of Assisi, each facilitating ministry will be offering a mini-presentation on the life of St. Francis after each Lenten supper.



**LENTEN STUDY GROUP
SUNDAY, MARCH 15
(SESSION 4)
10:30 AM IN THE PRC**

No Greater Love is a biblical pilgrimage that reveals Christ's amazing love for us. Best-selling author Edward Sri guides

you through the last hours of Christ's life. You will walk step-by-step with Jesus from the garden of Gethsemane to Mount Calvary. Every step of the way, Old Testament prophecies, messianic expectations, biblical symbolism, and historical context shed light on the mystery of Christ's suffering and death. Experience a deeper understanding and appreciation of God's immeasurable and unconditional love for you - grow closer to Jesus than you ever have before. For more information please contact Julie Dew 954-749-3929; jdewtn2018@att.net



THE SOCIETY OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL

In today's Gospel, as Jesus gives sight to the blind man. Through grace we are also transformed from not seeing to seeing and then Jesus sends us to help others see and to believe. Your gift to the Society of St. Vincent de Paul brings joy, peace, forgiveness, mercy and kindness to the hurting hearts of the poor.

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 MARCH "PRODUCT OF THE MONTH" RICE A RONI AND PASTA SIDES



YOUR KARM DONATIONS BENEFIT OUR FOOD PANTRY

Do you know that your donations to KARM can benefit our "Neighbors in Need" food pantry? All you have to do is take your donation items to any of the KARM locations. Tell them that your donations are to benefit St. Francis of Assisi - **Townsend** (mentioning **TOWNSEND** is important because there are two St. Francis of Assisi Churches on file with KARM - the other one is up in Knoxville). SVDP then receives gift cards from KARM which we give to our neighbors for purchasing clothing and other items. We have been getting \$100 to \$150 in gift cards each quarter, so your donations are greatly helping! Thank you for helping us and helping your brothers and sisters in need! We wish you could see the smiles this gift brings to them!



EAST TENNESSEE CATHOLIC 2026 READER POLL



The East Tennessee Catholic newspaper is conducting a diocese-wide reader poll during Lent this year and they need our help to ensure the results reflect the voice of every parish in the diocese.

The poll is live now through the end of March and is advertised in both the February and March editions of the newspaper. The goal is to better understand who is reading the newspaper, what content resonates most with readers, and how the faithful can best be served in the pews for years to come.

In addition to the digital option of participation, 1,000 paper surveys will be mailed out to randomly selected reader households. If you prefer a paper copy, please call or email the diocese office to request one: Ebooker@dioknox.org; 865-584-3307 ask for Emily Booker.

Please take a few minutes to complete the brief poll and share your insights. Your perspective helps our diocesan newspaper understand its role in your life and how to best serve the East Tennessee Catholic community for years to come.

UPDATE: The diocesan Office of Communications extends their sincere gratitude to every person who has participated in the Reader Poll. They are seeing a great response and are about one-third of the way to their goal at month's end!

'PRAY WITH THE POPE' INITIATIVE

The Pope's Worldwide Prayer Network and the Dicastery for Communication announced January 7, 2026 the "Pray with the Pope" project. According to a press release, this is a new initiative in which the pope will share his monthly prayer intentions through both video and audio, "inviting the universal Church and all people of goodwill to unite spiritually, using the same prayer that will now be led by the pope himself."

"This initiative aims to increase the visibility of the pope's prayer intentions, using a language suitable for prayer, in new formats, so as to better reach the faithful throughout the world, especially in today's world of digital communication," the press release stated.

In the full video shared on the Pope's Worldwide Prayer Network website, Pope Leo recites an original prayer written specifically for this month's prayer intention. To the right is the pope's full prayer for March.



**Pope's Worldwide
Prayer Network**

POPE LEO'S MONTHLY PRAYER INTENTION MARCH 2026

For Disarmament and Peace

Let us pray that nations move toward effective disarmament, particularly nuclear disarmament, and that world leaders choose the path of dialogue and diplomacy instead of violence.



Antoine Mekary | ALETEIA

DEACON FORMATION



BY: DAVID QUINN

BECOMING A DEACON – COUPLES' RETREAT

The official end of the deacon formation summer break is the couples' retreat in August. In August, we get to bring our wives with us to a weekend at the retreat center. It is not a formation weekend per se but an opportunity for wives to connect on their shared experience with the program. As much as the deacon candidates are creating a brotherhood, the wives are building a bond too.

At a retreat weekend, we have someone guiding us through a spiritual topic. Our first retreat weekend was led by Fr. Jerry Daniels. Our second retreat was led by Deacon Tim Elliott. Our third one was led by Fr. David Mary Engo. Each weekend was spent with time presenting a topic, time to reflect on the topic, and time to talk with other couples on the topic. We also had our usual Evening Prayer, Morning Prayer, Holy Hour/Adoration, and Mass.



Daily CATHOLIC WISDOM



In those parts of the world where the Faith can be served today by dying, the Church has its martyrs. But in most parts of the world this is not so. What the Church needs from us is not our death but our witness, the witness of our life and our utterance.



*- Frank Sheed
from his book, Theology for Beginners*

UPCOMING EVENTS

DATE	EVENT	DETAILS
3/23/2026	Lenten Penance Service 7:00 PM in the Church	Online: N/A Hall: Flyer on Liturgy Bulletin Board Phone: 865-448-6070
4/5/2026	Easter Sunday Masses: 9:00 AM and 11:00 AM	Online: StFrancisTownsend.org Hall: Lenten Schedule on Liturgy Bulletin Board Phone: 865-448-6070
4/12/2026	Divine Mercy Sunday Holy Hour of Adoration 3:00 PM in the Church	Online: StFrancisTownsend.org Hall: Flyer on Liturgy Bulletin Board Phone: 865-448-6070
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!

March 17	St. Patrick, Bishop
March 18	St. Cyril of Jerusalem, Bishop and Doctor of the Church
March 19	St. Joseph, Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary

INSPIRATIONAL QUOTES TO PROMOTE DEVOTION TO JESUS IN THE EUCHARIST

*“Turn in faith with all your hearts to the Lord my God,
because nothing is impossible for him,
so that he may put food in your way –
even enough to make you fully satisfied!
He has an abundance everywhere.”*

St. Patrick
c. 385 - 461 AD



DIVINE MERCY SUNDAY
SPECIAL HOLY HOUR
OF ADORATION

Sunday, April 12, 2026 2-3 PM

Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament

Scripture Readings

Praying the Rosary (with special text)

Praying the Chaplet of Divine Mercy

Benediction

Jesus, I Trust in You

PARISH PENANCE SERVICE

Monday, March 23, 2026

7:00 p.m.



Lent

This is the time of fulfillment.
The Kingdom of God is at hand.
Repent and believe in the Gospel.

MARK 1:15