

St. Francis de Sales Parish

ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH



Fr. Jeremy Merzweiler
Pastor

Fr. David Verbsky
Parochial Vicar

Raymond Herrick
Deacon

Richard Butz
Deacon, Retired

Kathryn Dougherty
Principal

Colleen McVicker
Director of Music Ministry

School:
330-644-0638 or stfparishschool.org

Parish Registration:
Please see the Priest
after any of the weekend Masses
or call the Parish Office.

Parish Office Hours:
Monday through Friday,
9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.

Masses: Saturday Vigil: 5:00 p.m., Sunday: 7:30, 9:00, 11:00 a.m.
Monday through Saturday, 8:15 a.m.; Tuesday and Thursday 6:30 p.m.

Confessions: Thursday, 5:30-6:15 p.m.; Saturday, 9:00-9:45 a.m.; or call the office
at 330-644-2225 for an appointment.

Baptisms: Please make arrangements with the Parish Office.

Weddings: Arrangements with the Parish Priest are to be made at least six months before the
wedding date.

Anointing of the Sick: At any time. Please call the Parish Office at 330-644-2225.

FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT DECEMBER 24, 2023



SUNDAY, DECEMBER 24, FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

No 7:30 a.m. Mass

- 9:00 a.m. Pro Populo
- 11:00 a.m. Jim Mesko (Pat Mesko)
- 4:00 p.m. Vigil – Casenhiser Family
(Jim & Chris Tawney)
- 6:00 p.m. Vigil – Burt Jackson (Don & Kathy McCabe)
- 12:00 a.m. Midnight Mass (Choir Prelude at
11:30 p.m.) for peace in the Holy Land

MONDAY, DECEMBER 25, THE NATIVITY OF THE LORD

- 9:00 a.m. Priest's Intention
- 11:00 a.m. Peace in Ukraine

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 26, ST. STEPHEN

- 8:15 a.m. Karen Renee Davis (Magyar-Davis Family)
- 6:30 p.m. James A. Eckman (Eckman Family)

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 27, ST. JOHN

- 8:15 a.m. Bob Baltrinic (Family)

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 28, THE HOLY INNOCENTS

- 8:15 a.m. Barb Duckworth (John Duckworth)
- 6:30 p.m. Elizabeth "Jackie" Wargo
(Dan & Sue Wargo)

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 29, ST. THOMAS BECKET

- 8:15 a.m. Ray Foley (Warner Family)
Helen DeShon – Anniversary of Death

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 30, SIXTH DAY IN THE OCTAVE OF THE NATIVITY OF THE LORD

- 8:15 a.m. Living & Deceased of the Ford Family
(Sandra D'Angelo)
- 12:00 p.m. Wedding: Brown & Bryan
- 2:00 p.m. Wedding: Ruscak & Bradshaw
- 5:00 p.m. Richard P. Stevens (His Wife)

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 31, FEAST OF THE HOLY FAMILY OF JESUS, MARY, AND JOSEPH

- 7:30 a.m. Pro Populo
- 9:00 a.m. Rosemary Capotosto (Kusnir Family)
- 11:00 a.m. Ben Gregg
(Theresa & Dorothy Zachorowski)
- 5:00 p.m. Vigil of the Feast of Mary, the Mother of God
Mary Beth Reymann (Kovesci Family)

HERE'S WHAT'S HAPPENING AROUND THE PARISH THIS WEEK...

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 24

- Adoration between 9:00 a.m. & 11:00 a.m. Masses
- Vigil Masses for the Nativity,
4:00 p.m. (Youth Choir) & 6:00 p.m.
- Midnight Mass, Choir Prelude at 11:30 p.m.

MONDAY, DECEMBER 25

- Merry Christmas!
- Masses at 9:00 a.m. & 11:00 a.m.

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 26

- No School
- Parish Office Closed

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 27

- No School
- Parish Office Closed
- Senior Group Euchre, 1:00-4:00 p.m.
- AA/Al-Anon, 7:30 p.m. (Upper Room)

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 28

- No School
- Parish Office Closed
- Exodus 90 Men's Gathering, 6:00 p.m.
(Beatitudes Room)
- SVdP Food Pantry Open, 6:00-6:30 p.m.
- Eucharistic Prayer Night for the protection of life,
7:00-7:30 p.m.

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 29

- No School
- Parish Office Closed

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 30

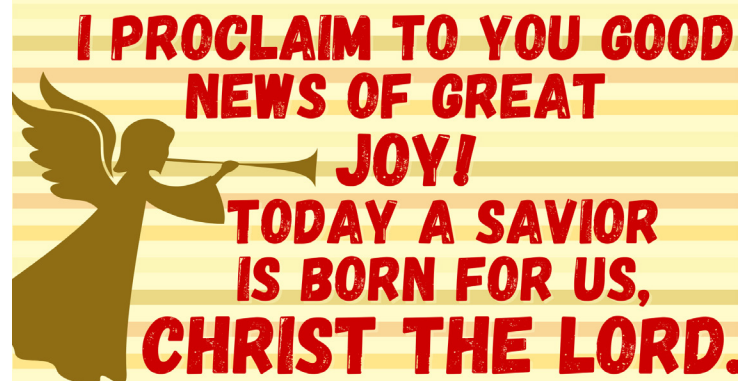
- Men's Group, 7:00 a.m. (Holy Family Room)

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 31

- Adoration, 6:00-11:00 p.m.
- Praise and Worship, 11:00 p.m.-12:00 a.m.

SCRIPTURE READINGS FOR THE WEEK

- Monday:** Is 52:7-10; Heb 1:1-6; Jn 1:1-18 or 1:1-5, 9-14
- Tuesday:** Acts 6:8-10; 7:54-59; Mt 10:17-22
- Wednesday:** 1 Jn 1:1-4; Jn 20:1a, 2-8
- Thursday:** 1 Jn 1:5-2:2; Mt 2:13-18
- Friday:** 1 Jn 2:3-11; Lk 2:22-35
- Saturday:** 1 Jn 2:12-17; Lk 2:36-40
- Sunday:** Sir 3:2-6, 12-14; Col 3:12-21 or 3:12-17;
Lk 2:22-40 or 2:22, 39-40



"TODAY IS BORN OUR SAVIOR, CHRIST THE LORD!"



Today we celebrate one of the most important days of all time: Christmas Day! The day that changed humanity. The day that gave us hope. The day that gave us a way out of our wayward lives to a life of grace, peace and love. Jesus Christ is the way, the truth and the life and He has given Himself to us as pure gift! Merry Christmas!

As we celebrate Christmas this year, we do it in the midst of a number of anniversaries. We recently celebrated 75 years of parish life here at St. Francis! This year also marks the 50th anniversary of the showing of the famous Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer animated movie special. Lastly, the Church celebrates the 800th anniversary of the creation of the first Nativity scene in Greccio, Italy by St. Francis of Assisi.

St. Francis shared why he desired to create a Nativity scene in his town.... *"I want to do something that will recall the memory of that Child who was born in Bethlehem, to see with bodily eyes the inconveniences of His infancy, how He lay in the manger, and how the ox and ass stood by."* He set up an empty manger inside a cave with live animals beside the manger. With these visual aids, he wanted to remind everyone more deeply of how Jesus came into the world in such poverty and simplicity (franciscanmedia.org).

In light of this, you will notice that we moved the Nativity scene in front of the altar. We did this precisely because St. Francis of Assisi as well as many other saints have beautifully connected the altar to the manger. The manger is highly symbolic and foreshadows the Eucharist. A manger is a feeding trough for animals and was likely the cleanest place in the stable where the Virgin Mary could place the baby Jesus. Christians would later reflect on this profoundly symbolic action and find a connection to the Holy Eucharist, where Jesus Himself becomes food for humanity.



St. Cyril of Alexandria in the 5th century explains, *"The setting of Christ's birth points us to the Eucharist. Since through sin man becomes like the beasts, Christ lies in the trough where animals feed, offering them, not hay, but His own body as life-giving bread."*

St. John Chrysostom in the 4th century encouraged his congregation to attend Mass on Christmas Day, where they could approach the altar as if they were going to the manger... *"For if we approach with faith we shall surely behold Him lying in a manger. His holy table will supply the place of a manger. For there will be spread the body of our Lord, not wrapped in swaddling clothes as then, but on all sides surrounded by His Holy Spirit"* (aleteia.org).

As you celebrate Christmas this year, approach the Nativity scene, kneel down and dwell upon the beautiful gift of Jesus in our lives. Jesus came to us in poverty and simplicity. He still comes to us in the humble, broken bread we are privileged to receive at every Mass.

Come let us adore Him!

Fr. Jeremy

P.S. Our Christmas gift this year is *Beautiful Eucharist* by Matthew Kelly. Please enjoy and deepen your love for Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament.

ADORERS NEEDED

We are in need of an Adorer for the following time:
 Tuesday, 5:00-5:30 p.m.
 If you are able to fill this, please call Joanne at 330-338-4810.

VOCATION CRUCIFIX

"The harvest is abundant, but the laborers are few; so ask the Master of the harvest to send out laborers for His harvest" (Mt. 9:37-38).

Receiving the Vocation Crucifix and praying for vocations is a beautiful and simple way to ask the Master to send out more laborers for His harvest! Please contact the parish office any time to get your name on the list; there are many slots to be filled – 330-644-2225.

The Wilson Family received the Vocation Crucifix this weekend.

WEDDING BANNES

III Carson Brown & Mercedes Bryan
 III Samuel Ruscak & Katherine Bradshaw

COLLECTION INFORMATION

December 1st-16th Faith Direct Online Giving

| | | |
|--------------------------|----|-----------------|
| Sunday | \$ | 13,424.31 |
| Capital | \$ | 150.00 |
| Christmas | \$ | 1,652.00 |
| Assessment | \$ | 100.00 |
| Immaculate Conception | \$ | 167.00 |
| Retirement for Religious | \$ | 237.00 |
| School | \$ | 330.00 |
| Special Gift | \$ | <u>1,480.00</u> |
| TOTAL | \$ | 17,540.31 |

The rest of the collection information for December 16/17 will be published in the forthcoming bulletin.

Thank you for your generosity to our parish!

A GIFT TO OUR PARISH

Did you know you can make a gift to our parish using your IRA? If you are 70 ½ or older, you may be able to make a gift of a Qualified Charitable Distribution from your IRA that will help our parish and reduce your taxable income. Talk to your advisors and IRA administrator or visit catholiccommunity.org/IRA to learn more. Questions? Call Therese in the parish office at 330-644-2225.



The Parish Staff wishes you and your family joy in Our Lord this Christmas season! May He fill your hearts and homes with peace. In observance of the holiday, the Parish Office will be closed from Friday, December 22nd through Monday, January 1st.

CHRISTMAS MASS SCHEDULE

This year, the Fourth Sunday of Advent happens to be Christmas Eve. Because we rejoice in both the final Sunday of Advent and the Feast of the Nativity, there are separate obligations for the Fourth Sunday and for Christmas. See the schedule below to find a Mass for the Fourth Sunday and a Mass for Christmas that will suit your family's schedule.

Fourth Sunday of Advent

Saturday, December 23, Vigil – 5:00 p.m. & 6:30 p.m.
 Sunday, December 24 – 9:00 a.m. & 11:00 a.m.

Feast of the Nativity of the Lord, Christmas

Sunday, December 24, Vigil – 4:00 p.m. (Youth Choir)
 6:00 p.m.

Midnight (Choir Prelude at 11:30 p.m.)

Monday, December 25 – 9:00 a.m. & 11:00 a.m.

Feast of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, & Joseph

Saturday, December 30, Vigil – 5:00 p.m.

Sunday, December 31 – 7:30 a.m., 9:00 a.m. & 11:00 a.m.

The Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God

Sunday, December 31, Vigil – 5:00 p.m.

Adoration, 6:00 p.m.-11:00 p.m.

11:00 p.m.-Midnight, Praise and Worship
 with Benediction

Monday, January 1 – 9:00 a.m. & 11:00 a.m.

Feast of the Epiphany of the Lord

Saturday, January 6, Vigil – 5:00 p.m.

Sunday, January 7 – 7:30 a.m., 9:00 a.m. & 11:00 a.m.

PARISH MINISTRY FAIR

Save the date for our parish Ministry Fair! Following the 9:00 and 11:00 Masses on Sunday, January 7, come over to the school gym to meet representatives from the many ministries in our parish. How might God be calling you to share your gifts in the new year? Come to find out!

**WELCOME TO
 ST. FRANCIS DE SALES
 PARISH**

Are you new to the parish? To register as a new parishioner, give our parish office a call at 330-644-2225, see the priest after Mass, or join us at Donut Sundays to meet with a fellow parishioner.

"BE WHO YOU ARE AND BE THAT WELL"
 St. Francis de Sales

EUCCHARISTIC REVIVAL OPPORTUNITIES



SUNDAY ADORATION

- During Advent, between the 9:00 a.m. and 11:00 a.m. Masses, we invite you to spend some time in Adoration! The Blessed Sacrament will be exposed from the end of 9:00 a.m. Mass to 10:45 a.m.

SUNDAY NIGHT PRAYER & BENEDICTION

- Every Sunday until Easter (except Christmas Eve), come for Night Prayer and Benediction, 7:00-7:30 p.m.

MONDAY PRAYER FOR STUDENTS

- 1:30-2:00 p.m. on January 22, February 12 & March 18
- Parents and Grandparents are invited to come pray for their students, whether in our parish school, PSR, or homeschool.

EUCCHARISTIC PRAYER NIGHTS

- Every Thursday night until Easter, the following prayer opportunities will be offered:
 - 5:55 p.m. Rosary
 - 6:30 p.m. Mass
 - 7:00-7:30 p.m. Half-hour of Adoration & Prayer for Healing (1st Thursday), Priests (2nd Thursday), Families (3rd Thursday), The Protection of Life (4th Thursday).

To find out more about Eucharistic Revival events in our Diocese, visit <https://www.dioceseofcleveland.org/eucharistic-revival/events>. To learn about the National Eucharistic Revival and find great resources to enrich your faith in the Eucharist, visit <https://www.eucharisticrevival.org/>.

"The Holy Eucharist is the continuation of Christ's incarnation on earth. The mystery of the Eucharist gives us the joy of having Christmas every day."
– St. Teresa of Calcutta



A message from Stephen Ministry: The Stephen Ministry Team at St. Francis de Sales Parish wishes you and your loved ones a very blessed Christmas! Please add any prayer intentions to the Stephen Ministry box located in the back of the church so we can pray with you and for you this Christmas season.



GIFTS FOR BABY JESUS

The collection of baby items for the Embrace Clinic and Care Center in Barberton begins this weekend, December 23/24 and continues the weekend of December 30/31. There is a crib in the narthex to place items. This is a beautiful way to honor and celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ while helping those in crisis pregnancies like the family of the unborn baby you may have been praying for all year with the Spiritual Adoption program that we encourage each year. The Center expressed the need for children's clothing up to size 4 (i.e., winter clothes, coats and boots).

If you wish to donate money, about \$50.00 will buy a car seat, \$100 will buy a crib, and \$150.00 will buy a crib and mattress. You can mail monetary donations to: Embrace Clinic and Care Center, 180 1st Street NW, Barberton, OH 44203. Thank you very much from the Respect Life Ministry.



CALL: 216-902-1312 ONLINE: CatholicCommunity.org/angel-contribution

Through the Angel Scholarship Fund, you can now contribute funds that will be used to provide tuition assistance for students to attend our school, and you will receive a 100% Ohio income tax credit of up to \$750 (single) and \$1,500 (married), against your state tax liability. In other words, the state of Ohio allows you to "spend" some of the state income taxes you must pay anyway to provide tuition assistance for students seeking an education in our Catholic schools. The Angel Scholarship Fund is a win-win-win for taxpayer donors, scholarship recipients, and our diocese. To make a contribution for the 2023-2024 school year, fill out the form on the following page and submit it by **December 31, 2023**.



ANGEL SCHOLARSHIP FUND

Turning taxes into tuition with the Catholic Community Foundation

2023 CONTRIBUTION FORM

PLEASE NOTE: Contributions must be postmarked by December 31, 2023 to be eligible for a 2023 state tax credit.

Donor Information

First Name: _____ MI: _____
 Last Name: _____
 Spouse Name: _____
 Address: _____
 City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____
 Phone: _____
 Email: _____
 Parish: _____

THANK YOU!

We will share your contact information with the school so they are able to thank you for your support. I wish to remain anonymous

Donation

General Scholarship Fund for
 Schools in Most Need: \$ _____
 School of my choice:
St. Francis de Sales \$ _____
 Total: \$ _____

Payment Information

I am paying by:
 Check (made payable to Angel Scholarship Fund)
 Credit Card:
 Visa Mastercard Discover AMEX
 Card Number: _____
 Expires: _____ CVV Code: _____
 Signature: _____

U23ASUNK1

Spouse Information (if additional donation)

First Name: _____ MI: _____
 Last Name: _____
 Check if address is the same
 Address: _____
 City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____
 Phone: _____
 Email: _____
 Parish: _____

THANK YOU!

We will share your contact information with the school so they are able to thank you for your support. I wish to remain anonymous

Spouse Donation

General Scholarship Fund for
 Schools in Most Need: \$ _____
 School of my choice:
St. Francis de Sales \$ _____
 Total: \$ _____

Spouse Payment Information

Check if payment information is the same
 I am paying by:
 Check (made payable to Angel Scholarship Fund)
 Credit Card:
 Visa Mastercard Discover AMEX
 Card Number: _____
 Expires: _____ CVV Code: _____
 Signature: _____

U23ASUNK2

or Monthly Contribution

Would you like to STRETCH your contribution into smaller monthly payments?

Register for monthly contributions at www.catholiccommunity.org/angel, email asinfo@dioceseofcleveland.org
 or call our office for assistance at **216-696-6525 x3670**

COMPLETE AND MAIL CONTRIBUTION FORM TO:

Angel Scholarship Fund, Catholic Community Foundation • 1404 East Ninth Street • Cleveland, OH 44114



**We welcome our newest parishioners...
we're so happy you're here!**

Bailey, Scott, Emma & Connor

Bowen, Gregg & Theresa

Drexler, Michael & Theresa

Hirsch, Paul

Krismanth, Lisa, Katherine & Madeleine

McAleese, Timothy Gwen & Emma

Mellon, Spencer & Tara

Pittinger, Joseph

Puglin, Jonathan



**And the newly Baptized...
welcome to our faith community!**

Jayde Elizabeth Adkins

Connor David Bailey

Rowan Hayes Chiavaroli

Eloise Grace Gleixner

Brooklyn Louise Littlefield

Navy Louise Logan

Mae Marie McNeill

Tristan Douglas Pamer

Crew Grant Pihlblad

If you are interested in joining the parish or having your child baptized, please call the Parish Office at 330-644-2225.
Our staff will be happy to help you!

The above are families who have registered and individuals who have been baptized since the end of October 2023.

Dear Parishioners,

Do you know someone who has been away from the Catholic Church? Pray for them and cultivate your friendship with them. Prayer, friendship and an invitation to Catholics Returning Home could make a huge difference in their life and in bringing a soul home to Christ. You are welcome to accompany them to the meetings. Cut this portion at the dotted line below and give the invitation to your friend. Copies of this invitation are also available in the Church Foyer.



No matter how long one has been away or for whatever reason, we invite you to consider renewing your relationship with the Catholic Church. Our faith community misses you and is incomplete without you. Please join us for informal sessions and an update of the Catholic faith. The six-session series will be conducted in a group format:

January 10
Sharing our Stories

January 17
Sharing Stories of Faith

January 24
The Creed: What Catholics Really Believe

January 31
All About the Mass

February 7
Reconciliation & Prayer

Come for all or part of the Wednesday evening series. Explore the way home! You will find an open door and a warm welcome!

Catholics Returning Home
Wednesdays, 7:00-8:30 p.m.
January 10-February 14, 2024
St. Francis de Sales Parish, Memorare Center
4009 Manchester Road, Akron 44319

Come, See.....

and Believe

**St. Francis de Sales
Parish** welcomes
you for **Christmas**
& invites you to
return this spring to
see where the Christ
child's journey ends
and where all
HOPE begins. See
the vivid musical
passion play,
Tetéstai - Here:
**March 22nd, 23rd,
and 24th 2024**



LivethePassion.org

BETHLEHEM CAVE AND NATIVITY MUSEUM

The Bethlehem Cave and Nativity Museum at Nativity of the Lord Jesus Catholic Church, 2425 Myersville Road, Akron, will be open for guided tours at 2:00 p.m. daily from December 26-30, 2023. Visit a replica of the cave where Jesus was born and view over 400 Nativity sets from around the world. There is no charge, but freewill donations will be accepted. For more information, email tours@nativityofthelord.org or call 330-699-5086 weekdays.

LOVE BEYOND WORDS NATIONAL MARRIAGE WEEK KICKOFF

All Married couples are invited to a celebration of marriage! We are going to kick off National Marriage week in style on Saturday, February 3 at St. Albert the Great Parish in North Royalton. The evening will offer Praise and Adoration at 6:30 p.m. with a reflection offered by Vicar of Evangelization Father Damian Ference. From 7:30 p.m. to 11:00 p.m., a reception will be held in the Hall with dinner, drinks and a DJ for dancing. The Marriage and Family Ministry office is happy to have RAK Photobooths to provide a memory for you to take home. Tickets are \$60.00 per couple with three drink tickets per person. Register at <https://www.dioceseofcleveland.org/events/2024/02/03/love-beyond-words-national-marriage-week-kick-off>.

THE ITE PROJECT

Join The ITE Project on January 12th from 6:00-10:00 p.m. for "When God Makes You Wait - A Half-day Retreat for the Frustrated" at Holy Family Parish in Stow. ITE's half-day retreats are intentionally designed for busy young adults searching for some self-care. The evening includes a home-cooked meal in a casual, social atmosphere, a presentation on the evening's topic by Fr. Louis Thomas, followed by contemplative Adoration, Confessions, and Mass. The evening concludes with dessert. It is the perfect balance of friendship with others and friendship with the Lord and the perfect opportunity to check in with yourself about your spiritual goals in 2024. It's short, simple, and free -- yes, that's right. FREE. ALL young adults are welcome! Registration closes on January 9th! Visit https://www.theiteproject.com/events/waitwithgod to learn more.

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