

Welcome to proudly-blended Saint Francis de Sales Parish United by the Most Blessed Sacrament. SFDS Parish was founded in 1890; Most Blessed Sacrament Parish was founded in 1901; St. Francis de Sales Church was built in 1911; and the two parishes merged here in 2007.

Today, we proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ in an urban setting to diverse members who form a Catholic community of believers of all ages. Our worship together overflows into charity evidenced by service, justice, and peace.



SAINT FRANCIS DE SALES PARISH
UNITED BY THE MOST BLESSED SACRAMENT

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IHM Center for Literacy:
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Religious of the Assumption
Convent: (215) 386-5016

Star Harbor Senior Center:
(215) 726-7468

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

December 13, 2020

Dear friends in Christ,

The liturgy of the Third Sunday of Advent calls us to rejoice because the Lord is near. Even if we may sometimes feel like our lives are very difficult, or that the world's challenges are too big, we must rejoice all the more not in our own efforts, but in the coming of Jesus Christ, the savior of the world, which we will celebrate in just a couple of weeks.

Archbishop Nelson Perez has released a pastoral message for Advent, and I would like to share it with you:

This year, perhaps more than ever, we need Christmas and its promise of hope for a suffering humanity in the person of Jesus Christ. To fully understand and be ready to accept that profound gift on Christmas day, we must prepare our minds and hearts.



If we embrace the Season of Advent fully, we will be ready for the Savior. Though our Advent experience may be far from typical this year due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this holy season can still be one of prayer and charity.

At the Angelus this past weekend, Pope Francis said, "Advent is a continuous call to hope: it reminds us that God is present in history to lead it to its ultimate goal and to lead us to its fullness, which is the Lord, the Lord Jesus Christ."

Soon we will rejoice in celebration of the birth of our Lord Jesus in Bethlehem, remembering the words of Saint Matthew, "Behold, the virgin shall be with child and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel, which means, 'God is with us.'" As we direct our lives more fully toward the Lord Jesus during these days of preparation, let us pray for and encourage one another in our efforts to be people of hope.

One of the ways our parish is "preparing the way of the Lord" is by assisting expecting mothers in need. If you can bring \$5 or \$10 dollars to church and mark your gift for "Catholic Social Services," we will use it to make a parish Christmas gift to CSS' program which assists pregnant moms in difficult situations.

May God be Blessed!

-Father Eric Banecker

MASS SCHEDULE AND INTENTIONS

Readings can be found at:

<http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings>

Saturday December 12

Our Lady of Guadalupe

9:00 Gail Allard

4:15-4:45 PM Confessions

5:00 PM Robert Johnson

Sunday December 13

Third Sunday of Advent

7:00 AM Augustine Pham

9:00 AM Confessions

10:15 AM People of the Parish

ISA 61:1-2A, 10-11; 1 THES 5:16-24;

JOHN 1:6-8, 19-28

Monday December 14

St. John of the Cross

7:00 AM Maria Nguyen

Tuesday December 15

7:00 AM John Cooney

Wednesday December 16

7:00 AM Maria Nguyen

5:00 PM Holy Hour, Benediction, and Confessions

Thursday December 17

7:00 AM John Cooney

December 18

7:00 AM Religious of the Assumption

Saturday December 19

9:00 All souls of the Nguyen family

4:15-4:45 PM Confessions

5:00 PM Rev. Father Joseph Pereira

Sunday December 20

Fourth Sunday of Advent

7:00 AM Peace for Nguyen family

9:00 AM Confessions

10:15 AM People of the Parish

COLLECTION AS OF DEC. 7

Weekly \$5,386.00

Fiscal YTD \$99,721.94

Mass Intentions for 2021

The 2021 Mass Book is now open. The suggested donation for all Masses is \$10.00. Please contact the Rectory for all your Mass needs.

If you have items for the Bulletin, contact

mdooleywork@hotmail.com

PARISH NEWS AND NOTES

Rectory hours are by appointment only until further notice

Christmas Donations for Parents in Need Dec. 13, Dec. 20



Due to Covid 19, we cannot have our annual Christmas giving tree. In lieu of this, we are going to raise money for **Catholic Social Service's Prenatal and Parenting Program**, which provides programs and support for mother's to be and families struggling to get by. We will be taking up second collections on the **3rd and 4th Sundays of Advent**. Our hope is that each of parishioner will contribute \$5 or more. Please bring checks made out to Catholic Social Service's Prenatal and Parenting Program or cash. Please put the donations in envelops marked Catholic Social Services. After the two collections, the parish will send the donations to Catholic Social Services. It will be a gift from all of us.

Red Cross Blood Drive Dec. 19



There will be one more blood drive this year on **December 19** from 9 AM to 2 PM at Calvary, 48th and Baltimore Ave. The need is very great, especially since the lockdown began. High schools and businesses have traditionally been successful blood drive sites, but many are not available during this time. Interested? For information or to make an appointment, please contact Fran Byers at 267-312-2255. Please consider donating blood if you have not recently done so.

Advent Activity: Thank You, Father!"

"*We love, because He first loved us.*"(1 John 4:19) Serra would like to introduce the program called "THANK YOU, FATHER" to show our appreciation, affection, and support for our wonderful priests. Parishioners please send a letter or email of gratitude for the remarkable priest in your life by **December 31, 2020**. Tell us how he made an impact by God's grace. Include your name, contact information, and Parish. All letters will be sent to corresponding priest. The Vocation Office, on social media, may post select letters. Please send your letter to: Attn: Thank You, Father Serra Missions 100 East Wynnewood Road Wynnewood, PA 19096 Or Please send email to: Cynthia Brown at cynthiaarlenebrown@gmail.com

The Pope Speaks Out

Pope Francis wrote a strongly-worded editorial for the *New York Times*, November 26, scolding those "...refusing to keep their distance...as if measures that governments must impose for the good of their people constitute some kind of political assault on autonomy or personal freedom! Looking to the common good is much more than the sum of what is good for individuals. It means having a regard for all citizens and seeking to respond effectively to the needs of the least fortunate. It is all too easy for some to take an idea — in this case, for example, personal freedom — and turn it into an ideology, creating a prism through which they judge everything." See: <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/11/26/opinion/pope-francis-covid.html?action=click&module=Opinion&pgtype=Homepage>

Pope Francis Builds A Nativity Scene (Part 3)

"It is customary to add many symbolic figures to our nativity scenes. First, there are the **beggars** and the others who know only the wealth of the heart...They too have every right to draw near to the Infant Jesus...Indeed, the poor are a privileged part of this mystery; often they are the first to recognize God's presence in our midst.... We see **Herod**'s palace in the background, closed and deaf to the tidings of joy....

Children – but adults too! – often love to add to the nativity scene other figures that have no apparent connection with the Gospel accounts. Yet, each in its own way, these fanciful additions show that in the new world inaugurated by Jesus there is room for whatever is truly human and for all God's creatures. From the shepherd to the blacksmith, from the baker to the musicians, from the women carrying jugs of water to the children at play: all this speaks of the everyday holiness, the joy of doing ordinary things in an extraordinary way, born whenever Jesus shares his divine life with us."

(More next week. Find the full Dec.2019 "Admirabile Signum" under Apostolic Letters at <http://www.vatican.va/content/vatican/en.html>)



WEDDING CONGRATULATIONS

To Julian Bello
And
Claudia Alarcon

Who were married in our church on December 5.
May God bless you on your new life's journey!

PRAY FOR THE SICK:

Jennifer Baugh, Eleanor Brooks, Spenser Brown, Becky Brown, Phyllis Buckhan, Christopher Browne, Bob Byers, Dawn Byers, **Bob and Claudia Christian**, Edmund Coccagna, Adlyn Cummings, Gisselle Marie Burgess, Michael Farley, Ruth Harrell, Paula Harvey, Shirley Hinson, Vashti Holden, Frank Innes, Bernadette Jengo, the Joseph family, Don McDermott, Venus Murphy, Wilma Noel, Marie O'Connor, Denise Pogue, Martin Prowisor, Jack Ruane, Sister Thérèse RA, Timothy A. Triplett, Peter Villa, Kristina Zaprasna,

Please keep the staff and residents at Renaissance Healthcare (47th and Chester) in your prayers in this time of Covid!

REMEMBER THOSE WHO HAVE DIED



**Rev. Raymond J. Himsworth, Pastor Emeritus,
Saint James Parish, Elkins Park**

Eternal Rest grant unto them O Lord and let perpetual light shine upon them.

Let us pray for the victims of all disasters, and for an end to violence and hatred across the country and around the world.



**3rd pastor Rev. Edward L. Gatens
(SFDS 1929-1936; died Dec. 19, 1955)**

GAUDETE SUNDAY

The Third Sunday of Advent is traditionally known as *Gaudete Sunday*. *Gaudete* (pronounced GOW-day-tay) is Latin for *Rejoice*. The priest wears rose colored vestments and the rose-colored candle is lighted on the Advent Wreath to remind us that *the Lord is near*.

SFDS HISTORY MYSTERIES: Nativity Portal: We Like Sheep

The Nativity scene is very weathered above the 47th Street door to our church, and today it's hard to tell if the visitors to the Christ Child, are kings or shepherds!

Does it matter?

You might have expected that our "magnificent church" would have identified with the Three Kings, dressed in worldly finery, and offering splendid gifts to honor the Christ Child. And, indeed, the *Adoration of the Magi* is a traditional theme for doorway sculptures on many elaborate old churches.

Our church seems to have chosen a different route, though. A partial view of our sculpture, clearly visible in a 1940 SFDS school photo, appears to confirm that the central visitor is a child shepherd with a sheep -- and this is supported by the phrase around the scene, still readable as "*The Word Was Made Flesh*" rather than "*They Offered Him Gifts...*"

Why depict a shepherd? Pope Francis observes that the arrival of the shepherds marks a critical moment in the story of Christ's birth, since, after hearing from the angels, "*the shepherds become the first to see the most essential thing of all: the gift of salvation. It is the humble and the poor who greet the event of the Incarnation.*"

Our doorway sculptures are part of an overall design theme in our church, based on John's Gospel that "*the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.*" This doctrine is central to faith: as the BBC concisely explains, "*Through the incarnation of Jesus, humans were able to start repairing their damaged relationship with God. This relationship had been imperfect since Adam and Eve disobeyed God. Through Jesus' incarnation, God began the process of salvation from sin, making it possible for humans to have a full relationship with him and go to Heaven.*"

How does this appear in artwork? The Oxford Dictionary of Christian Art states that "*The Incarnation, i.e. God becoming man in the person of Christ, is...symbolized, either as the Annunciation (at Mary's words 'Let it be with me according to your word'), or as the Nativity.*" So the Nativity depiction above the 47th street door represents the witness to God becoming human. On the front of the building, the Annunciation scene – another Incarnation -- is shown above the left or "choir" door. The theme continues above the center door, with the Christ child shown standing with arms outstretched in the same pose as Christ on the crucifix above the altar inside – foreshadowing his future sacrifice. And on the right, the crucified Jesus is mourned by his mother – a human moment – with an inscription reminding that "*Christ died for us*" – emphasizing that God became human to save us.

The same theme is echoed inside, with the three Life of Christ windows on the parking lot side of the church. Like the first door on the front of our church, the first window shows the Annunciation. The middle window is another Nativity scene with humble shepherds as the human witnesses to the Incarnation. The third window shows young Jesus building a cross with his Dad – a family moment, parallel to the scene of his mother taking him down from the cross on the front of the church. Below all three windows are different artistic interpretations of double crosses -- symbols of the dual nature of Christ, both human and divine.

Why are the outdoor scenes above the church doors important? The entryway, or "Portal," frames the experience. Those who pass through the front doors into the church are reminded of the power of prayer and instructed to be aware that Christ died for our sins. At the side door, we are advised to approach with humility. If that "portal" includes a child shepherd, then the meaning is even more pointed, since Jesus said "*the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.*" And the sheep in the scene remind us that we are God's flock, and he is both our shepherd and the sacrificial "Lamb of God."

Find more at <https://SFDShistory.wordpress.com>
Contact mdooleywork@hotmail.com



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What's My Name?
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#WHATSMYNAME

In Remembrance of Samantha Josephson



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