

SAINT FRANCIS OF ASSISI ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

(Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston)

524 Holley Street, St Albans, WV 25177 304-727-3033

www.stfranciswv.org parish@stfranciswv.org www.facebook.com/stfrancisofassisisaintalbans



MARCH 8, 2026 THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT

OUR MISSION

–In the spirit of Saint Francis, we, the church family, strive to discover Christ’s peace in us and in each aspect of creation by welcoming and walking hand in hand with our brothers and sisters on our faith journey–



“IF GOD CAN WORK THROUGH ME, HE CAN WORK THROUGH ANYONE.” – SAINT FRANCIS OF ASSISI

A WARM WELCOME TO SAINT FRANCIS OF ASSISI PARISH!

To register as a new or returning member of the parish, please contact the parish office at 304-727-3033. The parish community will be indeed delighted to have you.

SUNDAY READINGS P. 1033 (YEAR A)



09 Monday	10 Tuesday	11 Wednesday	12 Thursday	13 Friday	14 Saturday	15 Sunday
2kGS 5: 1-15ab Lk4: 24-30 (237)	Dn 3:25, 34-43 Mt 18:21-35 (238)	Dt 4:1, 5-9 Mt 5: 17-19 (239)	Jer 7:23-28 Lk 11:14-23 (240)	Hos 14:2-10 Mk 12:28-34 (241)	Hos 6: 1-6 Lk 18: 9-14 (242)	1 Sm 16:1b, 6-7, 10-13a Eph 5: 8-14 Jn 9: 1-41 or 9:1, 6-9, 13-17, 34-38 (31)

PARISH INFORMATION

Date	Mass Time	Mass Intention	Lector	Extraordinary Minister(s)	Altar Servers	Rosary Leader
SAT MAR 07	5:00 pm	Intentions of the people of the parish	Lisa D'Esposito	Leslie Huffman(X) Midge Butler (C) Helen Musrock(C)	Volunteers	Lisa D'Esposito
SUN MAR 08	11:00 am	Les & Mary Tabit By Sandy Williams	Mita Larson	Bill Tabor (X) Paul Niedbalski(C) Suzanne Farley(C)	Lily Palmer Sadie Palmer Diondrae Johnson	Mary Sanney
MON MAR 09	—	—	—	—	—	—
TUE MAR 10	6:00 pm	All the Souls in Purgatory	Pat Romanosky	Midge Butler	—	—
WED MAR 11	8:15 am	Sara Campbell Garska By Mom and Family	Helen Musrock	Tom Liberatore	—	—
THU MAR 12	8:00 am 8:30 am	Rosary Mary Jane Gertz By Tony Gertz	School Students	Lynn Fenimore	School Students	—
FRI MAR 13	6:00 pm	Rosy By Father Sojan	Dawna Kessler	Midge Butler	—	—
SAT MAR 14	5:00 pm	William S. White By Sherman & Vivian White	Helen Musrock	Leslie Huffman(X) Tom Liberatore(C) Midge Butler (C)	Volunteers	Helen Musrock
SUN MAR 15	11:00 am	Intentions of the people of the parish	Tom Williams	Paul Niedbalski(X) John Carnell (C) Bill Tabor (C)	Mighty Lopez Reed Wriston Miguel Matheus	Tom Williams

LITURGY SCHEDULE

Saturday

Rosary: 4:30 pm
Mass: 5:00 pm

Sunday

Rosary: 10:30 am
Mass: 11:00 am

Weekdays

Tue: 6:00 pm
Wed: 8:15 am
Thurs: 8:15 am
Fri: 6:00 pm

Adoration

Fri: 5:00 pm
Friday 5:00 pm

Confession

Saturday 4:00 pm

For rental of church facilities (parish center, gym, cafeteria), please contact:

Mary Nichols
304-727-9832

St Francis of Assisi Parish And School Staff

Father Sojan Xavier, Pastor..... (304) 435-4342 / sxavier@dwc.org
Liz Liberatore, Parish Secretary..... (304) 727-3033 / parish@stfranciswv.org
Gwen Muchow, Bookkeeper..... (304) 727-3033 / gwenbmuchow@stfranciswv.org
Music Director.....
Sandi Hudson, Religion Director.....(304) 549-4009 / shudson@stfranciswv.org
Erin Sikora, Principal..... (304) 727-5690 / esikora@sfsww.com
Kelly Oxley, School Office Manager..... (304)727-5690 / koxley@sfsww.com
Matthew Matheny, Knights of Columbus.....(304)545-8534/ mlmatheny1@gmail.com
Shaun Lopez, Pastoral Council President.....(681)439-0421 / shnlopez@gmail.com
Fred Heindl, Property Manager.....(304) 415-5942

Pastoral Availability

Father Sojan is available any time of day or night for spiritual guidance. If you or a family member is sick /homebound & require Communion or Sacrament of Anointing, contact him (304-435-4342) or the parish office.

Marriage Preparation

Engaged couples planning to marry at St. Francis should be practicing Catholics & are required to participate in a Marriage Preparation Program. 6 months notice is required. Contact the office to discuss date of marriage.

Order of Christian Initiation

Children ages 7-17& adults who have not been baptized or baptized but not confirmed go through a faith formation program before they are admitted to the sacraments.

Parish Office Hours Tues-Fri 9:00 am to 1:00 pm

PASTOR'S NOTE

ENCOUNTER THE LORD WHO WAITS FOR US AT THE WELL OF GRACE



I know that a few of you have gone through the process of a

colonoscopy. The preparation is far more difficult than the actual procedure. You feel hungry, thirsty, restless, and empty—physically weak and drained. But once it's over and you sit down for breakfast, you feel refreshed and back to your true self.

If a good meal can renew us after such a demanding physical experience, how much more refreshing and joyful it is when our *spiritual emptiness* is filled by God! This Sunday's readings remind us of that truth.

In the desert of Sinai, God quenched Israel's thirst by bringing water from the rock. At Jacob's well in Samaria, Jesus satisfies another kind of thirst—one that runs deeper than physical dryness. He meets a weary, isolated woman and offers her the "living water" that alone can satisfy every restless heart.

The Samaritan woman represents all of us who come to the Lord with empty jars. She arrives at the well at midday—perhaps trying to avoid the judgment of others. Yet Jesus is already there, waiting for her, crossing boundaries of culture, gender, and reputation to bring her life-giving grace. St. Augustine says, "He who asked for a drink was thirsting for her faith." It reflects that Jesus' deepest thirst at the well is not for water, but for the woman's heart. What begins as a simple request, "Give me a drink," becomes the beginning of her conversion. By the time she runs back to town, she is no longer hiding—she's proclaiming, "Come and see the man who told me everything I've ever done!"

Lent invites us into that same encounter. The "living water" Jesus promises is His Spirit poured into our hearts, as St. Paul reminds us, "because the love of

God has been poured out within us."

So what's your situation today? Is it dryness in your spiritual life, the burden of sin, or fear of being judged—"What would they think of me?" Remember, when we let Christ's grace soak into the dry ground of our souls, we find the courage to leave behind our old jars: our sins, fears, and disappointments.

The Sacrament of Reconciliation, prayer, and quiet moments of conversation with the Lord are ways to renew and enrich ourselves, to rediscover lost joy.

The Lord Waits for Us: Notice in the encounter with the woman that even before she came to the well to draw water, Jesus was already there. This reminds us that God always takes the first step—He waits for us even before we realize our need for Him. Just as the Samaritan woman found Jesus waiting in the midst of her ordinary routine, we too discover that Christ meets us where we are, not where we think we should be. His presence at the well shows that every encounter with Him is intentional and perfectly timed. He enters the dry, hidden places of our lives and transforms them into moments of grace. Long before we come seeking living water, the One who can truly satisfy our thirst is already waiting for us. Who knows—the Lord may be waiting to speak to us through His Word, through the sacraments, and especially through the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Encounter Must Lead to Mission: Look at the woman once more—she runs to tell others what has happened to her. Like her, we too are called to become witnesses, sharing the good news of Jesus with those who still thirst for hope. Our blessings are not meant to be kept; they are meant to be shared. That's evangelization! As Bishop Brennan reminds us, **"If your faith matters, do something about it."**

Let us use these remaining weeks of Lent to draw near to the well—to prayer, to the sacraments, and to quiet moments where Christ can speak to our hearts. Only He can satisfy our deepest thirst.

CATECHETICAL CORNER

FASTING: TRAINING THE HEART FOR GOD IN A NOISY WORLD



Last time in our catechetical note, we reflected on one of the fundamental ingredients of Christian life: prayer. This week, we turn to another pillar of Lent and of the spiritual life: fasting.

More than comfort, we are made for God: We live in a noisy world, full of distractions and enticing pleasures. So much around us encourages constant entertainment and the satisfaction of every desire. Yet our existence is not meant to be a never-ending search for comfort. We are not just driven by instincts; we are created in God's image, with minds and hearts made for a higher calling. Lasting happiness requires discipline. God desires that we become the best version of ourselves, and for that, our bodies and desires need to be trained, not obeyed blindly. The body constantly cries out, "Feed me, entertain me, pamper me!" but deep within there is a greater longing for God, truth, love, and holiness. Spiritual disciplines, especially fasting, help strengthen our will so that this deeper longing can lead our lives.

Fasting: Turning Back to God: Fasting is a primary example of this spiritual exercise. In Scripture, fasting is often a sign of repentance and a way of turning back to God. The Israelites fasted at Samuel's urging as they put away false gods and returned to the Lord. Many times in the Old Testament, people fasted to humbly seek God's will and mercy, showing that true fasting includes turning away from sin and coming back to God with sincere hearts. Jesus himself was led by the Spirit into the desert, where he fasted for forty days and faced temptation. He fasted in preparation for his public mission, showing us that serious discipleship involves sacrifice and self-denial.

Fasting: Freedom, Humility, and Eternal Perspective: Fasting is a sharp reminder that there are more important things in life than food and pleasure. Authentic Christian fasting helps free us from attachment to worldly things—attachments that often prevent us from becoming the people God is calling us to be. It reminds us that everything in this world is passing and gently turns our thoughts toward eternal life. When we

go without food for a time, we quickly realize how weak, fragile, and dependent we are. This honest self-knowledge can strip away pride and independence and foster a humble awareness of our utter dependence on God.

Fasting to Deepen Our Inner Life: Fasting is never an end in itself. Its purpose is to help us become more aware of God's presence in our lives and in the world around us—and also to notice where his presence is lacking because we have pushed him aside. It is not meant to be a show to impress others. Jesus reminds us that, like prayer and almsgiving, fasting is a hidden spiritual exercise. We fast to cultivate our inner life. When it is authentic, fasting draws us closer to God and opens our hearts to receive the many graces he desires to give us.

By its very nature, fasting is an act of humility. Dieting, by contrast, is often focused on appearance, ego, or vanity. In some ways, dieting is a secularized version of the great spiritual practice of fasting—but without the most important part: God. Christian fasting is not about self-obsession; it is about freedom, love, and deeper communion with the Lord.

Lenten Fasting: Throughout the history of the Church, fasting has been a regular part of Christian life. The forty days of Lent are a privileged time of renewal, a perfect season to form new, life-giving habits and to let go of old, self-destructive ones. There is a constant battle between the body and the soul. If we want a rich and abundant experience of life, we must let the soul lead. To do that, the body must be tamed and trained, not worshipped.

Fast beyond food: It is also important to remember that not all fasting involves food. We can fast from judging and criticizing others, from gossip, cursing, and complaining. We can fast from excessive screen time, social media, or anything that dulls our awareness of God and others. One powerful form of fasting is to practice silence and stillness—to step away, from time to time, from noise and constant activity, and to sit quietly with the Lord.

Conclusion: Our bodies are vehicles God has given our souls to experience life in this world. Until we learn to master our bodily desires, we will never be truly free. When, with God's grace, we learn to reign over our appetites through practices like fasting, we begin to taste the freedom, joy, and depth of life that God wants for us. May this Lent be a time when we rediscover fasting not as a burden, but as a path to greater love, clearer faith, and deeper union with Christ.

Bishop Brennan's Sharing Appeal Letter



Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Each year, the Catholic Sharing Appeal invites us to pause and reflect on how deeply we are connected as one family of faith across West Virginia. Though our parishes may differ in size, location, and circumstance, we are united in our call to proclaim the Gospel, serve those in need, and hand on the faith to future generations.

The Catholic Sharing Appeal is a tangible expression of that unity. Through your generosity, the Appeal supports essential ministries such as faith formation, Catholic education, and vital social outreach to the poor and vulnerable. At the same time, the Appeal directly benefits your local parish by returning funds to help meet its most urgent needs—strengthening parish life, supporting local ministries, and ensuring that each parish has the resources it needs to continue Christ's work in its own community.

I am deeply grateful for the sacrificial spirit so many of you show year after year. Your participation in the Appeal is an act of stewardship rooted in faith and trust—trust that God will multiply our gifts and use them for His greater glory.

I invite you to prayerfully consider how you can support this year's Catholic Sharing Appeal. Whether your gift is large or small, it is a meaningful contribution to the shared mission we carry together as the Church in West Virginia.

United in faith and mission, may we continue to walk together as disciples, bringing Christ's love and hope to every corner of West Virginia.

With kindest personal regards, I remain,

Bishop Mark Brennan

Father John Soplinski, Vocation Promoter of the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston, celebrated Mass, spent time with our students, and inspired them to listen to God's call to serve.



NEWS AND UPDATES

Volunteers Needed

Father Sojan is asking for folks to sign up for the foot washing on Holy Thursday. Please add your name to the sign-up sheet on the back table or call the office at 304.727.3033



EASTER FLOWERS

Donations are now being accepted for Easter Flowers. If you would like to make a donation you can either use your "EASTER FLOWER ENVELOPE" or put your donation in an envelope with how you would like your donation directed, example: in memory of, and drop it in the collection basket.



HAPPY MARCH WEDDING ANNIVERSARIES



WOMEN'S CLUB MEETNG

The Women's Club Meeting will be held Monday, March 9th at 5:30pm in the Church for a spiritual walk with Billie Kirk. Following the walk with Billie, we will go into the school cafeteria for a meeting. The hostesses for the evening will be Helen Musrock, Phyllis Romeo and Barbara Jackson. All women of the parish are invited to come to this meeting.

BLESSING OF HOMES DURING LENT AND EASTER



It is a tradition in the Catholic Church for the pastor to bless the homes of parishioners. If you wish to have your home blessed, Father will be available during the Lenten and Easter seasons. Please contact the parish office and provide your mobile number and address.

NEWS AND UPDATES

FIRST HOLY COMMUNION



Our parish will be celebrating First Holy Communion shortly after Easter. If any of your children are preparing to receive this

beautiful sacrament, we kindly ask that you inform the parish office at your earliest convenience. We also encourage them to begin attending the Sunday Religion classes as part of their preparation. Thank you for your cooperation and continued commitment to your children's faith formation.

St. Francis of Assisi School
Geili Dinner
 & Silent Auction
 Saturday March 21, 2026 6-10 pm
 Angela's on the River
 2 6th Ave, St Albans, West Virginia

Tickets On Sale Now!

MUSIC DIRECTOR FOR OUR CHURCH

We are glad to announce that Sophia Chaskes Vecchio will be joining our parish as our new Music Director. The necessary paperwork with the Diocese is currently underway, and she is expected to begin her ministry with us on March 16, 2026.



Sophia is professionally trained, and we are confident that, with her presence and direction, our liturgical celebrations will be greatly enriched. Please join me in warmly welcoming her to our parish community. I kindly request your wholehearted support and encouragement as she begins her service among us. We bless God for providing us with a devoted Catholic who is ready to serve our parish.

OLIVE BRANCH MINISTRY

Olive Branch
 Charleston
 April 25
 8:30 am - 4:30 pm

Mark your calendars and keep an eye on social media for more info!

This one-day retreat is designed for those in your parish who are currently going through separation/divorce. This can be a very lonely, painful and confusing time for those going through the process. Let us help you, help them get the information and resources that they need to find healing within their faith and church community.

More details to come.

If you would like to host an Olive Branch in your parish, contact Kathy Barton at kbarton@dwc.org.

YOUTH FELLOWSHIP

The youth are invited to join us this Sunday after Mass for a special time of fellowship, and faith sharing. It's a great opportunity to connect, grow in faith, and encourage each other.

All youth are welcome—bring a friend and come as you are!

We'd love to see you there.

—Youth Director

“Strong youth build a strong Church”

BLESSING BOX

St. Francis Blessing Box is located at the corner of 6th Avenue and Park Street.

Your donation is a gift to someone in need. A blue bin has been placed in the back of church to collect donated items. Items greatly needed are canned goods, noodles, peanut butter, jelly, bread, hats, scarves, gloves and soups



Uphold them in your prayers-

David DeLuca, Jay Dlugos, Suzanne Farley, Nona Fields, Jo Fletcher, Debbie Flinger, Liz Gadd, Barbara George, Robin Gothard, Aubrie Hebb, Donna Hebb, Nancy Hillen, Diane Holley-Brown, Jane Howley, Max Huck, Kenny Huck, Virgil Huck, Carmelina Kessler, Dawna Kessler, Tooter Kirk, Barbara Lambert, Larry Lerose, Madison Lopez, Susan Lopez, Sue Martin, Brent Marsteller, Mary McNeely, Joe McQuaide, Lillian Matheny, Kim McBurney, Mario Mendez, Susan Robinson, Diana Rossi, Patricia, Scarlett (child), Lillian Schilling, Michael Scott, Peggy Shelton, Matt Sowers, Becky Vannatter Smith, Joseph Swanson, Valerie Tabit, Pat Tabor, Colleen Ullmer, Joyce Weiskircher, Roberta Van Horn, Pat Vannatter, Robbie Vannatter, Barbara Yeager, Gordon Holbrook, Alaina Rae Gilbert, Tracy McGrath, Nico Sayre, Pearl Thompson, Ralph Holland, John Hebb III, Jan Quinlan, Kate Lichtenfels, Darlene Holland, Ty Laughery, Carroll children

Immediate Prayer needs:

Carolyn Hanson	John Carnell	Patty Young
Rick Mullins	Josephine Fletcher	Peggy Shelton
Rick Robinson	Matt Sowers	Allison Grinstead
Terry DeLuca	Dave Lucas	Brody Fulk
Margaret McEvoy	Landen Chin	Pam Burton White
Anna Ng	Michele Sturgeon	Brandi Authur

NEWS AND UPDATES

Sharing our Treasure Listed below are collections for February 14 & 15, 2026

Collection for Church Operation.....	\$5,269.74
School.....	300.00
Diocese.....	00
Votive Candles.....	112.00
Total.....	\$5,681.74

Weekly Mass Attendance
Sat -68 Sun -123
Total -191

Collections for Church Operations



SHARE YOUR TREASURE

The Catholic Church emphasizes the importance of giving from the heart and encourages individuals to give according to their ability. Your donation, no matter how large or small, is significant to our Church. A QR code has been created for you as an option vs weekly envelopes for our parishioners and visitors.



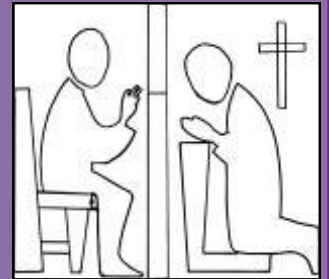
STATIONS OF THE CROSS ON FRIDAYS OF LENT

- 1:30 PM for Children
- ♦ 6:30 PM for Parishioners



LENTEN PENITENTIAL SERVICE

There will be a Lenten Penitential Service on Wednesday, March 18th at 6pm in the Church. Fr. John Finnell, Fr. Phillip Szabo, Fr. Shaji Thomas and Fr. Sojan will be hearing confession.



FATHER HAS MADE CONFESSION AIDS FOR THE YOUTH, TEENS AND ADULTS. THEY ARE ON THE TABLE IN THE BACK OF CHURCH BY THE CONFESSIONAL.

MARCH SECOND COLLECTIONS

March 8th—Diocesan Priests' Retirement Fund

Make check payable to: Priests' Health and Retirement Association

March 15—School support

Safe Environment Reporting Statement

The Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston maintains an Office of Safe Environment in accordance with the USCCB's Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People. **To Report Suspected Cases of Sexual Abuse of Children:** The Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston encourages reporting to civil authorities first and foremost if a crime has been committed. We also encourage utilizing www.reportbishopabuse.org to make a report about any bishop in the U.S. If you have reason to believe that a bishop has engaged in sexual misconduct, please contact civil authorities in the applicable jurisdiction and visit www.reportbishopabuse.org. **To Report to Civil Authorities:** Contact your local law enforcement; numbers will vary based on your location. If you believe someone is in immediate danger, call 911. **To confidentially report any incidence of suspected child abuse or neglect, including sexual abuse,** contact the West Virginia Bureau for Children and Families' Child Protective Services by calling the Child Abuse Hotline at 800.352.6513. **To Report to Diocesan Authorities:** In addition to civil authorities, the diocese encourages reporting to the appropriate church authorities. **To report suspected cases of sexual abuse of children by personnel of the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston to the Diocese,** contact one of the following designees at 1.888.434.6237 or 304.233.0880: Mr. Bryan Minor, ext. 263; Mr. Tim Bishop, ext. 353; Sr. Martha Gomez, ext. 264. Or you may call Rev. Don Higgs, 304.685.2367, the Office of Safe Environment at 304.230.1504, or Victims Assistance Coordinator Erin McFarland at 304.559.6742. In addition to the methods listed above for reporting sexual abuse, the Diocese also has partnered with Navex Global to offer the **EthicsPoint** platform to report other, additional concerns, such as suspected financial, professional, and personal misconduct of a priest, deacon, religious, or lay employee of the Diocese or any Catholic parish or school in West Virginia. The EthicsPoint platform can be accessed via www.dwc.org, under "Accountability", then "Report Misconduct" or by calling 844.723.8381. EthicsPoint is a third-party reporting system that reports to civil authorities where applicable and Diocesan authorities, and the identity of the person reporting is protected.