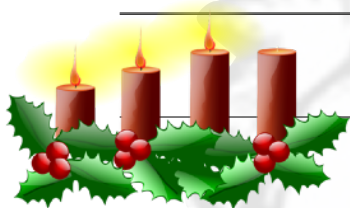


ST FRANCIS PARISH

NEWSLETTER



Mass @ 11.00 am St Francis of Assisi – Before Mass each Saturday @ 5.15 pm The Sacrament of Reconciliation – Parish Rosary at 5:30, (Please contact Fr Felix directly to book a date/time for reconciliation)
(Tel 01787 472477 / halstead@brcdt.org).

<u>Date</u>	<u>Time & Location</u>	<u>Intentions</u>
Saturday 13th December St Lucy	6pm Vigil Mass	Eternal repose of Josephine and Betty Stokes and for Crowley and O'Neal families
Sunday 14th December Third Sunday in Advent	9am Mass St Nicholas	Health and wellbeing of all
Sunday 14th December Third Sunday in Advent	11am Mass Halstead	
Monday 15th December	No Mass	The sanctuary light prayer intention is for health and wellbeing of all
Tuesday 16th December	No Mass	
Wednesday 17th December	No Mass	
Thursday 18th December	Parish Christmas Carol @ 6pm	
Friday 19th December	Exposition and benediction of the Blessed Sacrament @ 8am and Mass @9.30 Friendly Friday 10am-12pm	

First reading: Isaiah 35: 1-6, 10

Second reading: James 5: 7-10

Gospel: Matthew 11: 2-11



IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT:

- Enrolment for First Holy communion for next year has ended.
- Our Parish Youth Club takes place on the last Saturday of the month. It is open to ages 5-18.
- We are calling for sponsorship for the sanctuary lights for 2025. Write your intention and hand it over to Fr Felix.
- The parish has a Facebook page that gets updated daily with Mass readings and other items of information, consider having a look at it.

<https://www.facebook.com/Stfrancishalsteadparish/>

- If you recently joined our parish, we would like to have your name registered in our records. Please pick up a form at the back, fill it and return it to me or drop it at the back of the church.
- It will be beneficial for you to identify with an aspect of our parish life by committing your time and resources to the good of our parish. We need reinforcements on our volunteer team. If you would like to join our Extraordinary Ministers of the Holy Eucharist, please speak to Fr. Felix.
- It is a wholesome thought to pray for the dead (2 Maccabees 12:46). Consider offering a Mass for your departed loved ones and also for the living. Pick a form at the church's back and fill out your intentions.
- There is a chance for communion of the sick at homes for the housebound. Please let me know if any parishioners require a visit.

- It costs approximately £4,000 monthly to run our parish. Please consider sending an offering or a standing order to the parish. You can also make a donation to St. Francis of Assisi Church. Sort code: 40-13-22. Account Number: 71387014
- Everyone is welcome to participate in the Sanctuary Light sponsorship for 2024. You have the option to contribute £5.00 towards our weekly prayers for your specific intentions. Many thanks to those who signed up last year.
- Candles/ votive: £00
- Weekend collection: £426.43
- Halstead coffee: £47.70
- Bazaar proceed: £45.00
- Many thanks for your generosity to the parish.
- The Holy Water font is now available for us to use. From the tap, take some home for your use. Before using, please let Fr. Felix know. Feel free to bless yourself with the Holy Water font; however, sanitise your hands before use to minimise the risk of possible infection

For your diaries:

- Youth Club: Every Last Saturday of the Month. Next one is coming up in the New Year

Coffee morning on Friday from 10am to midday

Father Felix



The four-candle Advent wreath began in 1839 when German Lutheran pastor Johann Heinrich Wichern created a large wooden ring with

candles to help

children count down to Christmas.

German Lutheran churches soon adopted a simplified version with four candles, and the practice spread to other Protestant denominations by the early 1900s. Roman Catholic communities in Germany began using the wreath in the 1920s–30s, helping it spread throughout Central Europe. German and Scandinavian immigrants brought the tradition to North America, where it became common in Lutheran, Catholic, and mainline Protestant churches by the 1950s. Through church liturgy, religious education, and ecumenical sharing, the Advent wreath became widespread globally.

Germany has played a significant role in shaping many of the Christmas traditions now familiar in the UK. One of the most influential contributions is the Christmas tree. Although a few trees appeared earlier, it was Queen Charlotte, the German-born wife of George III, who first introduced a decorated tree to the royal household in the late 18th century. The tradition truly became widespread

after Prince Albert, Queen Victoria's German husband, popularised the family Christmas tree in the 1840s through widely circulated illustrations of the royal family gathered around it.

German influence also helped shape early Christmas card customs and festive decorating. Two distinctly German Advent practices—the Advent calendar and Advent wreath—spread to Britain in the 20th century, with the calendar becoming a staple in British households, especially once chocolate-filled versions appeared.

In recent decades, German-style Christmas markets have become a major UK tradition. Cities such as Birmingham, Manchester, and Edinburgh host markets inspired directly by German Weihnachtsmärkte, featuring wooden stalls, crafts, bratwurst, and mulled wine.

German festive foods have also become popular, including stollen, gingerbread, and mulled wine similar to Glühwein. Through royal influence, migration, and cultural exchange, Germany has helped shape much of the UK's modern Christmas celebration.



What is the good life which God intends for us? And how is it related with the ultimate end or purpose of life? Is it not our desire and longing for true *happiness*, which is none other than the complete good, the sum of all goods, leaving nothing more to be desired? Jesus addresses this question in his sermon on the mount. The heart of Jesus' message is that we can live a very happy life. The call to holiness, to be saints who joyfully pursue God's will for their lives, can be found in these eight beatitudes. Jesus' beatitudes sum up our calling or vocation - to live a life of the beatitudes. The word *beatitude* literally means "happiness" or "blessedness".

God gives us everything that leads to true happiness

What is the significance of Jesus' beatitudes, and why are they so central to his teaching? The beatitudes respond to the natural desire for happiness that God has placed in every heart. They teach us the final end to which God calls us, namely the coming of God's kingdom (Matthew 4:17), the vision of God (Matthew 5:8; 1 John 2:1), entering into the joy of the Lord (Matthew 25:21-23) and into his rest (Hebrews 4:7-11). Jesus' beatitudes also confront us with decisive choices concerning the life we pursue here

on earth and the use we make of the goods he puts at our disposal.

Jesus tells us that God alone can satisfy the deepest need and longing of our heart. Teresa of Avila's (1515-1582) prayer book contained a bookmark on which she wrote: *Let nothing disturb you, let nothing frighten you. All things pass - God never changes. Patience achieves all it strives for. Whoever has God lacks nothing - God alone suffices.*

Is God enough for you? God offers us the greatest good possible - abundant life in Jesus Christ (John 10:10) and the promise of unending joy and happiness with God forever. Do you seek the *highest good*, the total good, which is above all else?

The beatitudes are a sign of contradiction to the world's way of happiness

The beatitudes which Jesus offers us are a sign of contradiction to the world's understanding of happiness and joy. How can one possibly find happiness in poverty, hunger, mourning, and persecution? Poverty of spirit finds ample room and joy in possessing God as the greatest treasure possible. Hunger of the spirit seeks nourishment and strength in God's word and Spirit. Sorrow and mourning over wasted life and sin leads to joyful freedom from the burden of guilt and spiritual oppression.

God reveals to the humble of heart the true source of abundant life and happiness. Jesus promises his disciples that the joys of heaven will more than compensate for the troubles and hardships they can expect in this world. Thomas Aquinas said: *"No one can live without joy. That is why a person deprived of spiritual joy goes after carnal pleasures."* Do you know the happiness of hungering and thirsting for God alone?

