

Involved in Acts of Service:

Serving one's neighbour is the response to Jesus' love for us. Service communicates that love to others.

Giving thanks for animals

Animals are an important part of our world. We have them as pets, some of us eat them for food, other animals help us by working, and others still we just love to see. Why not treat some animals by offering them some special care this month?

- ◆ Look after a neighbour's pet, especially if the neighbour is elderly or has a disability. You could give the pet a bath, clean out their cage, give them a treat?
- ◆ You could also visit an animal shelter and spend some time loving animals which others have neglected. You could make a donation towards their care.
- ◆ You could arrange to take a pet in to visit at a nursing home.
- ◆ You could give to a wildlife fund?

Caring for creation

Why not spend some time as a family helping out with a local environmental group for the day. This will be hard work, but will be well worth it. The best part of days like this is going back years later and seeing your efforts make a difference—and then telling the story about the day you did it.



Caring for the poor

Francis gave away all that he had to the poor. Whilst you may not want to go that far, there are ways in which you can support the poor. Why not have a clean up around the house and give away to a local welfare agency clothes, toys and alike that are in good order but that you no longer require. These are often sold in op-shops to raise funds for people in need. Or, you could make a meal together for a neighbour or family member who you know is going through a tough time.

"I have been all things unholy. If God can work through me, he can work through anyone".

St Francis of Assisi.

All Saints'—2 Ambrose Street,
Hunters Hill

St Mark's—Figtree Rd, Hunters Hill

Our Parish Office is located at 2 Ambrose Street, Hunters Hill, and is open Monday to Friday from 9:45am to 1:00pm.

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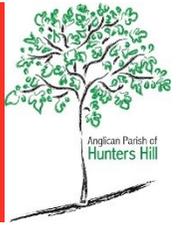
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The Fig Tree

"Nurturing the seed of faith"



St Francis of Assisi

Perhaps the most beloved saint throughout the entire world is Francis of Assisi. Why do people love him? Because he shows them how to live a simple life of praise.

Francis was born to wealthy parents in Assisi, Italy, in 1181. Loving money and what it could buy, Francis had no cares or worries. Then, in 1202, he went to war. Enemy soldiers captured and imprisoned him for a year. Suddenly the Gospels made sense to him. In the Gospels, he discovered Jesus, a humble man who lived in poverty, served others, and cared for outcasts.

The Gospels called Francis to live as Christ had done. So he got rid of his fancy clothes; he left his warm home; he walked away from his father who wanted him to be a wealthy merchant.

Soon many people gathered around Francis. He asked them to live in poverty and to preach the good news of God's love. This was the beginning of the Franciscan Order.

Francis died in 1226. During his short life—he was only 44 when he died—he reminded people that a poor carpenter from Nazareth had asked them to serve others. This poor carpenter, God's own Son, owned only the clothes on his back. But he had a great gift—he knew that God loved everyone. Jesus shared this gift with others.

Like Jesus, Francis saw God's beauty in everyone and everything. He passed this gift on to his followers—then and now.

Welcome to our third edition of "The Fig Tree". It is hoped that parents, caregivers and grandparents will use this as a tool to build upon the faith of their family.

We strongly believe that the home is the place where faith is best caught, taught, practised, nurtured and lived out. The role of the Church is to nurture and resource you in living this out, and be a place where we come together to share life with all its ups and downs.

We hope you find some resources and ideas to encourage you and your family in exploring the faith together.



Prayer of St. Francis of Assisi

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
where there is injury, pardon;
where there is doubt, faith;
where there is despair, hope;
where there is darkness, light;
and where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek
to be consoled as to console;
to be understood as to understand;
to be loved as to love.
For it is in giving that we receive;
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned;
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

Caring Conversations:

Caring conversations are those that allow time to share in others joys, hurts, dreams, hopes, concerns and values. Here are a few ideas to spark your imagination:

- ◆ Children have great imaginations, so spend time “wondering” with them. For example, “I wonder why . . . Flowers are so colourful? The Sky is blue? The moon goes around the earth? The sun is hot?” You could even take the next step and ask “I wonder who made all of this?”
- ◆ When do you feel at peace? Describe a time when you feel most at peace? Describe what that actually feels like within you.
- ◆ Talk about a time when you were hurt by someone. Were you able to forgive (pardon) them? What does it feel like to be forgiven?
- ◆ Can you describe what it means to have faith in something?
- ◆ Do you think that animals have dreams? If so, what do they dream about? Why do you think that people have dreams? What do you dream about?
- ◆ St Francis once gave a sermon to animals. Do you ever speak with your pets? What do you say? What do you think they hear you say?
- ◆ If you could be any animal or a bird, what would you be? Why?
- ◆ St Francis had a vision after which he decided to give everything away to the poor and live only to serve God. If you were asked to give away all that you own— could you do it? What thing would be hardest of all to give away? Why do you think God would ask Francis to do such a thing?
- ◆ Do you ever pray and hope for something that you think is impossible?

Spirituality in the Home:

This is all about your family’s devotional life. It includes deliberate activities like bible stories, prayer and table graces through to ensuring that you say please, thank you, sorry and providing Christian resources such as story books, music and much more.

Practicing Peace

St Francis once said: “While you are proclaiming peace with your lips, be careful to have it even more fully in your heart”. Why not try and practice peace with your family. Try it. It could be as simple as being silent together for the night. Make sure the television and other distractions are turned off. You could even turn off all the lights and just have a few candles going for atmosphere. If a whole night is too hard, try just 15 minutes each night.

Table Graces

Prayer is essential to building up the faith of your family— “a family who prays together, stays together”. However, if prayer is not the norm in your family, it can be difficult to begin. Why not start by saying grace before a meal. A simple grace might be to give thanks for all that is happening: Dear God, we give thanks for . . . birds, trees, pets, friends, grandparents . . . And for this food. Amen. Each person can add in their own things to be thankful for.

Family Rituals and Traditions:

Rituals and Traditions are patterns of behaviour that communicate meaning in life. They can include how you greet people, bedtime prayers and celebrations.

Have a night at home

Why not have a family night at home together. Pull out all of the old photo albums and tell stories about some of your family and their adventures. You could also play games together such as charades or eye spy.

Grow a plant from seed

Now that Spring has arrived why not plant some seeds together with your family (in a pot or a garden). Take time to go out and see how they are growing. “Wonder” about them together . . . I wonder how the seed knows to start growing? I wonder why plants are green? I wonder who made them like this?

Celebrate your pets birthday

Pets are often important members of our family. Why not have a pet party. You can even have a pet food cake for your animal. Give your pet some special treats and spend extra time playing with them.

