

Saint Francis Solanus



MAY 2018

St. Francis Solanus Welcomes New Director of Religious Education Mike Holbrook

Our parish is delighted to welcome Mike Holbrook to the role of Director of Religious Education — DRE — here at St. Francis Solanus! While this is a new position for Mike, he and his wife, Sue, have been parishioners here for 10 years, and both have been very active members of our faith community. Mike has many years of experience in faith formation under his belt, and is looking forward to helping us continue to grow and develop the parish's Religious Education programs.

Prior to becoming DRE at St. Francis Solanus in February, Mike had been assisting Carol Seifert with our RCIA process for the last 10 years. However, his work with the RCIA goes back even further. When the Diocese of Springfield introduced this adult process about 30 years ago, he was asked to help with the initiative at St. Dominic, becoming their catechumenate coordinator in 1988.



Mike Holbrook is the new Director of Religious Education at St. Francis Solanus

During the many years that Mike was involved with RCIA — the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, he realized that studying the faith is truly a continuous journey.

"I found that there is always something more to learn," he says. "The participants will often bring something to the forefront, and sometimes you can learn more from the people you are trying to catechize! I find that I learn something all the time, even though I was raised Catholic and have been exposed to Catholic teaching for the last 30 years. The faith is so rich and deep."

Thanks to this love for teaching and learning about the faith, Mike spent several years after his retirement from Federal Express working as the director of sales and marketing for the Sunday Missal Service. When St. Francis Solanus began seeking a new DRE, Mike's enthusiasm for faith formation and strong background

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New Director of Religious Education Mike Holbrook continued from front cover

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— *Mike Holbrook*

in catechesis was the perfect fit for the position.

As our parish DRE, Mike will be coordinating many different faith formation programs. One of his primary tasks will be directing the Parish School of Religion — PSR — recruiting and supporting catechists for the program and selecting the curriculum and materials to be used in the classrooms. He will also be helping out with the religion curriculum at St. Francis Solanus School. In addition, Mike coordinates the RCIA process and supports the adult faith study groups, Epic and Pivotal Players.

For Mike, adult faith formation is just as important as religious education for children, as the two go hand in hand.

“Parents are the first teachers of their children,” he explains. “That is why we spend so much time on stewardship and discipleship here at St. Francis Solanus. We talk all day long with the kids, but we have to reach the parents first, and they have to see that the church is welcoming, it’s forgiving, and it’s a place of safe haven for the children. Then the children gain that sense of stewardship and thankfulness from their parents.”

In addition to learning more about the faith and what it means to live as disciples, our Religious Education programs also offer parishioners a way to feel more connected to church life.

“The aspect of fellowship and belonging just naturally comes from these programs,” Mike shares. “People are coming together, and you get to know people’s names, you get to know their children, you get to know the commonalities and things that are similar in your lives. People start to form groups and bonds with these programs. They don’t just serve the purpose of teaching, but they also build community.”

As the new DRE here at St. Francis Solanus, Mike is thankful for the opportunity to help our Church in this great work of making disciples of parishioners, beginning with the very youngest students in our grade school and PSR programs.

“I know that one of the most valuable assets we have as a church is our children,” he says. “Seeing the children, working with them, helping in the formation of their hearts and minds is so important. It’s so rewarding to be a part of our children being catechized and brought up in the faith.”



A Letter From Our Pastor

The Month of Mary: A Time for Celebration and Joy

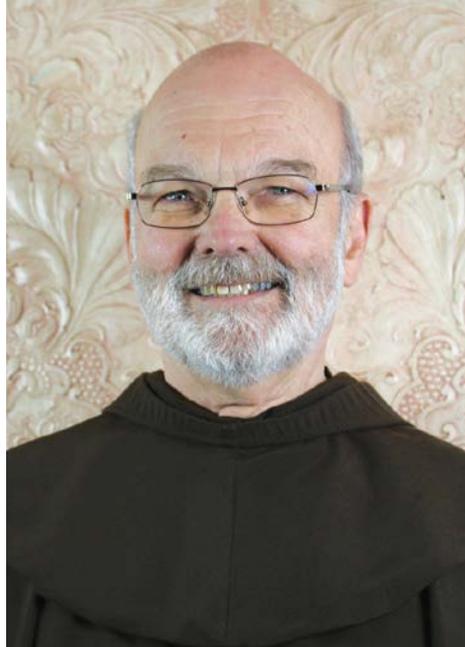
Dear Parishioners,

In the Catholic Church, we designate a particular devotion for each month — and May is when we honor our Blessed Mother Mary. Thus, this is a good time for us to think about and concentrate on our devotion to the Mother of God. Perhaps we can add a few more Marian prayers to our daily routine. Praying the Rosary might be even more important. Of course, that assumes that daily prayer is part of our daily routine — which it should be.

Our Blessed Mother is important to our faith and to our Church. Her willingness to serve in a way that allowed the Lord to take human form really made our salvation a possibility. Because of her complete trust in God, she lived her life free from sin, and after her life, she was “assumed” into heaven by the power of God and crowned Queen of Heaven and Earth.

She is, of course, not divine. We worship only our Lord Jesus Christ, but we honor Mary as a saint and in many other ways. We honor God when we remember the role of Mary in our salvation. Devotion to Mary always leads to Jesus Christ Himself.

Mary was joyous when she said “yes” to God. That is the kind of joy we need to seek — and we, too, must say “yes” to the Lord. Let us be grateful to Mary for



bringing us her Son. This is why we crown her on our Catholic version of Mother’s Day. Through Mary, we are given an invitation into the Catholic fold. Her feminine presence and the safety of her motherhood may help us grow.

For most of us, this time of year is a month of growth in relation to nature. It is difficult not to have May as one of our favorite months for so many reasons. May is a beautiful time. We are called to make it even more beautiful, and we can do that as we serve and love one another.

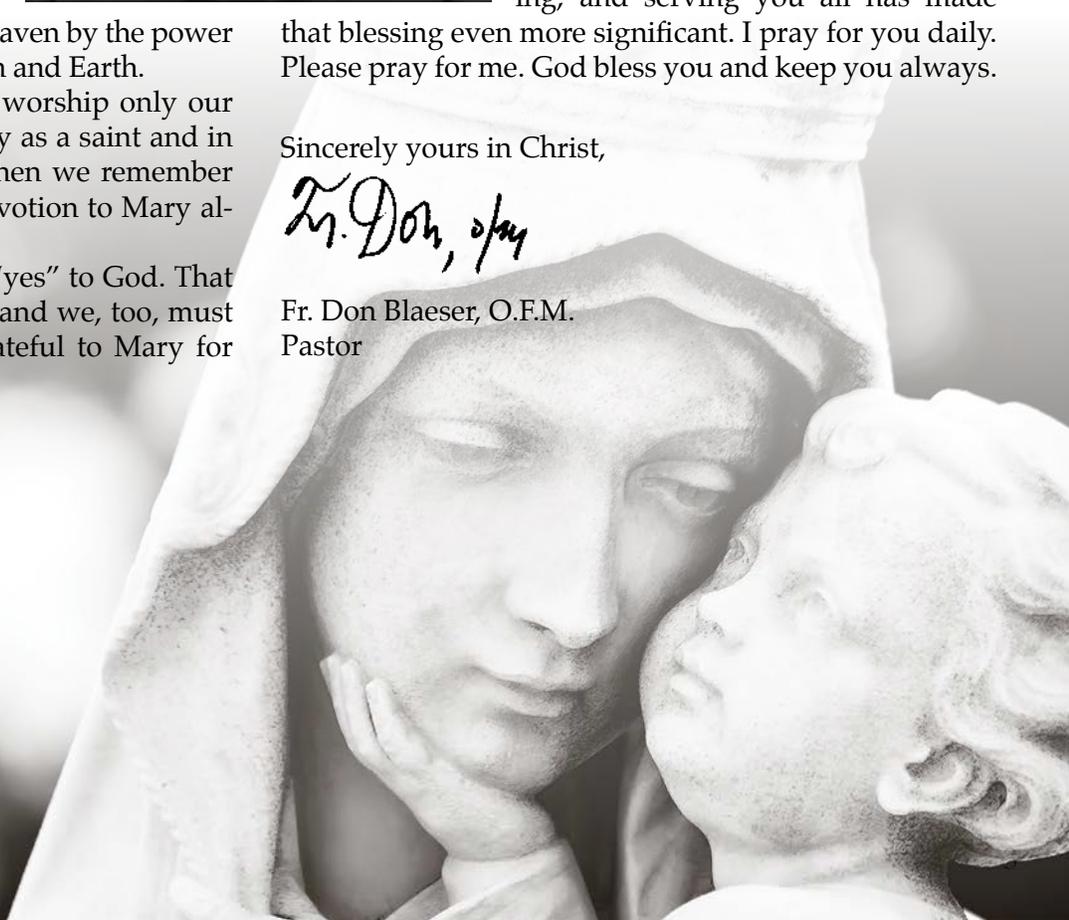
I am deeply blessed to be your pastor. I may say that often, but it is true. My priesthood has been a blessing, and serving you all has made

that blessing even more significant. I pray for you daily. Please pray for me. God bless you and keep you always.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Fr. Don, O.F.M." The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Fr. Don Blaeser, O.F.M.
Pastor





Prayer:

We make constant reference to the “three Ts” of stewardship, recognizing that to truly live as a stewardship people, we must give God the first fruits of our time, talent, and treasure. It is easy for us to see the concrete reality of the latter two. If we are to give God our talents, we must first recognize with what talents He has blessed us, and then use those talents for His greater glory. And as we continue our stewardship path, we know very well that our money is something concrete. When we recognize it as a gift from God, we know that we are to give a certain amount back to Him. It is easy for many of us to understand what it means to give God our talent and our treasure.

But what does it mean to give God a portion of our time? This idea is much harder to grasp, and yet giving to God the first fruits of our time is just as important as the other two. And if we understand this idea and implement it properly, our stewardship of time will serve as the very foundation from which our stewardship of talent and treasure bear fruit.

When we talk about stewardship of time, we are referring to prayer time. Prayer is of the utmost importance in a disciple’s life, and in the Diocese of Wichita’s *The Pillars of Parish Stewardship*, it is also one of the four pillars of stewardship.

Does this mean that in order to be true disciples, we should say the *Our Father* three times a day or pray a daily Rosary? Not particularly. Of course, we must not discount the merits of prayer, as the Church in her wondrous wisdom has given us certain prayers to help guide our lives. However, the disciple’s deep life of prayer involves even more.

St. John Chrysostom explains, “You should not think of prayer as being a matter of words. It is a desire for God, an indescribable devotion ... the gift of God’s grace” (*Hom 6*). That is, if we look at prayer as a mere regimen that we must follow every day, then we do not see to the heart of it. The reality is that prayer will take on different forms for every one of us. One person may have a deep devotion to the Rosary, and in praying it, he is closely united to the Lord. Another person might feel deeply connected to Him through constant conversation – in the car on the way to work, before bed at night, or at other hours throughout the day. Meanwhile, for another

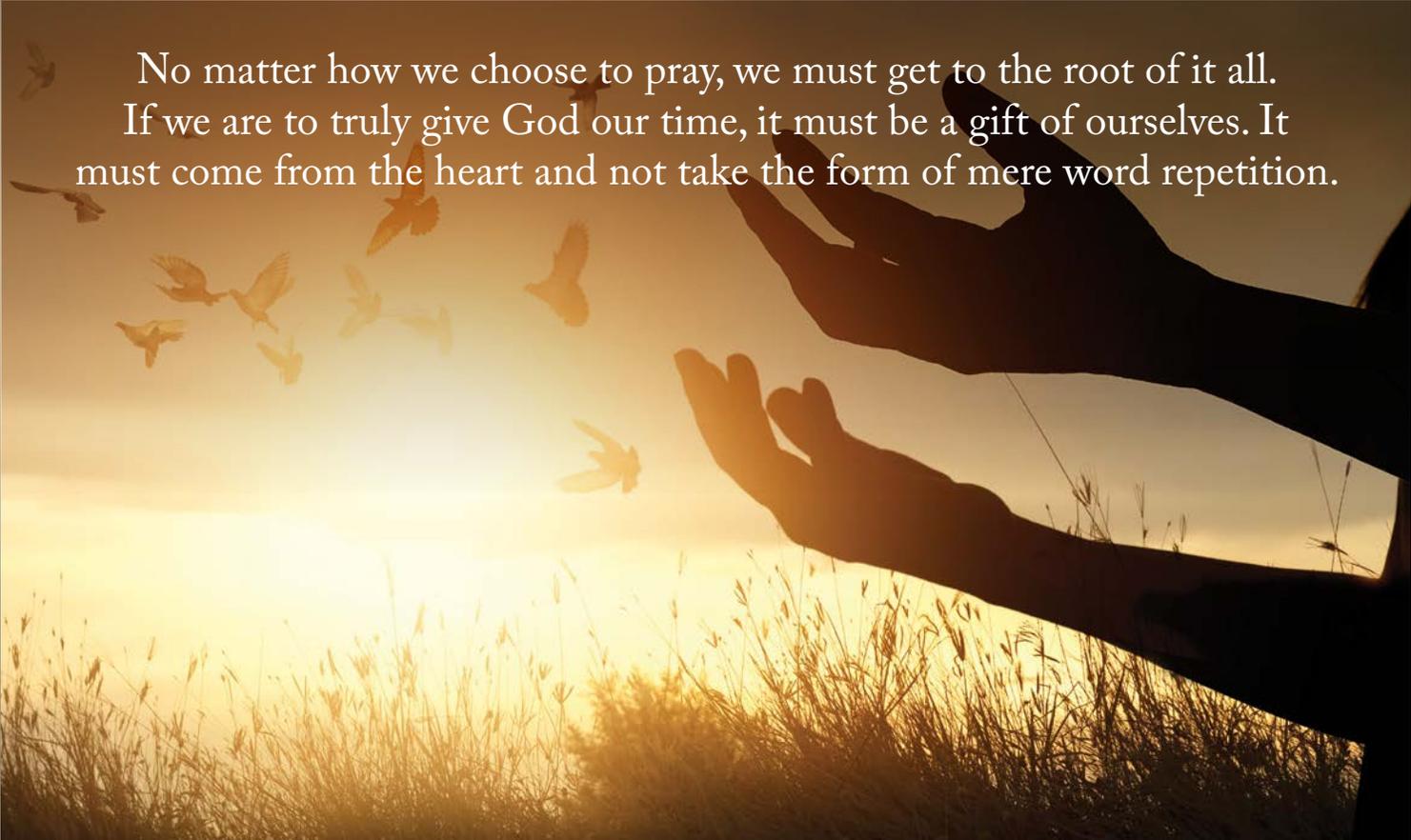
Come to Know the Lord

person, a daily or weekly hour of silence before the Lord in Eucharistic Adoration is the best place for him to offer the Lord his heart. No matter how we choose to pray, we must get to the root of it all. If we are to truly give God our time, it must be a gift of ourselves. It must come from the heart and not take the form of mere word repetition. If we offer an *Our Father* without meditating on the words, it can simply become recitation.

The point of prayer is to get to know the Lord. If we are committed to living as His disciples, we must be on personal terms with Him. The first disciples didn't know what it meant to pray the Rosary. And until the Lord taught them the *Our Father*, they couldn't pray that either. But they were definitely true stewards of their time. They walked with Jesus, talked with Jesus, and ate meals with Him. He was their best friend, and the more they got to know Him, the more they longed to serve Him.

The same holds true for us today. We can walk with Him, talk with Him and sit with Him, just as they did. And He wants us to do this, too. St. John Chrysostom proclaims, there is nothing more worthwhile: "For prayer unites us to God as His companions" (*Hom 6*). How can we serve Him if we don't know Him? If we truly desire to be a servant people, we must talk to Him whom we wish to serve. We must get to know Him. Then, most assuredly, we will fall in love with Him. We will undoubtedly desire nothing more than to serve Him.

Recognize Jesus as your best friend and spend time with Him as such. He is the Lord, the Creator of the Universe, without whom we would cease to exist. Bring Him your cares and concerns, your excitement, your worry, your fears and your frustrations, and allow Him to comfort you. He is there, and He wants to speak with you.



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St. Isidore's Simple Stewardship

When we consider the lives of the saints, the first that usually come to mind are more than likely classed into four categories — martyrs, priests, religious, and great miracle workers. St. Isidore was none of these, and yet he is revered in Spain as one of “the five saints,” which include St. Ignatius of Loyola, St. Teresa of Avila, St. Francis Xavier, and St. Philip Neri, all of whom were canonized with him in the same year. His feast day is May 15.

The life of St. Isidore is a great testimony to how, with God's grace, we can take the occurrences of a simple, mundane, and even sometimes difficult life and use them as opportunities for sanctification.

Isidore was born near Madrid, around the year 1070, into a peasant family. While still a young boy, he began working as a day laborer on the farm of Juan de Vergas, a wealthy landowner, just outside of Madrid.

Despite the hard work on Vergas' farm, where Isidore spent the rest of his life in service, he did not complain and always tried his hardest to meet the tasks requested of him. Above all things, he upheld his relationship with Jesus. As he walked behind his plow, he would talk to God, offering up his work as a prayer. He rose up extra early each day before work to attend daily Mass. He would even spend his vacations touring the different churches of Madrid and the surrounding areas.

As hardworking as Isidore was, his fellow workers complained to Vergas that the pious laborer always arrived late for work because he attended Mass every day. Isidore could not deny the accusation, but he assured his employer that he always made a special effort to compensate for the extra minutes he spent in prayer. One day, Vergas decided to see for himself whether Isidore was really slacking in his work. Hiding in the bushes, he watched as Isidore came out of church, went directly to the fields, and began his plowing. To Vergas' astonishment, he saw a “man” with another plow beside Isidore, driving a team of white oxen. When he ran toward the mysterious team, it disappeared and Isidore only looked puzzled when Vergas asked him about it. “Sir, I work alone and know of none save God to whom I look for strength,” Isidore said. No doubt, God had sent His angels to help ensure that Isidore's work would not suffer because of his placing the spiritual above the temporal.

While working for Vergas, Isidore fell in love with



and married a young woman, Maria Torribia, who shared his devotion and faith. They had one child, a son, who died while still a boy. A model of sanctity herself, Maria — also a canonized saint — served her husband faithfully all her life. Together, Isidore and Maria would look for ways to serve the poor, even though they had very little themselves. One story says that when Isidore brought a number of hungry people home with him one day, Maria realized as she scraped the bottom of the pot that there was no more stew. Isidore asked her to check one more time, and she was able to spoon out enough to feed everyone. They could not refuse an act of kindness to anyone.

At times, we might be tempted to think that we do not have the talents or the assets to be good stewards. But St. Isidore shows us by his simple, humble example that we can live out the call to discipleship in the smallest actions of charity and piety — that we only need do as much as we can, and trust that God will do the rest.

Closer Than Ever Before: Larry and Rita Frese Share in Faith Journey

“God always seems to give us so much back when we give in our small ways. It just seems like in saying ‘yes,’ there are always spiritual surprises and blessings that come along, often in unexpected ways.” — *Larry Frese*

Swept up in the busyness of today’s world, it’s far too easy to find oneself stuck in a spiritual rut. This, says St. Francis Solanus parishioner Larry Frese, is exactly where he found himself nearly 20 years ago when he finally agreed to attend his first Cursillo weekend.

“I had kind of gotten lost on my spiritual journey,” Larry says. “I’d gotten caught up in work and had all the wrong priorities in life. So, when I finally got in a bad enough rut, I accepted my friend’s invitation to attend a Cursillo.”

The result was a truly life-changing experience, permanently reorganizing his life and transforming Larry’s relationship with God, his wife Rita, and ultimately the entire faith community.

“I found a loving God there that I really hadn’t known that well before,” Larry says. “I have been Catholic all of my life, but I was really just going through the motions. Now it was real and deeply personal.”

Rita, meanwhile, was overjoyed by the transformation in her husband. In fact, she had been interested in attending Cursillo for years. So, she eagerly followed his example a month later at the subsequent women’s weekend.

“It’s ideal that the husband goes the first month and then you attend the following month,” Rita says. “So, Larry went that January and then I followed him in February. I had actually wanted to go the first time he was asked 10 years prior. So, I was just waiting and was thrilled when he finally agreed to go.”

Thanks to their weekend experiences, the Freses’ entire outlook on faith and the liturgy changed. Rather than merely a weekly obligation, the Mass became something they looked forward to each week. They began hungering to know the Lord more and through their shared prayer time were able to get to know one another and in new and deeper ways. And finally, eager



Larry and Rita Frese

to give back, they began volunteering for both Cursillo and parish events.

“It truly brought joy back into our house,” Rita says. “And through that joy we found that attending Mass was something we wanted to do instead of simply had to do.”

“We also became much more involved in general after that experience,” Larry adds. “We started volunteering with the youth and became Eucharistic Ministers, which is always such a deeply positive and rewarding experience. We also help with parish activities like the picnic and are involved in several prayer groups.”

Today, the couple remains deeply involved in the Cursillo movement, volunteering in various capacities and serving as St. Francis Solanus’ Cursillo representatives. For them, this has been a concrete way to give back and to share with others the joy that they have been blessed to receive — a way to encourage others in the faith journey as they themselves continue drawing closer to the Lord.

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St. Francis Solanus

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Larry and Rita Frese *continued from page 7*

“It’s like that Bible verse which says you come closer to God and he comes closer to you (James 4:8),” Rita says. “We’re closer to God and each other than ever before since that initial ‘yes.’”

“We’re also much closer to the parish as a whole,” Larry adds. “And God always seems to give us so much back when we give in our small ways. It just seems like in saying ‘yes,’ there are always spiritual surprises and blessings that come along, often in unexpected ways.”



Rita and Larry with some of their greatest blessings — their children and grandchildren.

Liturgy Schedule

Saturday Vigil: 4:30 p.m. | **Sunday:** 6:30, 8:00, 9:30, 11:00 a.m.

Weekday Mass: M, T, W, Th, F, 6:30 a.m. | M, T, W, Th, F, S, 8:00 a.m. | W, 8:35 a.m. during school year

Confessions: Saturdays 8:30 a.m., 3:00 - 4:00 p.m.

Holy Days of Obligation: Vigil 5:30 p.m.; Holy Day: 6:30 a.m.; 8:35 a.m. on school days; 8:00 a.m. during summer; 5:30 p.m.