

Saint Francis Solanus



SEPTEMBER 2014

A Letter From Our Pastor

Welcome to Our New Parish Newsletter!

Dear Parishioners,

Welcome to the first issue of our new monthly parish newsletter!

As our parish community continues to grow and develop stewardship as a way of life, we recognize the need for increased communication. Through this newsletter, we hope to share stories that will help us all to better understand who we are as Catholics and what we are doing as individual members of Christ's family. In upcoming issues, we will focus on what's going on in the St. Francis Solanus community, and how those activities and events are changing hearts and minds and helping parishioners grow closer to Christ and each other. Each article will ultimately focus on Christ at work within our community through the stewardship way of life.

Our hope is that this newsletter will be a successful means for ongoing education and formation in our faith, and I pray it will be a vehicle through which you are informed and inspired to become more actively involved in the life of Christ and the parish.

Another way I hope to improve our parish's communication efforts is through a comprehensive parish survey that will be conducted in early 2015. Through the survey, I want to hear from you regarding our parish and its future. A survey will be mailed to each home, and then I will ask you to take the time to fill it out and return it as soon as possible.



Your input will be very important, and it will give the Pastoral Council and me a better understanding of your thoughts about our parish.

This fall, we will conduct our Annual Stewardship Renewal. The Renewal is the time each year

when we ask each other to re-prioritize the way we use God's gifts in the Church. It is the time we write down how we will become more devoted to Christ over the next year with our commitments of **time** (using my time on earth wisely; making time for personal prayer, family prayer, and quality time with friends and loved ones);

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What Does Stewardship Mean?

What comes to mind when you hear the word “stewardship”?

Do you think of it as just another way to talk about money? Do you quickly dismiss it as a notion that has nothing to do with being Catholic?

Stewardship is actually a concept that is Scripturally-based, and is absolutely vital to our life as Catholics. God tells us, in the very first book of the Old Testament, “Be fertile and multiply. Fill the earth and subdue it. Have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air and all the living things that move on the earth” (Gen 1:28).

What does that mean to us today? It simply means that God is telling us, “This is yours, so take care of it.” One of the first things God tells us to do is to be good stewards of the gifts He has entrusted to us!

The Old Testament is not the only place where we can find references to stewardship. Indeed, of the 36 parables in the New Testament, more than half of them deal with time, talent, possessions or money. Therefore, if Jesus spoke of stewardship that

much, it should be a very important part of our lives!

As Catholics, we refer to the three facets of stewardship as “time, talent and treasure.” Although these are three concrete ways to express and measure stewardship, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops tells us that stewardship is part of discipleship. Stewardship is a way of responding to God’s call in every aspect of our lives.

The Scriptures and Church traditions teach us one important point that cannot be overstated — that stewardship is primarily based on our need to give in gratitude, not on the Church’s need to receive. Of course, both the Catholic Church and our particular parish will always need money. However, we are not asked to give simply to defray costs and fund charitable programs. We are instead asked to remember our *need* to gratefully return a portion of our time, talent and treasure to God, recognizing all that He has given to us.

It is important to remember that stewardship is a way of life, and not a program. True Catholic

stewardship involves an ongoing call to live as followers of Christ. It takes time to find and define personal goals. You can begin by examining your personal commitments to the parish. How do you live your faith in your daily life with your family and friends? How much time do you spend in daily prayer, going to Mass or being involved in parish ministries and activities? What percentage of your income should you give back to God every week? What talents do you have that could be used to strengthen our parish family?

The coming months will see us increasing and intensifying our education and communication on stewardship. We will be developing a better understanding of how stewardship is a way of responding to God’s call to discipleship. And with God’s help, changes will occur in each of our hearts as we devote ourselves to a stewardship renewal within our parish. Examine how you are currently responding to God’s call to stewardship. If God called you home tomorrow, would He proclaim, “Well done, my good and faithful servant”?

*The Old Testament is not the only place where we can find references to **stewardship**. Indeed, of the 36 parables in the New Testament, more than half of them deal with **time, talent, possessions or money**. Therefore, if Jesus spoke of stewardship that much, it should be a **very important** part of our lives!*

..... A JOURNEY OF INQUIRY

The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults at St. Francis Solanus

Each of us has an individual faith journey, a distinct story of how our relationship with Christ has evolved over time. Many of these narratives lead people to inquire into the Catholic faith through the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults.

“Our process for RCIA is year-round with no beginning or ending time, because when people are ready to inquire into the faith, we want to meet them wherever they are,” says Carol Seifert, Director of Religious Education. “The first step is to meet with each person individually to see what their background is and what can we do for this person particularly.”

The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, or RCIA, at St. Francis Solanus is a journey, a process, and an invitation to share your faith story and learn more about the Catholic faith.

Each year, Carol works with a team of lay people, supported by our priests, to facilitate the program. The sessions start in August and take place on Thursday evenings in the library annex, though flexible options exist for those with schedule conflicts. RCIA begins with a period referred to as “inquiry.”

“We have several times of formal inquiry stages throughout the year,” Carol says. “That can last anywhere from three to six weeks depending on the person. This stage is for anyone who is considering joining the Church to ask questions.”

In the next stage, catechumens and candidates are introduced more formally to the sacraments, liturgy and rituals, with slightly different processes for those who have been formerly baptized.

“In this stage, we start studying Scripture and certain topics and have special rites that people go through depending upon where they are in the process,” Carol says. “It is a process for those who want to learn more about being Catholic and for Catholics who have been baptized Catholic but never completed any other sacraments. I’ve also had people attend who are Catholic but who want to refresh their faith.”

Mike Holbrook works with Carol as a member of the RCIA team, and he emphasizes the different paths that bring individuals to RCIA.

“One thing I’ve learned is that you can’t assume to know where people are in their journey – you have to find that out,” Mike says. “People join for different reasons. They join because their spouse is Catholic. They join from different Protestant faiths and are well-versed in the Bible. People will join who already believe in the Real Presence, and then many of our candidates don’t know what Jesus did for us.”

After catechumens and candidates enter into the Church at Easter, they meet for a few sessions to discuss their experience and next steps in the community, a stage referred to as “mystagogy.”

“We try to meet a couple times after they enter to break open their experience and their integration into the parish,” Carol says. “If we’ve done our job, they feel comfortable enough to blend in and get involved. The purpose of the process is to share the faith with one another and to make them feel comfortable enough with the Catholic faith that they can practice and pray with us as a community.”

Parishioners who want to assist with RCIA are always welcome simply to attend the sessions, share with the group, and meet the candidates and catechumens. Volunteers can also assist in the facilitation of certain sessions or serve as sponsors.

For more information about the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, whether you have questions about joining or serving with the program, please contact Carol Seifert at 217-222-2898.



Tarryn Benjamin is baptized at the Easter Vigil Mass



Candidates receiving Confirmation at the Easter Vigil Mass

“We have updated and ordered new Confirmation materials to better connect with the eighth-grade students as they prepare for one of the most important events in their lives. The materials include real-life situations that they may face as a young individual and offer a moral compass for them to follow.”
– Principal Lori Shepard



Students participate in the Crazy Winter Olympics during Catholic Schools Week

The Mardi Gras Carnival



Exciting Updates and Development

It's that time of year when our students are heading back to school and settling in for a new year! At St. Francis Solanus School, the new academic year brings with it many exciting updates and a few important changes.

Over the summer, quite a few improvements were made to the school campus. The school's boiler system was replaced, and asbestos was properly removed from the boiler room, in turn providing a much safer environment for all who occupy the building. The boys and girls restrooms on the main floor have been remodeled and updated, and two classrooms and a new faculty lounge have been painted. The furniture and carpeting in the lounge have also been updated.

“These updates to the lounge will provide St. Francis with a well-deserved place for teachers to have lunch and work on paperwork, but will also enhance the ‘meeting process’ when a new family wants to tour the school and register their child,” says Lori Shepard, principal at St. Francis Solanus School. “This area will double as a reception area for families who are interested in St. Francis. This will be an investment in our future. As for the bathroom, the function of the facility has been compromised for many years and we are blessed to be able to provide the students and faculty with needed improvements.”

For the first time in over 13 years, the entire school facility has undergone a deep cleaning. The maintenance crew has been hard at work this summer making sure every nook and cranny is cleaned and polished.

“All classrooms have been emptied and will be cleaned from top to bottom,” Ms. Shepard says. “The hallway floors have been stripped, including one classroom after years of layers and layers of wax buildup. We have removed all trophies and cleaned, organized and replaced old trophies with updated awards recently won last year by athletic and academic teams. We are in the process of creating another trophy case to preserve the history of St. Francis School. Some of the trophies date back to the early 1900s.”



Grandparents' Day 2013



Fourth-graders listen to a talk by Olympic gold medalist Jackie Joyner-Kersey at the Heptathlon for Healthy Habits



Enrichment classes during Catholic Schools Week



The annual Dogwood Parade



Raffle winners at the Change Cancer Drive

Developments in Store for New School Year

The school staff is working on building a master calendar of events, which will be available online so that all faculty, staff, students, and parents will know what is going on at the school at all times. The calendar will correlate with parish events so that teachers and staff may be able plan activities further in advance.

There have also been a few important updates to the Student/Parent Handbook, including the addition of several diocesan policies that have not previously been listed or followed.

"These guidelines will enable our faculty and staff to operate within state law when it comes to medications, safety codes, etc.," Ms. Shepard says. "There will be an addition of new rules to enforce, but along with that comes a higher standard of education for our students."

This year's eighth-grade students will be using a new curriculum for their Confirmation preparation.

"We have updated and ordered new Confirmation materials to better connect with the eighth-grade students as they prepare for one of the most important events in their lives," Ms. Shepard says. "The materials include real-life situations that they may face as a young individual and offer a moral compass for them to follow."

St. Francis is continuing to work towards a one-to-one initiative in the classroom this year by providing all eighth-grade students with iPads. All seventh-grade students will have a laptop, and all other students will have full access to the computer lab and use of the iPad carts.

This past spring, teachers received some professional development with iPads, and will continue to work over the summer to improve their skills, as students will be instructed throughout the school year.

There have also been a couple of changes to our staff this year. Connie Bergman, our social studies teacher, has retired and was replaced by Ethan Siebers. Kim Nixon, who was in charge of technology in the junior high, has also left the school.

All of these exciting changes, along with many others, are made possible by generous donations, as well as help from parents and parishioners. There are many ways for parishioners and parents to pitch in and help make this school year a big success. Parents are required to do 10 hours of service for the school, and we are always on the lookout for volunteers!

"There are many ways that a parent can get involved!" Ms. Shepard says. "They can supervise playground duty, help with Home and School committees, assist the classroom teacher as a room mother, and help with various events such as Jump Rope for Heart, Mardi Gras, Catholic Schools Week, Trunk or Treat, Crazy Olympics, School Play, Movie Night, etcetera"

As you can see, this new year is packed full of exciting news and much-needed updates! For more information about the upcoming school year at St. Francis Solanus, please call the school office at 217-222-4077 or send an email to school@stfrancissolanus.com.



Dressed up for Crazy Hat Day during Catholic Schools Week

Jackie Joyner-Kersey, Olympic gold medalist, with Principal Lori Shepard at the Heptathlon of Healthy Habits



Principal Lori Shepard with the "Dogwood King" during the Mardi Gras Carnival



ST. RAPHAEL



ST. MICHAEL



ST. GABRIEL

Celebrating the Feast of the *Archangels*

Every Sept. 29, the Church celebrates the feast day of the Archangels – St. Michael, St. Gabriel and St. Raphael. We are indeed blessed to be inspired by these “servants and messengers of God” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 329).

The term “archangels” has its Scriptural basis in the New Testament (1 Thes 4:16, Jude 1:9), indicating a chief or leading angel. “Archangel” generally refers to St. Michael, St. Gabriel and St. Raphael, as they are the three angels most frequently mentioned throughout Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition. The fact that these three angels are mentioned by name on multiple occasions indicates the significance of their roles in the history of salvation. It is because of these important roles that we take pause to celebrate on Sept. 29.

St. Michael is mentioned by name on several occasions in Sacred Scripture (Dn 10:13, Rev 12:7), and his role in the Tradition of the Church has been extensively documented. He has been widely referred to as the “great prince,” and is most often associated with the apocalypse – the final battle against Satan. Christian Tradition gives St. Michael four different roles, but he has primarily been regarded as the patron and protector of the Church.

St. Gabriel is mentioned by name in Scripture (Lk 1:19), and Tradition has also assigned him implicit roles within Scripture where he is not specifically mentioned. Most important, however, is St. Gabriel’s role as the messenger of God, delivering to Mary the announcement of the birth of Our Savior (Lk 1:26).

St. Raphael is mentioned by name only in the Book of Tobit, where he is responsible for healing Tobias. Raphael means “God has healed” and thus, he has also often been associated with the “angel of the Lord” (Jn 5).

The feast day on Sept. 29 gives each of us the opportunity to consider our own role in the Church, as we gratefully commemorate the Archangels responsible for carrying out their roles of defender, messenger and healer.

“My Time is Something I Can Make Use Of”

Amanda and Brian Garnett

Amanda Garnett was an atypical American undergraduate student. Her studies put her in proximity to the Church – a spiritual and physical proximity.

“I did my bachelor degree at Quincy University, which is a Catholic University with a heavy focus on the Franciscan way of life, and which is actually located right across the street from St. Francis,” says Amanda, who was raised as an Assembly of God member. “God has always been present in my life, but it was my history major and theology minor that led me to become Catholic.”

Amanda and Brian have always lived in the Quincy area and were introduced by their parents, who met at church.

“They thought we’d be a good match, and we really are,” Amanda says. “We were married in November of 2001. We work well as a couple. Brian tends to be calmer and more reserved, whereas I am very outgoing and passionate. We balance out each other out, and he is very supportive of raising our children in the Catholic faith.”

Both of their children – 10-year-old Hayden and 6-year-old Clare – were baptized at St. Francis, and Hayden also received his First Communion at the parish. They both attend St. Francis School. Amanda and Brian emphasize the importance of the faith in their home and endeavor to model discipleship for their children.

“We have a lot of Christian traditions, and prayer is very important to us – I am open in my prayer life, and my kids see me praying,” Amanda says. “Attending Mass is a tradition for us, and we do it as a family. Any time we can give back, we get the kids involved. In fact, Hayden ended up working a booth at the picnic and helped us clean up. He has expressed an interest to be an altar server. We try to set the example for our kids.”

When Amanda and Brian joined St. Francis in the spring of 2009, they weren’t in a position to give extensively in terms of finances. But Amanda knew that as a Christian, she was called to give.

“For me, I knew that my time is something that I can make use of,” Amanda says. “Giving is focusing on the resources that you have and putting those to use in whatever way God needs them to be used. If everyone really meditates and prays, we are all called to do something.”

In 2010, a friend suggested that Amanda become involved with PSR classes at St. Francis, and Amanda began teaching second-grade classes.

“From there, everything just evolved,” Amanda



Amanda and Brian Garnett with their children, Clare and Hayden

says, with a laugh. “I got involved in working at the Parish Picnic, and then gradually that evolved until this year, when I was the chairman of the picnic. The picnic is a real community event for Catholics and non-Catholics – any members of the community.”

This year, at least 100 volunteers worked the picnic and over 5,000 members of the community gathered for the celebration. The Parish Picnic is St. Francis’ biggest fundraiser and raised over \$26,000 last year. Amanda attributes the success of the Parish Picnic to her committee.

“I had an amazing committee this year, and everyone gave 110 percent,” Amanda says. “Through the whole process from start to finish, I met more people than I thought I ever would. You really get to hear the needs of the parish. It opens your eyes to not just the picnic needs, but all the needs and strengths of the parish. It really forms a bond with the community.”

Amanda believes that serving at the Parish Picnic introduced her and Brian to members of the parish who they might not have met otherwise, especially given the size of St. Francis.

“It was interesting for Brian and me, because people would call and volunteer their time, and we realized how many people we knew and were getting to know,” Amanda says. “Especially with our large parish and the different Mass times, you don’t necessarily get to see everyone. But the Parish Picnic brings everyone together, so you can put names with faces and become more familiar with the parish as a whole. It was very rewarding.”

In addition to her work with the Parish Picnic, Amanda also took a step in offering her time by becoming an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion.

“I love being able to share that moment with parishioners when I say, ‘the Body of Christ,’ and they agree, ‘Amen,’” Amanda says. “I love that time, and I feel a sense of peace. There is something about knowing that you are acting as a conduit to provide this miracle that God has given us in the Eucharist.”

Next year, Amanda anticipates serving at the Parish Picnic as a volunteer with her family in whatever capacity that is needed. She thanks the parish and Fr. Don for continued support and encouragement.

“We love the parish and the school, and we do whatever we can,” Amanda says. “I would encourage everyone to look to God and see what blessings He has given to you and to put those to use. God has a purpose that He wants us to fulfill.”

St. Francis Solanus

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Welcome *continued from front cover*

talent (using God-given gifts to strengthen the Church through service to parish ministries and other activities), and **treasure** (the wise and just management of my financial resources; giving a proportionate amount of my income to the parish).

As we strive to develop stewardship as a way of life at St. Francis, the support and involvement of each individual parishioner is necessary to sustain the life of our parish. All of you have a place here, and all of you have a role to fill in the life of the parish as we live our lives as disciples of Christ.

May the Holy Spirit renew and refresh all of us as we work together to build our parish family through the use of our time, talent and treasure.

Sincerely yours in Christ,



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

All of you have a place here, and all of you have a role to fill in the life of the parish as we live our lives as disciples of Christ.

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, F, 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.