

Saint Francis Solanus



NOVEMBER 2015

“See the Face of Jesus in Everyone” Connie Gordon

About two years ago, Connie Gordon called her husband and told him to sell the house. They took a leap of faith and moved to Quincy from South Carolina.

“My mom and dad both belonged to St. Francis, and I had gone to church with them, so it already felt like home,” Connie says.

No strangers to moving, Connie and George frequently relocated throughout George’s military career. They found that the faith became a centralizing power in their mobile lives and brought it with them wherever God sent them.

“As a military family, the church was our family because we traveled so much,” Connie says. “Every time we moved, the first place we went to was the church.”

Yet, after they were settled in the Quincy area, Connie realized how lonesome she was. All their

children and grandchildren were down south. At that time Connie took another big step.

“I went over to the church and said that I was new to the area and asked if they had something I could do,” Connie says. “It just surprised me that they were so welcoming! They basically said, ‘Can you start now?’”

Connie definitely felt nervous about reaching out to the church directly, but the fruits of her giving back to the community have been wonderful – she now feels like she belongs to a faith family.

“I am a very introverted person, so even for me to go to the church and ask was outside my comfort zone,” Connie says. “People might be afraid of not being needed, but that isn’t the case at St. Francis!”

Today, several days a week Connie volunteers at St. Francis’ parish



Connie Gordon

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“The Joy Needed to Rediscover and Make Fruitful the Mercy of God” *The Jubilee Year of Mercy*

Pope Francis has declared a Jubilee Year of Mercy, which will commence on Dec. 8, 2015 (the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception) and culminate on Nov. 20, 2016 (Christ the King-Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe).

Jubilee Years are not unique, as this will be the 29th such Jubilee Year since the first one in 1300. Our most recent Jubilee Years have been in 2000, 1983, and 1975. In the Catholic Church, the concept of the **Ju-bilee** is a special year of remission of sins and universal pardon. In the Book of Leviticus, a Jubilee year is mentioned to occur every 50th year,

in which slaves and prisoners would be freed, debts would be forgiven, and the mercies of God would be particularly manifest.

However, this particular Jubilee is unique in many ways. As in the past, it involves the establishment of Holy Doors. These are doors located at the four major Basilicas in Rome – St. Peter Basilica, the Basilica of St. Mary Major, the Basilica of St. John Lateran, and the Basilica of St. Paul Outside the Walls. Usually, Catholics are invited to make a pilgrimage to Rome and to enter through these doors during the Holy Year. Christ identified Himself as “the door.” In his announcement, the Holy Father pointed out that the Holy Doors “...evoke the passage from sin to grace which every Christian is called to accomplish. Jesus is the one and absolute way to salvation. To pass through a Holy Door is to confess with firm conviction that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the Lord, the Savior who suffered, died, and rose for our salvation.”

Pope Francis encourages every Catholic to make a pilgrimage to a Holy Door. He has recognized that pilgrimages will be taken to Rome and to other chosen churches with Holy Doors spread around the world

– there are three others designated in the world, with the only one in North America in Quebec City’s Basilica of Notre-Dame de Quebec in Canada. Thus, in an unprecedented move, Pope Francis has directed that every diocese and archdiocese in the world specify a church or shrine with a Holy Door to encourage and make it easier for vast numbers of people to make pilgrimages in keeping with the Holy Year and to pass through a Holy Door. To put that in perspective, there are almost 6,000 dioceses and archdioceses in the world, and nearly 200 in the United States alone.

Therefore, every Catholic has an opportunity to fulfill this pilgrimage and to pass through a Holy Door. The churches and shrines designated as having Holy Doors will be announced soon. Of course, there is much more involved in this Holy Year of Mercy. Each Catholic needs to strive to learn about the Jubilee Year and to fulfill its stipulations. As Pope Francis said in his Bull of Indiction, “Doors speak to us of welcome, hospitality, openness. I am convinced that the whole Church will find in this Jubilee the joy needed to rediscover and make fruitful the mercy of God.”



“I have decided to call an extraordinary Jubilee that is to have the mercy of God at its center. It shall be a Holy Year of Mercy.”

– His Holiness Pope Francis

A Letter From Our Pastor

November: Time to Be Grateful

Dear Parishioners,

I thank God every day for my priesthood; I thank God every day for each one of you; I thank God when I say the Mass; I thank God for each and every day. There are so many ways that the Lord has blessed me that I cannot really mention them all. That is a lot of gratitude, I know, but it is that kind of attitude of appreciation for God's presence in our lives, and His many gifts to us, that we need to concentrate on — not just this month when Thanksgiving is so much on our minds, but throughout the year.

It has been said many times that people who are good stewards are grateful people and, as a result, are happy people. If we think about the good things in our lives — no matter how many challenges and sorrows there may be — and make them the center of our thoughts, it makes everything better.

As Catholics, we are thankful people by nature. We share the Eucharist regularly, and this is a gift from God on which we should always unite. You are probably aware that the word "Eucharist" itself comes from the Greek word *eucharistia*, which means, quite simply, "thanksgiving." As a faith family, we share this meal of "thanksgiving" often, and certainly at every Holy Mass.

Thus, my thoughts of thanksgiving are not confined to one time of year, but every day of the year.



That should be the goal for each of us. I heard someone say recently that our Thanksgiving holiday has Protestant roots, but there are Catholic roots to the tradition, as well. Were you aware that in 1565 — 56 years before the Pilgrims celebrated their first Thanksgiving — Spanish Catholic settlers and Native Americans celebrated a Thanksgiving at a Holy Mass in St. Augustine, Fla.?

Thanksgiving is a way of life for us. Every time we gather to celebrate Mass, to pray, or to just enjoy one another's company, it is a time for that eternal gratitude. Everything we have is a gift from God. It may be something basic like fresh air and clean water. It

may be food. It is certainly family, friends and our very parish. Let us thank God not just at this time of year, but always. You and I are blessed.

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

A close-up photograph of a hand holding a white piece of paper. The words "Be Grateful" are written on the paper in a green, cursive marker. The background is a soft-focus image of a person's hands holding a glass of water.

An Opportunity for Stewardship

The Fall



Jennifer Arens grew up here at St. Francis Solanus. She has many fond memories of her mother's dedicated service to the parish – making cinnamon rolls for parishioners to enjoy after Masses, volunteering for parish events and serving on committees.

"I want to do some of the things I remember my mom doing," Jennifer says. "I see events like the Fall Bazaar as a way to build your parish community. I want my kids to experience that community in their parish just like I did. I like the idea of the parish being an intimate group where everyone knows each other. I think it's important for my kids to grow up remembering what I did in the Church. People are so busy these days so there aren't as many parish activities as there could be, but I want to find the time and the balance to make events happen."

Jennifer is coordinating this year's Fall Bazaar, with the help of many parishioners offering their time, talent and treasure to make the event a success. The Fall Bazaar will be held in the new Parish Center on Saturday, Nov. 14, from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. There is no cost to attend this great event for the whole family!

"The Fall Bazaar is a great way for people in the parish and the local community to shop for the holidays, while supporting our parish and local vendors," Jennifer says. "We have local crafters and direct-sales vendors, many of whom are parishioners, so shopping at the Bazaar is a great way to support parishioners and local people who make crafty items or homemade items. It's a way for people to shop local, shop in our community,

"I see it as a way for everyone to benefit – parishioners get to shop for Christmas, the parish raises money, and the crafters and vendors are able to meet a lot of people and gain new customers. It also opens vendors up to our Church and our school and our parish." – Jennifer Arens

o, Shopping, Fellowship, and Fun l Bazaar

while all the money raised at the event goes toward the church. I see it as a way for everyone to benefit – parishioners get to shop for Christmas, the parish raises money, and the crafters and vendors are able to meet a lot of people and gain new customers. It also opens vendors up to our Church and our school and our parish – and who knows, maybe something will touch their hearts!”

Parishioners can enjoy a breakfast of coffee and cinnamon rolls, in honor of Jennifer’s mother, and lunch will also be available for purchase, with all proceeds going to the parish. There are all sorts of activities for the whole family, including gift certificate raffles for local businesses, cash raffles, quilt raffles, the 50/50 raffle, and basket raffles. There will also be a Cookie Walk, where parishioners can purchase delicious donated baked goods.

“We are always looking for people to come and show support, buy raffle tickets and enjoy everything the Bazaar has to offer,” Jennifer says. “People are able to help in so many ways. It’s a once-a-year event, so I’d like to make it bigger and better every year. The only way to do that is to have more people help, and more people to come to the event. The more people come, the more the vendors want to be there, and the more money we are able to raise for the church. People can offer their time by coming to set up, take down, serve food, or help the vendors set up their tables. Maybe if they don’t have time, they could use their

talent for baking to donate something to the Cookie Walk, or maybe they have an awesome idea for a really great basket for the basket raffles. And they can share their treasure by just coming to the event and supporting our parish by shopping, participating in all of the activities, and purchasing cookies or a meal.”

While the main purpose of the event is to raise money for the parish, the Fall Bazaar is a great time for parishioners to get together and spend time in fellowship outside of Mass.

“It’s one thing to come to Mass each week – but it’s another thing to come and participate in the fun parish events,” Jennifer says. “By coming, they are supporting our parish, and it’s a fun way to join in the parish community and support local businesses. I think the time spent together as a parish family is so important. I hope people look forward to this event because they know they are going to see the same people every year. Maybe you look forward to going because you haven’t seen these people in a few months. I like to think of the parish as a small community on its own, so I hope it brings out parishioners and helps us all get to know people in the parish better. They get to sit and visit and have breakfast or lunch together, and get their shopping done at the same time. When you go to a parish event, you’ll definitely run into people you know. And you can visit, which you can’t do at Mass!”



For more information on the Fall Bazaar, please contact Jennifer Arens at 217-430-5752 or via email at jenkevarens@yahoo.com.

Advent:

Preparing for the Coming of Christ

As we proceed through this month of November, we note that we will begin celebrating Advent close to the end of this month, on Sunday, Nov. 29. So now is the perfect time to begin preparing for the Advent season, and to remind ourselves of the season's true purpose.

There are six seasons in the liturgical year for Catholics. The first is and always will be Advent. Advent is a season unto itself – it is not part of Christmas. The six seasons are, in order: Advent, Christmas, Lent, the Sacred Paschal Triduum, Easter, and Ordinary Time (which is divided into two sections, one from the end of Christmas time until the beginning of Lent, and one from the end of Easter time until Advent).

The point for us as Catholics as we approach Advent is to realize that Advent is *not* Christmas, even though it is possible to get caught up in the Christmas feeling that is so prevalent during this important liturgical cycle. Advent stands alone, and we need to ap-

proach it in that way. The mystery of Christ unfolds to us throughout the Church year, and that disclosure begins with Advent.

Each of us Catholics is most likely aware that the Church has spent centuries of prayer, thought and study, inspired by the Holy Spirit, to define and identify how we are to live out our faith. We have Canon Laws set down for us from Rome. Also, at the Vatican, in the Curia overseen by the pope, there is something called the Congregation for Divine Worship. It is this sector of the Church that has given us our calendar and the reasons for it.

According to the *General Norms for the Liturgical Year and the Calendar* issued by the Congregation, "Advent has a twofold character: as a season to prepare for Christmas when Christ's **first** coming to us is remembered; as a season when that remembrance directs the mind and heart to await Christ's **Second** Coming at the end of time" (39).

We may think in terms of Advent being merely as a time to pre-

pare for Christmas. Nevertheless, it is much more important than that, or at least it should be. The word "Advent" evolves from the Latin word *adventus*, which means "coming." We all understand that Christ is coming; His first coming is celebrated on Christmas, and that is to what our Advent preparations may tend to lead.

To really be prepared nonetheless involves also understanding the second reason for the Advent season – to prime us for the Second Coming of Christ. Although this may seem to us not in keeping with the "Christmas spirit," it is exactly what we need to remember to include in what we do during Advent. Just as Lent is a penitential time leading up to Easter, Advent should be a penitential time leading up to Christmas.

It is important for us, as stewards of the Church, to understand and appreciate both aspects of Advent. And it is equally important as good stewards to live out those expectations.

The Mystery of Christ unfolds to us throughout the Church year, and that disclosure begins with Advent.

Volunteers Live Stewardship

..... With Their Work

While our full-time parish staff keeps matters running smoothly, they are thankful their work is made lighter by our parish volunteers.

"They are total and complete assets to the office," says office manager Barb Girouard. "It's nice to have them there. They add to the family atmosphere of the office."

Mary Musholt and Emmie Venvertloh help out with whatever tasks must be done – and they joyfully view their work as an opportunity to serve God while serving others.

Mary has been volunteering for nearly five years and began her work under former parish office manager Marsha Tushaus.

"I help with the collections and the tally, rechecking and bundling," Mary says. "I answer the phone – whatever Barb has, I try to do. I always enjoyed office work. I worked for 30 years for my husband in his business, and I thought this was in the area I could do. I am a good friend of Marsha's, and I asked if she needed any volunteers. She asked if I could help on Mondays, and it fit the bill."

Mary agrees that her volunteering is a way for her to live stewardship.

"I feel it's a way I can contribute and help," she says. "I find more and more how valuable volunteers are in all areas. I enjoy the people here. I enjoy what I do."

Not only does Mary volunteer in the parish office, but she also sings in the Funeral Choir.

"On Monday mornings, I go to church and help straighten up the books after the weekend," she says. "Then, I come over here to the office."

By living a stewardship life through her work, Mary feels a closeness to Christ.

"I offer [my work] up to Him," she says. "It's something I can give back to Him."

Emmie also has been volunteering in the parish office for about five years. When Marsha was unable to continue her work, Emmie was asked if she could help.

"I just stayed," she says.

Emmie's volunteer day is Tuesday.

"I take care of the Masses that parishioners request by entering them into the computer," she says. "I collect the



Emmie Venvertloh

"I feel it's a way I can contribute and help. I find more and more how valuable volunteers are in all areas. I enjoy the people here. I enjoy what I do." – Mary Musholt

money from the votives in the church and count it. I help when the tuition is collected for the school, and help organize it. I do shredding – whatever they need me to do."

Although Emmie has been a lifelong member of the parish, her duties have enabled her to get to know even more fellow members.

"Mostly, I like people and being able to help out," she says.

She, too, agrees that being a volunteer enables her to live a stewardship life, and through that, grow closer to Christ.

"You feel you're doing something for the Church and the community," Emmie says. "It helps you get closer to God and His work."

Anyone wishing to volunteer at the office may call 217-222-2898.

St. Francis Solanus

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“See the Face of Jesus in Everyone” *continued from front cover*

office and school, and even at St. Peter’s parish office.

“I do whatever they need,” Connie says. “I was folding bulletins and copying for the front office and the teachers, and it just evolved from there.”

For over 35 years, Connie worked as a nurse in long-term care, and she always wanted to volunteer more after retiring.

“I had a friend tell me once that if you see the face of Jesus in everyone, you can do anything,” Connie says.

Connie is also a Third Order Carmelite and gathers with a group at St. Rose’s once a month for study, fellowship and Mass. The group anticipates receiving authorization soon to start an official Third Order Carmelite

community here in Quincy.

“The Carmelite Order is where I found my spirituality,” Connie says. “Every week, I look forward to my perpetual adoration hours at St. Peter’s. It is how I recharge. Adoration makes all the other things I do possible.”

Connie is so grateful for all the members of the St. Francis faith community who embraced her during her transition and following her father’s passing. She feels surrounded by a sense of belonging.

“Truly, thank you for being so welcoming,” Connie says. “Everyone has been wonderful. They were there when I needed them, and I hope I am there for them.”

“I am a very introverted person, so even for me to go to the church and ask was outside my comfort zone. People might be afraid of not being needed, but that isn’t the case at St. Francis!” – Connie Gordon

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.