

# Saint Francis Solanus



DECEMBER 2014

## LIFETEEN

### Provides a Fun, Faith-Filled Environment for Teens

During their high school years, teens are at a pivotal time in their spiritual development. Often surrounded by differing ideas and viewpoints, it is important for Catholic high school students to learn about and strengthen their faith. Through the citywide LifeTeen youth ministry – which includes participants from four local Catholic parishes, including St. Francis Solanus – parish teens are able to grow in their relationship with Jesus Christ, and deepen their understanding both of their faith and of themselves.

LifeTeen is a youth ministry program specially designed for students in grades nine through 12. The ministry holds meetings at Blessed Sacrament Parish every Sunday from 6 to 8 p.m.

“There’s always food and snacks, and there’s always a fun activity,” says Deacon Terry Ellerman, who is the Pastoral Associate at Blessed Sacrament. “The purpose is just to allow young people to get together, enjoy themselves, enjoy their faith and praise God.”

In addition to regular meetings, LifeTeen also organizes several service projects.



“For example, sometimes we’ll go to parishioners’ houses if they need help,” Deacon Terry says. “We also try to help with the pantry at Catholic Charities several times throughout the year.”

LifeTeen isn’t just a way to grow in faith – it’s also a way for teens to make friends who share the same beliefs and values.

*continued on page 5*



# Stewardship of Treasure

## *Giving to God First*

**H**ave you ever wondered why no one really becomes uneasy when someone brings up the first two “Ts” of stewardship – giving of your time or talents – but when the third “T” comes up, many of us become uncomfortable?

That third “T” is treasure, and some people simply become so annoyed by the subject, they tune out the words from the pulpit.

Why is there seemingly such an adverse reaction?

Our finances are such a personal subject. Discussing money issues with others is not easy, and having someone tell us what to do with our finances is even worse. We earn the money, after all. So shouldn't we decide what to do with it?

Of course, the answer is “yes” – we decide every day how to spend

our hard-earned dollars. Indeed, the monetary choices we make will either keep our finances in check, or put us into the red. The average American family has about \$7,000 in credit card debt – so finances certainly represent a challenge to our current society. Tight budgets, trying to “keep up with the Joneses” or poor financial management may be to blame for our tight resources. Does this mean we do not have anything left over for God?

Stewardship, at its roots, teaches that we are not supposed to give God our “leftovers.” We should instead strive to return to God a portion of our “first fruits” – giving to God first and then using the rest for our other needs. God gave us our talents that help us earn a living, after all. He should come first.

This idea can be worrisome for many. If our finances are already strained, how will we ever find enough to give back to God? Or, if we do try to give God our “first fruits,” will there be enough left over to cover our required expenses?

Taking the correct financial steps toward good stewardship simply boils down to trust – believing that God, who takes care of all of His creation, will take care of us. Trust that in giving to God first, we are both acknowledging that our multitude of blessings come from Him, and that we are thankful He chose to give them to us. And finally, trust that if we give to Him first, that all else will fall into place – because He is in ultimate control.

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*A Letter From Our Pastor*

## Making Christmas a Time of Real Blessing

Dear Parishioners,

As we all know, December is about Christmas – and Christmas is about giving.

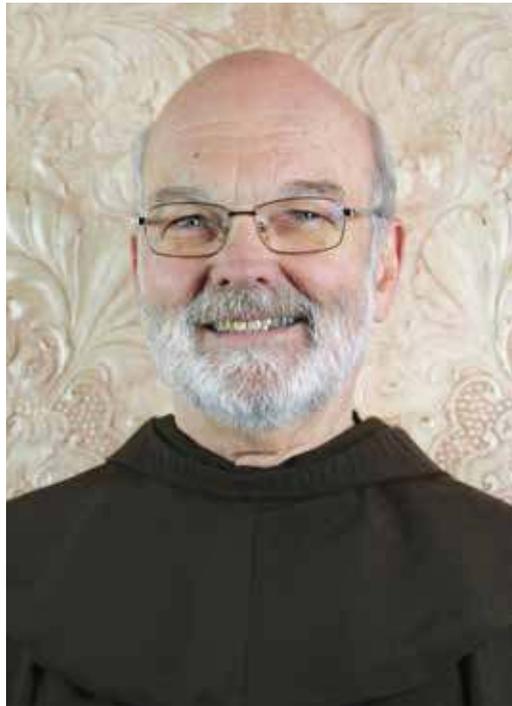
The basic truth of Christmas, celebrating the birth of Jesus the Messiah, God Incarnate, is plenty of reason for us all to rejoice and worship. But the additional load we have piled onto our Christmas observance means that worship is often almost lost in the shuffle.

Think about what weight Christmas has to bear. For instance, we send Christmas cards to people we contact at no other time of the year. We have to put up wreaths, Christmas trees and lights. It's the time of year above all others to visit relatives – "Home for Christmas" is a sort of national motto. There's the Christmas dinner to plan and cook. And then, we have Christmas presents to buy. No wonder the Christ Mass becomes an afterthought!

Presents, at least, are a natural extension of the Christmas theme: "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son" (Jn 3:16). As God loved us and expressed it by giving His Son, so we in turn share the love we have received by giving to others. And it's natural to show the joy we feel at the birth of our Savior with gifts, decorations and festivities.

Maybe, though, we can combine our Christmas activities with our stewardship commitments. Treasure, although challenging, is the simplest. Shouldn't the most expensive Christmas present we give be the one to Jesus, whose birthday we're celebrating? Risen and glorified, He needs nothing we have. But His Body, the Church, continues Jesus' mission here on earth, and as good stewards, we all have a need to return a portion of our gifts to God in gratitude for His many blessings.

Stewardship of our time may be a little more complicated, but can't we spend a little more of our time in



worship and prayer? Drop in to the church and offer a prayer of thanks for the gift of God's Son. Maybe you can attend Mass each day of the Christmas Octave. Have your family gather for prayers together in the morning or at dinner, in preparation for Christmas Day and through the Christmas season.

And talent? There are lots of possibilities. You can help decorate the Church. Or perhaps you might cook or bake for someone who is homebound or a shut-in. Invite someone who will be alone to share Christmas dinner with your family. Offer to work in a soup kitchen. The possibilities are endless.

Yes, December is synonymous with Christmas. But with a little planning, we can make this hectic time one of real blessing, both for ourselves and others.

Have a blessed and joyful Christmas.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

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

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



# Knights of Provide Active Service



The Knights of Columbus provide a wonderful example to follow for almost any Catholic parish. The organization's members are collectively dedicated to serving their Church, their parish, their community, and their country in a number of ways.

"We have a lot of people who belong to the Knights that are Eucharistic Ministers, lectors, or sing in the choir," says Alan Mitten, Fourth Degree Knight and Comptroller for the Fourth Degree Assembly. "They jump in and do whatever is needed."

The Knights of Columbus is a Catholic men's fraternal organization that supports our parishes, priests and local communities. Council 583 of the Knights of Columbus, our local council, hosts many activities and conducts various fundraisers throughout the year to benefit groups in our parish and community. In August, they

held their annual Quincy Knights of Columbus Barbecue, which included carnival rides for kids. This month, the Knights will host their Christmas event called Christmas Cheer, where they buy and give out Christmas presents to children of the Knights.

Some of the other events they host throughout the year include a

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*— Alan Mitten, Fourth Degree Knight and Comptroller for the Fourth Degree Assembly*

weekly breakfast, held every Sunday from September through March at the Knights of Columbus Club. The Fourth Degree Assembly also runs a TV Mass, broadcasting the weekly Mass on Sunday mornings on KHQA for those who are unable to attend Mass in person.

"One of the things that Knights do when you become a Knight, you get a rosary," Alan says. "We like to pray the Rosary as often as we can, especially for sick people. And we visit sick people, who may or may not be Knights, in the hospital. I personally volunteer at Blessing Hospital in the surgical intensive care unit as a greeter, greeting people whose loved ones are having surgery that day, and getting them set up near a phone so they can get updates about their loved one in surgery."

The Knights also contribute to the efforts of a number of charitable organizations. They work

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# Columbus Service to the Community

with the Family Life program, and they oversee a program in which they give \$500 scholarships to local families to send their children to Quincy Notre Dame High School. In September, the Knights began their annual Tootsie Roll Campaign to benefit intellectually handicapped children. During this campaign, members of the Knights of Columbus stand in front of retail stores and on sidewalks, handing out Tootsie Rolls and accepting donations.

The Knights of Columbus organization not only provides its mem-

bers with the opportunity to serve, but it also builds a sense of camaraderie and unity among the men in the community while enhancing their faith.

"It's because they are doing the right thing," Alan says. "They are helping other people, being ready to assist where needed. It's the knowledge that as a Knight, you can make a difference."

The Knights of Columbus is open for all Catholic men 18 and older. For more information about Knights of Columbus, please call Alan Mitten at 217-228-3230.

For more information on the Quincy Knights of Columbus Council 583, please visit the local website at [www.quincykofc.org](http://www.quincykofc.org), or follow our council on Twitter @QuincyKofC.

## LifeTeen *continued from front cover*

"It's a neat way to be with other kids who share their faith, and who can support each other," Deacon Terry says. "It's also a way to just enjoy each other's company – it's a friendly environment to be in."

The ministry organizes several social activities in addition to its faith formation and service opportunities.

"We have scavenger hunts every so often, and every month we like to have one of our Sunday meetings be a gym or outdoor night," says Deacon Terry. "The other day, we showed the movie *God Is Not Dead*, and we ended

up with a great turnout!"

At the end of October, LifeTeen also did a special Halloween-themed evening at Woodland Cemetery, complete with a scavenger hunt and spooky stories.

"Br. Ed is a storyteller of sorts, and he tells ghost stories for the kids," Deacon Terry says. "They really enjoy that."

All St. Francis Solanus teens are encouraged to participate in LifeTeen activities – and parents are also welcome to encourage their kids to get involved.

"It's an opportunity for parents to truly ensure their kids are in a wholesome, faith-filled environment, and parents are always more than welcome to be a part of it in any way they want," Deacon Terry says. "For the kids, it's a great opportunity to enjoy themselves and learn more about their faith."

For more information about LifeTeen, or to get involved, please contact Deacon Terry Ellerman at 217-242-2467.

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*– Deacon Terry Ellerman, Pastoral Associate at Blessed Sacrament Parish*

# ADVENT: *A Journey of Anticipation*

Advent is a time of preparation for the arrival of our Savior – the word “advent” itself means “coming.” Associated with personal reflections on the birth of Christ, Advent often is considered merely a symbolic period of waiting. Yet, in the Book of Luke, Christ directly reminds us of His second coming: “You also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him” (Luke 12:40).

Advent, therefore, carries a twofold purpose, as the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* explains, “for by sharing in the long preparation for the Saviour’s first coming, the faithful renew their ardent desire for his second coming” (524).

Today, in a society that moves at such a fast pace, there is a tendency to consolidate Advent and Christmas as one season. However, they are two distinct liturgical seasons in our Catholic faith.

While Christmas includes the Birth of Our Lord, the Feast of the Holy Family, the Epiphany, and the Baptism of Our Lord, the Advent season should not be overlooked. Indeed, it contains many rich traditions and feast days of its own, including the Feast of the Immaculate Conception of our Blessed Mother – a Holy Day of Obligation – on Dec. 8, as well as the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe on Dec. 12.

Advent is the season of anticipation of the mystery of the incarnation, and is a time for spiritual renewal and preparation. Yet, for many of us, Advent is filled by one long pre-Christmas “to-do” list – choosing, buying and wrapping gifts. We are rushed in getting Christmas cards to the post office in time, and become stressed planning our family Christmas dinner.

Once Christmas Day arrives, many of us are glad – not because Advent is over and we are finally able to joyously celebrate Christ’s arrival, but because we’re so relieved that all the stress and work of the Christmas holidays is finally over!

So how can we change the way we experience Advent? There are many ways in which we can fully participate in this beautiful season, such as:

- *Starting Advent traditions in your home, like lighting an Advent wreath and discussing weekly readings.*
- *Taking food to those who are hungry, blankets to those who are cold, and toys to children who have none.*
- *Attending a communal Penance service.*
- *Recognizing Advent as the beginning of our liturgical year, and making your New Year’s resolutions during the Advent season instead of waiting for Jan. 1.*
- *Displaying an Advent wreath or Advent calendar in your home, which are both wonderful traditions to share with your children.*

Let us commit ourselves throughout Advent to spending time in prayerful expectation so that when Christmas Day arrives, we will be able to fully welcome Christ into our homes and hold Him in our hearts.

## ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS SCHEDULE

### *Sacrament of Reconciliation:*

On Tuesday, December 23, the Sacrament of Reconciliation will be available from 3:00 to 4:00 p.m., and from 6:00 to 7:00 p.m. in church.

### *Christmas Mass Schedule:*

Christmas Eve, Wednesday, December 24:  
4:00 p.m., 6:00 p.m., 8:00 p.m. and 10:00 p.m.

Christmas Day, Thursday, December 25:  
8:00 a.m. and 10:00 a.m.



## A Home Parish, a Parish Family

### *The Smith Family*

When she was growing up, Joselyn Smith's family belonged to a parish with a very active youth group, and she was a regular participant. But when she left for college, she lost that sense of having a "home" parish. Then, she and her family moved to Quincy and joined St. John's Parish. When the local parishes merged, Joselyn found a new home parish here at St. Francis Solanus.

"It was very welcoming," Joselyn says. "We got a lot of invites from people to be involved. We had to choose what was right for our family at different times. I was able to go to a Cursillo weekend, and that was such a spiritual experience. My involvement grew from that. Even though I was involved before, I became even more involved."

Joselyn and her husband, Brad, and their children, Renee and Ryan Cafun, have been members of our parish family for the last eight years. Ryan attends St. Francis Solanus School, and Renee graduated from St. Francis and now attends Quincy Notre Dame High School. Both Renee and Ryan are altar servers, Brad is an usher, and both Joselyn and Brad are Extraordinary Ministers of Communion.

"We always try to serve as a family on the schedule, because I think it's good for building our spiritual life when we can do that together," Joselyn says. "And it's also convenient for us to all be serving at the same Mass."

Brad and Joselyn are also currently participating in a Bible study group at the parish focused on the *Adventures in Matthew* study by Jeff Cavins. For the past two years, they have been on the Parish Picnic Committee. Joselyn also volunteers with Vacation Bible School and participates in the Home and School Association's meetings and activities.

When Renee was in the eighth grade and preparing for her Confirmation, Joselyn took an active part in her preparation and facilitated a 12-week program called the Bible Timeline for Teens, and she hopes to do the same for her son, Ryan, when he is in the eighth grade.

"Because we do it as a family, my kids don't complain about being involved," Joselyn says. "We're scheduled, we plan to be involved, so it's never a hardship or a surprise to the kids that they have to be involved. It makes them more responsive when they're called to do other things. They're not shy, they're not bashful. They're more apt to get involved. We embrace spirituality in the home. I try to always remind the kids how important stewardship is, both in Mass and outside of Mass, but that it starts at Mass for the most part. When Father puts things in the

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*Joselyn Smith and her daughter, Renee Cafun, helping set up for the Parish Picnic*



*Joselyn Smith with her daughter, Renee Cafun, stuffing mailers for the Parish Picnic*



*Brad and Joselyn's son, Ryan Cafun, at his first Mass as an altar server*

# St. Francis Solanus

ROMAN CATHOLIC PARISH

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## The Smith Family *continued from page 7*

bulletin or the school sends stuff home at Christmastime, the kids are very open to participating.”

Through their active participation as a family, Joselyn, Brad, Renee and Ryan have found themselves part of a larger family of faith here at St. Francis Solanus Parish.

“I’ve met a great deal of people who are available to help because they care,” Joselyn says. “The community of people involved in stewardship are very caring. I have been able to find a substitute when I can’t

be there and to find help when I can’t do it. It’s blossomed into more than stewardship, into a parish family with an environment of people who love God and are grateful to God for all they have, and it’s difficult to be sad or unhappy in that environment. For all that I am fortunate to have, I am able to use the time, the talent and the treasures that God has given me to try to grow and to build God’s kingdom on the earth.”



*Brad Smith setting up for the Parish Picnic*

## *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.