

Saint Francis Solanus



MARCH 2015

Austin's Army Keeping St. Francis Solanus School Ready for Anything

Every Monday around 8 a.m., a special group of soldiers descends upon the halls of St. Francis. Known as Austin's Army, these soldiers come equipped not with artillery but with hammers, paintbrushes and a willingness to do whatever it takes to keep St. Francis Solanus School looking its best.

"We repair anything that can be repaired at school," says Tom Rakers, Austin's Army Coordinator and Volunteer. "We fix everything that we can, whether it's building shelves or working on the plumbing."

A former bricklayer, Tom explains that approximately 16 parishioners make up the group, with around 10 of them showing up to volunteer at the school each week.

"We're all retired guys, some-where between 65 and 80 years

old," Tom explains of what has become a great retirement project for the men of the parish.

Named for Fr. Austin, a former priest at the parish, Tom says the group got its start in the early 1980s at Fr. Austin's suggestion. Of the original group of men who assembled to take on the task, Tom says just one is still with the group. The time commitment is minimal, and Tom notes that it is a great way for those who volunteer to stay active and hold onto skills they may have used in their former careers. At the same time, the effort also saves the school money that might otherwise have to be spent on a contractor or handyman.

Past projects completed by Austin's Army include building a computer room, hanging doors and placing cabinets in the new teach-



er's lounge, and building frames for SMART Boards. When tablets and iPads were first introduced at St. Francis, Tom says the group created special carts to store and charge them overnight.

"Usually Monday, there's a whole list of little things to do, like change light bulbs and paint," he says. "It gives us something different

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The Wise Men's Gifts Symbolize Our Lenten Obligations



We experience great joy when we celebrate the coming of the Magi at Epiphany each year. For many of us, it is the completion of Christmas. Yet, the gifts offered by the Magi — gold, frankincense and myrrh — can be a guide for us as we plan our Lenten observances this year.

It may seem strange to connect the joyful celebration of Epiphany with the penitential season of Lent. Yet, our spiritual life should not be divided into separate bits having no connection with each other. In the same way, the Church's liturgical year should also flow from one season to another. The different feasts and seasons certainly have different emphases, but they are intended to build on each other. So let's see if we can connect what the Magi gave Jesus with what we're going to offer Him this Lent.

The basic ingredients for our Lenten rule normally come from what are termed the Three Notable Duties — prayer, fasting and almsgiving. These in turn come from Jesus' Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7).

How do we connect the wise men's gifts with the notable duties? Actually, what the gifts symbolize matches up surprisingly well.

Frankincense is the basic ingredient in the incense used in the worship of God, in the ancient world and in the Church today. Offering it to Jesus points out His divine nature, and so

it symbolizes prayer. Our Lenten rule needs to include prayer and worship. Of course, we are bound to worship at Sunday Mass year-round. Maybe during Lent, we might add a weekday Mass. Perhaps we can increase the time we devote to private prayer at home or at adoration. Devotional reading from the Bible or another appropriate book can be added. And don't forget the possibility of adding family devotions during Lent, so the whole family prays together.

When we offer our gold to Christ to build His Church and to help His poor, we are engaged in almsgiving. While giving from the treasure God has entrusted to us is a duty throughout the whole year, maybe this Lent we can practice being a little more generous than usual. If our giving is a thankful response to the gift of eternal life that God has given us, we will find that the giving is indeed a means of grace.

For centuries, myrrh has been associated with fasting. Although myrrh comes from the same family of plants as frankincense, it has a more pungent scent and bitter taste. In the ancient world, it was regularly used in embalming. Generations of theological writers have seen the gift of myrrh as a foreshadowing of Christ's sufferings. And fasting strengthens us in holiness and prepares us to come into God's presence after our own deaths. St. Thomas

Aquinas himself linked myrrh with repentance and fasting when he wrote that myrrh represents the penance by which we preserve our souls from the corruption of sin.

Fasting may be the most difficult of the three notable duties for modern Americans. After all, most of the advertising and many of the magazine articles we see are devoted to making us more, not less, comfortable. We usually think of fasting only under the heading of dieting to lose weight. Instead, try to think of fasting as a way to become more spiritually fit. Body and spirit affect each other. The whole sacramental system is built on the truth that we can receive spiritual grace through material things and physical actions. Our specific requirements of fasting are limited — abstaining from meat on Fridays during Lent, and a reduction in the quantity of food we eat on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. But discipline of our physical bodies for our spiritual well-being does not have to be limited to Lent!

Gold, frankincense and myrrh were indeed valuable gifts for the wise men to present to the Child Jesus. When we look at their symbolism, we can see their relationship to the three notable duties of almsgiving, prayer and fasting. What gifts are we going to offer to Jesus this Lent?

A Letter From Our Pastor

The Joy of Lent

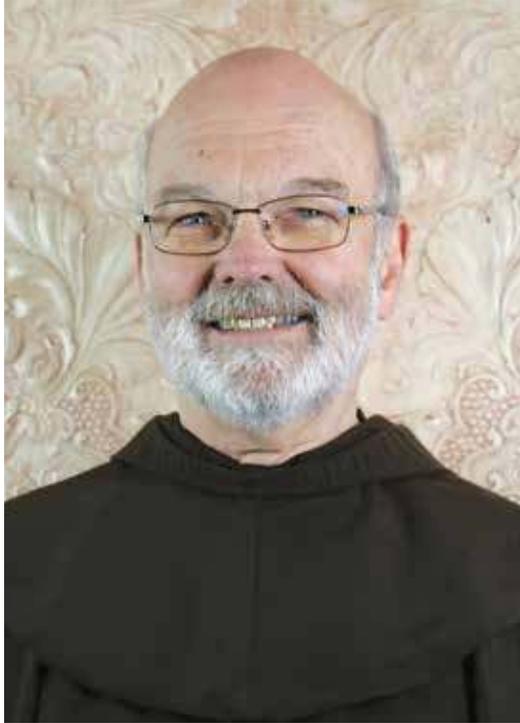
Dear Parishioners,

Have you ever thought about the joy in sacrifice that Lent provides? Most of us don't delight in sacrifice; in fact, in our daily lives we often do our best to avoid challenges and practices that push us outside of our comfort zones.

In Christianity, there is a beautiful irony between joy and sacrifice, and we are presented with a wonderful opportunity to embrace this in a unique way during Lent. In his 2014 Lenten message, Pope Francis shared, "Lent is a fitting time for self-denial; we would do well to ask ourselves what we can give up in order to help and enrich others by our own poverty."

While giving up sweets in favor of healthy snacks for Lent is a common and noble endeavor, the goal of Lent should not only be a spiritual excuse to lose weight! In choosing acts of self-denial, we are saying "no" to things in order to get into the practice of saying "no" when inclined towards sin, ultimately deepening our faith and our relationship with the Lord. Victory can be found when we deny ourselves and pick up our crosses and hardships in order to grow closer to Christ!

Therein lies the joy. When we grow closer to God by denying our will, we say "yes" to a life of abundance with Him. Our God is a benevolent God; He will not hold back His grace from those who honor Him and choose challenging things to grow and give Him glory. Christ even tells us Himself, "Blessed are



the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

Without question, Lent is a time for conscious penitence and for spiritual preparation for Easter. And, it is important to remember that God loves us whether we make Lenten changes or not. At the same time, Lent provides us an opportunity to make God a greater part of our life, and to take our faith to new levels. Stewardship is a God-centered way of life — a spiritual way of living that, above all, acknowledges God's presence in all we do.

Lent is a time for each and every one of us to do more than simply deny ourselves; we need to welcome God into

our lives in greater ways, so that when we get to Holy Week and Easter, we have an even greater appreciation for the sacrifice the Lord made for us. Talk about pure joy!

May you and your loved ones enjoy a holy and joyous Lenten journey, and a blessed Easter.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Fr. Don, O.F.M." with a stylized flourish at the end.

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

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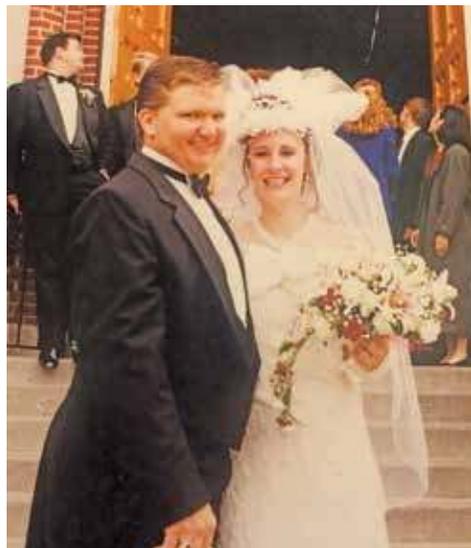
“Family Togetherness” — Jeff

Every family is busy in its own way. But in serving together with their children, Jeff and Anne Meyer hope to instill in them the lesson of finding the time to give however they can.

“Living stewardship as a way of life has given us a sense of family



Grace's First Communion



Jeff and Anne Meyer's wedding at St. Francis in 1992

togetherness,” Anne says. “Everyone is busy, but it is important to always find time as a family to volunteer or give. I hope that our girls understand that there are so many different ways to give at whatever place you are in your life!”

Raised in Catholic homes, Jeff and Anne remember growing up within families that mainly gave to the Church through their Catholic schools. After they were married in 1992 at St. Francis, they began to find ways to be involved according to their place in life.

“When our children were young, I was on the Parish Council, worked with the Ladies of St. Francis, and served as a Eucharistic Minister,” Anne says. “Women and children can now take part in more positions at church, and I think that inspires people when they see younger kids serving.”

Now the Meyer girls – Makenzie, 21; Breanne, 20; Jordan, 16; Keiley, 15; and Grace, 12; – are almost all teenagers, and the four oldest attend

ed St. Francis School and Quincy Notre Dame.

As the girls became older, one key way to serve came through Girl Scouts. When Anne was a girl, her mother was her Girl Scout leader, and then Anne became the leader for Makenzie when she became a scout in kindergarten.

“Service projects have always been the most important part of Girl Scouts for us,” Anne says. “It is a tool to keep the girls involved in faith-based things through the Church, like visiting nursing homes. I say my husband became a Girl Scout when Makenzie did. It is a family experience!”

With Girl Scouts, the Meyers have participated in food drives and raised money to give back to the Church through projects like the Angel Tree or organizations like the Salvation Army or the YWCA. The Girl Scouts started the toy drive after Thanksgiving, to which many St. Francis School students contribute.

“When you do one little thing



The Meyer girls in their Girl Scout uniforms – (from left) Jordan, Makenzie, Breanne and Keiley with Grace in front

Jeff and Anne Meyer

like donate a toy or serve at Mass, it might not seem that big,” Anne says. “But when you put those little things together, we have all easily donated over 2,000 toys to Catholic Charities over the years!”

The Meyer family also gives through liturgical ministries. Anne continues to serve as a Eucharistic Minister and does the Children’s Liturgy of the Word. Jordan and Keiley are altar servers, and Keiley and Grace sing in the Children’s Choir. They also go to church together and pray as a family before meals.

“Our core values surround the church and our family,” Jeff says. “The girls might bicker or ask why they have to volunteer for some things, but they do realize this is for the greater good! Whether it is fishing or coaching the girls through sports, we always do things as a family.”

While giving has brought Jeff, Anne and their family closer together, it has also brought them closer to their church family, which they par-

ticularly experienced when they were blessed with Grace.

“It was a true blessing to see the church come together and support us after Grace was born with her special needs,” Anne says. “All the prayers and things they did for us made us feel loved. Grace has been a gift to everyone. People love to see her at church. She shakes hands with the elderly. She brings smiles to people’s faces.”

Jeff and Anne thank everyone at St. Francis who has embraced them over the years. They encourage others, especially those with young families, to find some way – even if it is the smallest way – to give.

“Being involved has done a great deal for us,” Anne says. “It has brought our family closer together. It has brought us closer to the people in our parish community. And the church isn’t just the building – it is the people.”



Jordan serving at Christmas Eve Mass in 2008



Breanne being baptized at St. Francis



Anne, Jeff and Keiley at her First Communion at St. Francis



The Meyer family – (back row, from left) Jeff, Anne, Makenzie and Breanne; (front row, from left) Jordan, Grace and Keiley



Makenzie becoming a Girl Scout in 1998 at St. Francis School

Feast of St. Joseph, Husband of Mary

March 19

Devotion to St. Joseph began relatively late in Church history, primarily because his role of husband to Mary and head of the Holy Family was underplayed in early Christianity by many unauthenticated legends of Christ's childhood. These legends almost always portrayed Joseph as an old man, a simple guardian of Mary and Jesus.

Modern theology places Joseph in a much more important position. Because of his true, sacramental marriage to Mary, Joseph shared in Mary's parenthood — Joseph was a father to Jesus in every way except physical generation. Joseph appeared publicly as the natural

father of Jesus, thus shielding the virginity of Mary and the reputation of Jesus. Joseph's fatherly love, authority, and watchful service were all necessary circumstances in God's plan for the Incarnation.

Joseph was born in Judea or Galilee in the first century B.C. Little is stated in the Bible about the influence Joseph had on Jesus. History tells us that he brought Mary and Jesus to the temple each Passover and taught Jesus the carpentry trade. He seems to be the silent family man who shows his love for his family by providing them with security. The very safety of Mary and Jesus was guarded by Joseph when he took his family into Egypt

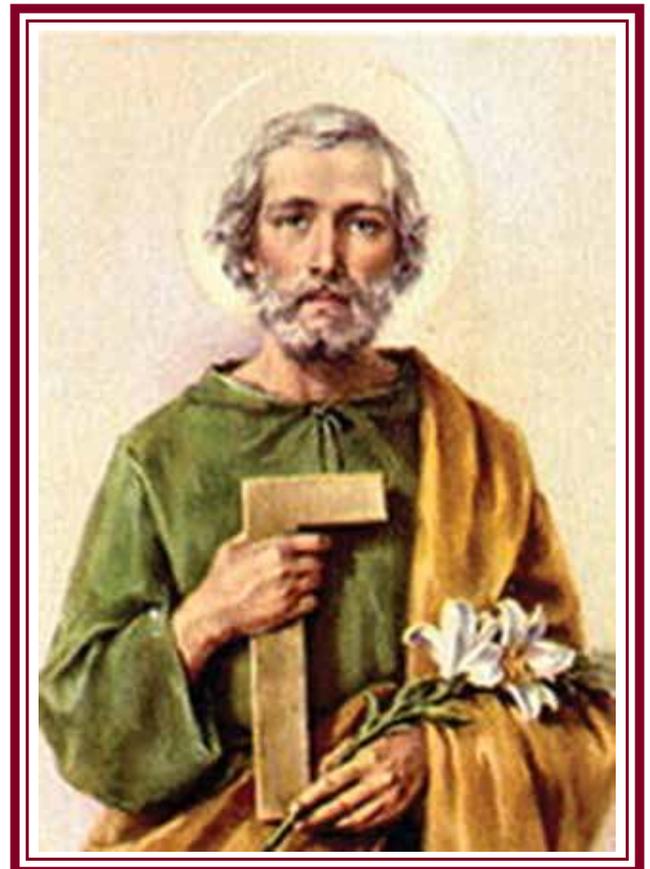
to avoid the massacre of male babies ordered by King Herod.

In the history of the Church, Western veneration of Joseph began with the introduction of the Feast of St. Joseph in the late 15th century.

In 1870, at the end of the First Vatican Council, Pope Pius IX declared St. Joseph to be the patron of the Universal Church. He is also the patron of carpenters, workers, fathers, and a happy death given that he died in the presence of Mary and Jesus. The title of Joseph's March 19 feast day is "Husband of Mary." Pope Pius XII later declared May 1 to be the feast of St. Joseph the Worker, to counteract the Communist May Day holiday.

A traditional prayer to St. Joseph

O Blessed St. Joseph, faithful guardian and protector of virgins, to whom God entrusted Jesus and Mary, I implore you by the love which you did bear them, to preserve me from every defilement of soul and body, that I may always serve them in holiness and purity of love. Amen.



Ladies of St. Francis Bringing Women Together in Christ

Barb Kuhn lives in the country, so she has a significant commute to the city of Quincy. When she's able to, she goes to early morning Mass and then gets to spend some time with different people she has met through the Ladies of St. Francis Ministry.

"I'm a widow now, and it's very good for me," Barb says of seeing her Ladies of St. Francis friends while in town. "Not only for them, but for me. Sometimes I'm not having a good day, and I meet one of them for coffee. I think I'm going to help them, but it turns around and they help me and care for me through a hard day. I've met some wonderful people through Ladies of St. Francis who have become very dear friends."

Along with Edna Trimble, Marcia Tushaus and Sis Obert, Barb organizes Ladies of St. Francis card parties, held on the first Thursdays of September, October, November, March, April, and May. Members affectionately refer to them as 'gatherings' rather than 'meetings' since they are very informal events, beginning with dinner, followed by a little business, then entertainment of one sort or another. Then the games begin.

Members play rummy, canasta, euchre, or any game of their choice. Door prizes are often available, so participants stand a good chance to win while sharing in a fun time and growing closer to their sisters in Christ. In such a fast-paced society, taking the time just to be with somebody is a valuable gift. By honoring the dignity of the person and making them a priority, it imitates Christ's selfless care and concern for us.

"In a lot of different ways, it's a reflection of Christ's love," Barb explains. "You don't have to spend a lot of money to care for someone. Time is much more important. Sometimes, if you take someone out for a cup of coffee, or a sandwich at noon, they'll talk about it for a month. It's a huge deal. You took time to be with them."

Look for updates in the weekly bulletin for exact gathering times, which will be posted about three weeks in advance. For more information, please contact Barb Kuhn at 217-430-0574. All ladies of the parish are invited to come and join. In fact, if you are female

and 18 years or older, you technically already belong to Ladies of St. Francis – so you might as well go and see what they're all about.

"Come check us out!" Barb encourages. "Come and see what a good time we have! I've never heard someone leave our gatherings who said, 'I wish I never came.' I think you'll have a good time. Everyone is more than welcome."

"In a lot of different ways, it's a reflection of Christ's love. You don't have to spend a lot of money to care for someone. Time is much more important. Sometimes, if you take someone out for a cup of coffee, or a sandwich at noon, they'll talk about it for a month. It's a huge deal. You took time to be with them." – Barb Kuhn



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Austin's Army *continued from front cover*

to do and we look forward to it every week."

For Tom and his fellow volunteers, helping out at the school goes beyond simply showing up and repairing what's broken – the volunteers have fully embraced the idea that in giving, we also receive.

"I think most of us really enjoy doing it, but when you get down to it we are giving to God," Tom says of the fellowship the gentlemen find while helping with the projects.

Austin's Army is open to volunteers of all ages, not just those who are retired. Any parishioner who has the time, talent and energy is encouraged to lend a hand. Those who are interested are asked to come to the school's kitchen door on a Monday morning or contact Tom Rakers at 217-223-1428.

"Just walk in and say you want to join Austin's Army," he says. "We'd like to have as many as we can."



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.