

Saint Francis Solanus



JUNE 2015

Building Stewardship at St. Francis Solanus *The Stewardship Committee*

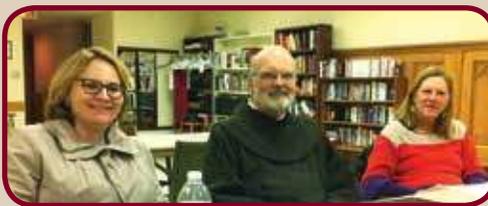
As our parish family certainly knows, stewardship has become a major part of parish life here at St. Francis Solanus. And while we continue to grow in our understanding and practice of stewardship as a way of life, the Stewardship Committee is here to help our parish family proceed on that journey.

"St. Francis has an amazing history, and all we're trying to do is build upon that and deepen the relationships among the parish family, with each other and also with God," says Ken Sparrow, Vice Chair of the Stewardship Committee. "With the steps we've begun to take with the newsletters and a growing number of ministries and activities, we're very upbeat about the process and where it's going to take us in the future."

The Stewardship Committee consists of around a dozen members who meet with the pastor,

generally on the fourth Tuesday of each month, to consider ways to invite, welcome, connect, and engage the parish community at St. Francis Solanus in developing our resources of time, talent and treasure in service to the Church.

The agenda for each meeting is based on whatever stewardship activities are happening at the time, such as the Leadership Retreat, Stewardship Renewal or Parish Survey.



"The Leadership Retreat that we had in the fall was quite well attended," Ken says. "It included a lot of young parishioners, which was very exciting to see. People came out very excited about their faith and their parish. I can see it doubling in attendance this year. Right now, we're trying to see if and how we can help with the opening of our new Parish Center. We know that with that new facility, there's a ton of great energy in the parish and we want to harness that energy and keep that energy alive. The energy in the parish the last couple of years has increased a lot and we want to keep that energy going, and that is one of the reasons for starting the committee in the first place."

The Stewardship Committee includes one member of the parish staff and a number of parishioners of all ages and demographics. These volunteers not only encourage our parish

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Stewardship

Keeping Our Stewardship Commitments in the Summertime

The kids are out of school and our fast-paced lives centered on school and youth sports activities have slowed down. Our own internal clocks are now on summer time. We're ready for a break from our hectic lives.

And while we take vacations and enjoy the leisurely pace of the season, we need to remember that summer is not the time to take a vacation from God. In fact, summer can serve as the perfect opportunity to grow our relationship with God, especially since most of us have considerably more free time.

So, instead of neglecting our faith due to busy days and late nights, try these simple steps to embrace God during the quieter summer months and during your vacation.

Get More Active in a Parish Ministry

The summer is actually a perfect time to get more involved in a parish ministry. Because we no longer have to get the kids to and from school, or get them to sporting events or other activities that normally occur during the school year, our schedules are a bit less cluttered. Summer is indeed a perfect time to fill some downtime with service to God through ministry and giving of your talents. Take a look through the parish ministries to find something that suits your particular interest or talent.

Vacation Bible School, for Kids and Adults

Vacation Bible School is a great way for younger children to learn about God through songs, activities and fellowship. The fun-filled lessons build upon Gospel teachings while keeping kids' attention. For older children, it is a great opportunity to offer service by being a team leader or assistant. Adults can also help plan, decorate, organize, and teach during the week. It's a wonderful activity for the entire family!

Give Thanks for the Sun

Praise God for the sun, time off from school, and easygoing days by visiting the church to say a quick prayer. Bring a journal or rosary along to help stay focused. Little children can even bring a religious coloring book to give thanks to God on their terms. Or, before heading to the pool, why not attend daily Mass with the kids? It's a perfect way to start the day and set the tone that — vacation or not — God is still an important part of your family life.

Don't Take a Vacation from Mass

Often while on a vacation away from our parish family, we are not familiar with where to attend Mass. Don't let that be an obstacle for you. Check out www.masstimes.org in order to find out where and when to go to Mass. In addition, if you are lodging at a hotel, the concierge will assist you with directions to the nearest Catholic Church.

Summertime Stewardship of Treasure

The prime reason for keeping up our pledge all summer is that God doesn't go on vacation. He continues to sustain us throughout the summer months. He persists in pouring out blessings on us, even during the hottest weather. He keeps on meeting us in His sacramental presence when we go to Mass wherever we travel. As God remains faithful to us during the summer, we are called to be faithful in our commitments to Him and our parish family, even during our vacation time.

So, enjoy the warmer temperatures and the relaxed atmosphere. Just don't forget who provides the sun and the sand! And most importantly, remember to take God with you wherever you go on vacation!

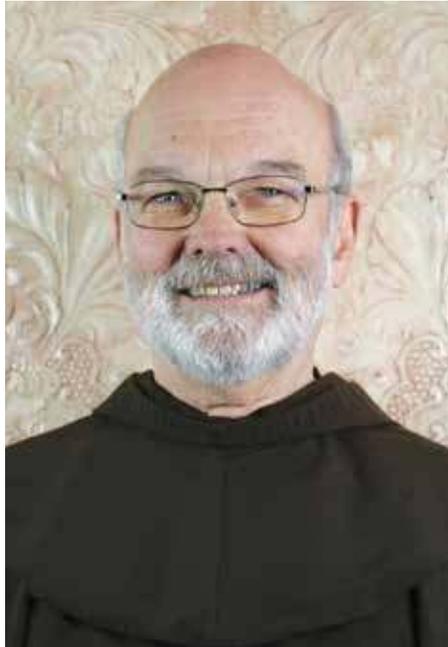
A Letter From Our Pastor

Our Lives are Filled With Examples of Good Stewardship

Dear Parishioners,

We do not have to look very hard to find examples of stewardship in our lives. It starts right here in our own parish. Think of the people who serve us in so many ways. There is a group of wonderful people who are here at the parish, sometimes every day, helping to make our faith community operate effectively, especially in terms of worship and liturgy. Then, of course, there are those who serve tirelessly and selflessly with our many parish ministries, which reach out to those around us — to those in need.

This kind of service — discipleship — is exactly what Christ was saying when He told us to “Love your neighbor.” Think of others in our Church, our communities and our lives who show us what it means to be a good steward. One of the first who comes to mind is our Holy Father, Pope Francis. His very life is a testament to what it means to serve — to be a good steward. In one of his recent homilies, the pope said, “Real power is service. Jesus reminded us ‘He came not to be served, but to serve,’ and His service was the service of the Cross. For the Christian, getting ahead, progress, means humbling oneself. If we do not learn this Christian rule, we will never, ever be able to understand Jesus’ true message.” That is my message for both you and me — we must be willing, at times, to



put our own comfort and desires aside for the needs of others. That is what true stewardship is really all about.

Summer is upon us — we are entering that time of year when things slow down a bit, and we tend to live life at a more relaxed pace. Nevertheless, it is not a time to let our faith lives slow down. In fact, it is a great time to enrich and focus on our faith and our God.

God’s creation is all around us. As we enjoy the summer season and bask in the sun, I hope you will take time to remember the wonders of His creation and His glorious gifts. We also must strive to renew our efforts to be good stewards every day by continuing to serve others, and to be thankful for the

many living examples of stewardship we see at our parish and in our daily lives.

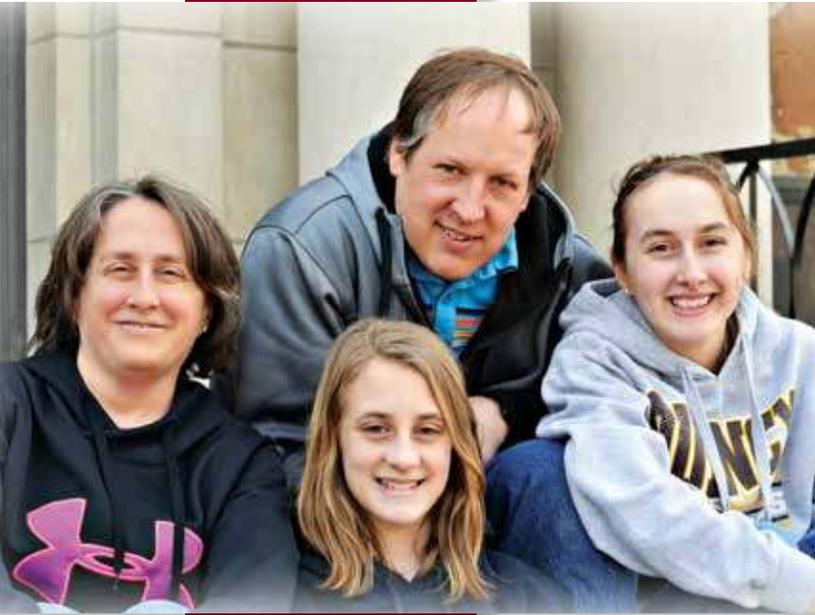
Sincerely yours in Christ,

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



“It Starts THE VOOR



*The Voorhis family –
Linda and Mark with
their daughters, Faith
(front center) and
Gabby (right)*

During their younger days, they worked at adjacent stores in the local mall. One day, Mark had the gumption to go next door and ask Linda for a date, which led to many dates – several that began by going to Mass together.

Mark and Linda Voorhis moved from parish to parish after their marriage. Then they found St. Francis.

“At St. Francis, which is just two blocks from us, everyone is friendly and welcoming,” Mark says. “It’s a humble parish. We became parishioners in 2010, and the girls started going to St. Francis School that year.”

Catholic school was a big transition for the Voorhis family since Gabby, 15, and Faith, 11, had previously attended public school.

“It is a sacrifice to send them to Catholic school, and it has definitely been worth it,” Linda says.

“They need to know what God does for them and the miracles He creates every day. Now Faith goes to St. Francis, and Gabby is at Quincy Notre Dame.”

Yet whether children go to public school or private school, Mark and Linda believe that faith formation begins at home.

“There is a poem called *Children Learn What They Live*,” says Mark. “It reads, ‘If children live with criticism, they learn to condemn...if children live with encouragement, they learn confidence.’ I think what it says is very true.”



(From left) Faith and Gabby Voorhis

at Home” HIS FAMILY

Mark and Linda hope to set an example for their girls by volunteering and trying to put God first every day.

“We do try to put God first in our lives, and it is hard to do between jobs and being busy!” Linda says. “We try to take that 10 to 15 minutes a day to just sit and talk to God like He is your best friend. Thank Him for everything He has given to you.”

For the Voorhis family, volunteering is their way of giving back and giving thanks for the blessings they have been given.

“The biggest thing with giving is just to start, and we started with the Parish Picnic,” Mark says. “You can give whatever time you have. If you want to take up the gifts, you can just walk by the table and pick up the cross that is next to them. You can always call the parish and ask what is needed.”

When asked if she could help with PSR at St. Francis, Linda thought that it would be a fun way to share her faith by teaching children and helping them grow.

“I think my own faith has grown just by watching them and seeing the difference you can make,” says Linda, who has taught PSR for four years. “I am actually a sponsor this year for a Confirmation candidate who was one of my PSR students. It has been great to watch him develop into the young gentleman he is becoming!”

Mark enjoys being “behind the scenes” and helping with sacristan duty at St. Francis. Meanwhile, their girls both help with Vacation Bible School, and Faith is also an altar server.

Mark and Linda believe that we all have our hidden talents and that we need to encourage each other – particularly as we support the next generation, the young stewards of the Church.

“So often, we leave church or start our day with the best intentions, but then that secular world creeps in, and we have to take a step back and regroup,” Mark says. “We are role models for the next generation. Let them see you pray. Talk to them after Mass about what they learned in church. It starts at home.”

“The biggest thing with giving is just to start, and we started with the Parish Picnic. You can give whatever time you have. If you want to take up the gifts, you can just walk by the table and pick up the cross that is next to them. You can always call the parish and ask what is needed.” – Mark Voorhis

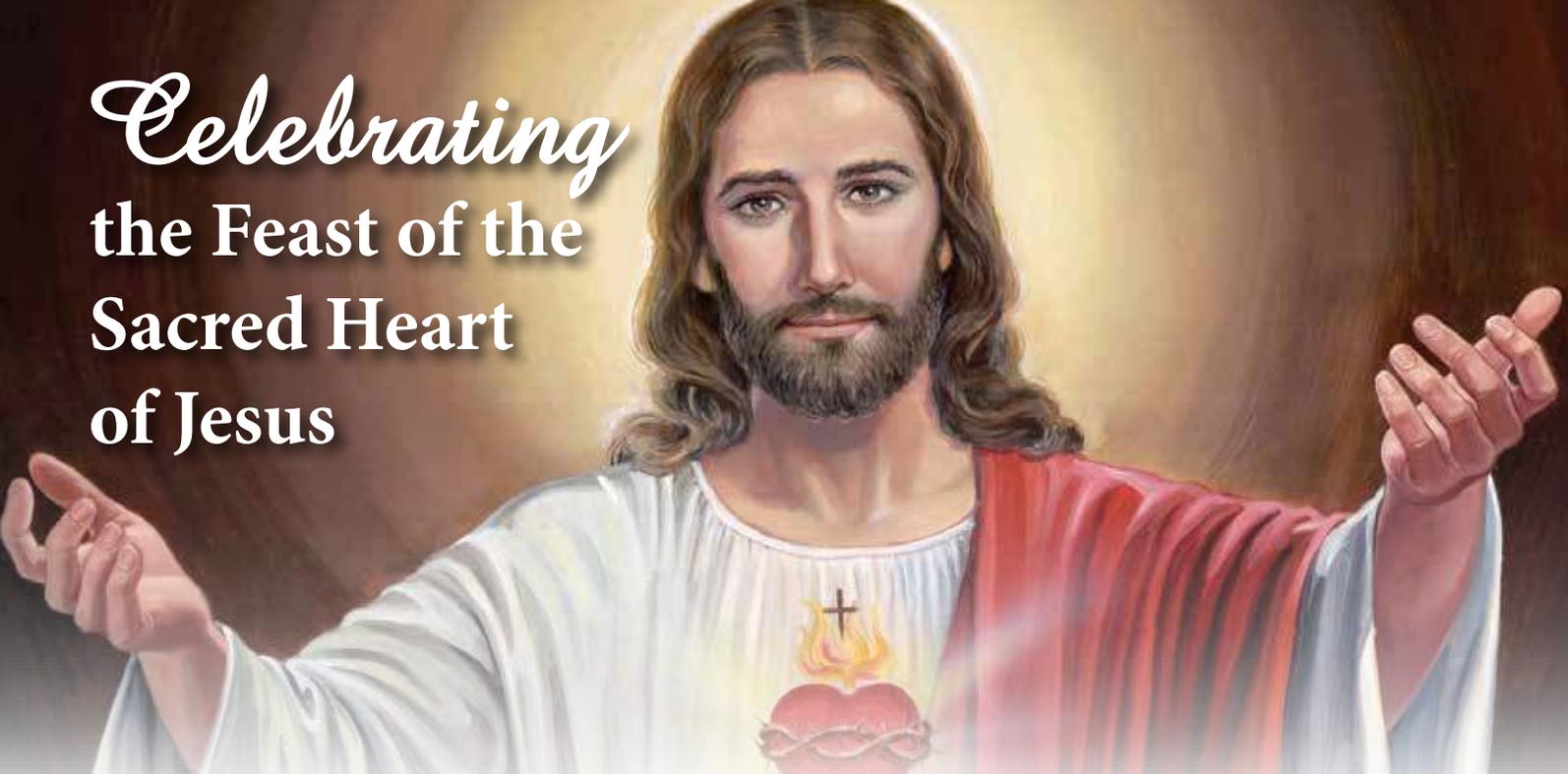


*Gabby Voorhis’
Eighth-Grade
Graduation from
St. Francis*



*Faith Voorhis’ First
Communion at
St. Francis*

Celebrating the Feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus



The Sacred Heart of Jesus is probably the most widely recognized representation of Christ's divine love and unwavering compassion for all of humanity. Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus has been practiced for centuries, and this devotion continues to play an important role in today's Catholic faith. As we celebrate the Feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus on June 12, we have a wonderful opportunity to learn more about this essential Catholic devotion and its role in Church history.

Devotion to the Sacred Heart extends as far back as the 11th or 12th centuries. While there are no definitive texts or histories that verify initial devotees, it is understood that the devotion grew out of the Benedictine and Cistercian monasteries of the time. By the 16th century, documented devotional prayers and exercises had been formulated, and the ascetic writers began making more extensive reference to the Sacred Heart. But it was not until the 17th century that devotion to the Sacred Heart moved beyond being practiced on a private, individual basis. St. Jean Eudes established the first feast of the Sacred Heart, and this was shared with devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. It was then

that the devotional feast of the Sacred Heart began to spread to other dioceses and religious communities.

However, the devotion as we know and understand it today largely stems from the visions of Jesus Christ to St. Margaret Mary Alacoque. In fact, right here at St. Francis Solanus, the beautiful stained glass window to the left of the high altar depicts Jesus appearing to St. Margaret Mary. While these visions were numerous, the most remarkable revelation, known as "the great apparition," occurred during the octave of Corpus Christi in 1675. As Jesus said to Margaret Mary, "Behold the Heart that has so loved men... instead of gratitude I receive from the greater part (of mankind) only ingratitude."

Reporting her vision to Fr. Claude de la Colombière, Margaret Mary was then directed to write an account of the apparition. Despite her initial reluctance to do so, as well as her misgivings upon its completion, this written account would soon be published and widely read among both clergy and lay people, thus playing an instrumental role in spreading the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Another book, *The Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus*, was written by Jesuit Father Croiset after Jesus told Margaret Mary to

have Fr. Croiset write it. Following Margaret Mary's death in 1690, Fr. Croiset would compose a short biography of her life that was amended to his book, which served to further increase interest and practice of the devotion.

Over the course of the next century, devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus would continue to spread. By the latter half of the 18th century, a Mass of the Sacred Heart was given papal approval for Poland and Portugal, followed two decades later by Venice, Austria and Spain. Then, in 1856, the Feast of the Sacred Heart was officially established by Pope Pius IX.

While the specific readings and exercises for the feast day have been changed and replaced over the years, the basic tenets that extend back to the visions of St. Margaret Mary Alacoque remain the same — the acknowledgment of and devotion to Christ's unending compassion and love for all of us. Indeed, the Catholic Church maintains and continues to build on this wonderful devotion. A key tradition was established in 2002, when Saint John Paul II decreed a world day of prayer for the sanctification of priests — World Priest Day — to be observed annually on the Feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

“Showing That We Really Care” *The Adult Funeral Mass Ministry*

“The bodies of the dead must be treated with respect and charity, in faith and hope of the Resurrection”
– Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2300

One of the most difficult crosses to bear in life is the death of a loved one, particularly when that death is unexpected or untimely. Grief is a natural occurrence at such times. However, through our Catholic faith, there is also hope and even joy knowing that Christ has conquered death forever and that we will one day be reunited with our lost loved ones.

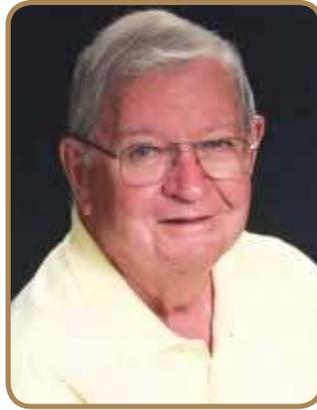
In the grieving process, the funeral liturgy plays an important role. It provides a unique opportunity for loved ones to mourn while also celebrating the life of the deceased, and finally finding comfort in Christ. For the past four years, Jim Nauert has served as Coordinator of the parish’s Adult Funeral Mass Ministry, a ministry dedicated to assisting the priest during funeral liturgies.

“We provide service for the priest at funeral Masses,” Jim says. “We help the priest do whatever needs to be done. Basically, we’re grown up altar boys and girls.”

Three members of the ministry are needed for each funeral Mass. Volunteers perform tasks such as carrying the Easter candle and holy water during the procession, preparing the incense for the priest, facilitating the offertory, and assisting with the distribution of the Eucharist. Through this service, their goal is to help the liturgy run smoothly in order to create a prayerful and comforting atmosphere for those grieving.

“We try to make the Mass as solemn as we can for the people who are mourning, showing that we really care about the deceased and their family,” Jim says.

Burying the dead is the seventh Corporal Work of Mercy. It is important that we respect the bodies of the



*Jim Nauert, Coordinator
of the Adult Funeral
Mass Ministry*

“You listen to the lives of some of these people and you’re thankful to partake in helping to bury them. We want the same kind of treatment when we die. I think I am more conscious of the whole gratification of being a Catholic, too – you just grow when you hear those things about people’s lives, and you think about your faith and your own life more.”

*– Jim Nauert, Coordinator of the
Adult Funeral Mass Ministry*

deceased as way of valuing the life that they lived, helping their families through the grieving process, and finally reminding us of the hope of the resurrection.

“I think it’s our obligation to bury the dead, and this is one of the ways of doing this before they are actually buried in the cemetery,” Jim says. “It’s just giving back to the Church too – helping out when you’re in your older age and have more time.”

Although being present at so many funerals seems a sad task, there are many rewards for being present.

“There is a lot of gratification in doing the job,” Jim says. “You listen to the lives of some of these people and you’re thankful to partake in helping to bury them. We want the same kind of treatment when we die. I think I am more conscious of the whole gratification of being a Catholic, too – you just grow when you hear those things about people’s lives, and you think about your faith and your own life more.”

Currently, the ministry consists of about 25 members. However, because funerals are last-minute by nature, it is often difficult to get the necessary three for each service.

“When you look at the names and take into account how many are sick, out of town, or have conflicts, it kind of cuts the numbers down,” Jim says. “Sometimes I have to call 13 to 14 people before I can get the three people needed for the service.”

For this reason, volunteers are much needed. If you feel called to join this unique ministry, please contact Jim Nauert at 217-223-7021.

St. Francis Solanus

ROMAN CATHOLIC PARISH

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The Stewardship Committee continued from front cover

family to be more selfless with their time, talent and treasure, but they are also living that call themselves through their participation in the Stewardship Committee. For Ken, being a part of the committee is his response to a call to be more engaged in his own faith.

"About six or seven years ago, I was sick for a number of months," Ken says. "During that time, it turned my faith life inside out. It was a difficult time, but a time when I was learning things about my faith that I never knew before. I knew that at some point, I would engage in a faith-based ministry at the church, and when I found out about the Stewardship Committee being formed, I knew right away that this was something I wanted to be a part of. It seems that often, we take things in our lives for granted, and sometimes it takes a hardship or a difficult personal experience to help deepen our relationship

with God and engage us more deeply in our faith, and that's exactly what happened in my own life."

And through his participation in this ministry, God has blessed Ken and the other members of the Stewardship Committee in return.

"I've heard personal comments from people about the newsletter, how they've been touched reading the stories about people's faith journeys and how it's changed their perception of their own faith lives," Ken says. "That, to me, was terrific. As a committee, we've gotten to where we're very excited every month leading up to the meeting, because we know how well this is already going, and you can feel the energy in the room that lets you know we're on the right track."

For more information about the Stewardship Committee, please call the parish office at 217-222-2898.

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.