

Saint Francis Solanus



JANUARY 2016

“Sharing My Gifts and Contributing in the Stewardship Model” Our St. Francis Solanus Finance Council

Brian Dreier's faith journey begins right here at St. Francis Solanus – he grew up as a member of our parish, before his family moved away when he was in grade school. However, he and his family returned to Quincy three years ago. Now, Brian finds himself involved in the parish in ways he had never imagined.

“Two years ago, Father asked me if I would serve on the Finance Council,” he says. “I have a background in finances and financial planning, so it seemed to make sense to do it. Being a part of the Finance Council makes me feel as if I am not just a part of the parish, but I am sharing my gifts and contributing to the stewardship model.”

The parish Finance Council meets with the pastor on a regular basis. It consists of seven lay people from the parish, and Brian serves as the Chair. While the Finance Council does not have decision-making



Brian Dreier, Finance Council Chair

authority, consultation is at the heart of the decision-making process for the administration and stewardship of the temporal goods of the parish. The St. Francis Finance Council is oriented to sharing information, listening, contributing to the discussion, and promoting consensus.

The *Code of Canon Law* mandates a parish finance council, stating, “In each parish there is to be a finance council which is governed, in addition to universal law, by norms issued by the diocesan bishop and in which the Christian faithful, selected according to these same norms, are to assist the pastor in the administration of the goods of the parish without prejudice to the prescript of Can. 532” (537). In addition, section 532 states clearly that the pastor is responsible for the decision-making process, while he is assisted by lay boards like the Finance Council.

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Stewardship: New Year's Resolutions

The New Year has arrived, and we have all been busy making – and trying to keep – our list of New Year's resolutions. Many of us choose resolutions geared toward health and fitness. After all, possessing good overall health is critical to our well-being. Others may try to avoid a particularly bad habit. Maybe you need to quit smoking or stop swearing. Still, many of us plan things we have always wanted to do, but never get around to doing.

As the days of January continue onward, however, many of us find the inspiration of keeping our good-intentioned resolutions to be fading fast. By the end of the month, most of us have given in to our temptations and returned to our old ways. We are only human, right? Discouraged by this yearly failure, many of us don't even bother making New Year's resolutions anymore, especially if we feel like we won't succeed.

Maybe our failures lie in both how we make our resolutions and what resolutions we actually choose. What we need to understand is the “root” of our resolution. For example, if you resolve to eat less candy to drop those recently added holiday pounds, is the “root” of your resolution a selfish one — wanting to look better since you overindulged? Or, are you genuinely seeking to stop giving in to each “sweet tooth” craving by practicing mortification — giving up of a personal pleasure to glorify God? If the “root” is a selfish one, only to benefit yourself, then it is often difficult to keep in the long run. However, if we are trying to glorify God, our mission is much more important and worth keeping.

Tying your New Year's resolutions into the principles of stewardship – giving of your time, talent and treasure back to God – is a great way to ensure that the “root” of your resolution is right on track! For instance, resolving to pray each evening before going to bed glorifies God, brings you peace before slumber, and allows you to grow in your relationship with Christ. The “root” is pure. Your desire to keep it will



be stronger and make it easier for you to keep. In the same way, resolving to return your talents to God by helping others in need is an excellent choice in creating a selfless resolution with the right “root.” Furthermore, resolving to re-evaluate your finances is also extremely important, and the beginning of a new year is a great time to do it. Are you giving back to God out of gratitude for all He has given you? Or are you merely dropping a dollar or two in the collection basket just to feel good about yourself?

If you are not where you would like to be as a good steward – either with sharing your time, talent or treasure – you can resolve to do better. The New Year is a perfect opportunity to start anew and become the good steward that God desires each of us to become. And when we choose selfless things that build His kingdom instead of ours, we are sure to not only stay on track, but to succeed!

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A Letter From Our Pastor

Working Together as a Strong Faith Community

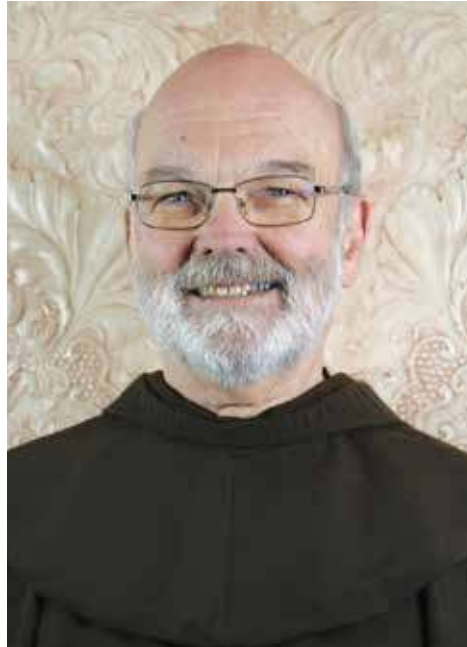
Dear Parishioners,

Happy New Year! Whenever we begin a new year, it's the occasion to look back over the previous year. So, how was the year 2015 for you? I hope it was good. The truth is that every one of us can look back and remember sad things, losses and big mistakes that have happened. We'll remember tragedies and disasters in the world, and maybe some very serious ones in our own lives.

But hopefully, the good that has happened in our lives and even in the world around us has outweighed the bad. Maybe you'll call me an optimist if I say that I firmly believe that the good overshadows the bad. The truth is that I'm not an optimist. More importantly, I'm a man of faith. I believe that God is always with you and me and the entire world, helping us to do better, to grow, and to get through the messiness of life.

One thing that we can all look back on with real joy is the completion of our beautiful Parish Center. Everyone – and I do mean EVERYONE – who I meet who comes into it for a meeting, or just walks through to take a look, gives it rave reviews. The space is well designed and versatile. We have everything from Ladies of St. Francis dinners to Scout gatherings, from brides and bridesmaids to prayer groups, from PSR classes to Finance Council, Pastoral Council meetings, Bible Study, and much more going on – many of them at the same time.

Members of other parishes told me before we built this that once it was finished, we'd be asking how we ever got along without it. And they were right. The truth is that this facility is a tribute to you, the parishioners of St. Francis Solanus Parish. It shows what's possible when we work together. So, thanks again to all of you who



contributed to make this dream a reality. And we can do more. Much more.

The Stewardship Commitment Cards that so many of you filled out in the last two months are part of the way we can do more. I was thrilled to see how many of you handed in a Commitment Card. There were a huge number of cards that came in right in the beginning, but then a whole lot more in the next couple of weeks. Your involvement in the life of our parish brings great dividends both for the parish and for you. I'm sure you will feel good about yourself and find your faith means more to you when you are involved in the ministries and organizations and committees of the parish.

So, as we begin this New Year, I want to do two things. I want to thank you for your generosity – for giving of your Time, Talent and Treasure to St. Francis Parish. And I also want to encourage you – strongly encourage you – to fulfill your commitments. You might even ask yourself if there is something else you might do. Just as with the Parish Center, we can make more dreams into realities when we work together as a strong Faith Community.

Have a Blessed New Year!

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

The truth is that I'm not an optimist. More importantly, I'm a man of faith. I believe that God is always with you and me and the entire world, helping us to do better, to grow, and to get through the messiness of life.

“Be Willing and Open”

Brad and Caitlin



Brad and Caitlin Kendrick



The Kendrick Family in front of The Last Supper

Brad Kendrick says Bible study can be like a scavenger hunt. Each time we read the text, we are in a specific situation in our lives, so different passages – perhaps verses we’ve read a dozen times – can reach out to us with new insights.

“We are called continually to grow and mature in the faith given to us,” Brad says. “The best way to do that is to dive into the Bible. I say *dive* because to get the most out of the Bible, we have to be willing to put ourselves into the story and allow the story to change us.”

Though Brad grew up a few blocks away from the parish and has been a lifelong member of St. Francis Solanus, his participation in the faith community simply consisted of Mass attendance until a few years ago. He decided to take a more active role in 2012 and asked Fr. Don if he could bring a Bible study program to St. Francis.

“Every aspect of learning is present in studying the Bible – our history within the church, the model of Christ’s life and how we are to live as well as insights into the future,” Brad says.

Brad and his wife, Caitlin, met in 2003 through mutual friends. Their faith hasn’t always been an integral part of their relationship, but it became more important as they became parents – to Peyton, 3, and Riley, 1 – and got more involved. Caitlin joined the parish in 2009 after completing the RCIA process.

“To raise our children in the Catholic faith, I had to learn about the Catholic faith myself,” Caitlin Kendrick says. “After learning more about the faith, I chose to enter into the Church.”

Today, Brad is involved in liturgical ministries, the Pastoral Council and has been a part of a Catholic Identity planning program for St. Francis School. He continues to facilitate Bible studies and enjoys supporting the pastor’s providing for the needs of the parish with the council.

“I love brainstorming new ways to reach out to those in our church community,” Brad says. “I believe we need continually to assess where we are and where we would like to be as a parish.”

Since joining the Church, Caitlin has enjoyed being involved with the RCIA process. For her, it is an opportunity to share her faith with others and help the catechists and catechumens “pave” their way to entering the Catholic Church.

Open to Be a Disciple”

Caitlin Kendrick

“We encourage them to think about ways which they can become involved with the church and share their faith,” Caitlin says. “As the lessons are presented every week, I continue to learn more about the faith, which helps me to grow a stronger bond between myself and God.”

For both Caitlin and Brad, being involved has strengthened their faith and their connection to their parish family.

“Once engaged in the parish in one form or another, a sense of belonging will take hold, and you will continually find new ways to assist the church family,” Brad says. “Learn the opportunities provided at St. Francis and pick something that fits into the talents that you possess.”

As he looks around the parish of which he has been a part since boyhood, Brad feels encouraged by a new energetic spirit alive in the community, a spirit physically represented with the addition of the Parish Center.

“I pray that we as a community can continue to find new ways to spread our Catholic faith, both within St. Francis, as well as out in the community locally and globally,” Brad says. “We are called to be disciples. We must learn what it is to be a disciple and then be willing and open to *be* a disciple.”



The Kendrick family – (from left) Peyton, Caitlin, Brad and Riley

Our St. Francis Solanus Finance Council *continued from front cover*

“I truly think that Fr. Don understands and appreciates our input and advice,” Brian says. “He is very open to listening to us and to receiving our counsel. He listens sincerely, and although his decisions may vary slightly from some of our perspectives, we genuinely feel that we are providing an important element of lay participation in the process.”

The St. Francis Solanus Finance Council meets on a monthly basis.

“Father and I sit down and establish an agenda for each meeting,” Brian says. “Certainly, a financial review and update of the parish are part of every meeting. Then we may add or include other items, which have a financial impact on parish operation. We are

doing our best to have an open financial report for the parish. There is a weekly update in every bulletin, and we do an annual report in the fall, prepared by one of the CPA’s on our Council, which provides a more comprehensive view to the people of the parish.”

Finally, according to Brian, the Finance Council approaches its duties with stewardship very much in mind.

“We have done much in recent years in relation to the idea of stewardship,” he says. “To really be a stewardship parish we need people who are willing to step forward and share their gifts. There is no question that I and the others on the council agreed to serve because we recognize that this is a good way to share our gifts, our talents and experiences.”

The pastor appoints members of the St. Francis Solanus Finance Council. For more information on the Finance Council and its operation, please contact Brian Dreier at bd123@everestkc.net, or call Fr. Don at 217-222-2898.

The Patron of Catholic Schools in America

.....*St. Elizabeth Ann Seton*.....

As the first American-born canonized saint, Elizabeth Ann Seton's entrance into history was guided by Divine Providence. Born on Aug. 28, 1774, just months after the Boston Tea Party, Elizabeth's childhood witnessed pivotal events in the formation of our country — the Continental Congress, the Declaration of Independence, and the American Revolution. At the time of the foundation of the new Republic, in a society predominately hostile toward Catholicism, a flower blossomed that would forever change the shape of education in the United States.

Elizabeth Seton was born into a wealthy Protestant family in New York City. Her life, although materially blessed, was not without suffering. Elizabeth's biological mother died when she was only 3, and her younger sister, Catherine Josephine, died at the age of 2. A spark of faith, however, was visible even in her early childhood. When questioned about her sadness concerning her sister's death, Elizabeth simply responded, "Kitty is gone up to heaven. I wish I could go there too."

Elizabeth grew into a beautiful woman, courted lavishly by handsome young men from prominent New York families. At the age of 19, she met a charming New York financier, William Seton, and the couple was wed in 1794. They remained in high society until her father-in-law's passing, which left them to care for



William's seven younger siblings, along with three children of their own. Consequently, the Seton finances crashed.

The couple traveled to Italy — it was here that William's health failed him, and he died in December 1803. Providentially, Elizabeth was left in the company of a strong Catholic family where she witnessed the practice of the faith. In a letter to her sister, Elizabeth wrote, "My sister dear, how happy would we be, if we believed what these dear souls believe, that they possess God in the Sacrament, and that He remains in their churches..."

After an eight-month stay, Elizabeth returned to America, and she began to investigate Catholicism more deeply. She was besought by Protestant friends

who hoped to dissuade her. At this time, Elizabeth prayed repeatedly, "If I am right, Thy grace impart, still in the right to stay. If I am wrong, oh teach my heart to find the better way."

In 1805, after much interior struggle, Elizabeth became Catholic. Abandoned entirely by her family and friends, she resolved her financial difficulties through teaching.

In 1807, Elizabeth was invited to establish a Catholic school for girls in Baltimore. The task was daunting, and Elizabeth labored intensely, explaining how "from half past five in the morning until nine at night, every moment is full — no space even to be troubled." After winters spent in continual hardship and sacrifice, the school flourished and, within years, Mother Seton planted the seed from which sprang the parochial school system — along with hospitals and orphanages.

Before her death in January 1821, she was the active mother of five — although two of her daughters died young — and the spiritual mother of a full-fledged religious congregation known as the Sisters of Charity. She was canonized in 1975, and her feast day is celebrated on Jan. 4.

Thanks to St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, the Catholic parochial school system remains vibrant and active. And as we celebrate Catholic Schools Week, we are thankful for the sacrifice of this loving wife, devoted mother, foundress, and All-American saint.

Sharing Our Faith: Part of God's Plan

Many of us may feel that in order to be a teacher, one must be an expert. Yet, when it comes to teaching the faith, a faith that is vibrant and active is far more important than formal training. Indeed, one is never truly an "expert" on the spiritual life – it is a journey that we must all travel, in many different places and along varying roads.

"The role of the catechist is to share the Good News," says Carol Seifert, Director of Religious Education. "Faith is a gift we share with one another, and we all grow and learn from each other. Sharing the faith is important if we want to keep our faith alive and growing. We can never exhaust the mysteries of God and children in particular, with all their innocence, can teach us a lot about trust and faith in God. Matthew's Gospel says 'unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.' Even Jesus thinks we have a lot to learn from our children."

For parishioner Mary Monckton-Blickhan, teaching the fifth-grade Religious Education class has been an opportunity to share the faith, as well as an opportunity for her own personal growth.

"I think it's important for each of us to share our faith, because each of us is unique," Mary says. "The Lord loves each of us differently and we help each other grow in our relationships with Him by sharing. I think that's the beauty of humanity and part of the purpose of His plan."

According to Mary, each of us is a teacher in our own way, because we each have a personal relationship with Christ.

"Teaching is sharing," she says. "It's not a one-way street – you give and you receive. Teaching allows us to have a relationship with our neighbors, and that's the

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Catechists share the Good News with our youth and, in return, grow in their faith as they share.

"Teaching is sharing. It's not a one-way street – you give and you receive. Teaching allows us to have a relationship with our neighbors, and that's the big command – love God and love your neighbor. Sometimes, it's hard because our neighbors can have flaws, but it challenges us to see God's presence among us." – Mary Monckton-Blickhan

St. Francis Solanus

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1721 College Avenue
Quincy, IL 62301
(217) 222-2898
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Sharing Our Faith: Part of God's Plan *continued from page 7*

big command – love God and love your neighbor. Sometimes, it's hard because our neighbors can have flaws, but it challenges us to see God's presence among us."

Parishioner Linda Voorhis teaches the sixth-grade Religious Education class and, similarly to Mary, expresses how she has matured through her service as a teacher.

"I have grown in my faith through teaching," Linda says. "Not only do I get to see the teachings through my eyes, but I get to see it through their eyes. It's like seeing two different aspects."

For Linda, teaching Religious Education has been

a reminder for her and her family to keep God first in their lives.

"It's so important to share your faith with kids, as well as other members of the church and your family," Linda says. "God needs to come first."

Finally, as Carol notes, sharing the faith with the youngest members of our community is truly a blessing.

"The children bless us each week with their smiles and their spirits," she says. "Their insights into the faith and their eagerness to be good Catholic Christians is inspiring, as well."

Are you interested in learning more about our Parish School of Religion program, or would you like to get involved? If so, please contact Carol Seifert 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.