

Saint Francis Solanus



FEBRUARY 2016

Bringing the Good News *Lectors Reverently Proclaim the Scriptures*



Lectors serve our parish each week at Mass by proclaiming God's Word to their parish community.

In moments of seemingly insurmountable grief, we find that our faith will not only guide us through the darkness, but will make a profound impact on the rest of our lives. This was the experience of Janet Zeidler, who coordinates our Lectors Ministry.

"In my own family, we lost a young nephew to brain cancer," Janet says. "Trying to understand why God would call such a young person home to Him – I think reading the Scripture helped us gain wisdom and faith and acceptance."

Although she experienced the power of God's Word as she coped with grievous circumstances, Janet has certainly found that Scripture has brought her closer to God in everyday life.

"I feel like I reflect much more on the Word," she says. "I have started a subscription to *Give Us*

This Day. [It gives me] the Scriptures every day from the Mass, so I read those and reflect on them. I think I now have a deeper appreciation for and intimacy in the Word."

As coordinator of this ministry, Janet works to train new lectors, as well as support those who have been serving for years. She enjoys all of these aspects of being able to help others glorify God, especially at Mass.

"I think whenever you are at the [ambo], God is speaking through you and helping you to deliver His message," she says. "I think that adds to the way you share the Word and how reverently you speak to the people.

"When I am up front, I feel much closer in the celebration of the Mass," she continues, "I just feel that there's such a strong connection with participation in the

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Living Lent in 2016

During the 40 days that Jesus spent fasting and praying in the desert, Satan was constantly tempting Him. He preyed on Jesus' humanity, trying desperately to get Him to test God. Of course, we all know that it didn't work. As Jesus is 100 percent God at the same time that He is 100 percent man, the devil was unable to take hold of Him.

Yet, the story of Jesus' temptation in the desert communicates an all-important truth to us. Jesus, the God-man, experienced everything we have and everything we ever will as human beings. Satan even tried to tempt Him, just as he tempts us every day. But because Jesus is God at the same time that He is human, He had no tendency to give in to Satan's attempts.

Even so, Christ fought Satan tooth and nail, putting him in his place: "Get away, Satan! It is written, 'The Lord, your God shall you worship, and Him alone shall you serve'" (Matthew 4:10). At that, the devil left Him.

We all find ourselves in similar situations. We live in a world wrought with sin, and, in his ever-so-cunning way, Satan makes the sinful look appealing. We must stand firm in our faith and tell Satan to "Get away," just as Jesus did. Only then will we truly experience the glory of the salvation Christ came to give. Lent offers us a particular time to fight Satan, taking courage in the resurrection that we are preparing to celebrate. It is a time that we spend focused on strengthening our relationships with the Lord. Armed with His power, which we receive in

many different ways, we can resist the temptations of the devil and accept the salvation Christ offers each one of us.

How can we do this? Get to know the Lord through prayer. Read the Scriptures often. St. Jerome tells us that ignorance of Scripture is ignorance of Christ. So, we must be steeped in Scripture. Read it daily – chapter by chapter, or verse by verse. It is, after all, the Word of God! Draw close to the Blessed Mother – she is eager to bring us to her Son. Join her at the cross, where she witnessed her most precious Son die for each one of us. Pray the Rosary – individually and as a family. It is a powerful prayer through which, with Mary, we walk through Christ's life, His Death, and His resurrection. Unite with Christ Himself in His suffering.

At a minimum, the Church tells us to fast and abstain from meat throughout the Lenten season. Catholics who are 14 years of age and older must abstain from meat on Ash Wednesday (which falls this year on Feb. 10), Good Friday (falling this year on March 25), as well as all of the Fridays throughout Lent. In addition, Catholics between the ages of 18 and 60 are required to fast on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. Fasting is defined as eating one meal and two smaller meals, which, together, do not equal the larger meal.

The idea behind these requirements is to help us focus on the spirit of the season. We are to be preparing ourselves, just as Christ did, for the great event that won for us salvation!

A Letter From Our Pastor

Lent – A Time of Preparation, Introspection and Change

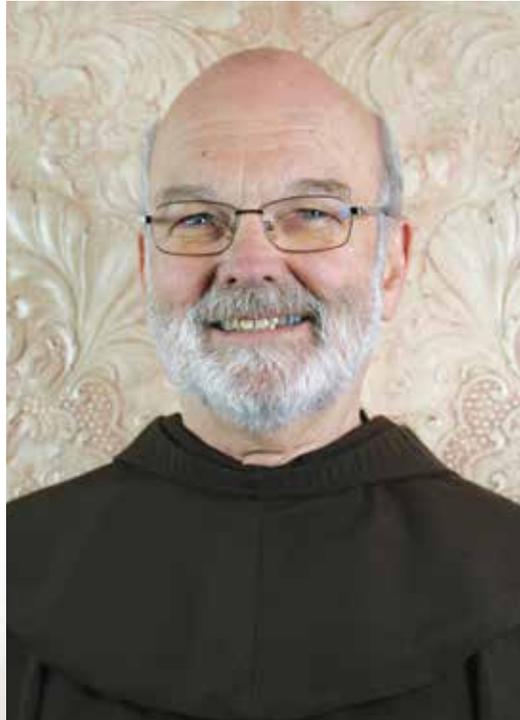
Dear Parishioners,

This is the holiest time of year for Catholics. Lent, of course, officially begins on Ash Wednesday. Most of us are familiar with the traditional Lenten practices of prayer, fasting and almsgiving. Those are important in relation to repentance and renewal. Everything we do should remind us that Lent is a penitential season.

In the midst of this serious time, however, we must keep in mind that the word “Lent” comes from a Middle English word, which means “spring-time,” and the time of lengthening of days. When we think springtime, our thoughts tend to be lighter and brighter. That is how we need to view Lent, just as we recognize the joy, colors and brightness of Easter.

In the Church over the past few decades, we as Catholics have come to the insight that Lent is more than a time to give something up. It is also a time to add something, to take action about our faith in ways that make it more meaningful and real. This does not mean we should not make sacrifices – we need to consider that while sacrifices may mean denying ourselves something, they can also mean we are filling that denial with a positive action.

We are talking about conversion again. We are speaking of stewardship again. This is a time when we should be looking within ourselves. It is a time for introspection. How can we improve? Maybe we need to be a bit more patient with people in our lives – perhaps we need to adjust some of our attitudes. One thing we



all need to do is to see and find the good in many small things in our lives.

Do we spend quality time with God, and with our families? Do we help someone in need? Do we set aside a time each day to pray? The possibilities for change and positive action seem quite endless. The point is to do it. Stewardship is a life of action – Lent should be a time of action.

Rather than being concerned about how others see us, this is a time for us to look at ourselves. We may need to rethink and re-evaluate our faith and especially our relationship with God. The Lord has called each of us to love and serve. Every day and every season is a time for us to carry

out that call – but now, during Lent in preparation for Easter, this is very important indeed.

The 40 days of Lent are a time for us to live life as a disciple and as a steward of our God-given gifts.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Fr. Don, O.F.M." The signature is written in a cursive style.

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



Liturgy Planning Helps Set th

Whether we take the time to realize it or not, every Mass is like a performance. From the vestments, to the altar cloths, to the objects that surround the altar, each item is purposefully chosen to help set a mood and a tone for a specific time in the liturgical year. These objects help the faithful enter into the world created by the performance.

From a burlap manger cloth to the stark emptiness of Lent, every object seen on the altar is chosen carefully by the Liturgy Planning Committee to help parishioners get a visual sense for each season.

“Our committee consists of 10 to 12 ladies who work side-by-side with Father and the Religious Director to make sure that everything that needs to be done during the liturgical year regarding church celebrations, holidays, and special events, are planned and ready when they need to be,” says group secretary Cindy Reichert. “From Easter to Christmas, and everything in between, the Liturgy Planning Committee has a part in preparing the church so the parishioners will be able to celebrate each spiritual event with the utmost understanding and reverence.”

Meeting monthly, members look ahead to future Masses to study the readings and decide how to set the stage for the most impact. Committee Co-Chair Doris Karhoff uses the transition between Advent and Christmas as example.

“We get the candles and the wreath ready,” she says. “We get the banners ready on the posts. We coordinate flower arrangements to the season. After Advent, we switch everything out for Christmas, we put up the crib and the trees to put us in the mood of waiting for the baby Jesus.”

This idea of waiting allowed the committee to create a powerful visual moment just before this past



Carefully choosing objects that surround the altar for each Mass, the Liturgy Planning Committee is tasked with setting a mood for worship. This display from Thanksgiving shows off the bounty of the harvest.

Christmas season, when an empty crib was left at the altar until the big day arrived.

“When a mother is waiting for her baby, she fixes the room and gets it ready, so why can’t we treat the church the same way?” Doris says. “When you’re expecting, you don’t wait until the night before to put

“When the plan comes together, whether it be calling volunteers for the feet washing on Holy Thursday, getting children to carry up the baby Jesus and putting Him in the manger on Christmas Eve, or decorating the church for Easter and Christmas, the overwhelming feeling of the Holy Spirit working through me to be a part of this committee is awesome.” – Cindy Reichert

The Stage for Meaningful Masses

everything up. So, when you see the crib there, you realize we're getting into the idea of there's going to be a baby there."

Both women say watching the groups ideas go from planning to execution is an exciting experience and one that can transform the spirit, as well.

"When the plan comes together, whether it be calling volunteers for the feet washing on Holy Thursday, getting children to carry up the baby Jesus and putting Him in the manger on Christmas Eve, or decorating the church for Easter and Christmas, the overwhelming feeling of the Holy Spirit working through me to be a part of this committee is awesome," Cindy says.

"When you get involved with a ministry like this, it changes your whole world," Doris concludes. "It's changed my whole outlook for the better and I don't know how to describe it."



The glory of Jesus' birth is a special time at St. Francis. This display was created by the Liturgy Planning Committee to highlight the joy of the Savior's arrival.

Parishioners who would like to volunteer their time with the Liturgy Planning Committee are encouraged to contact Doris Karhoff at 217-224-1516 or Cindy Reichert at 217-224-9694.

Bringing the Good News *continued from front cover*

Mass and delivering that Word."

Janet notes that lectors are encouraged to read and become familiar with the Word, particularly through reflection and prayer, so that it may be delivered in an articulate, but reverent manner when proclaimed at Mass.

According to Janet, bringing Scripture into your life – whether reading it at home or proclaiming it at Mass – is an integral part of living your faith. And it is not simply a matter of just *hearing* the Word of God; it must also be taken to heart and applied to our daily lives.

"We can't just read it, we have to live it," she says,

"And the only way we can live it is if we truly become familiar with God's Word."

Janet encourages those who might be interested in becoming a reader to contact her, and come to a parish lector training. From learning how to process in with the Scriptures to practicing reading in front of the microphone, Janet is happy to help others who want to join this ministry that has been such a blessing to her. In addition, our online ministry scheduler makes it easy and convenient to serve according to your schedule.

"Have some confidence in yourself, as you truly become an integral part of the Mass!" Janet says.

Is God calling you to share His Word through the Lectors Ministry? For more information about how you can serve, please contact Janet Zeidler at 217-779-0290.

Valentine's Day

The Feast of a Christian Martyr

Candy, flowers, romantic dinners, and excuses for wooing are the common traditions we associate with the once-pagan holiday known as Valentine's Day.

Dangling cupids, candy "message" hearts, and faux long-stemmed roses clutter every card store, waiting for that last-minute purchase.

The question is — how did this over-commercialized holiday really begin?

There are a few stories surrounding the history of Feb. 14 and St. Valentine himself, all dating back to the Roman Empire. The 14th day of February was a day set aside to honor the goddess Juno, queen of the Roman gods and goddesses. The following day,

Feb. 15, began the feast of Lupercalia — a fertility festival dedicated to Faunus, the Roman god of agriculture, as well as to the Roman founders Romulus and Remus.

As part of the festival traditions, there was a name drawing among the young people. The names of young Roman women were written on slips of paper and placed into a jar. Each young man would draw a young woman's name from the jar, and the two would be partners for the duration of the festival. Sometimes the pairing lasted an entire year, and often, the couple would fall in love and later marry.

At the time, Emperor Claudius II was involved in many bloody and unpopular campaigns, and he was having a difficult time recruiting soldiers to join his military leagues. Claudius believed that soldiers were reluctant to join because they did not want to leave their loves or families.

With this in mind, Claudius decreed all marriages and engagements canceled in Rome. During this time, St. Valentine was a priest in Rome, and he and St. Marius secretly married young couples. For this, St. Valentine was apprehended and dragged before the Prefect of Rome, who sentenced him to be beaten and then executed by beheading. He suffered this martyrdom on Feb. 14, around the year 270 AD.

Before his death, it is said that St. Valentine left a note for the jailer's daughter, who had become his friend, and signed it "From Your Valentine." Although the truth behind the St. Valentine's legend is murky, the stories certainly emphasize his appeal as a sympathetic, heroic and, most importantly, romantic figure. It is no surprise that by the Middle Ages, Valentine was one of the most popular saints in England and France.

Over time, Feb. 14 became a time for lovers to exchange sweet messages, making St. Valentine the patron saint of lovers. The date was often commemorated with the sending of poems and simple gifts. During the Middle Ages, it was commonly believed in France and England that Feb. 14 was the beginning of the avian mating season, which added to the idea that the middle of February — Valentine's Day — should be a day for romance.



Mike and Gayle Happekotte

The Present Moment of Reality

God knows us better than we know ourselves. He can recognize a talent within us – one that can be used to serve Him and the Church – and calls us to bring that talent to the forefront through stewardship. As people of faith, we all have a role – and as parishioners Mike and Gayle Happekotte show us, it doesn't have to be complicated. You could be replacing the weather stripping on a church door, preparing the altar before Mass, or delivering food to the hungry – whatever the case, it is about having something you know how to do, recognizing something you can give, and acknowledging the blessings found in the present moment of reality.

As with all of us, faith has to begin somewhere. For both Mike and Gayle, the first seeds of faith were planted in childhood. Gayle, who was raised Protestant, grew up in a family who lived and practiced their faith. Her father was a church elder, an usher, and counted money. Her mother, who thrived in the kitchen, volunteered for any social activity that involved preparing and serving food. Interestingly, until Gayle met Mike, she had no experience with the Catholic Church whatsoever. But that all changed once they became engaged, because not only was she about to marry a man who not only had strong ties to his faith, but one whose family's connections with St. Francis Solanus went back several generations.



"The first time I attended Mass with Mike, everything was in Latin and I had absolutely no clue what was going on," Gayle says. "At one point, the priest turned around and said something in English, and I remember thinking 'Halleluiah!' because I could finally understand something. Later, though, after we started a family, I decided to convert so we could be a family of one faith."

Mike's ties to the parish go all the way back to 1850, when his great-great-grandfather arrived from Germany and settled in the area. By the time Mike was born, he had a faith legacy that was rooted in several generations of ancestors, and it was in this parish – the parish of his great-great-grandfather – that he received all his sacraments. From his parents, he learned a simple faith, but one that has blossomed over time. In particular, Mike was greatly influenced by his maternal grandfather, Frank Schleicher, whose quiet

demeanor and strong faith spoke volumes both in the parish and out in the community.

"The older I get, the more I appreciate how he lived," Mike says. "When someone would ask him what he was going to do about something, he always responded by saying, 'I'll see how the Spirit leads me.' I didn't exactly understand what he meant back then, but I do now."

And after 53 years of marriage, after raising four children – Eric, Keith, Beth, and Amy – as well as their oldest grandson, and after going through good times and bad ones, Mike and Gayle have reached a point in their lives in which their faith not only sustains them, but is a source for continued growth. They also know how important it is to pray that the desire to know God be placed on our hearts.

"I want the best for my family, so I feel it's important for me to be an example to my children and grandchildren," Gayle says. "I know how much I need my faith and what a difference it has made in my life. This – all that we have and everything we do – comes from God. Even when things are difficult, you just call His name. He is waiting for you. This is how life works."

And along with their faith, their involvement in the parish has also evolved. Both of them have found ways to give back in ways that reflect their personalities, which for them means working quietly behind the scenes.

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St. Francis Solanus

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Mike and Gayle Happekotte *continued from page 7*

Together, they deliver groceries for the food pantry, Gayle helps with funeral dinners, and Mike, who is a retired electrician by trade and a talented carpenter, sees something that needs to be repaired and just does it. He also serves as a sacristan, arriving to the church six days a week to open it up before morning Mass. And it is in those early morning hours, alone, in the quiet of the church, that Mike likes to contemplate what he refers to as *the present moment of reality*.

"When I was in my late 30s, I rediscovered my faith, and since then I've come to realize that we can only live in the present," Mike explains. "We can't live two minutes ago. We can't live two minutes hence. It is only when we are in the present moment of reality – in the now – that we discover the absolute

truth, which is Christ. So, whatever happens in life, it is what it is – and this includes the good, bad and everything in between. This is a very peaceful and freeing experience for me."

Ultimately, the Church calls each and every one of us by name to become actively involved, and by giving of ourselves we can experience the spiritual connection, growth, and renewal of love that Christ offers through his ministries here on earth. It doesn't have to be complicated; there is no deed too big or too small.

And in the end, God simply longs for us to come to Him, for it is when we are in the present moment of reality that we, like Mike and Gayle, can experience a faith that is quiet, simple, and yet very fulfilling.

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.