

Saint Francis Solanus



MARCH 2016

In this Extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy, Let God Surprise You this Lent *Our Parish Mission*

We are now into the month of March — just weeks ago, we entered into the season of Lent. During this time, each of us is expected to define specific spiritual goals we would like to reach before Easter and plan how we will pursue them. Our St. Francis Solanus Catholic Community offers us many occasions during the Lenten season to assist us in living out our faith and, in particular, enhancing our Lenten journeys.

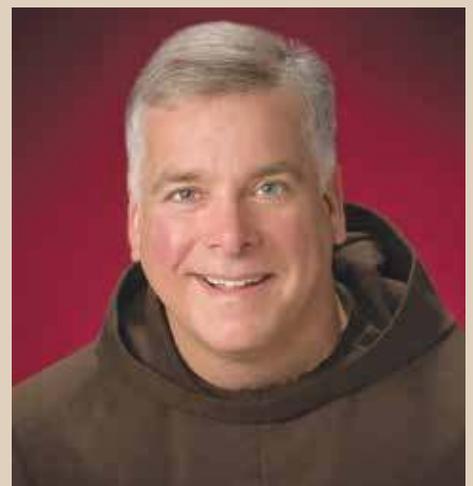
One of the important events planned is our Lenten Mission. Our St. Francis Solanus Parish Mission is scheduled for March 12-16. Fr. Kenneth P. Paulli, OFM — a professor at Siena College in Loudonville, N.Y. — will lead the mission. He is a well-known speaker and mission presenter, and brings something special to every mission he leads.

The theme for this year's mission is "In this Extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy, Let God Surprise You this Lent."

"The theme is drawn from some-

thing Pope Francis has said since he first announced the Jubilee Year," Fr. Paulli says. "The Holy Father said, 'If the Church is alive, she must always surprise. To surprise is typical of the living Church. A Church that no longer has the capacity to surprise is a weak, sick and dying Church. Our God is a God of surprises. The Holy Spirit wants to surprise you. Jesus asks us to become like little children. Little children have the capacity to be surprised.'

"The purpose of a mission is indeed to bring the Church and our faith alive," Father continues. "For me, a mission is always done in the context of prayer. Although I may be designated as the leader or the facilitator, it is something we do together. It is a shared journey. You might say my missions are interactive in nature, an experience which involves us both. I am a Franciscan priest and thus have a great devotion to St. Francis of Assisi. I would ask that people come to the mission prepared as St. Francis always was



Fr. Kenneth P. Paulli, OFM

— to listen, to hear, and to respond to God. I am of the opinion that this mission will be appropriate for anyone who is a teenager or beyond."

Speaking at all Masses on March 12 and 13, Fr. Paulli will offer people an opportunity to experience his dynamic style. The mission itself will occur in the church on the evenings of Monday, March 14; Tuesday, March 15; and Wednesday, March 16; beginning at 6:30 p.m. The sessions are normally an hour to one

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The Easter Triduum: The Great Week and the Feast of Feasts

Each year, three days merge liturgically into one. This is the single event or prayer that commemorates the heart of the Gospel message — “by dying He destroyed our death; by rising He restored our life.”

Though Advent marks the beginning of the liturgical calendar, the culmination of this calendar is in the Easter or Paschal Triduum, which is its own liturgical season. Around the world, the communion of the faithful are united in celebration of the Triduum with liturgies for Holy Thursday, Good Friday and the Easter Vigil rich with tradition and symbolism.

Both the word “Passover” and the word “Paschal” have roots in the Hebrew *pesach* meaning a “passing over.” In the Jewish tradition, Passover recalls when the Israelites were saved from slavery as the angel of death “passed over” the chosen people. In gathering for the Feast of Passover, Christ and the apostles celebrated the Last Supper, the beginning of the Paschal Triduum when Christ “passed through” His passion, death and resurrection.

The Triduum, from the Latin for “three days,” begins at dusk on Holy Thursday with the Mass of Our Lord’s Supper. As the apostles and Christ gathered to celebrate the

Passover, we gather on Holy Thursday and commemorate the institution of the Eucharist, the institution of the priesthood and the new commandment to “love one another... as I have loved you” (John 13:34-35). In many churches, in imitation of Christ’s action of humility and service, the celebrant washes the feet of several of the faithful.

Christ and His disciples went from the Last Supper to the Garden of Gethsemane. In a similar tradition, Holy Thursday concludes with a solemn procession to a place set aside for the repose of the Eucharist. Here, we adore the Blessed Sacrament as Christ asked His disciples to “stay and keep watch” with Him when His soul was “overwhelmed with sorrow” (Matthew 26: 38). The liturgy ends without a closing rite, and the altar is stripped.

Beginning without an introductory rite, the Good Friday service commemorates Christ’s passion from His condemnation to His crucifixion and death. Though the Mass itself is not celebrated, we read from John of the Lord’s passion, death and burial. We offer prayers of petition and venerate the cross before receiving Communion. Again, the liturgy ends without a closing rite as the celebrant departs in silence.

At this time around the world, the

doors of the tabernacle are left open as we mourn the death of Christ.

Without an introductory rite, the Easter Vigil — the Feast of Feasts — on Holy Saturday evening begins in darkness and continues the same holy event or prayer begun on Holy Thursday.

This is the night when we celebrate Christ’s triumph over death! *This is the night* when the Alleluia is sung for the first time since the beginning of Lent. *This is the night* when we welcome new members into full communion with the Church.

After the procession of the Paschal Candle, representing Christ Himself as the light of the world, we hear the story of our salvation history from Genesis to the Resurrection. We then welcome the Elect into the Church, and together with our brothers and sisters in Christ, we celebrate the Liturgy of the Eucharist and conclude Mass with the triumphant double Alleluia.

While three days are set aside annually to celebrate the Paschal Mystery, we, the communion of the faithful, continue meditating on the salvific passion, death and resurrection of Christ throughout all our lives. For Christ, as we hear in the Easter Proclamation, “has ransomed us with His blood, and paid for us the price of Adam’s sin to our eternal Father!”

A Letter From Our Pastor

Make Prayer and Hospitality Pillars of Your Lenten Journey

Dear Parishioners,

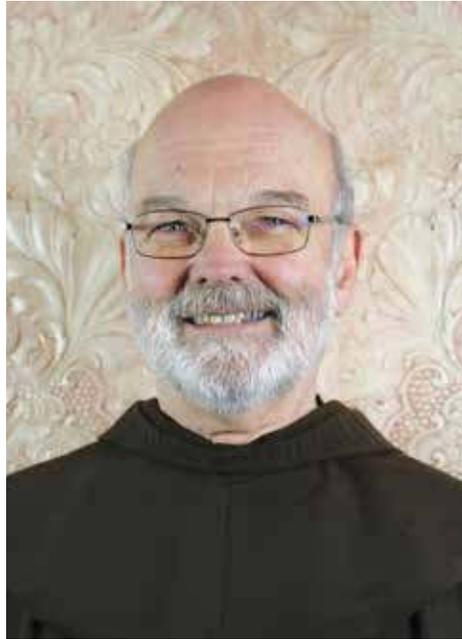
In the coming weeks, we will conclude our Lenten observance, experience Holy Week, and celebrate the joy of Easter. Of course, I hope that you have made some effort to make this Lenten season special and significant, but if you have not, it is never too late to accomplish that goal.

With thoughts of Lent, Easter and the Year of Mercy at the top of my mind, I offer a couple suggestions to help carry you to the end of your Lenten journey.

As you know, prayer is foundational to stewardship, as it is one of the Four Pillars of a stewardship parish — along with hospitality, formation and service. With this in mind, here are some suggestions on how you might make your prayers even more consequential.

Pick someone to pray for, perhaps even someone you don't get along with. Just pray for them. You do not have to tell them you are praying for them, but the exercise is good for you, and for them, as well. If possible, find a time this month to pray before the Blessed Sacrament, especially if this is something you do not normally do. Pray every morning shortly after you get up, and again each evening before you turn in. It does not have to be a long prayer, but it does need to be done consistently.

In terms of the pillar of hospi-



tality, there is also much we can do in this area, both as a parish and as individuals and families. Here is a suggestion that involves hospitality — one that is also connected to gratitude and even the Year of Mercy. Many of us spend time at a computer. It is a way for us to stay connected to those who are close to us, and to the world around us. Why not begin and end each week emailing someone a note of thanksgiving? Again, it does not have to be lengthy, but when we think about it, each of our lives is filled with people to whom we should be grateful.

Just send that someone a note thanking them for something specifically, or in general. By starting and ending each week like that, our minds are in the right place for

prayer and for having the attitude that Christ asks us to have.

I thank you for all you do, for our parish, for the Church, for one another, and for me personally. I am blessed. Like most, I may not express it often enough. I pray for you, and I ask you to pray for me during this holy time.

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



“We Are for *Celebrating the Sacrament of Marriage*”

Karen was still a student at Quincy College when John, a recent graduate from the same college, overheard that she was studying for an Organic Chemistry final exam. Since he had majored in Chemistry, John offered to help her study.

“We’ve always said that the chemistry was just right!” Karen Steinkamp says. “Taking the time to talk to each other and just spending time together as a couple, even when the kids were little, has been the cornerstone of our marriage.”

Every February here at St. Francis Solanus, we celebrate the Sacrament of Marriage and married couples like Karen and John at the Annual Anniversary Mass.

After Communion during the Masses on Feb. 6 and Feb. 7, couples from newlyweds to those celebrating decades of matrimony will be called forward by name. They will each receive a rose and a special blessing.

“It’s important to recognize the commitment couples make to the Sacrament of Marriage, whether it’s their first year of marriage or



The Annual Anniversary Mass

their 60th year,” Carol Seifert says. “It gives the parish community the opportunity to support those who are newly married, and it is inspiring to see couples who have been faithful to their commitment for many years.”

This year, St. Francis Solanus parishioners Marilyn and Leo Stegeman will celebrate 66 years of marriage. They met at a sand-

wich shop in 1945 after Leo returned from World War II. They believe going to Mass together is one habit that has kept them close to each other and to Christ.

“We’ve raised five boys who now all have families, and when we get together, we all go to church together,” Marilyn says. “Marriage is a two-way street. You need to be there when you’re

“Just remember that there will be times when marriage is more than just a feeling — it is a decision. There will be ups and downs, but loving each other — and deciding to love each other — through it all will make all the difference in the world.” — Karen Steinkamp

Each Other”

age at our Annual Anniversary Mass



Mass at St. Francis Solanus

needed. We are for each other.”

For John and Karen, who have been married for over 25 years, learning how to be there for each other meant supporting each other in spite of their differences and celebrating their unique personalities.

“We’re different in how we like to spend our free time, but we encourage each other to do things that we enjoy doing,” John Steinkamp says. “We acknowledge and accept that we have very different personalities.”

Marty and Doris Karhoff met in

the 1970s through a mutual friend at a dance. Since Marty’s job frequently kept him traveling, they would meet each year on their wedding anniversary to share a meal at Hardee’s with whatever time they had.

“We still do this and will this year for our 40th anniversary,” Doris says. “Since Marty joined the Church a few years ago, we are closer now than we were at the beginning. Now that Christ is in our lives, it is easier to give yourself and your time and that is what we

try to do together.”

Today, Doris and Marty find many ways to spend time together, from praying and going to Mass to mowing the lawn and shoveling snow.

“Pray together and be together as much as you can,” Doris says. “We believe that we have a whole different outlook on life since Marty joined the Church. We can tell the difference in our attitude and in why we do things.”

This June, Marilyn and Leo have a grandson — one of seventeen grandchildren — who will be married. As they celebrate his marriage, they share what they believe is at the heart of marriage.

“It is very important that you both agree to everything in the Church,” Marilyn says. “Marriage is a mutual agreement between you, God and your mate.”

This February, let us join together in celebrating our married couples and praying for those amongst us who are preparing for the sacrament.

“Just remember that there will be times when marriage is more than just a feeling — it is a decision,” Karen says. “There will be ups and downs, but loving each other — and *deciding* to love each other — through it all will make all the difference in the world.”

If you would like more information about the Annual Anniversary Mass, please contact Carol Seifert through the parish office at 217-222-2898.

“Serving Keeps the Focus Sharon and

When they had more young children at home and less disposable income, David and Sharon Lunt started hosting a weekly meal for some college students. It became the Tuesday Night Supper Club, and though the faces around the table changed, the Lunt family made lasting friendships with faith-filled young adults.

“We didn’t foresee the way that just sharing a meal with others would change and enrich our lives,” Sharon says. “It was just a way to serve when we really didn’t have much money to give. Even the smallest thing can be a wonderful way to reach out to others.”

Serving itself has always been central to David and Sharon’s relationship since they met on a Great River Teens Encounter Christ weekend in 1982.

These GRTEC weekends draw on a passage from John 12:24: “unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies it remains no more than a single grain. But if it falls to the ground and dies it produces much fruit.”

“The concept of ‘wheat’ can best be described as servant leadership,” David says. “We have tried to model our stewardship on Christ-like service.”

Sharon and her family have a long relationship with St. Francis Solanus — her parents, grandparents and great-grandparents



Sharon and David Lunt

were all parishioners. David and Sharon were married in 1983 at St. Francis Solanus, and, after having moved away for a few years, they returned, joined the parish as a family and got involved in the faith community.

Of course, *how* David and Sharon have served has evolved over the years.

“As the demands of work and family change, we have had to alter the way we serve our parish and community,” Sharon says. “The best place to start serving is look at one’s gifts or talents. There are so many ways to serve!”

Sharon first became involved as a lector, and David joined the choir and became an Extraordi-

“As the demands of work and family change, we have had to alter the way we serve our parish and community. The best place to start serving is look at one’s gifts or talents. There are so many ways to serve!”

— Sharon Lunt

nary Minister of Holy Communion. They also returned many times to participate in GRTEC weekends.

“Sometimes people hear the word ‘stewardship’ and think it only pertains to giving money to the Church,” David says. “We have always tried to tithe, especially attending Dave Ramsey’s Financial Peace University series. While that kind of service is important, there are many ways to give to our parish community.”

David and Sharon have raised eight children — Meghan, Joshua, Nathan, Zachary, Mathias, Rachel, Esther, and Noah — who have all attended Catholic school. Those who are old enough have attended GRTEC weekends, and many of them sing in the choir.

on Christ and Others” *David Lunt*

“The best way to keep your kids Catholic has to be to keep them involved in the family and the parish life,” Sharon says. “We explain how we tithed to the parish and we give that example. The children use the envelopes that the parish provides when they are younger. When they have their own jobs, then they decide when and how to tithe the money they make.”

There are so many ways for our children to be involved in the community, and they are welcome to serve at Mass as lectors, altar servers, choir members, and ushers. There are also many opportunities through our Catholic schools.

“The school requires service

hours, but it fosters a sense of serving the community that stays with them after high school,” David says. “The Catholic high school sends kids to the March for Life and Catholic HEART Workcamps every year, and one does not have to be a student at the school to attend.”

Today, though Sharon no longer lectures, she is getting ready to be a part of a new group of men and women who are volunteering to assist others to prepare forms for private school scholarships.

“The scholarship programs have made it possible for our children to attend excellent and faithful schools,” Sharon says. “We are

very grateful for the sacrifices others have made to make that happen.”

For Sharon and David, service has been a part of their lives since before they were married — more than a part of their lives, service is a way of living that they embrace and endeavor to instill in their children.

“Serving helps keep the focus on Christ and others and less on us,” Sharon says. “We feel like our church community and our GRTEC community are part of our family. There are so many ways to serve. Sometimes you just have to open yourselves up to the opportunities.”



A Lunt family gathering



The Lunt family — (top row, from left) Zachary, Joshua, Mathias and Adam holding Elizabeth; (middle row, from left) Sharon, David, Kelli, Nathan, Esther, Rachel and Meghan holding Bryce; (front row, from left) Noah (ring bearer) and Abigail (flower girl)

St. Francis Solanus

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Our Parish Mission *continued from front cover*

hour and 15 minutes in length, and refreshments will be available.

Fr. Paulli is currently on sabbatical leave as he completes a book about conversion. The book, which has the working title, *Outside the Walls*, is closely connected to the idea of stewardship because of the conversion element.

"Stewardship requires conversion, but conversion is something each of us must seek almost each and every day," Fr. Paulli says. "I may be a priest, but I face many of the same challenges everyone does. We are more the same than different. I will include some of what the book presents in the mission. There is certainly some personal witness involved."

The titles of the three evening sessions are as follows:

Monday — "Let God Surprise You in People, Familiar and Unfamiliar"

Tuesday — "Let God Surprise You in Places, Comfortable and Uncomfortable"

Wednesday — "Let God Surprise You in Things, Old and New"

Our Parish Lenten Mission is open to everyone, and Fr. Paulli would like to encourage everyone to attend.

"If people can attend only one mission night that is fine," he says. "But if they can plan and commit to being there all three nights it is even better."

If you would like more information on the upcoming Parish Mission, please contact 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.