

Saint Francis Solanus



APRIL 2016

“An Appointment With God” Peggy Klauser on Stewardship

What inspires us to practice stewardship? For each of us, the answer to this question likely differs somewhat. But at the core of our desire to give back is very often an experience when we received help in a time of need. For Peggy Klauser, the comfort she found in God’s presence and in the support of the St. Francis Solanus community during a difficult time in her life increased her desire to give back by serving others.

“I was divorced in 2009 and became a participant in a divorce support group at St. Francis,” Peggy says. “It was wonderful to have the Catholic Church support me on that journey. [The divorce] ended up being one of the most traumatic events of my life. But between the support group and doing a Cursillo immediately after, I was really brought back to life.”

Peggy’s participation in the Divorce and Beyond support group strengthened her faith and inspired her to become

even more involved in parish life.

“It helped me put God in the center and let me know I would never walk alone,” she says. “It instilled a commitment in me to inspire others and to support and encourage others on that journey. It was just amazing.”

In the years since her initial participation with Divorce and Beyond, Peggy has remained actively involved as a mentor and team member, and she is one of three people who will coordinate the group this year.

In addition to her service with the divorce support group, Peggy serves as a lector and volunteers at the St. Francis Community Assistance food pantry.

“The most wonderful part of the food pantry work is understanding how blessed I am and that others aren’t always as fortunate,” she says. “So, being able to do a small part of unloading deliveries, packaging deliveries, or actually making deliveries is really fulfilling. And the people I work with at the food pantry are very kind and



“There are just a lot of good, committed Catholic people at St. Francis that are willing to do so much to help others,” says Peggy Klauser

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Teaching By Example

The Importance of Prayer in a Child's Life

"I want to be just like Mom!"
"I want to be just like Dad!"

Perhaps nothing lifts a parent's heart like hearing these words. While certainly affirming, such words also remind us of the great responsibility that comes with parenthood.

Children often examine the lives of their parents when making decisions that will affect their own lives. For example, a young boy may dream of becoming a physician one day, just like his father. Or a young girl may hope to become a veterinarian, just like her mother. Could the same be said about their parents' faith lives?

Just as children learn traits and values from their parents, they should also learn the importance and great joy of developing a personal relationship with Christ. And the foundation of such a relationship is prayer — conversation with God.

How should we go about teaching our children to pray? There are several methods, but none works as well as teaching by example. Begin teaching the importance of prayer by praying openly with your spouse. This teaches children that prayer is meaningful and important, and not just a ritual. Also, pray with your children — in the morning and in the evening. Show your sons and daughters the importance of beginning and ending each day in prayer.

While a fortunate dilemma, it's a dilemma nonetheless — Catholics face the challenge of discerning which prayers to use, considering the thousands available. A good rule of thumb is to start simple — maybe an *Our Father* or *Hail Mary*, and then move into something more complex — *Hail, Holy Queen* or *Prayer to St. Michael the Archangel*, among others. Begin with prayers your children can pick up fairly quickly. Not only will

this show them that praying can be fun and easy, but shorter prayers are also usually easier to understand.

Teach your children the importance of spontaneous prayer, rather than just prescribed prayers. Spontaneous prayer is any prayer that is created at the same time it is offered. Another way to think of spontaneous prayer is "praying in your own words." Structure spontaneous prayers according to the ACTS acronym — Adoration, Contrition, Thanksgiving, and Supplication. In layman's terms, this means beginning each prayer with words of adoration, such as "You are the Lord God Almighty. I love you." Move into a period of contrition, asking God's forgiveness for the sins you have committed. Then give words of thanksgiving, thanking God for the gifts He has given. Finally, spend time sharing with God your heart's desires. These intentions can be personal or on another's behalf. Following this format ensures that spontaneous prayer "covers all the bases," and doesn't become just a mental wish list. While God wants to hear and grant our wishes, He also expects words of adoration, contrition and thankfulness.

The best time to begin praying with your children is right now. The sooner they learn about prayer, the sooner they can begin cultivating their own relationship with Jesus. Many parents even pray with their children before birth, hoping their unborn son or daughter can hear their words in utero. Remember, there is no better way to teach one's children about the value of prayer than by example.

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A Letter From Our Pastor

All Things and All People Are Made New

Dear Parishioners,

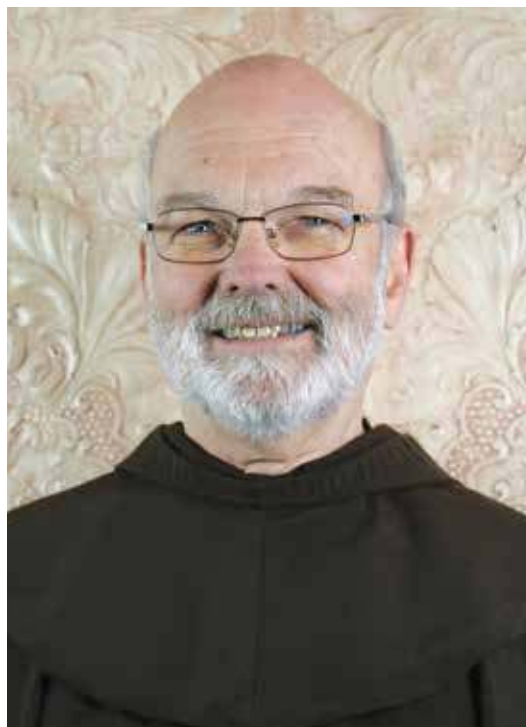
We associate the Easter season with springtime — a time of new life and new beginnings — and Holy Scripture addresses this idea of newness many times. In one of our readings during April, God declares, “Behold, I make all things new.”

This idea of being “new” is important to us as Catholics, and it is important to our parish. We need to strive to do this on a regular basis – even on a *daily* basis. Think of the fact that all was once new. Regardless of how you view the development of this earth and those of us who occupy it, all was once new.

During this ongoing Easter season, we need to retain that idea of being “new.” And being “new” means conversion, and we have often pointed out that conversion is at the heart of a life of stewardship.

It is always risky to try to summarize God, but we hear in Holy Scripture four ways that the Lord makes things new:

1. **God makes us spiritually and morally new.** This is part of that conversion process, but it does not occur unless we want it to happen and we work at it.
2. **God makes us physically and bodily new.** This is the hope of eternal life, when God makes it clear that all of our sorrows and pains and challenges of this life will be eliminated.
3. **God makes creation new.** This is difficult to imagine or to perceive, but the world that we will eventually experience is new and glorious.
4. **God perfects our relationship with Him and with each other.** In heaven there will be no sin to get in the way of His love for us, our love for Him, or our love for one another.



For all of the seeming depth and complexity of these concepts, they really boil down to one basic idea – if we live out our lives in ways that serve and love others, this “newness” is not only a natural progression, but also a natural result. It all comes down to the calling each of us has received. Are we responding to that call? Are we even thinking about that call? We need to, and we need to do it now – not at some vague point in the future. We have an annual renewal here at our parish, but we might better term it a “perennial renewal.” That is what our faith and our lives need to be all about.

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



Feeding the Hungry Physically



St. Francis Solanus School students show some of the donated groceries that they helped collect for the school's St. Francis of Assisi Feast Day Food Drive.



Young St. Francis Solanus student Tristan Pieper uses her day off from school to help stock the pantry.

When we think of the word “hunger,” we are correct to associate it with physical nourishment. However, as Catholics, we should also remember that there is a lot more to hunger than needing something to eat.

“Hunger isn’t strictly about those that are physically hungry,” says Mary Beth McGee, Coordinator of the St. Francis Community Assistance Ministry. “There are many ways a person can be hungry – physically, emotionally and spiritually.”

Through these words, Mary Beth reflects how Christ’s instruction to feed the hungry goes beyond mere physical needs. Mindful of this, the St. Francis Community Assistance Ministry seeks to answer God’s call by providing for those who hunger in a variety of ways, most notably through its maintenance of the parish Food Pantry.

“I think we’re giving back to people who are less fortunate than us – this is pretty much what God told us to do,” Mary Beth says. “When you look at the Bible and the early New Testament, the big community jobs were feeding the hungry and caring for the widows. So we are doing what God asked his Church to do right from the beginning.”

To accomplish this important task, numerous volunteers are needed each day. Every week for the Food Pantry alone, parishioners give of their time, talent and treasure in order to purchase or pick up donated items, take inventory and maintain stock, man the phones, manage client records, organize and execute food drives, and deliver orders. The Food Pantry’s delivery system carries out a particularly important job, says Mary Beth, because out of the 14 local pantries, St. Francis Solanus’ remains the only one to provide this service. This system is often essential for homebound, elderly and community members who

“We are blessed to have such a faithful group of volunteers who are so generous. We currently have over 100 volunteers and many others are involved weekly. It’s whatever work we can do for the St. Francis Community Assistance Ministry.”

y, Emotionally and Spiritually

do not have adequate transportation.

The combination of all these jobs resulted in 650 different households with an average of 353 people per month being served last year. This, of course, was only made possible through the hard work and generosity of countless parishioners.

“We are blessed to have such a faithful group of workers,” Mary Beth says. “Our parishioners are really so generous. We currently have over 100 volunteers – some are involved in small ways, whereas others are involved weekly. It’s whatever works for them.”

Beyond the Food Pantry, the ministry also works to assist those in need through its outreach to the elderly. Ministry volunteers travel regularly to local nursing homes, visiting with community members who are often in need of fellowship and love. During the Christmas season, extra care is given for the elderly as St. Francis Community Assistance Ministry volunteers print Christmas cards for nursing home residents and deliver poinsettias to parishioners who are 90 years and older.

“I think what we are doing with the elderly is also fulfilling God’s call to feed the hungry by letting those parishioners know that they are not forgotten and are still cared for,” Mary Beth says.

Finally, seeking to help parishioners who are hungering for comfort, ministry volunteers also print and send out sympathy cards to members who have recently lost loved ones. Through all these various undertakings, members of the St. Francis Community Assistance Ministry are daily living out the corporal and spiritual works of mercy.

“Jesus shows us mercy and is merciful to all,” Mary Beth says. “And, Jesus wants us to show mercy in return to others less fortunate. Mercy can be in the form of compassion, kindness, and tenderness.”

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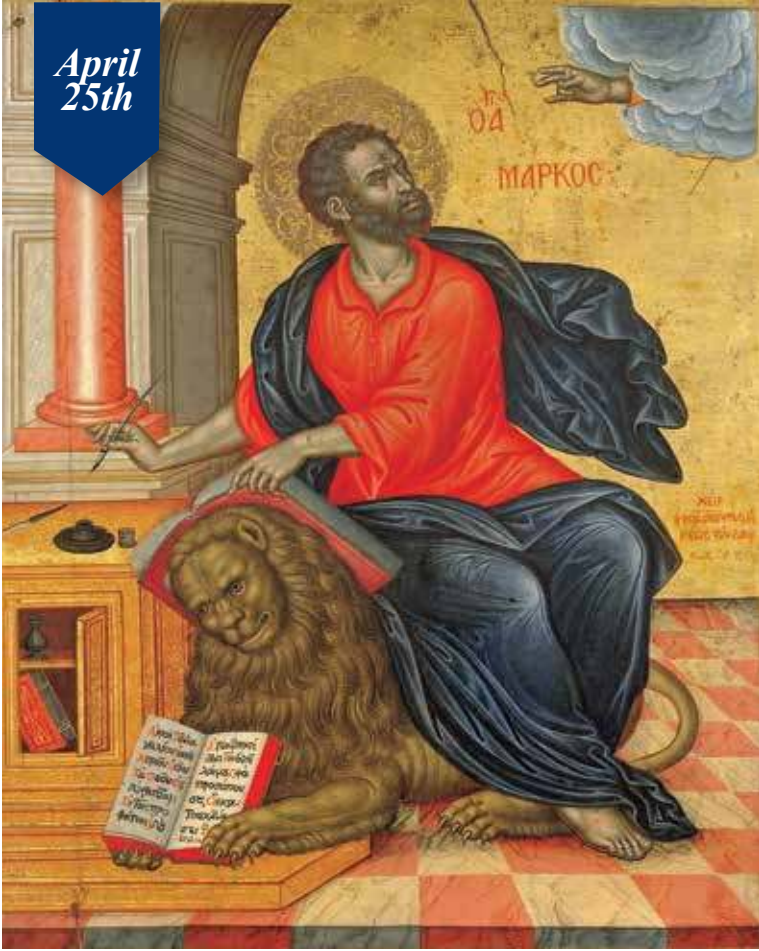


The St. Francis Community Assistance Ministry is one the entire family can join in together. In this photo, Journey Frericks helps her grandmother Joyce Frericks stock the Food Pantry.

Although numerous volunteers are already involved, the St. Francis Community Assistance Ministry is always in need of more people who can give of their time in service to provide for the hungry. For more information, please contact Mary Beth McGee at 217-430-1533 or ambmcgee@sbcglobal.net.

St. Mark: Spreading Christ's Message

April
25th



Mark's story reminds all Christians of their responsibility to spread the Gospel message. Each believer is summoned to live a life of radical mission — one that, like Christ's in Mark's Gospel, defies the status quo in search of greater good and justice.

The shortest and oldest of the four Gospels, Mark draws from oral tradition and a document named Q, which contains many of Christ's sayings. Likely written 25 to 30 years after the Ascension, Mark's Gospel serves as a source for those of Matthew and Luke. Setting this Gospel apart from the others, women play an integral role in Mark's Gospel, often understanding with clarity aspects of Christ's message that the apostles had difficulty comprehending.

Furthermore, Mark portrays Christ's persecution as a result of His radical challenge to established orders of religion, economy and politics.

While the history of Mark's Gospel is fairly accessible, many legends have arisen around him that cause difficulty when attempting to explore this saint's historical persona. Some associate Mark with Simon Peter after the Ascension, and others identify Mark as the young man who ran naked from the Garden of Gethsemane when Christ was arrested. Despite attempts to place Mark in Christ's physical proximity, the most significant depictions recall his activity as a disciple in the early Church. Some scholars say that Mark was a companion of Peter's and was the first bishop of Alexandria — thus, the first pope of the Coptic Orthodox Church of Alexandria. Mark is also said to be "John Mark" of the Acts of the Apostles, a cousin of Barnabas who accompanied Paul on his journeys. However, most do agree on Mark's martyrdom. Tradition has it that he was dragged through the city streets due to his attempts to turn Alexandrians away from Egyptian gods.

Although Mark's extraordinary achievements may not seem to align with the lives of the ordinary faithful, his story reminds all Christians of their responsibility to spread the Gospel message. Each believer is summoned to live a life of radical mission — one that, like Christ's in Mark's Gospel, defies the status quo in search of greater good and justice. By following Mark's example, Catholics are empowered to continue their presence as a powerful political and social force, always attempting to mirror the kingdom of God on earth. We celebrate Mark's feast day on April 25.

Sharing One of God's Greatest Gifts Through the Rosary Makers Ministry

For the past 25 years or so, Phillip and Sherry Kemner have been making a tremendous impact on the world in a hidden way. They have been serving God in the way they love most – spreading devotion to the Rosary through the Rosary Makers Ministry, a small group at our parish.

“My wife and I were inspired to start doing this ministry because of our love of the Rosary,” Phillip says. “My wife and I have a strong devotion to the Rosary. I am in my 70s, and I have prayed the Rosary every day since I was old enough to pray. Sherry prays the Rosary a number of times each day, and I pray it more than once a day. I have been leading the Rosary at our parish on Monday nights for almost 30 years. We try to cover everyone we can in prayer.”

As we look towards May, the month of Mary, we have a wonderful opportunity to consider the importance of Our Lady and the Rosary in our faith. Here at St. Francis Solanus, the members of the Rosary Makers Ministry foster a devotion to Our Lady by making rosaries and giving them to organizations such as Blessing Hospital and Catholic Charities. They also make rosaries for First Communion students at Blessed Sacrament Catholic School. In addition to Phillip and Sherry, the group includes a couple of other faithful parishioners. To make the rosaries, they get material from Our Lady's Rosary Makers in Kentucky.

“In past years, we have sent rosaries all over the world, such as to Africa, Europe and South America,” Phillip says. “We have also made them for people in the armed services. We like to spread the Rosary wherever we can. We feel that this is what God wants us to do.”

So, among the wide variety of prayers in the Catholic tradition, why do the Kemners choose to promote the Rosary?

“The Rosary brings peace to people, and it has throughout history,” Phillip says. “Mary is the Mother of God, and our mother. Everyone likes to love their mother. Mothers are always there to help you.”

Over the years, they have also seen the devotion bless their family in remarkable ways.

“I think the Rosary has definitely helped our marriage,” he says. “The family that prays together stays together. When our six children were little, we would pray the family Rosary, and I think it really helped them. I am sure many of them still pray it now.”

So, be sure to make the most of this wonderful time as we approach the month of Our Lady, and take up one of the most powerful devotions in the world!

*“Cling to the Rosary as
the creeper clings to the tree,
for without Our Lady,
we cannot stand.”
-Blessed Teresa of Calcutta*



*If you would like more information about the
Rosary Makers Ministry, please contact Phillip and
Sherry Kemner at 217-224-4911.*

St. Francis Solanus

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Peggy Klauser on Stewardship *continued from front cover*

giving – very spiritual people.”

Peggy is thankful for the love and support she received from the St. Francis Solanus community during one of the most challenging times of her life, and she truly enjoys working alongside and forming relationships with other parishioners through service.

“There are just a lot of good, committed Catholic people at St. Francis that are willing to do so much to help others,” Peggy says. “They welcomed me with open arms and they supported me – if you have a desire or you have a problem, they will open their arms to you.”

Although life can certainly get hectic, Peggy considers her stewardship commitments to be a top priority.

“It’s something that goes on the schedule, kind of like an

appointment with God,” she says. “And you certainly wouldn’t want to break those!”

A commitment to stewardship is an important family value that Peggy has passed down to her three grown children, all of whom remain active in their current home parishes. And for Peggy, service is also a way to express her profound gratitude for the abundant blessings she has received.

“God has blessed me with so much,” she says. “I have an amazing family, I have a roof over my head, I have food to eat. I’m so incredibly blessed that even to give back a small portion is the least I can do to help with the many opportunities that are given to serve at St. Francis.”

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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, 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.