

# Saint Francis Solanus



JULY 2016

## “It’s an Awesome Feeling to See What God Has Done for Us”

### *Diane and Kent Andrew*

For Diane Andrew, meeting fellow parishioners through her involvement in the church had a profound impact on her faith.

“I’ve always had faith, but not to the degree that some of these other people had,” she says. “They were a big inspiration. For me, it was getting involved [that deepened my faith].”

One of 11 children, Diane was raised going to St. Francis Solanus, the parish to which her family has belonged since 1925.

“My parents were very adamant about the fact that we would all attend Catholic school,” Diane says. “They made sure that we attended Mass every Sunday, and we were involved with the various Catholic Youth Organization events and sports.”

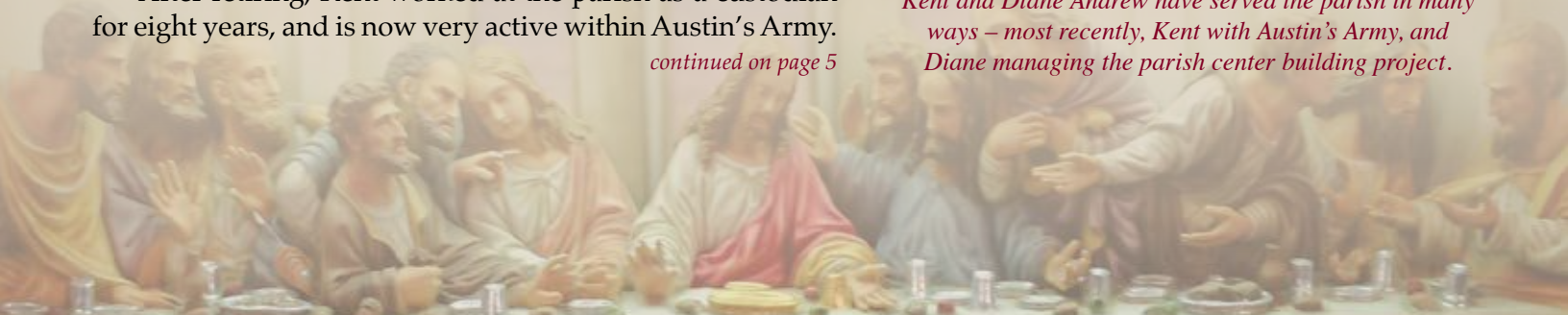
Diane and her husband, Kent, became more involved with the parish after having their own children. From being school parents, to participating in scouting, they found many ways to use their gifts to serve the community.

After retiring, Kent worked at the parish as a custodian for eight years, and is now very active within Austin’s Army.

*continued on page 5*



*Kent and Diane Andrew have served the parish in many ways – most recently, Kent with Austin’s Army, and Diane managing the parish center building project.*



# THE TRAITS OF THE CHRISTIAN STEWARD

Each day, we strive to live stewardship in our lives, recognizing our roles as “God’s co-workers” in His creative, redemptive and sanctifying work. But in our quest to live as disciples of Christ, many obstacles often arise.

One of the most prevalent roadblocks in living stewardship is understanding the traits that make up a good Christian steward. Surely, it would be much more convenient if we had some sort of “stewardship profiler” who could lay out the necessary steps to becoming a good steward, like on one of those television crime dramas. Unfortunately, it more often feels like living stewardship is a lifelong journey that we will never fully comprehend.

Fortunately, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops’ pastoral letter on stewardship, *Stewardship: A Disciple’s Response*, gives some insight into the characteristics that make up a good Christian steward. It may not have the powers of a stewardship “profiler” or “mentalist,” but it certainly gives us some tangible things to think about.

The Christian steward should display some of the following traits:

## INSIGHT

Before the disciples could live what we know as the stewardship way of life, they needed a flash of insight, or a certain way of viewing the world and their relationship to it in a fresh light. This “divine grandeur,” more than anything else, is often what sets people on the path to Christian stewardship (*Stewardship: A Disciple’s Response*, 39).

## JOY

Christian stewards are often presented with difficult obstacles, but they should remain joyful in the face of challenges to their lives of stewardship. Like Paul, the good steward is able to say, “I am filled with encouragement, I am overflowing with joy all the more because of all our affliction” (2 Cor. 7:4). Only by serving with a joyful spirit will stewards fully reap the rewards of their service, both in this life and the next.

## CONSCIENTIOUSNESS

Stewards are fully conscious of their accountability in sharing of their time, talent and treasure. As caretakers of the gifts that God has given them, they have the opportunity and responsibility to use them to their fullest potential to spread God’s Kingdom on Earth (40).

## GENEROSITY

Christian stewards are generous out of love as well as duty. They should display a desire to share with and care for others based on the sacramental graces they have received. And they are also cognizant of the many warnings that the New Testament presents to those who fail in charity and authentic love (40).

Indeed, living as a Christian steward is a lifelong journey with many ups and downs along the way. But if we strive to consciously incorporate each of these characteristics into our giving of time, talent and treasure, we will find that the profile of a good Christian steward will become much clearer with each experience of service.



## A Letter From Our Pastor

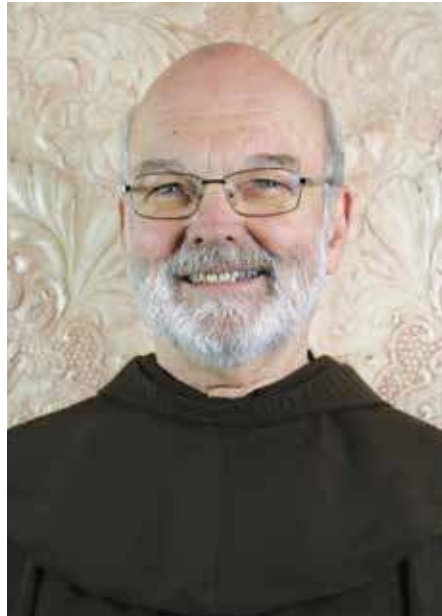
# Stewardship and Discipleship Begin With Love

Dear Parishioners,

In John 13:35, Jesus says, “By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” So many times, the Lord calls us to love one another. This was one of the Gospel readings back in April. On that particular Sunday, Pope Francis gathered with a large group of teenagers, and the whole theme of his homily was built around that message. It is a message that is equally appropriate for all of us, young and old.

Pope Francis is well aware of modern technology and modern communication, especially with how it is so prevalent among today’s youth. He also said in that April homily, “Happiness cannot be bought; it is not an app that you can download on your phones, nor will the latest update bring you freedom and grandeur in love.”

The pope explained that “Love is the Christian’s identity card, the only truly valid ‘document’ that identifies us as followers and disciples of Christ.” Nevertheless,



we must work to constantly renew this card, because if it ever expires, we cease being witnesses of the faith. If we are really followers of Christ, then genuine love needs to shine forth in our lives. As Pope Francis said, “Before all else, love is beautiful, and it is the path to happiness.”

Who among us does not want to be happy? We all strive for that, and the Lord gives us a formula for achieving it. It may seem simple on the surface, but we all know how difficult it can be. Love – the kind of love to which we are called by Jesus – is work. Lots of work. It takes effort, renewal, conversion, and persistence.

During his homily, Pope Francis completely captured the essence of stewardship, and of love. He declared, “Look to the Lord, who is never outdone in generosity. We receive so many gifts from Him, and every day we should thank Him... Let me ask you something. Do you thank the Lord every day? Even if we forget to do so, He never forgets, each day, to give us some special gift. It is not something material and tangible that we can use, but something even greater, a lifelong gift. He offers us His faithful friendship, which He will never take back.”

Gratitude is, of course, at the very basis of stewardship. It is this thankfulness that should inspire us whenever we run up against one of life’s many roadblocks – those things that make it hard for us to love as we should. If we rely on the Lord, we can accomplish this love. As the pope said in closing on that day in April, “Loving in this way, you will be recognized as disciples of Jesus. And your joy will be complete.”

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



# Solanus Saints: Fo



*Parishioner Julie Schuetz, (left) was assigned to assist first-grade teacher Ms. Jamie Poore. Julie would come in each Wednesday for an hour, reading aloud to students and assisting with worksheets, allowing Ms. Poore to meet with individuals and small groups.*

With three children attending St. Francis Solanus School, parishioner Julie Schuetz has enjoyed being involved in the school community in a number of ways over the years. So, when she was invited last year to become part of the school's long-range planning as a member of the Academic Committee, Julie gratefully accepted. Amidst the committee's discussions, it became apparent that teachers needed additional help. Boggled down by endless planning, organizing and grading, it was becoming more and more difficult for educators to meet the individual needs of an increasingly diverse student population.

With this need identified, Solanus Saints was born.

"We thought a great way to assist teachers without spending money would be to get volunteers from the parish involved, helping teachers with what they need, whether it is during the day with actual instruction or after school," Julie says. "We want to give our teachers the extra boost they need to be able to meet the needs of each student, no matter what learning level they are at."

Excited by the new plan, fourth-grade teacher Carla Slough and kindergarten teacher Maureen Makarewicz began learning what kind of support each of their colleagues needed, while Julie began gathering parish volunteers. Parishioners were then matched up with teachers and, in the words of Mrs. Slough, the ministry "just started to blossom" from there. Over the course of its inaugural year, volunteers performed a wide range of

services, from creating bulletin boards and organizing files, making copies, reading aloud to students, to actually conducting enrichment activities.

No matter how large or small the task, says Julie, each service helped "free up the teacher, allowing them to spend more time developing curriculum and actually helping the students." In return, the teachers were deeply grateful for the additional support and humbled by the countless parishioners who offered their time and talents in service of the students.

"It gladdens my heart when I see so many people who really do want to be part of our school family – so many people who really want to help our students succeed," Mrs. Slough says.

In a truly unique way, the Solanus Saints Ministry enables parishioners to give of their time, talent and treasure in a way that best fits both their abilities and schedule. Some parishioners, like Julie, were able to come in weekly during the school day to assist their assigned teacher. Others came in during after-school hours, helping with the more organizational aspects of teaching. Still others chose to be "on call," coming in occasionally to work on special projects or events where additional help was needed.

In the process, parishioners – particularly those without school-aged children – were able to become more involved in our parish school, seeing firsthand the good work that is being accomplished there.

"It allows them to see what is happening at the school, witnessing firsthand what their donations are going to and the importance and great benefits of a Catholic education," Julie says.

As the new school year approaches, ministry coordinators are hopeful to have even more parish volunteers, enabling each teacher to benefit from this ministry. By serving as mentors, classroom helpers and providers of

*"It gladdens my heart when I see so many people who really do want to be part of our school family – so many people who really want to help our students succeed." – Mrs. Carla Slough, fourth-grade teacher*



# arming the Future

extra support, Solanus Saints members help ensure our teachers' success in creating living saints and future leaders of our society.

"As a teacher, it's not just the teaching day – there is so much after-school work as well, and I'd love to see more teachers be able to focus on the actual teaching of their students," Mrs. Slough says. "I also just want our whole parish to feel part of the school, like we are one family, and not just two separate entities."

*If you would like more information on the Solanus Saints Ministry, or are interested in becoming involved, please look for the registration form in upcoming parish bulletins, or contact Principal Lori Shepard at 217-222-4077.*



*For Julie Schuetz (right), the most rewarding experience of her time volunteering through Solanus Saints was seeing a child's face "light up when they got something."*

## Diane and Kent Andrew *continued from front cover*

Taking care of the maintenance and various projects around the parish and school are a perfect fit for Kent, who is glad to be able to give back to his community.

"Everybody has their way of helping," he says. "This is just one of the things I enjoy doing."

Retirement was also the beginning of a deepening of Diane's faith, as she became more involved in the parish, specifically, coordinating the parish center building project. Although on the surface, working as a project manager might not seem like a deeply spiritual experience. In Diane's case, however, she says God worked through the experience to strengthen her faith.

"It's an awesome feeling to see what God has done for us [with the parish center]," she says. "I've never done anything like this before, but I felt it was truly a call from God to do it, and I did it with the help of many volunteer parishioners. No one person could put together a building project like we did without the help of many others. You just have to put it in God's hands and ask for guidance along the way."

"People said, 'How are we going to get this money to pay for the parish center?'" Diane adds. "I'm like, 'Put it in God's hands!' We got more than what we thought we would get. The money will come. It will

happen in God's time. One thing I've learned is that I have more peace, instead of being stressed out all the time. Making decisions, when you put things in God's hands, and truly give it to Him, the peace just comes over you."

Diane also found her faith deepening as she began meeting and getting to know other faithful parishioners.

"Some people were further along in their faith than I was, and they are a good inspiration to me; they made me want to be better, and made me want to learn more," Diane says. "If you hang around in that right group, it's going to wear off on you."

She encourages others to find ways to be connected within the parish. Whether in service, in learning more about God's Word, or just in spending time and learning from other Catholics, Diane has discovered there is something for everyone.

"We have different things for different people," Diane says. "Just step back and say, 'God, what do you want me to do?'"

So, whether you joined the parish yesterday, or your grandparents were parishioners, there are always opportunities to grow in your faith, if you're ready to see them. Thanks for the reminder, Kent and Diane!

# STORY OF A SAINT:

## *Feast Day of St. Maria Goretti – July 6*

The story of St. Maria Goretti is one that resonates with people of all cultures and ages.

History and Church Tradition tell us of the brutal deaths many Christians endured for the love and reverence of Christ. Many martyrs were burned at the stake or stoned to death – methods of murder that make one’s skin crawl – and St. Maria Goretti’s death was no less gruesome. However, St. Maria Goretti was not killed because of her faith in Christ. Nor was she forced to deny her love for Jesus like many martyrs.

St. Maria Goretti died trying to ward off a rapist.

St. Maria Goretti’s story is one that would make the writers of the television drama *Law & Order* cringe. Yet, her story is real. It is true, and not just a fabrication of a screenwriter’s mind. St. Maria Goretti’s story is one that speaks to all hearts – especially in today’s sexually charged culture.

St. Maria Goretti was born in Italy in 1890 to a poor family, and she was one of seven children. The members of her family were no strangers to distress. The Gorettis knew heartache and destitution quite well. St. Maria Goretti’s father, Luigi Goretti, was an unsuccessful businessman, and due to his small income, the family was forced to share a house with a neighboring family, the Serenellis. St. Maria’s father died when she was only 9 years old. Likewise, one of her younger siblings also died at 8 months old. After her father’s death, St. Maria was forced to take on many of the daily chores and

raise her brothers and sisters while her mother, Assunta, worked to support the family.

Times grew steadily harder for the Goretti family. In the wake of Luigi’s death, Assunta had a very difficult time making ends meet. Then one day, Alessandro Serenelli, one of the Serenelli children, attacked and tried to rape St. Maria. St. Maria, who was only 11 years old at the time and determined to protect her virginity, resisted his advances, screaming that she would rather die than let him taint her purity. Alessandro, armed with a dagger, grew weary of St. Maria’s resistance and stabbed her to death on the front steps of the Goretti/Serenelli home.

Alessandro Serenelli was captured shortly after St. Maria’s death. Because he was a minor, Alessandro was spared the death penalty and was instead sentenced to 30 years in prison. For three years, he remained unrepentant of his crime until a local bishop, Bishop Giovanni Blandini, visited him in jail. Soon after the bishop’s visit, Alessandro wrote him a “thank you” letter, explaining that St. Maria Goretti visited him in a dream and handed him a bouquet of lilies, which burst into flames as soon as they touched his hands.

After Alessandro was released from prison, years later, he visited St. Maria’s still-living mother, Assunta, and pleaded with her for forgiveness. Assunta forgave him, saying that if St. Maria had forgiven him on her deathbed, then she could do the same. They attended Mass together the very next day, receiving Holy Communion side-by-side. From that day until the day

of his death, in 1970, Alessandro prayed to St. Maria Goretti as “his little saint.” He eventually became a Capuchin friar and spent the rest of his days in a monastery, working as a gardener and receptionist.

As we celebrate St. Maria Goretti’s feast day, on July 6, remember her courage, morality and willingness to forgive.



**JULY 6**

**SAINT  
MARIA  
GORETTI**



## “The Parish Is What We Make It” The St. Francis Solanus Pastoral Council

**M**artin (Mak) Makarewicz has been a member of St. Francis Solanus Parish for more than 40 years. For the past 10 years, he has served on the Pastoral Council, and has been the President of the council for the past five years.

“We are an advisory council to Fr. Don Blaeser, our pastor,” Mak says, describing the purpose and goals of the Council. “Our purpose is to help Father watch over everyday parish life, you might say. Serving on the Pastoral Council is very rewarding. I actually look forward to meetings and to the challenges we may have. We deal with the spiritual aspects of the parish, and that is something which is close to my heart. We have few responsibilities in relation to finances or buildings and grounds.”

Regarding a pastoral – or parish – council, the *Catholic Code of Canon Law* states, “If the diocesan bishop judges it opportune after he has heard the presbyteral council, a pastoral council is to be established in each parish, over which the pastor presides and in which the Christian faithful, together with those who share in pastoral care by virtue of their office in the parish, assist in fostering pastoral activity” (536). The Bishop of Springfield



*St. Francis Solanus Pastoral Council President Martin (Mak) Makarewicz*

has mandated a pastoral council in each parish, and we have had one at St. Francis Solanus since 1966.

Because of his experience in the parish and on the Pastoral Council, Mak has a clear understanding of the processes and goals.

“Father and I meet about 10 days prior to our scheduled meet-

ings, and we discuss what should be on the agenda,” Mak says. “Of course, we need to address those items Father feels are important, but we members also have an opportunity to suggest or bring up topics, as well. Our council consists of 12 lay people, along with Father, the school principal, and the Director of Religious Education [DRE]. In general, members are appointed by the pastor and serve for a three-year term. We meet nine or 10 months each year, often taking the summer off. If something comes up that Father thinks we need to address, we will meet in summer, however.”

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– Martin (Mak) Makarewicz, Pastoral Council President

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# St. Francis Solanus

ROMAN CATHOLIC PARISH

1721 College Avenue  
Quincy, IL 62301  
(217) 222-2898  
stfrancissolanus.com

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## The St. Francis Solanus Pastoral Council *continued from page 7*

Mak expressed that one of his personal goals is to get more young people involved in parish life and in the Pastoral Council.

"Our council has worked closely with Father on the concept of stewardship, and we do see some positive results," he says. "I feel there are more people involved. However, we as parishioners need to recognize that the parish is what we make it. There are lots of opportunities to serve and the Pastoral Council is one of them. I urge people who are interested to let us know of their interest. People can talk to any member of the council, and certainly to either Father or me. Father is the one who appoints people to the council, of course."



*If you would like to learn  
more about our Pastoral Council,  
please contact  
Martin (Mak) Makarewicz  
at 217-224-8668  
or [makx5@comcast.net](mailto:makx5@comcast.net),  
or Fr. Don Blaeser  
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, 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.