

Saint Francis Solanus



DECEMBER 2016

Opportunity for Prayer and Service Abounds This Advent

Advent is a season of joyful anticipation. And we can make this season even more joyful by making the most of our “waiting” time, whether through prayer or service.

There are a number of opportunities waiting to help you celebrate with our parish community. Carol Seifert, Coordinator of Religious Programs, says Advent can bring out the best in us as we strive to widen our circle of giving and prepare a place within our hearts for the Christ child.

“Advent is a time to be of service to others, which is what we’re supposed to be about anyway through our baptism,” Carol says. “This time of year is so busy with parties and shopping and baking, but it’s nice to remember what it’s really about – the spiritual aspect of it, rather than just the gift giving.”

To feed our souls, the parish encourages families to purchase an Advent wreath and candles to use at home daily. Available anytime in the parish office, wreathes can be purchased for \$5, while candles are available for \$3. The accompanying prayers to use while lighting the candles can be found in the bulletin. Additionally, all parish children will be given an Advent calendar to help them count down.

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Just as our altar is prepared for Christmas with the beautiful red and white poinsettias pictured, so too should we take time to prepare our hearts this Advent season. Opportunity to lend your time, talent, and treasure abounds here at St. Francis Solanus for those wishing to experience Advent on a deeper level.



Opportunity for Prayer and Service Abounds This Advent

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Carol says this is also a great time of year to get involved with the Scripture Discussion Group. The group meets every Thursday at the church at 6:30 p.m. to read, share and discuss the Scripture for the coming Sunday. While the Scripture Discussion Group is ongoing throughout the year, Advent can be a particularly good time to get involved in spiritual preparation for Christmas.

There are plenty of opportunities this month to answer Christ's call to complete a Corporal Work of Mercy.

"The Liturgy Committee will have several giving trees displayed in church with gift tags for parishioners to purchase a Christmas gift for a family in the parish that is in need," Carol says. "Parishioners can also donate Eucerin, Cetaphil, and Curel lotions, which are given to parishioners who are in the nursing homes."

You can also help feed the hungry in more ways than one with the purchase of a fruit basket. The Holy Name Society will sell fresh fruit baskets throughout the month with all proceeds going to the food pantry.

"The fruit baskets are assembled on Dec. 17 starting at 8 a.m. in the parish center – volunteers are welcome," Carol says.

In addition, St. Francis Solanus Community Assistance will deliver poinsettias to parishioners who are 90 years of age and older. Volunteers are always needed to deliver the poinsettias. Please contact Cathy Waterkotte at 217-223-3772 to volunteer.

"They also provide Christmas meal groceries to parishioners who utilize the food pantry," Carol says. "Help is needed to put the boxes together and distribute or deliver them to parishioners."

Parishioners can contact Connie Hoyt, 217-224-2322,

or Diane Schultz at 217-223-9055 to volunteer to help assemble and deliver the boxes.

Finally, a couple events will also help set the right tone for the season ahead. First, a bilingual Mass to celebrate the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe will be held on Dec. 11 at 1:30 p.m. Refreshments will be offered immediately afterward. Then, the St. Francis Solanus School Christmas program will be held in the church on Dec. 15 at 6:30 p.m. All are welcome.

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For more ideas on how you and your family can get involved this Advent, contact the parish office at 217-222-2898.

A Letter From Our Pastor

Advent: Moving Toward a Time of Fulfilled Hope

Dear Parishioners,

There is never a time during the year when we cannot pause and reflect on who and what we are and how we conduct our lives, both as a parish and as people of God. But this time of year in particular lends itself to just that.

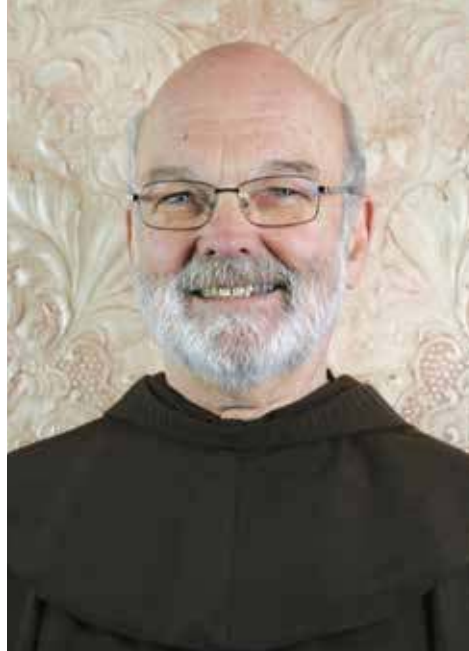
Advent is often called “a season of hope.” However, it is more than that. We have choices and decisions to make at this time. This is the time when we must acknowledge the need for us to change attitudes and to welcome the light of Christ’s presence. In this way, we can contribute to bringing hope to a world that is starved for hope.

Of course, we approach this time of year with a spirit of confident expectation, but now is the time for us to be awake to Christ, Whose presence is revealed as forgiveness, Whose peace reconciles our differences, and Whose hope should strengthen and lift up our hearts.

We have pointed out that each and every day is an opportunity for a new beginning. Our new Church liturgical year began on the First Sunday of Advent. We understand that Advent is a time of preparation for the celebration of the Nativity of our Lord – Christmas – but I would remind you that it is much more than that for us Catholics and Christians.

It is a time for us to prepare for Christ’s Second Coming, as well. Much of what we do, our Scripture readings, our prayers, our traditions are built on that reality. One of the traditions in our Church and in many of our homes is an Advent wreath. That custom is filled with meaning. The wreath tends to be circular in shape with four candles – three purple and one rose. The color purple is very evident at this time of year, just as it is during Lent. Purple represents prayer, penance, sacrifice, and good works.

On the Third Sunday of Advent, though, we



light the rose candle. That is Gaudete Sunday, a day of rejoicing. Throughout Advent, the candles are lit in progression each week. This builds on the idea of expectation and hope that we may see as Christ’s first coming into the world, but we must also keep in mind that, at the same time, we are anticipating His Second Coming. We cannot ask ourselves often enough, “Are we ready?” Jesus and St. Paul and others remind us often that we do not and cannot know the time and the place.

The point is that the time is now for us. Yes, this is a time of hope, but we are heading toward a time of fulfilled hope. God bless you

and yours at this special time of year.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Fr. Don, O.F.M." with a small flourish at the end.

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



Community Assistance Ministry E

Living in stewardship and discipleship is woven into the fiber of our parish, and the work done by the volunteers in our Community Assistance Ministry is daily proof.

"I think St. Francis Solanus has a real sense of helping those in need," says Mary Beth McGee, ministry coordinator.

Parishioners not only are generous with donations of foodstuffs and money for the Food Pantry, but they also step forward to help with the variety of outreach efforts of the ministry.

Some of the ministry members make sure that parishioners who are in care facilities and anyone 80 years of age and over receive birthday cards. Others make sure that parishioners who have lost a loved one receive a sympathy Mass card. During December, ministry members will see that parishioners 90 years of age and older receive poinsettias.

And still, the ministry is working to expand its outreach. There are plans in the works for the coming year, Mary Beth says, to begin services for homebound parishioners, such as running errands and shopping for groceries.

The Food Pantry has seen some significant developments during the past year.

While the number of people served by the pantry has increased, the pantry also has been able to obtain food from more sources.

"We're handling pet food now," Mary Beth says. "Last year, a veterinary clinic had a pet food pantry, but it ended, and now they're helping us with pet food. We can help with dog and cat food, and we're the only parish doing this. And a big thing this summer was, we were able to get people to donate fresh produce. We also got a grant for fresh produce."

The fresh produce was available for pick-up only at the pantry because of the logistics involved in the ministry's delivery system.

"But the biggest thing is we had the greatest increase in the number of volunteers over the last year," Mary Beth says. "We have well over 100 volunteers in this ministry. We have three groups of baggers in the pantry, and two different groups who do the pick-up on Tuesday and Thursdays, and two different groups recycling the boxes. We have three women who take care of the buying, and people who help deliver food from the food



Mrs. Alvero Bardon holds one of the Fall Harvest grocery bags she just prepared by adding a grocery list to each one. She volunteers for the Community Assistance Ministry by providing clerical help when needed. She will tell you she is the oldest ministry volunteer at 96 years of age. "You're never too old to be a good disciple of the Lord," Alvero says.



The new shelves made a huge difference for storage in our new pantry. Stocking the shelves are (from left) Eric Eling, Carla Eling, Pauline Upper, Cindy Peters and Joyce Frericks.

Embodies Stewardship, Discipleship



These volunteers are helping with the Tuesday morning pick-up – (from left) Bobbi Wellman, Flip Schotte, Connie Havens, and Judi Mass.

bank. We have a lot of help here. They come together with lots being involved."

Mary Beth says she attributes the increase in ministry participation to the move toward stewardship and discipleship in the parish.

"I think so many times, people think stewardship is about giving money or tithing," Mary Beth says. "But that's just one component. The benefits we have from stewardship – it's so fun to get to know other parishioners, they're good-hearted people, they like to help. It's a no-brainer to want to hang out with them!"

Mary Beth looks at the data collected over the past number of years to see how the ministry has grown in the number of people served.

"In May 2015, before we recruited volunteers, we served 80 households with 295 people," she says. "In May 2016, we served 178 households with 631 people. We more than doubled the number of people served. That's how much more we grew in a year's time."

Volunteers are always welcome to join the ministry, as there are some other plans in the works.

"We're in partnership with Horizons, the soup kitchen, in Quincy," Mary Beth says. "We'll be looking at having our volunteers helping out, serving lunches at Horizons. I see that happening as the next step."

And the ministry always welcomes food donations, as well as monetary donations, to help the Food Pantry's work.

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Anyone wishing to volunteer may contact the parish office at 217-222-2898.

Being a Good Christmas Steward

The Christmas season is fast approaching. We have already made our gift lists, and perhaps even checked them twice. First on the list is family, followed by friends, our children's teachers and coaches, and maybe even the mailman. Christmas inspires us to give our family and friends gifts of love and appreciation, in gratitude towards all they do for us during the year. The very idea of holiday gift giving – a display of love and gratefulness to those who have touched our lives – is parallel to the concept of stewardship. When we give to God, we are effectively saying “thanks” for all He has done for us.

Think of all God has done for you this year. How have His loving arms embraced you? Maybe He has answered a special prayer intention. Maybe He has created a job opportunity for an unemployed loved one. He may have helped safely bring a new baby into the family, or instilled peace during a particularly difficult time. God's blessings are countless, and the abundant gifts He bestows upon us are given freely out of incomprehensible love – despite our unworthiness.

Think of the ways you respond to God's bountiful blessings. How do you choose to show Him your thankfulness? As we prepare for the coming of Christ during

Advent, will we remember to add Jesus' name to our list? Uncle John wants a new drill, and Grandpa definitely needs a new cardigan – but what does Jesus want? It is His birthday we are celebrating, after all.

The very first name on the list – above our spouse, children, relatives, and friends – should be God's name.

As we prepare for the coming of Christ during Advent, will we remember to add Jesus' name to our list? Uncle John wants a new drill, and Grandpa definitely needs a new cardigan – but what does Jesus want? It is His birthday we are celebrating, after all.

As disciples of Christ, we are called to give God our “first fruits,” not our leftovers. We should joyfully place God first on our gift-giving lists, not out of guilt or as an afterthought, but out of love and appreciation.

Stewardship allows us to tangibly give a Christmas gift to God through our time, talent and treasure. We give God gifts of time through prayer, such as spending time before the Blessed Sacrament or praying the Rosary. We can give our talents to God by way of simple charitable actions, such as bringing a meal to a hard-pressed neighbor, or watching a young mother's children so that she is able to prepare for her own family's Christmas celebration. And as for treasure, we can give God a portion of our income this Christmas by dropping an extra dollar in the collection basket. Whatever choices you make this season, make the decision to be a good Christmas steward.



“Being Involved Is Part of Our Lives” *Troy and Holly Hummel*

Holly Hummel remembers walking to St. Francis Solanus with her grandmother to light candles and offer up their intentions together. Years later, when Holly married her husband, Troy Hummel, they felt drawn to the parish their grandparents had both attended.

“Going to St. Francis Solanus is like walking into home,” Holly says. “Being involved in the community is part of our lives, and it gives us a feeling of belonging.”

Holly and Troy met through mutual friends and later discovered they had actually sat across from each other when attending a wedding at St. Francis Solanus.

“You can see us near each other in the photos,” Troy says. “In a short time, we knew we would get married. We talked about how we definitely wanted to raise our kids Catholic and how that was important to us.”

In 1999, Holly and Troy were married at St. Francis Solanus. As new members of the parish, they discerned how they could become involved in parish life and soon began serving as Youth Group leaders.

“We were involved in the Youth Group before we even had kids, and did that for two or three years,” Troy says. “A lot of the kids who were in the Youth Group when we were leaders now have families of their own.”

From the beginning, Holly was also interested in teaching the Children’s Liturgy and shadowed a woman who was involved with the program. Now, she has been one of the teachers for over eight years. Holly and Troy also recently finished a two-year commitment as Chairs of the Parish Picnic.

“There is a lot of work that goes into the Parish Picnic, but it is very rewarding,” Holly says. “People love the picnic, and it is good for fellowship amongst families of the church and the school.”

In the Hummel family, St. Francis Solanus Church and St. Francis Solanus School are inextricably linked. Catholic education is a priority for both Holly and Troy. Currently, their daughter Katie is a freshman at Quincy Notre Dame, and their daughter Olivia is a seventh-grade student at St. Francis Solanus School.

“We’re setting an example for our children and getting them involved, as well,” Troy says. “Our kids are actually involved in many service activities through their schools. They also help with the setup and teardown for



(From left) Katie and Olivia Hummel



The Hummel family – (from left) Katie, Troy, Holly, and Olivia

the Parish Picnic. We’re proud of that.”

Between our church and our school, there are many different ways to become involved from public roles, like serving as a lector, to quiet roles, like cleaning the church. Holly would encourage anyone who wants to find a way to serve to shadow a faith community member who is active in a ministry.

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St. Francis Solanus

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

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“Being Involved Is Part of Our Lives” *continued from page 7*

“You can be involved as little or as much as your schedule allows,” Holly says. “People are very approachable. If you see someone who is a Eucharistic Minister or who does something you’re interested in, ask him or her a few questions.”

Being involved has helped the Hummel family learn how the parish and school operate “from the ground up.” They’ve met numerous other families through giving and serving together.

“We’d like to say a big ‘thank you’ to all the people who say ‘yes,’” Troy says. “St. Francis Solanus is a beautiful church, and it is going to thrive or not according to the people who say ‘yes.’ For us, it has become a way of life.”

Season Schedule:

Christmas Eve:

4:00, 6:00 (*Children’s Liturgy*),
8:00, and 10:00 p.m.

Christmas Day:

8:00 and 10:00 a.m.

New Year’s Eve:

5:30 p.m.

New Year’s Day:

8:00 and 10:00 a.m.

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.