

Saint Francis Solanus



JANUARY 2017

National Catholic Schools Week: *Celebrating the Gift of Catholic Education*

Each year, Catholic schools across the nation take a week to celebrate everything that makes them a uniquely Catholic community. Not only does this build up morale and enthusiasm within each school, but it also reminds us of how universal the Catholic faith truly is.

"I feel it is so important to celebrate Catholic Schools Week each year to highlight and showcase what we have to offer in Catholic education," says Principal Lori Shepard. "It is a great opportunity to come together and focus on what is most important in our education process – our faith."

The National Catholic Education Association chooses a theme each year for all schools nationwide to use as they each celebrate their schools in unique ways. For example, this year, all Catholic schools will focus on a new aspect each day of the theme "Catholic Schools: Communities of Faith, Knowledge and Service."

"This year's theme highlights our focus on faith development, academic excellence, and dedication to community service," Ms. Shepard says. "During this



During Catholic Schools Week, students are able to pick enrichment classes in which they can participate. Some of the options include baking, photography, animal pals, florist design, and more!

week, our students will have the opportunity to dress in creative ways for fun, as well as dress up for Mass. We will highlight our mission for vocations and share the importance of following in Christ's footsteps with our students."

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National Catholic Schools Week *continued from front cover*

Celebrating in union with other schools across the nation, Catholic Schools Week invites students, parents and teachers alike to remember the inestimable value of an education that unites academic excellence with the beauty of our Catholic faith, and to remind us all of our ultimate purpose – achieving heaven. It also allows each school to focus on their strengths in fulfilling the Catholic mission to educate the whole person – body, mind and soul.

“Our students at St. Francis Solanus are the foundation of the church,” Ms. Shepard says. “It is important to solidify their love for Christ in daily action, example and prayer. We do our best to provide a loving environment that will give them a strong faith, academic success, extracurricular opportunities, lasting memories, and lifelong friendships. With the Lord’s help, our goal is to help our students become productive members of our community, and more importantly, the future leaders of our Church.”

Some of the activities in which the students will participate during the week include trivia contests, special enrichment classes where the students may sign up for a class of their choice, and an assembly to celebrate academic and spiritual accomplishments.

National Catholic Schools Week will be held this year from Sunday, Jan. 29, through Saturday, Feb. 4. Please keep an eye on the bulletin for more information on ways to get involved during this week and special events taking place! If you would like to learn more or to ask questions, please contact the school office at 217-222-4077.



Each year, Catholic schools across the nation spend one week celebrating their academics and spirituality. Some of the ways schools celebrate is by offering extra activities or crafts for students to enjoy.



“To encourage academic friendly competition, we will have trivia contests between the students – we end the fun-filled week with an assembly to celebrate the accomplishments of all of the students both in academic and spiritual ways,” says Principal Lori Shepard.

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– Principal Lori Shepard

A Letter From Our Pastor

Breaking Through Our Personal Resistance, Listening to God

Dear Parishioners,

Did ya read it? The book we gave you for Christmas. Yeah, that book. Every family was offered a book by Matthew Kelly. Including the three books by Kelly that we've given out in the past years, I think this one is the best. As I was reading it, I found I just couldn't put it down. Each chapter was so engaging that I found myself wanting to continue, even though other things were pressing, or I just had to get to bed.

Resisting Happiness is a curious title for a book, at least until you get into it. Why in the world would we resist happiness? Aaaaah, that's the question! Kelly explores the answers throughout this very personal book. I say "personal" because he is very self-revelatory about his own life, and at the same time offers priceless insights about our own faith-life and pursuit of happiness.

Kelly recalls overhearing a conversation between two of his kids:

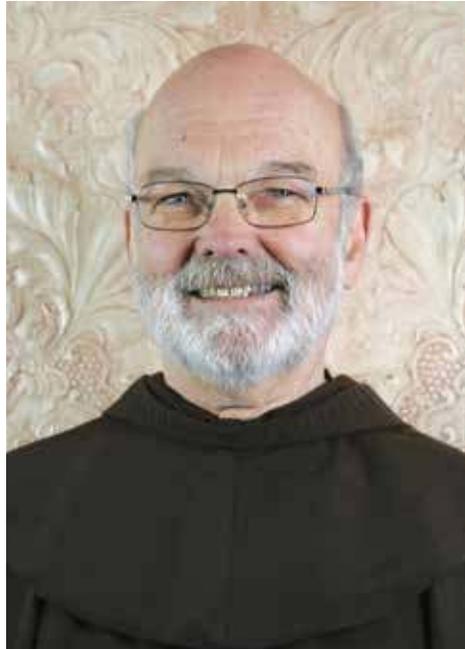
"You are too wrapped up in Jesus, Isabel!"

"Well, Easter is all about Jesus, so it's good to be wrapped up in him," Isabel replied.

"I like Jesus, but I am more interested in the chocolate eggs and the chocolate bunnies."

"There it is," Kelly replies. The quintessential conflict that lies within our very human nature about happiness. As we pursue our quest for happiness, where do we find it? Is it in the here-and-now? Or is it in the hereafter? Or....?

You'll find the word "resistance" running through the book. Call it resistance, or call it selfishness, or call it the devil, or temptation – the point is that we all



struggle with it. Where does it come from – our human nature itself, or something outside ourselves? The point is that often, the resistance actually leads us in the opposite direction from where we ultimately want to go.

"Resistance loves keeping us busy with anything but the one thing that will most help us grow." Kelly has a way of saying, in a very short simple sentence, something that is so true, so profound, that it provokes pondering. Also: "Our lives change when our habits change. New habits bring new life."

He talks about being bored. He writes: "To say we are bored at any moment in our lives is a massive insult to God, but to say we are bored at

Mass takes the insult to a whole other level." The solution in one word: Listen. Listen to God. Listen to other people. Listen to your body. Listen to your own soul. Break out of the selfishness that is the root and cause of boredom, and begin to discover real happiness.

I'm only scratching the surface here. I encourage you, I challenge you – yes, I dare you to read Matthew Kelly's *Resisting Happiness*, and see if you don't find it, as I did, a stimulating read. No, more than that – a doorway opening to a whole new life with yourself, with others, and with God.

Have a Happy, Holy and Blessed New Year.

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

Raising a Family in the Fa

Pope Francis, in his 100th general audience held on Aug. 26, 2015, had the following advice for parents: "Our families need to ask for the gift of the Spirit! Through prayer, even in the busiest times, we give time back to God, we find the peace that comes from appreciating the important things, and we encounter the joy of God's unexpected gifts."

The pope then went on to acknowledge that making time for prayer and worship can be difficult for mothers and fathers, who face the task of turning "24 hours into 48." And indeed, this challenge can seem impossible at times! But for families that decide to actively live out their faith, the rewards are priceless.

The Bruns family is one of many young families in our parish that are committed to passing on the faith. For Nate and Jackie Bruns, raising their children in the Church is an essential aspect of family life.

"Nate and I were both raised Catholic and see the value in that," Jackie says. "And that has been very important in our adult lives and how we raise our children."

With three small children – Oliver, 6; Winnie, 3; and Nora, 2 – getting out the door for Mass on Sunday morning has not always been an easy feat! But once Nate and Jackie made the conscious decision to prioritize attending Mass each week as a family, they discovered that they have been able to make it happen.

"We have definitely been in that rut when the kids were really little and it was such a challenge to get everyone [to church]," Jackie says. "Now that we have made the commitment, it's just going to happen. So if we don't make it to the 9:30, we're going to the 11."

For these parents, bringing their children to Mass from a young age is an important way to introduce them to participating in the faith.

"Even if they don't understand the whole message of the Mass, they can still get into it," Nate says. "They can be with the church community, hear the songs, and just be there for the process."

In addition to praying together at home and attending Mass, another way the young Bruns children participate in their faith is by helping Jackie prepare food for funeral dinners. The family enjoys being involved



Nate and Jackie Bruns with their children, Oliver (6), Winnie (3), and Nora (2)

with this ministry because it sends a message of love to those who have recently experienced a loss, and it is also something they can all do together.

"We don't have a lot of time with the small children, but if I get a call and they need a pie or a salad for a funeral dinner, the kids can help me," Jackie says. "Also, we've lost grandparents over the last couple of years,

ith: *Meet the Bruns Family*



The Bruns children – (from left) Oliver (6), Nora (2), and Winnie (3)

and this is something nice that people did for us. It's something small that we can do, but it is giving that care to someone who has lost a loved one. And the kids love helping with it. Winnie isn't quite old enough to understand exactly what we're doing, but Oliver understands that we're preparing and taking this [food] to help the family of someone that has died."

As director of Quincy Catholic Charities, Jackie's service to others extends beyond the parish and into our broader community. In the eight years that she has spent at Catholic Charities, she has experienced an increased personal commitment to stewardship.

"Every day, we see how blessed we are," she says. "In my job, I see a lot of families in difficulty, and it's hard to see how much people struggle and how they're hurting. Stewardship is just our purpose here on earth – we're here to help other people and to do God's work."

When it comes to serving others, the Bruns family has also noticed that when they make themselves available and stay active in the faith, God presents them with more possibilities for reaching out to others.

"The more chances we have to do things and to give, it seems like we're presented with opportunities to do even more," Nate says. "It's a great feeling to be able to do that."

While life with three little ones is certainly very busy, Nate and Jackie Bruns have made actively living out their faith a top priority for their family. As adults who now fully understand the priceless gift that their own parents passed on to them, they have committed to raising their children in the faith.

What a joy it is to see so many young families here at St. Francis Solanus bringing their children up in faith, love and service!

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Teaching Children to Live a Life of Stewardship

How old do you have to be to practice stewardship? Can a 5-year-old embrace stewardship? How about a 10-year-old?

Although there is no guideline to what the right age is to begin to live a life of stewardship, God's call certainly extends to each of His children – even the young ones.

It is especially important to show children that they are not too young to share their time, talent and treasure to help build God's kingdom.

Sharing Your Time

A young child can share of his time in a variety of ways appropriate to his ability. For example, during the day, a child can pray for a loved one that is hurt, or say prayers with his parents or siblings. He can participate in Mass each Sunday, and even take time from his day to thank God for a veteran who has served our country.

Spending time being virtuous – such as being patient, generous and kind – is also a great example of sharing our time for love of God.

Sharing Your Talent

Using God-given talents to glorify God can also be performed by both young and old. An elementary school-aged child can easily clean her room or perform chores such as raking leaves, doing laundry, or taking care of pets. Making cards for people who are sick or who have had a death in the family are other concrete examples of being a faithful steward.

Even using our talents – such as playing a musical instrument or football – to the best of our abilities to give God glory is an example of being a good steward.

Sharing Your Treasure

Although children do not have the same type of treasure to share as adults, instilling the importance of sharing finances is an important lesson.

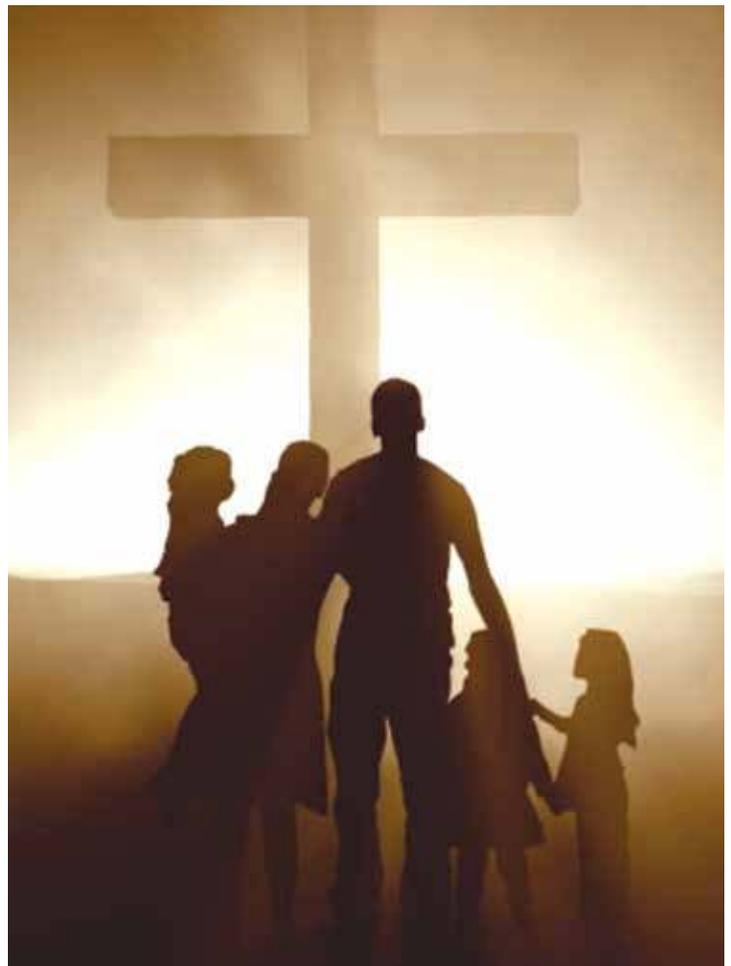
If a child receives an allowance, he can return a portion of it to the Church in the collection basket. If he gets money for his birthday, he can give a small portion of it back to God in thanksgiving. Little ones can even

share things like their Halloween candy with their siblings or friends as a way of demonstrating generosity.

The Most Important Lesson

Above all, the most important lesson to teach our children is why we share. We don't share because we "have to." We don't share because our parents tell us to. We share our time, talent and treasure with God because we are thankful for the blessings He has given us and we want to thank Him for His generosity.

Teaching these lessons at a young age will allow a lifetime of good stewardship to follow for even the youngest of God's children.



School Board Opens Up Stewardship Opportunities

Years ago, Ryan Klauser joined the School Board as a way to get involved and be an active participant in his children's education. Little did he know that this would open his heart to serve the school and parish even more.

"When my children started school at St. Francis, my wife was able to take off work to go to school functions, and the School Board was something that I could be involved in in the evenings," he says. "I actually have an education background, and teach community college courses myself, and this has really helped me to be involved in and aware of their educations. Then, the more I've been involved in the school, the more I have gotten involved with what is going on at the parish. It's really been a ripple effect."

The School Board is composed of nine members who each serve three-year terms, with a limit of two terms. The board is primarily an advisory board, which helps the principal and pastor with decision-making regarding St. Francis Solanus School. The board also works to coordinate with local parochial schools through representation on an area leadership team.

"We want all the schools to work together and not be competitive," Ryan says. "For example, we all try to have our tuition be the same across the board. We also serve as a liaison between the school administration, and the parents and community."

Serving on the board is a great stewardship opportunity for its members. The current School Board selects board members, and anyone who is interested is welcome to be considered for board membership.

"Throughout the school year, we look at the talents that a lot of our parishioners and school parents have, and try to find school parents and parishioners who have the talent and the abilities that would be a good fit for the board," Ryan says. "I also like to look for people who have talents they could bring to the board, who may not necessarily volunteer themselves, but would be interested if you asked them. This sometimes helps people to get a little more involved."

Ryan himself can relate to this scenario. By going

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School Board member Ryan Klauser with his wife, Jayna, and children, Bradyn and Adayre

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ROMAN CATHOLIC PARISH

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

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out of his comfort zone, he opened up to many opportunities to serve the school, and by extension, the parish. Since joining the school board, Ryan and his wife have served on the parish picnic committee, and Ryan also serves as an usher, with the Knights of Columbus, and on a local area leadership team.

“For me, it’s not my natural inclination to get involved in things like this,” Ryan says. “But I have

found that the more I get involved, the more I enjoy doing it. Attending Mass with my family and being involved in parish ministries has helped me to see the need for involvement in the parish community.

“I think it has really given me growth as a person,” he adds. “I also feel like I am doing what I’ve been called to do. God has put these opportunities in my path to allow me to grow.”

Ryan Klauser encourages anyone who is interested in joining the School Board to get in touch with him by phone at 217-779-1115, or by email at ryan_klauser@att.net.

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.