

Saint Francis Solanus



MARCH 2017

A Wonderful New Space for Communal Life to Flourish Our Parish Center

After years of being cramped with limited space for ministry meetings and parish fellowship, St. Francis Solanus parish is deeply grateful to be able to offer its new Parish Center for both parish and personal gatherings. The fruit of countless hours of planning and of parishioners' generous donations, the Parish Center was designed to be a community space where ministry and communal life can grow and blossom.

"Having that additional space has truly been such a huge blessing," says Misty Cramsey, Parish Administrative Assistant. "It was needed so badly before. Sometimes, for example, we couldn't accommodate funeral dinners for larger families, and it's so nice to be able to offer parishioners this large space, rather than being cramped in a small building. It's been nice, too, for PSR to move out of the school classrooms, creating kind of their own space, even though it is still shared."

Furnished with an industrial kitchen that includes a stove, dishwasher, microwave, warming cabinets, and an ice machine, the Parish Center is the perfect design for parish receptions, special celebrations or rehearsal dinners. The building also possesses plenty of storage room and gathering space, allowing ministries to easily meet and store sup-



Having a designated space for parishioners to gather for celebrations, ministry operations and spiritual growth is an important part of cultivating a sense of family within the parish.

plies. Most importantly of all, says Misty, the Parish Center allows that sense of community to flourish here at St. Francis by providing space for fellowship and hospitality.

"It is just important for everybody to be able

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Stewardship of the Cross

The liturgical year is such a gift to us. As we turn the pages of the calendar, reflecting on the life of Christ, we have the opportunity to consider the most sublime events in the history of mankind. Of these events, perhaps none is more beautiful and worthy of contemplation than the one we are about to commemorate — Jesus' sacrifice of Himself for us on the Cross.

It is fitting and, at the same time, paradoxical. It is fitting that God should do it, because only an infinite God could rid us of the infinite debt we owed by our sin. It is paradoxical that He not only did it, but wanted to do it out of pure love for us, His lowly creatures. What is Jesus trying to show us? Even more staggering, what is He really asking when He exhorts us, in turn, to take up our cross and follow Him?

Jesus freely gave His life for the Church, and He calls us to do the same. Some of us may, in fact, give our entire lives for the Church. But for most of us, this giving takes place by a series of daily actions, both large and small, of Christ-like, sacrificial love — specifically, by giving our time, talent, and treasure for the good of the Church. And yet, by joining these actions with His, we have the chance to participate in that very same sacrifice. This month, let us take the time to examine our hearts and actions in light of Jesus' as we journey with Him toward the Cross.

Jesus gave Himself unselfishly and excessively.

Consider the manner of His sacrifice — one drop of Christ's blood would have been more than sufficient to save the entire human race, and yet Our Lord Jesus chose to shed every last bit. From start to finish, Jesus showed us by His passion that He wanted to do more than what was merely sufficient. If there was more He could give, He gave it. He never stopped to count the cost or to look for what He could get in return.

Jesus made His sacrifice a supreme act of love for the Church.

Counter-cultural even to this day, Jesus actually upheld sacrifice as desirable — the most perfect way to show our love: "Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (Jn. 15:13). In His infinite wisdom, Jesus now offers this path to us as the way to holiness: "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross daily and follow me" (Lk. 9:23).

Jesus gave Himself willingly and even joyfully.

"No one takes [My life] from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have the power to lay it down, and I have the power to take it again" (Jn. 10:18). At the first Eucharist, Jesus even went so far as to say, "I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you" (Lk. 22:15). Needless to say, the Passover sacrifice to which Jesus referred was not a symbolic one, but was in fact His very Body and Blood He would give for us through the sacrifice of the Cross.

Jesus, meek and humble of heart, make our hearts more like Yours.



A Lenten Stewardship Prayer

*"O my God, teach me to be generous:
to serve You as You deserve to be served;
to give without counting the cost;
to fight without fear of being wounded;
to work without seeking rest;
and to spend myself without expecting any reward
but the knowledge that I am doing Your Holy will."*

— St. Ignatius of Loyola

A Letter From Our Pastor

Lent Is More Than Preparation for Easter

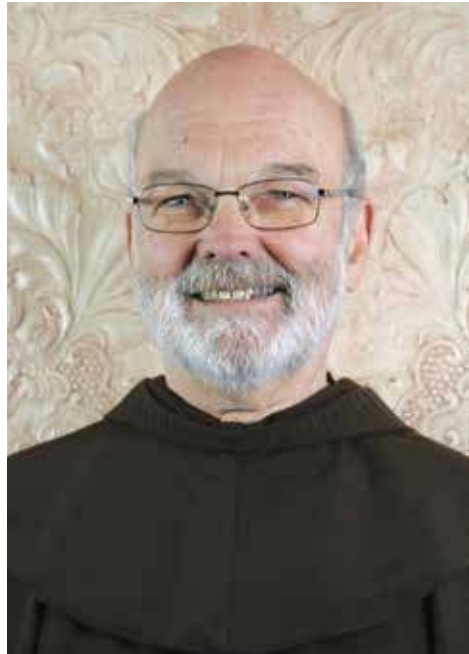
Dear Parishioners,

In 2013, Pope Francis issued his first significant work. It was what is called an “apostolic exhortation” titled *The Joy of the Gospel* (*Evangelii Gaudium* in Latin). While Rome may use fancy words for some of these things, an “exhortation” of this sort does not change any official Church rules or traditions. However, it does offer advice and encouragement about how we should live our lives.

Pope Francis offers this kind of guidance on a regular basis, but this one in particular seems to present us with suggestions that are worthy of our consideration, especially during Lent. The pope called us to become missionary disciples: “The Church which ‘goes forth’ is a community of missionary disciples who take the first step, who are involved and supportive, who bear fruit and rejoice” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 24).

Speaking about his exhortation, Pope Francis said, “One of the riches of the Second Vatican Council was to remind the Church of the two ‘lenses’ of the season of Lent: baptismal and penitential.” In fact, Vatican II noted specifically, “The two elements which are especially characteristic of Lent – the recalling of baptism or the preparation for it, and penance – should be given greater emphasis in the liturgy and in liturgical catechesis. It is by means of them that the Church prepared the faithful for the celebration of Easter, while they hear God’s word more frequently and devote more time to prayer” (*Companion to the Catechism of the Catholic Church* #1348).

It might be well for us to keep these in mind during Lent. There were vows made during our baptism, and this is the time of year to try to fulfill those vows, in addi-



tion to reaffirming them. We are given various opportunities to renew these vows, and we may tend to do it automatically without a thought. Now, however, is the time to think. Perhaps during Lent, we can renew these vows as families – and we need not necessarily do it in church or at a Mass. Then, we need to do something during Lent to help each of us understand what that renewal means.

The other important part of Lent pointed out by Pope Francis has to do with penance. Most of us have heard the traditional practices of Lent – fasting, prayer, reception of the Sacraments, and almsgiving. These are things that may bring us closer to Christ. By fasting, we may gain a

greater understanding of the hunger the Lord feels for our souls; by increased prayer, we join in union with God; through the Sacraments, especially the Eucharist and Reconciliation, we become a greater part of that union with God; through giving alms, we empty ourselves in part, just as Jesus emptied Himself for us on the cross.

This is a time to do more than prepare for Easter. This is a time to change how we may approach living and our faith. God bless you now and throughout this holiest of seasons.

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 There” The Divorce and Beyond Ministry

Most Reverend Alexander K. Sample, Archbishop of Portland, recently addressed the issue of divorce and the Church. He said, “The Catholic Church recognizes the pain and trauma of a lost marriage. Divorce affects more than just the couples ending their marriage. Children in the family are affected. In-laws on both sides are experiencing the loss, too, as are neighbors and friends. There is often mourning at the end of the marriage. Yet, there are many misunderstandings about the Church’s teaching on divorce. Divorced Catholics are still full members of the Church and can participate

fully in the life of the Church. Divorced Catholics may receive the Eucharist and Reconciliation.”

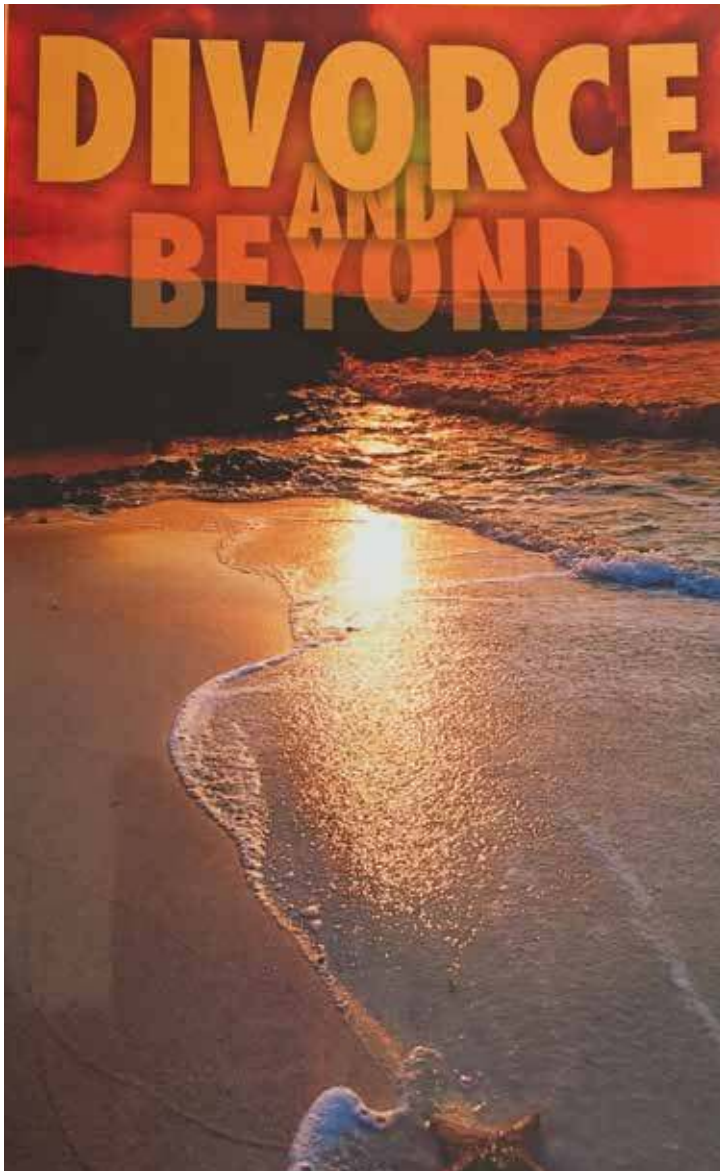
The archbishop’s words are echoed by his fellow bishops who issued a document titled *Marriage: Love and Life in the Divine Plan* in which they state, “We (bishops) understand the pain of those for whom divorce seemed the only recourse. We urge them to make frequent use of the sacraments, especially the Sacraments of the Holy Eucharist and Reconciliation.”

Since 2009, we have been offering a program here at St. Francis for those who are or have been divorced, through our Divorce and Beyond Ministry. Currently, we have three people involved in the ministry who have been trained and certified to facilitate the program offered.

“The people who choose to participate in our Divorce and Beyond program are at different stages in the process of divorce and the days that follow,” says Bev Helkey, one of the trained and certified program facilitators. “One of their biggest challenges is learning to love themselves. We understand that and we are there to help them.”

The program is an eight-week process based upon the book *Divorce and Beyond*, which was co-authored by James Greteman, Leon M. S. W. Haverkamp, and Elsie P. Radtke. Greteman outlines the program in this way: “When a marriage ends it is more than a separation of two people. It is a death of an important part of their lives. Divorce and Beyond, the program for adults who have gone through a recent divorce, offers readers and participants the support and guidance they need to help them through the divorcing process. It helps them through the initial stress, anger and guilt to ultimate forgiveness, happiness and growth.”

“Each week, we focus on one of the many emotions people often experience in divorce – healing, forgiveness, anger, guilt, and much more,” Bev says. “The program is non-denominational in nature and we welcome all regardless of faith. Divorce can be an incredibly stressful time. As we work through the book, we ask people to do some reading and preparation. Then we gather so that each can be aware that God loves them. We always open and close with prayer, followed by discussion and sharing. In past years, we have experienced some wonderful bonding and excellent dialogue.”



to Help Them” try at St. Francis Solanus Parish

In recent years, the program has been offered once a year, beginning on the Monday one week after Labor Day and continuing for the following eight weeks. Meetings are planned to begin at 7 p.m. and end no later than 8:30 p.m. It is important that people pre-register so the facilitators have some idea of numbers and materials needed.

“I need to stress the confidentiality associated with what we do,” Bev says. “I have found the program to be very self-affirming and recommend that anyone feeling the pain of divorce to consider it. I would be happy to talk with anyone interested about what we do and when we are doing it next.”

If you would like to learn more about the Divorce and Beyond Ministry, please contact Bev Helkey at 217-242-8522 or bk86201@hotmail.com.



Our Parish Center *continued from front cover*

to meet, allowing us to share in one another’s lives,” Misty says. “I look at my parish as an extension of my family. There are so many of us busy with our individual lives, but it is important for us to be able to get together for dinners, socialization and ministry in order to continue fostering those familiar bonds. It also allows us to continue reaching out to others, bringing them into the family through these get-togethers and ministry gatherings.”

Readily available for parish events and ministries,

the Parish Center can also be rented out for personal gatherings such as anniversaries, birthday parties and sacramental receptions. Rental fees vary depending on the size of the gathering and the amount of space needed. To book the Center, parishioners may either contact the church office directly or they can request a reservation through the Parish Center and Reservations tab underneath the Parish section on the website at stfrancissolanus.com/parish/parish-center-calendar/.

We encourage parishioners to take advantage of this new space, ensuring that all the time, talent and treasure put into its creation continues to go toward good use. For questions about the Parish Center and its history, please contact either Diane Andrew or Misty Cramsey at 217-222-2898.

All groups, parish or non-parish related, are responsible for cleaning up Parish Center facilities after their event. This is an important part of keeping our communal space nice, ensuring that it is always ready for the next group or gathering. A complete list of Parish Center policies can be located on the parish website at <http://stfrancissolanus.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/Parish-Center-Policy-1.pdf>.

What Is The Chrism Mass?

The Chrism Mass celebrated throughout the Catholic world is traditionally held on the morning of Holy Thursday, unless for pastoral reasons the local bishop or archbishop moves it to another suitable day during Holy Week.

There are basically two purposes for this annual Mass. At the Chrism Mass, the archbishop (or bishop) blesses three oils — the oil of catechumens (*oleum catechumenorum* or *oleum sanctorum*), the oil of the infirm (*oleum infirmorum*) and holy chrism (*sacra chrisma*) — which will be used in the administration of the sacraments throughout the diocese for the following year. In addition, archdiocesan and religious order priests renew their promises.

Anointing with oils has been a practice in the Church since Old Testament times. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* says this about holy oils: “Anointing with oil has all these meanings in the sacramental life. The pre-baptismal anointing with the oil of catechumens signifies cleansing and strengthening; the anointing of the sick expresses healing and comfort. The post-baptismal anointing with sacred chrism in Confirmation and ordination is the sign of consecration. By Confirmation Christians, those who are anointed, share more completely in the mission of Jesus Christ and the fullness of the Holy Spirit with which he is filled, so that their lives may give off ‘the aroma of Christ’” (1294).

Each of us Catholics already has received some of the benefits given through these holy oils — namely, in the Sacrament of Baptism and in the conferring of the Sacrament of Confirmation. We hope to someday obtain further graces through them in the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick (formerly called extreme unction). Yet, most of us know very little about these sacred oils. Moreover, few of us are able to be present when the solemn blessing of them takes place in a cathedral church.

The whole concept of “anointing” has a strong Church tradition. Throughout the Bible, various references indicate the importance of olive oil in daily life. Oil was used in cooking, particularly in the making of bread, that basic



food substance for nourishment; as a fuel for lamps; and as a healing agent in medicine. Moreover, with oil, the Jews anointed the head of a guest as a sign of welcome, beautified one’s appearance, and prepared a body for burial.

Sacred Scripture also attests to the spiritual symbolism of oil. Psalm 45:7 reads, “You love justice and hate wickedness; therefore, God your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness above your fellow kings,” signifying the special designation from God and the joy of being His servant. Moreover, to be “the anointed” of the Lord indicated receiving a special vocation from the Lord and the empowerment with the Holy Spirit to fulfill that vocation: Jesus, echoing the words of Isaiah, spoke, “The spirit of the Lord is upon me; therefore, He has anointed me” (Lk 4:18). St.

Paul emphasized this point as well, “God is the one Who firmly establishes us along with you in Christ; it is He Who anointed us and has sealed us, thereby depositing the first payment, the Spirit in our hearts” (2 Cor 1:21). Therefore, the symbolism of oil is rich sanctification, healing, strengthening, beautification, dedication, consecration, and sacrifice.

At the Chrism Mass, the bishop will bless three different oils: the oil of catechumens, for adult and infant Baptisms; the oil of the sick, for the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick; and the oil of chrism — a fragrant oil blessed only by the bishop for Baptisms, Confirmations, ordination, and the consecration of sacred spaces. After Mass, each priest receives a sufficient amount of all three oils to be used at parishes, schools, hospitals, and other places where they may be assigned and functioning.

In addition, the priests renew their promises at this Mass. The bishop will ask the priests as a group, “Beloved sons, in remembrance of that day when Christ our Lord conferred His priesthood on His Apostles, and on us, are you resolved to renew, in the presence of your bishop and God’s holy people, the promises you once made?” To this, the priests respond in unison, “I am.”

Please consider attending the Chrism Mass as part of your Lenten journey.

Stewardship: Grieving Together and Growing in Grace

Being part of a parish community provides countless opportunities for us to experience God's love and to show Christ to others. While stewardship is often associated with concrete gifts of our time, talent, and treasure, simple acts of kindness to others go beyond simply providing for one's physical needs – they enable us to help one another during life's most challenging moments, presenting Christ to others through our words and deeds. In this way, we embody St. Paul's words to "bear one another's burdens" (Galatians 6:2).

"The Grief Support Group is a new ministry, but not a completely new ministry, because it's part of a bigger effort the parish has – the Funeral Ministry as a whole," Fr. Duc Pham says. "This will be an opportunity for those grieving to pray together, with scriptural guidance. Ultimately it's about giving people an opportunity to share their grief with one another."

Many of us have experienced loss ourselves, or have watched someone close to us experience a loss. These can be times of intense suffering and search-

"Bear one another's burdens, and so you will fulfill the law of Christ."
– GALATIANS 6:2

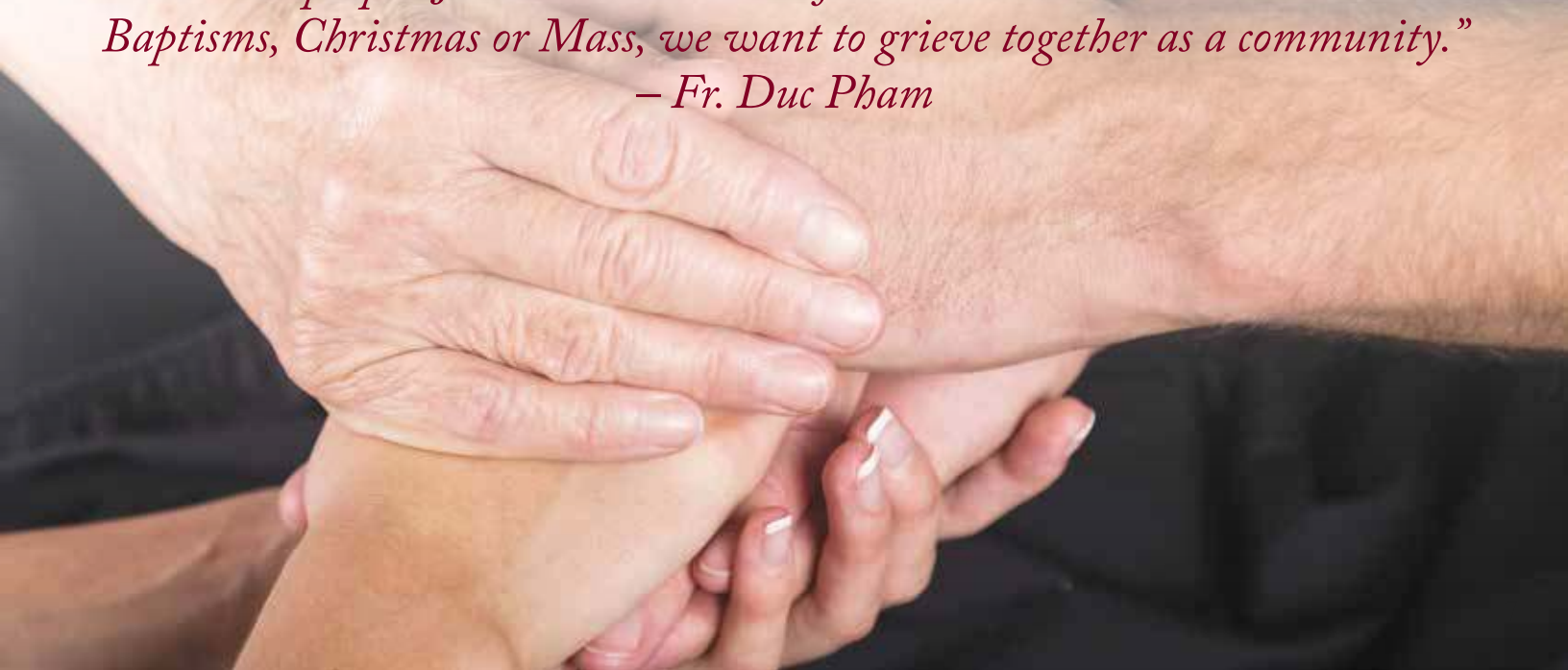
ing. However, comforted by the hope of God's mercy, it can also be a time of great spiritual growth as we are drawn into a deeper reliance and intimacy with our Lord.

"The need is to have Scripture be a part of the important juncture of grieving," Fr. Duc says. "Another dimension is to help people not be isolated when grieving. There is a human dynamic of tension that when you're in pain, you want to draw away – but at the same time, the healing aspect is from sharing that with people. Just as much as we rejoice at various celebrations such as Baptisms, Christmas or Mass, we want to grieve together as a community."

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– Fr. Duc Pham



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ROMAN CATHOLIC PARISH

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

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Stewardship: Grieving Together and Growing in Grace

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The group will meet roughly every other month, depending on the amount of people who come forward with interest. Acting as a type of prayer service, there will be a reading and homily although the main service is allowing those that are grieving to come together and share with each other.

“As a parish, we are trying to understand better how

to become disciples and disciples serve one another,” Fr. Duc says. “I think when Jesus says, ‘Where two or more are gathered, there I am in your midst’ – that there is no other time in our life when we need Jesus in our midst more than when we are grieving, and to experience Christ in our midst, healing us. This is what we do for one another. This is how we journey together and experience discipleship.”

If you would like to learn more about the Grief Support Group or find out when the next meeting is, please contact Fr. Duc Pham at the parish office at 217-222-2898, ext. 104.

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.