

Saint Francis Solanus



SEPTEMBER 2017

The RCIA Team: Sharing the Beauty and Richness of Our Catholic Faith

The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults – RCIA – is the method by which people desiring to seek full initiation into the Catholic Church can do so. It is a ritual process through which people are formed as disciples of Jesus Christ. There are two groups of people included in the RCIA process: the unbaptized who are called “catechumens” and the baptized who are termed “candidates.”

Here at St. Francis Solanus, Coordinator for the RCIA process is Carol Seifert. However, she is ably assisted by an RCIA team – a group of adults who provide a lot of help, including being responsible for some sessions. One of the longtime members of that team is Mike Holbrook.

“I have been involved with RCIA here at St. Francis for 11 years, but my background with the process goes back some 30 years, as I was also involved at a previous parish,” Mike says. “Traditionally, our RCIA annual process begins in September, and for many years it was held on Thursday evenings. However, we make a real attempt to fit the process to the schedules and the availability of our catechumens and candidates. As a result, last year we met on Sunday morning after the 9:30 Mass.”

In terms of his own role on the team, Mike notes



that he has a heart for prayer and a great devotion to the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

“Thus, I tend to teach those classes, and I enjoy trying to share my enthusiasm and knowledge with the others,” he says. “I see RCIA as a way of sharing the beauty and richness of our Catholic faith more fully. It is more than an initiation into the Church – it is a life-changing process, not just a one-time experience. People come to the Church for a variety of reasons.

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Setting an Example of Stewardship for Our Children

As we strive to live as grateful stewards, we must remember that each of us has a responsibility to help our youngest parishioners learn what it means to live as a disciple of Christ. Jesus Himself told the disciples, "Let the children come to me, and do not prevent them; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these" (Mt 19:14). Christ wants children to grow closer to Him and to become His disciples, and parents are responsible for helping to lead their children to this end. The Rite of Baptism reminds us that parents are "the first teachers of their child in the ways of faith."

An important part of faith involves living a life of stewardship, as the proper response of a Christian disciple. So, it follows that parents bear a great responsibility that comes from Christ Himself to raise their children as grateful stewards. However, it may already be difficult for adults to grasp the concept of stewardship and put it into practice in their own lives. How can parents teach their children to do the same?

First and foremost, parents can teach stewardship by setting a good example. Indeed, the example of our lives is so powerful that it can and should be a witness to the Gospel. As parents live the life of stewardship, their children will see the beauty in the stewardship way of life, and they are bound to follow suit. If parents live in thanksgiving to God for all He has given them, their children will grow to see that all we have is a gift from God. And when parents offer gratitude to God, it will surely impact their children.

Eight-year-old Suzie has watched her dad serve Communion at Sunday Masses throughout her young

life. When asked why she thinks he does this, she responds, "We need to help the priest."

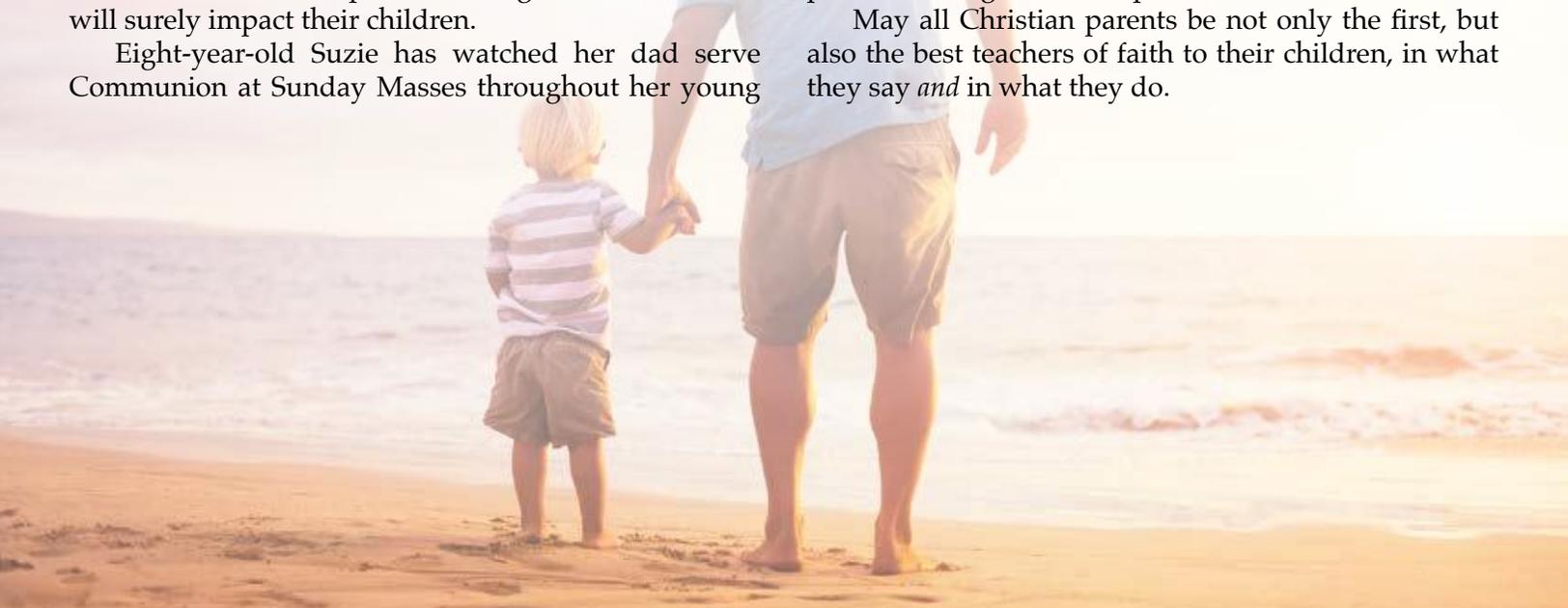
Meanwhile, her older sister, Jane, responds to the same question by explaining, "We need to serve God. He does so much for us. We should appreciate it and give back to Him."

It is clear that by witnessing their dad's example, the girls are beginning to understand – each in her own way – that the life of a Christian disciple involves selfless service in gratitude to God. However, it is not just their father's example that has helped them develop this understanding. Both their father and their mother emphasize stewardship as a family practice. They spend time in family prayer, serve at the soup kitchen together, bring up the offertory as a family, and participate in other acts of service. Such involved participation in the faithful life allows the girls to bear witness to the power of serving others in thanksgiving, even at their young ages.

"We need to help other people," Suzie says. "Jesus wants us to put other people first, and if we want to listen to Him, we need to serve others."

As Suzie's statement demonstrates, the stewardship way of life is not only understood or lived out by adults – Jesus wants children to be His disciples, as well. So, it is essential that parents help their children develop a true understanding of stewardship, and encourage its practice through the example of an active faith life.

May all Christian parents be not only the first, but also the best teachers of faith to their children, in what they say *and* in what they do.



A Letter From Our Pastor

Save Room on Your Busy Schedules for Stewardship

Dear Parishioners,

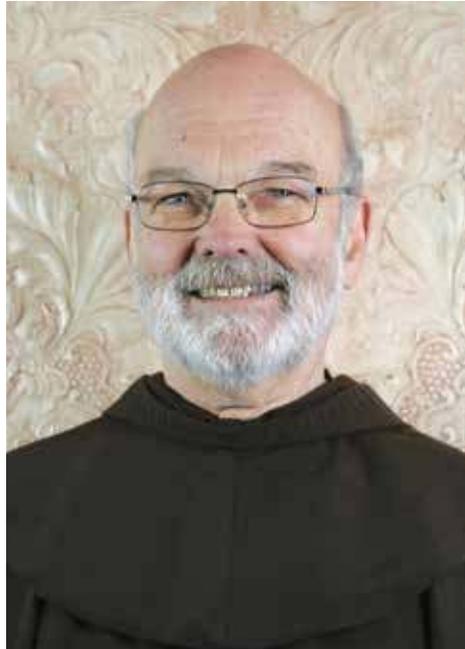
I don't know about you, but I still get a surge of adrenalin as the beginning of September approaches. Even though I'm no longer in school, I feel a sense of anticipation when I see the shelves filled with brand-new notebooks, composition books, and all the assorted items students use. I'm aware once again of the great hopes, exciting dreams, and good intentions that a new school year holds.

Even for those parishioners not directly involved in school, September marks new beginnings. Labor Day traditionally marks the unofficial end of the summer vacation season, and our calendars may reflect that. Many of you have calendars a lot like mine — they're full year-round with appointments and obligations. But even for us, things get busier in September as various organizations that took a break during summer begin their regular round of meetings again.

Nevertheless, I have a request for you as you fill up your fall schedules. First thing, please put in some time to share the talents God has given you. As you are aware, as Christian disciples — as stewards — we are called to return to God a portion of the Time, Talent, and Treasure He has entrusted to us. We should make our commitments to God when we begin our planning, so that we don't offer Him just the scraps of time and energy left over after everything else.

Make this September the month you make a commitment to sing in the choir, including attending rehearsals. Or begin working with our parish religious education in one way or another. Or decide to launder altar linens once a month. Or get involved with one of the parish organizations or ministries. Or help care for the parish grounds. Or join the Knights of Columbus. Or join a social service ministry. Or... well, you get the idea.

There are many ministries and groups within the parish where you can serve, and you'll find that you



receive even as you give. Hardly anyone in the parish can't find at least one activity in which they can participate and which fits their schedule. If **you** aren't involved, make this September the month to change that.

Thinking about commitments, some people say they don't have Time for prayer. Again, it's a matter of priorities, and I challenge any one of you to demonstrate to me that you can't pray at least one Our Father, one Hail Mary, and one Glory Be during the course of the day. That's at least a beginning.

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

St. Francis Solanus C

A new school year is upon us again, and everyone at St. Francis Solanus has been excited to dive in and make this year the best yet! Along with the excellent academics and traditions that make our school great, this year also brings plenty of improvements and new initiatives.

"I am blessed to be starting my fifth year as Principal of St. Francis Solanus," says Ms. Lori Shepard. "I love seeing the students as they arrive each morning and as they leave our building each day. They share personal stories that allow me to get to know them on a deeper level, and my love and respect for them continues to grow each and every day. I can't believe how much they change and grow in just a couple of short summer months! I'm humbled and thankful for the opportunity to work with such great teachers and staff, and to mentor to our future leaders of the community and church."

St. Francis Solanus has added two new faces to the staff this year – Julie Radel joins the staff to teach second grade, and Debbie Olson is our new Intervention Specialist. This year has also brought several changes to school infrastructure, including hiring additional maintenance personnel and renovating two third-floor restrooms. The sixth, seventh and eighth-grade hallway has also been improved, thanks to suggestions from our students. These improvements include a fresh coat of paint,

new lockers and a school logo. We have also started a new hot lunch program, and have made great strides to improve school security after being awarded a grant from the Marion Gardner Jackson Trust.

"Safety is one of our top priorities," Ms. Shepard says. "Because of the extra funds, we were able to add a phone to each classroom. If an intruder were to come into the building, teachers would now have the ability to notify the entire building if we need to go into lock-down. We also have added more security cameras, key-less entry and a new fire alarm system. Our parking lot has been improved with a crosswalk area for students to enter the building, and we have teachers assigned each morning for added supervision."

We also welcomed two important technological advancements to our school.

"Our librarian, Dawn Peters, worked all summer to implement new software to catalog all of our library books properly," Ms. Shepard says. "This has allowed books to be easily and quickly found with the new scanner system.

"We are also offering a new electronic textbook as part of our seventh and eighth-grade social studies curriculum," she adds. "The Techbook is produced by Discovery Education, an affiliate of Discovery Channel, and will be downloaded onto the students' iPads."



Austin's Army volunteers Ed Zanger and Alan Blickhan give the lower hallway a fresh coat of paint.



New lockers were added to our sixth, seventh and eighth-grade hallways.

Goes Back to School

The Techbook's benefits include updated geography material throughout the year, weekly updates with current events videos and links that tie in to what students learn in history, word definitions and video explanations of relevant terms. Students who struggle with reading proficiency and comprehension are able to adjust the book's reading level, or hear an audio version. Students are also able to highlight and take notes in their Techbook, and teachers and parents are able to track their students' progress.

St. Francis Solanus seeks to form well-rounded students, and faith is an intrinsic part of what we do here at our school. In keeping with tradition, Ms. Shepard has chosen a new theme for this school year: "This is the Day the Lord Has Made, Let Us Rejoice and Be Glad!"

"This phrase reminds us that we should be thankful to our Lord for another day," she says. "We should not go through our day with complaints and a frown, but rather trust in Him and rejoice!"

As always, school staff works together with parish clergy to help children become both academically successful, as well as spiritually enriched.

"Our dedicated teachers continue to nurture, love, teach, and instruct your children to best of their ability each and every day," Ms. Shepard says. "If a child is having difficulties in any area, my heart goes out to them and

it is my top concern. Everything else stops if a child is in need. We work as a team to solve academic social, or emotional concerns.

"We are also blessed to have three priests who minister to our school family on a regular basis, offering Liturgy every Wednesday and numerous prayer services at various times," she adds. "They also establish a strong rapport with our student body by coming into the classrooms on a regular basis and teaching the core foundation of our faith."

Over the years, many members of the parish family have reached out to support our school. By working together to provide the best Catholic education for our students, we are developing the future of our Church and community.

"Our student leaders will one day inspire others to practice stewardship, share their faith, and become role models of the city of Quincy," Ms. Shepard says. "It is up to the adults in the parish to set the tone and create a path for our young people to follow for years to come."

How can you help our school to thrive? Many parishioners have been generous with their time, talent, and treasure – by giving material and monetary donations, offering tutoring for students helping teachers with various tasks and more. Ms. Shepard recalls how many of our retired parishioners have generously stepped up to the plate.

"Our 'Solanus Saints' are always willing to help with any academic area that they can," she says. "Our 'Austin's Army' group is comprised of several retired gentlemen who have helped our school for many years and have saved us thousands of dollars in repair work and painting. They help beautify our school and, in turn, our students take such pride in belonging to a school family that cares and supports each other. We are most grateful to them for donating their time and talent to make such a difference in our school!"

"May the Lord bless us and watch over us," she adds. "As we work together to make this the best school year yet!"

"Our student leaders will one day inspire others to practice stewardship, share their faith, and become role models of the city of Quincy. It is up to the adults in the parish to set the tone and create a path for our young people to follow for years to come."

– Ms. Lori Shepard, Principal



There were new technological advancements put into place for this school year, including electronic textbooks and a new library scanner system.

Visiting the Franciscan Missions in Alaska

“Mission Trips are About Building Relationships”



Traveling on the Yukon River to Koyukuk



St. Patrick's in Koyukuk

Our sister parishes, the Franciscan Missions located deep in Alaska's interior, had always intrigued Angel Miranda. This summer, she experienced the missions firsthand and shared everything from Mass to moose meatloaf with our extended faith community members.

“My absolute favorite thing about the trip was the sense of community,” Angel says. “Mission trips are not always about doing something, like building a house. They are about building things between you like relationships, family, a community.”

Angel was first inspired to visit our sister parishes after attending the Sister Parish Conference in 2016. During this educational experience, she learned more about mission trips and the many ways we can give to our sister parishes.

“I knew when I left there that day that I had to travel to these parishes so that we could build a relationship with them,” Angel says.

This year, from July 23 to July 29, 16 members of St. Francis Solanus traversed across three time zones to the Diocese of Fairbanks, Alaska, to visit the Franciscan mission parishes.

After landing in Fairbanks and navigating delays caused by forest fires and a volcanic eruption, seven of them traveled on a tiny plane to Galena to visit the faith community members of St. John Berchmans.

“We had a community dinner with covered dishes including salmon, moose and other delicious items to try,” Angel says. “We experienced songs in the native language and were given a handmade basket in which we placed the names of everyone in the room, almost like it sealed us as a family.”

On Tuesday, Angel and her group traveled on a boat down the Yukon River to visit the parishes in Koyukuk and then in Nulato, St. Patrick and Our Lady of the Snows.

“At Our Lady of the Snows, the people of Nulato and all of us got to partake in a full Mass, which they do not get the opportunity to do often,” Angel says. “We finished with a dinner and enjoyed each other's conversation and stories.”

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Visiting the Franciscan Missions in Alaska

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On the trip, Angel most enjoyed building relationships with the members of our larger community. She describes it as similar to catching up with relatives.

“Everyone was so welcoming and personable,” Angel says. “This applies to not only the Athabascan people, but also to our own parishioners I had not met prior to this trip.”

The trip also opened Angel’s eyes to so many things that we take for granted, from regularly scheduled Masses to everyday living expenses. For example, she discovered that in the regions of Alaska they visited, a gallon of milk was \$12.

“It is so easy to get swept away by life’s daily responsibilities, and we tend to just assume the things that we are used to will always be there,” Angel says. “We get caught in the hustle and bustle and forget sometimes to be thankful for what we have all around us.”

Angel would encourage anyone who can to take a trip to visit and foster relationships with our sister parishes in Alaska.

“The way the people held each other together was wonderful, and the treatment of elders was so inspirational,” Angel says. “I have every intention to take advantage of Mass now, since so many people don’t have the opportunity to receive as much as I can.”

“It is so easy to get swept away by life’s daily responsibilities, and we tend to just assume the things that we are used to will always be there. We get caught in the hustle and bustle and forget sometimes to be thankful for what we have all around us.” – Angel Miranda



Members of St. Francis Solanus in Koyukuk



Faith community members in Galena



The Yukon River and Nulato

St. Francis Solanus

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The RCIA Team *continued from front cover*

RCIA is a way of meeting them on their level and accommodating their needs. Because of the nature of conversion, people come at different stages and different times. We now are really on a year-round schedule.”

After meeting throughout the year, traditionally it is at the Easter Vigil on Holy Saturday when the elect are initiated into the Catholic Church through their reception of the Sacraments of Initiation – Baptism, Confirmation, and the Holy Eucharist. Those already baptized enter into full communion in the Church and celebrate

the Sacraments of Confirmation and the Eucharist. It is a joyful occasion for the whole Church, but it does not conclude the RCIA process.

RCIA continues to meet throughout the Easter Season – normally through Pentecost Sunday. This is a time of reflection during which the new members of our Church can meditate upon their initiation and seek to deepen their understanding of the Christian faith and way of life through the new experience of being fully practicing members of our Catholic community.

If you would like to learn more about the RCIA process at St. Francis, please contact Coordinator Carol Seifert at 217-222-2898 or cseifert@gmail.com. People interested in being part of the RCIA team should also contact Carol. We are also in need of sponsors for the candidates.

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.