

Saint Francis Solanus



DECEMBER 2017

Caring for Our Parish Family Through Intercessory Prayer

Though we often focus our stewardship ministry on more active forms of service, it's important not to forget an important and powerful method of helping those in need — intercessory prayer. For in lifting up our own and the needs of others in prayer, we simultaneously acknowledge our dependence on God's grace. This in turn leads us to a greater act of surrender, entrusting ourselves to a good and merciful Father and drawing us all closer together as the Body of Christ.

"I think intercessory prayer helps us remain focused on what Christianity is truly all about," parishioner Pam Keller says. "It's not about ourselves — our faith is about others. We're about living out stewardship and helping those in need."

Pam is honored to be the parishioner responsible for creating the Intercessory Prayers for St. Francis Solanus' weekend liturgies. Newly written each week, it's her own special form of stewardship as she prayerfully considers what's going on in the life of the Church and world.

"There are certain standard intentions each week that Fr. Don likes for us to have, like for our sister parishes in Alaska and for the Right to Life," Pam says. "Then for the others, I usually like to incorporate what's going on that week, whether it's Grand-

continued on back cover



St. Francis Solanus parishioner Pam Keller, coordinator of the parish's Intercessory Prayers



The Eucharist and Stewardship as a Way of Life

More than 20 years ago, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops approved a pastoral letter titled *Stewardship: A Disciple's Response*. This document was an invitation to follow Christ Who gave of Himself for us. Each of us is called to serve our neighbors and to be stewards of God's creation and of all that has been entrusted to us. However, to truly understand stewardship, we must look to the Holy Eucharist. The Holy Eucharist is the total gift of our loving Savior to us. Stewardship is our response to that gift.

Even the word "Eucharist" implies stewardship. The word "Eucharist" finds its roots in the Latin word *eucharistia*, which in turn came from the Greek word *eukaristos*, which meant, quite simply, "gratitude" or "thanksgiving." How fitting that we, who are called to be a stewardship people, celebrate at the focal point of every Mass an act of thanksgiving and gratitude — namely, the reception of Jesus' gift to us — the Eucharist.

In their pastoral letter on stewardship, the bishops speak of the Eucharist in this way: "The Eucharist is the great sign and agent of this expansive communion of charity... we enjoy a unique union with Christ and, in Him, with one another. Here His love — indeed, His very Self — flows into us as disciples and, through us and our practice of stewardship to the entire human race."

When we receive Christ's Body in the Holy Eucharist, we hear the minister say, "The Body of Christ." To this, we respond, "Amen" — which means in Hebrew, "Yes; it is so." This is the essence of stewardship. We should enter the Church for Mass out of "gratitude." We recognize the presence of the Lord in Holy Communion, and then we truly receive the Lord. What is left for us to do is the fulfillment of stewardship — that is, sharing what we have received in love of God and neighbor. Our entire experience speaks to stewardship — we are grateful; we recognize the real presence of the Lord; we receive the Lord; and then we share what we have received.

Christ's gift to us through the Eucharist is an invitation to us. We are called to give beyond what is convenient or what may be comfortable. We are called to forgive even



when forgiveness may not be deserved; we are called to love even when that love is not returned. We are called to love as God loves us.

The Eucharist is stewardship celebrated. The Mass is more than a ritual. It is an actual encounter with God, with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. We need to respond to the Eucharist with our complete selves. What we experience in the Eucharist should, in turn, translate into our daily lives. We are committed to the Church, which is Christ's body. We show our love for His body by acts of charity and generosity. We spend time in prayer, expressing our gratitude and our love.

God's greatest gift to us is Christ's great love for us — this was shown when He was crucified on the Cross to pay the penalty for our sins and to give us eternal life. God's love for us is without limit, and He offers Himself to us in the Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist. Stewardship is how we respond to that gift.

"The Eucharist is 'the source and summit of the Christian life.' 'The other sacraments, and indeed all ecclesiastical ministries and the works of the apostolate, are bound up with the Eucharist and are oriented toward it. For in the blessed Eucharist is contained the whole spiritual good of the Church.'" — *Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1324*



A Letter From Our Pastor

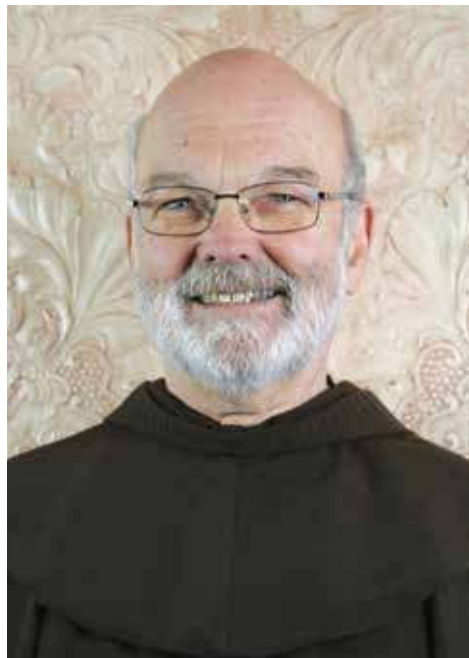
Reflections at the End of the Year

Dear Parishioners,

It seems as if we just finished Lent and Easter, and here we are at Advent and Christmas. To say this is a busy month for many is an understatement. Although December is a month of love, it can also be a difficult month for some. For those with families, it may be a month of travel as people rush to be united with loved ones, sometimes after a long period of separation.

There is no shortage of reminders as to what time of year this is. However, for us as Catholics, we may need to refocus to see where we are in our faith lives. Were you aware that for us, December is dedicated to the Immaculate Conception? In that regard, we celebrate a Holy Day of Obligation on Friday, Dec. 8. Advent begins on Dec. 3, and you may notice that we begin to wear purple as a sign of Advent. That color changes to white or gold beginning at Christmas.

Of course, this is also the last month of the regular calendar year, which may add additional tasks to our own schedules as we finalize things for the end of the year. However, there are many opportunities for us during this month to share, to pray and to celebrate in a Christian way, and I would encourage you to make an effort to be part of these. Right here in our parish, much is happening along those lines, and a careful



reading of the bulletin will alert you to the “when, where and what” of these upcoming opportunities.

As I indicated earlier, this can also be a difficult time for some. In the midst of our own celebrations and joy, we need to be aware of that reality and of those living with it. This is a time to reach out, and it is a time to show love.

This December, let our minds be focused on Christ, Who will be born for us at Christmas, and for Whose coming we must always be prepared throughout the year. This is a time to thank God and to pray. It is a time to reach out to love and live peacefully with one another. We need to remember that life continues after December, in spite of everything we feel we need to get done.

My prayers and blessings go out to each of you and your families. May God continue to watch over you. May the year 2017 end well for all of us!

Sincerely yours in Christ,

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

School Volunteers Offer L

In the spirit of “it takes a village to raise a child,” the willing volunteers who come forward as helpers at our St. Francis Solanus School are making sure our students are not only well-prepared academically, but also solidly grounded in their faith.

Lori Shepard, Principal of St. Francis Solanus, has high praise and deep gratitude for all those who help make a difference for our children.

“All of these people minister to our students, which is a great lesson on stewardship for them,” she says. “Sharing of their time, talent, and treasures will give them lasting memories of what it means to walk in the path of Christ. Without their help, our school would be lacking in so many areas, and we are enriched on a daily basis because of their generosity and kindness.”

Ms. Shepard cites the virtual “team of volunteers” who truly live in stewardship for our school.

“We are blessed to have Solanus Saints, who are matched with each individual teacher to help tutor students needing a little extra help, run copies, make bulletin boards, or help cut out materials,” she says. “We are also blessed to have Austin’s Army, who come in every Monday morning from 8 a.m. to noon to assist us in repair work, painting, building projects, and many other creative tasks too numerous here to mention.”

With the work of Austin’s Army, our school enjoys a savings of thousands of dollars — and the volunteers expect nothing in return.

Ms. Shepard also cites the work of Karen Bottorff,

who enables our school to offer Spanish to our sixth, seventh, and eighth-grade students each Wednesday.

“They will develop a strong foundation for the language when they go to Quincy Notre Dame in the future,” Ms. Shepard notes.

Another group of volunteers who are invaluable to our school are the library assistants. These women are dedicated to coming to the school each Tuesday to help Mrs. Peters while the students are checking out books, returning books, or are in the library for a study hall.

“No matter the request, the ladies are always willing to help where needed,” Ms. Shepard says.

Another valuable volunteer is Connie Gordan, who reports to the school on a regular basis to help the women in the office copy materials.

“Connie has been in so often that she has her own ‘bucket’ of materials that is usually waiting for her with Post-It notes attached!” Ms. Shepard says. “We do not know what we would do without her! When she cannot come in for a week or two, everyone in the office notices that she has not been here and we miss her greatly.”

Another valuable helper is Misty Cramsey, who sorts forms in the office.

“We thank her for her time, as well,” Ms. Shepard says.

There are behind-the-scenes helpers who have made a difference for our school in its daily operations. Brian Schrecke built a staircase on the school stage that provides storage for chairs and other items above the stage area.

“He quietly began working on the project and had it



Our St. Francis Solanus School volunteers

Life Lesson of Stewardship

completed in no time," Ms. Shepard says. "And again, he did not expect any recognition whatsoever. By donating his time for this project, he has provided a valuable extension of our space and storage. What a tremendous gift!"

Ms. Shepard also is most grateful to Schuyler Chandler, who donated his time to service the school's air conditioning and heating units.

"Again, his work is a tremendous effort that many people are not aware of," Ms. Shepard says.

Two of our parish organizations also are in the ranks of school helpers. The Holy Name Men's Society has held annual golf tournaments for many years, with all the proceeds going directly to the school for technology upgrades, or to help purchase extra materials for the teachers' classrooms. Each spring, several of the members help clean up the landscape area in front of the school building.

"What a difference they make!" Ms. Shepard says. "Every year, my heart fills with joy to see their love and support for our students and teachers at this school."

The Ladies of St. Francis have also donated large ticket items to the school over several years that the school otherwise would not be able to afford.

"We love the bench outside the west doors that they

recently donated," Ms. Shepard says. "This comes in very handy during recess for the children."

The room mothers volunteer to make treats, create fames, and help with afternoon parties for the students when holidays are celebrated. Guest speakers also share a wealth of information with our students. Our alumni, parents, and community members also step up with financial support. The Memorials to the school, with donations to upgrade the technology and needed books, also are counted as helpers.

"The list of people behind the scenes that share of their surplus is too long to mention here," Ms. Shepard says. "You know who you are and the Lord sees what you do."

Ms. Shepard also cites the blessings in having our three Franciscan priests, Fr. Don, Fr. Duc, and Fr. Bob, who visit the classrooms on a regular basis to discuss very important topics with the children that helps build their faith life. The priests frequently have prayer services for the students and celebrate Mass every Wednesday.

"They inspire us to keep our faith life 'front and center' and help draw us closer together as a school family," Ms. Shepard says.

Anyone interested in becoming a volunteer for St. Francis Solanus School may call Ms. Shepard at 217-222-4077.



Volunteers help to keep things running smoothly.

Stewardship and Hospitality for the Advent and Christmas Seasons

It's the Advent and Christmas season. You've extended invitations, planned the menu, and decorated your home. You are ready to be hospitable. But what does it really mean to live the stewardship of hospitality?

The Bible tells us in 1 Peter 4: 8-11, "Above all, let your love for one another be intense, because love covers a multitude of sins. Be hospitable to one another without complaining. As each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another as good stewards of God's varied grace. Whoever preaches, let it be with the words of God; whoever serves, let it be with the strength that God supplies, so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong glory and dominion forever and ever."

When we read Peter's words, we see that hospitality is more than good manners. We see that hospitality is part of what it means to be a faithful steward. So, during the hustle and bustle of Advent and Christmas, how can we be hospitable?

Open your home to strangers. The holidays can be an especially painful time for people. This year, do something about it. If you're already expecting strangers, welcome them warmly. Decide ahead of time that

showing love is more important than passing judgment.

Be truly cheerful. When you open your home for the holidays, you may be a happy host, but are you a cheerful one? Believe it or not, there's a difference. A happy person feels happiness. A cheerful person causes happiness.

Use your gifts to serve. Hosting and serving go together. You bake the turkey, pour the drinks, and slice the pie. To some degree, this is expected and normal. What's not normal is for a host to truly serve — to look for the needs in others and the gifts in themselves and find even a small way to help.

Give God glory. When family, friends and strangers enter your home, it's an opportunity for them to see Christ in you. You never know what's going on behind the scenes in people's lives or how much an encounter like this might mean to them. So, when you welcome and serve your guests, remember that your ultimate goal is to give God glory.

Advent and Christmas give us the opportunity to reflect on Jesus' call to live as stewards and disciples of His Word — and through hospitality, we can live that calling.



Flower Committee Bringing *Beauty* to God's House

Flowers. Banners. Plants. Colors. Isn't it nice to walk into a beautiful church? In a special way, as Catholics, we appreciate the "smells and bells," the physical reminders of our faith, acknowledging that this created beauty invites us to come to know Ultimate Beauty, in God.

And while we do our best to create a beautiful environment at St. Francis Solanus, it isn't simply to have a pleasant visual. Those who serve as part of our Flower Committee, decorating our church along with the seasons, hope to make it a place that draws people closer to God.

"Our church is one of the oldest Catholic churches in Quincy and it's absolutely beautiful," says longtime parishioner, Joyce Frericks, a retired floral designer, who has served on the Flower Committee for the past 15 years. "I just enjoy it tremendously — when all God's people can come and enjoy this beautiful church."

The Flower Committee hopes to make our church a welcoming environment, for both longtime parishioners, as well as visitors to the area.

"I give glory to God and we want to make His house beautiful for all," Joyce says. "You've got people who just come on Easter and Christmas — the church triples in attendance for those Masses, and you want to try to get those people to come back time after time."

The Flower Committee decorates for all the significant feast days — poinsettias for Christmas and lilies for Easter — as well as to denote the changing of seasons, such as a fall display complete with pumpkins and mums, or military memorabilia to commemorate holidays such as Fourth of July or Veterans Day.

Joyce often finds herself praying as she works to decorate the church.

"I think we all just talk silently to God," Joyce says. "Not a lot is said, but everybody, in their own way, is talking and praying to God as they're doing this."

A sense of camaraderie has also grown amongst those who serve in this way.

"It makes you feel more connected to the church," Joyce says. "It ties you with your fellow parishioners and they become a part of your family, you care so much about



Each season, members of our Flower Committee work to make the church a beautiful place to worship.

each and every one of them."

Joyce encourages her fellow parishioners to consider becoming involved in this ministry, especially this Christmas, which falls on a Monday.

"We have such a small window of time to get in and decorate the church for Christmas this year," Joyce says. "We'd love the help — we've got three hours this year!"

She encourages even those who may not be expert florists to come and help.

"There's a lot of busy work, taking down all the Advent stuff and putting up all the Christmas stuff — there's a lot to do," Joyce says. "Everybody is appreciated for whatever talent they bring to the table."

For Joyce, one of the highlights of serving in on the Flower Committee is walking into Mass for the first time, after they've decorated for a special day.

"It brings everybody together," she says. "You're just so happy to see all the families together. It gives your heart a warm feeling to see so many parishioners in the church together. It's a very powerful sensation to walk in and see the smiles on everybody's faces — the joy of the day and celebrating the real true reason for Christmas."

For more information or to serve with the Flower Committee, please contact ministry coordinator Doris Karhoff at 217-224-1516, or Joyce Frericks at 217-440-6588. Parishioners will be gathering at noon on Dec. 24 to decorate the church. Please come help if you are able!

St. Francis Solanus

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Caring for Our Parish Family Through Intercessory Prayer

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parents' Day, Vocation Awareness, or Catholic Schools Week. They change, too, with the various liturgical seasons. So in general, it's made me really pay attention to what's going on in the Church."

Yet, though these weekly intentions are written specifically for the Sunday liturgies, Pam explains, they aren't intended to be read just once and then forgotten by the congregation. Rather, these petitions are intended as a sort of guideline for our own personal prayer throughout the upcoming week, uniting us

further as we lift up the needs of our parish, Church and world together.

"We as Catholics need to take these intentions home with us and to continue to pray for one another," Pam says. "That's part of the great beauty of being Catholic. I know in my own case, it's made me much more aware, keeping the needs of the Church more present in my mind. I'm hoping that's true of others, too, helping us all practice our faith more fully out in the public and remaining more connected with one another throughout the week."

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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.