

Saint Francis Solanus



APRIL 2018

St. Francis Solanus Students Prepared for Easter During Lenten Journey

The students at St. Francis Solanus School have prepared for the celebration of Easter by taking their Lenten journey with powerful prayer services and service projects that draw them closer to living in Christ.

“Clearly, the service projects remind the students of how Jesus came to serve us all,” says Principal Lori Shepard. “We follow His example of helping others and hope to live a life of holiness. Our prayer services bring us closer to the faith life that our Catholic schools foster, and we are encouraged to share our talents with others, as we have been created by our Lord and Savior for that purpose.”

The students began their journey with a Fat Tuesday Mardi Gras Carnival that included an afternoon of games, activities, food, and lots of fun with prizes included. But the next day, Ash Wednesday, the mood shifted dramatically with a focus on the Lenten Liturgical Season.

“The Season of Lent allowed our school to draw closer to Jesus through prayer, service, sacrifice, fasting and abstaining,” Ms. Shepard says.

Students created colorful masks to wear during the all-school Lenten Prayer Service. During the service, the students also symbolically buried the “Alleluia” until Easter morning with the Resurrection of our Lord, Jesus Christ. The prayer service focused on how some people wear a mask to cover up their true identity, but that



Mr. Carroll Range, a crossing guard for St. Francis Solanus School for many years, was honored with this cake on the occasion of his 87th birthday.

the Lord creates each person with gifts and talents that should not be hidden, but shared with the world.

The entire school also focused on the Stations of the Cross as another powerful prayer service. A large screen was created that enabled the students to experience the Stations visually, while students acted out the passages.

“It was a dramatic effect that left a lasting impression upon the students,” Ms. Shepard says.

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St. Francis Solanus Students Prepared for Easter During Lenten Journey

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Service projects have also been part of the students' Lenten journey. They collected food items for the Food Pantry for needy families, and creating door decorations for nursing home residents.

"To remind us of how Jesus is the Servant of all, students participated in a prayer service that included washing of the feet," Ms. Shepard says. "It was a moving experience for all involved."

Individual classrooms also took part in service activities, such as making cards for nursing home residents and also visiting them. Students also held other service projects to help others around the school on a daily basis during Lent.

A special project involved the students' honoring Mr. Carroll Range, a crossing guard, on his 87th birthday.

"Mr. Range has been an integral part of St. Francis for many years," Ms. Shepard says. "He has been on the street corner of 18th and College, assisting our students as they cross the busy street and always sharing a wave and a smile. He is well-known in Quincy and is loved by all."

Mr. Range recently suffered a stroke and had been hospitalized, but he now lives in a nursing home in Quincy.

"The students created a large poster with their signatures to thank him for the many years of service to our school and wish him a happy birthday," Ms. Shepard says. "He is missed on our corner, but we keep him in prayer and wish him well."

The teachers at St. Francis Solanus School work each year on creative ways to emulate the teachings of the Church and to draw the students closer to Jesus.

"The ashes remind us of the cross, and the Passion, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ," Ms. Shepard says. "We want to be a part of that journey. We have been saved by His sacrifice and we want to celebrate our waters of Baptism with everlasting life. We want our hearts to be purified and prepared for the coming of the Lord."

Of course, the students' activities during Lent leading up to Easter are just part of how St. Francis Solanus School is creating a strong foundation for their faith.

"Catholic education is the future of our Church,"



Mr. Carroll Range — who was employed as a school crossing guard by the Quincy Public Schools and who worked with our school for many years — is honored by fellow employees during his 87th birthday party. Our St. Francis Solanus students made cards and a large, signed poster for the party.

Ms. Shepard says. "We are creating the foundation for generations to come to stay strong in their faith life by living the Gospel each and every day. We are providing valuable experiences with our School Mission to provide a Christ-centered environment that empowers students to serve God and others, not only during the Lenten Season, but in Ordinary Times, as well. As students leave our school, grow, mature and thrive, we are building the leaders of our Catholic faith for the future and beyond. The Catholic faith will be part of our heritage, our gift to our children, and the service leaders of tomorrow."



Mr. Carroll Range's daughters help him open cards made by our students at St. Francis Solanus School for his birthday. In the background is a large poster the students made and signed for Mr. Range, who was a beloved crossing guard at the school for many years. He is now living in a nursing home after having a stroke.

Inquiries about enrolling children at St. Francis Solanus School are welcome. Please call the school at 217-222-4077.

A Letter From Our Pastor

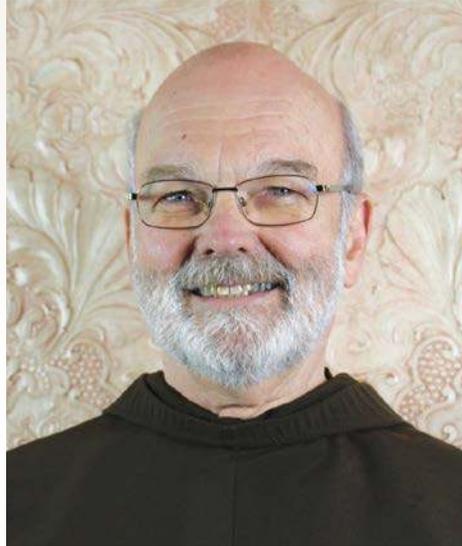
Where Are Our Priorities?

Dear Parishioners,

I am in hopes that you are aware that we are completing and will continue to celebrate the holiest time of the year in our Church. Easter Sunday, April 1, is the high point of the year for us as Catholics. We will, of course, continue to celebrate this holy time until Pentecost Sunday, which is May 20 this year. That is correct — our Easter season continues until then.

St. Paul provided some sage advice. He said, “think of what is above, not of what is on earth” (Colossians 3:2). Regardless of your opinions on what happens after resurrection, we can agree that it will be something “above” this life. Paul might be asking us if we put God first in all things. Life can become very encumbered with possessions, money, power, and even our egos.

Our goal should be to put God at the top of our lists. If that is not what we do, we may need to ad-



just our priorities. If we have not moved in that direction during Lent or in the past, now is the time to do it. We must constantly strive to not allow earthly things to become our gods.

It was St. Gregory the Great who said, “God made us to be the gardeners of paradise.” Some stewardship people have maintained that God has given each of us a garden — and when we are judged, we only hear one question, “What have you done with the garden I gave you?”

What have we done? What are we doing? First, we must recognize

and acknowledge that we are all gifted, admittedly in different and varied ways. Despite what we see as our gifts or how we measure them, we need to ensure that we are using them in ways that serve God and others — ways that show good discipleship and stewardship on our parts.

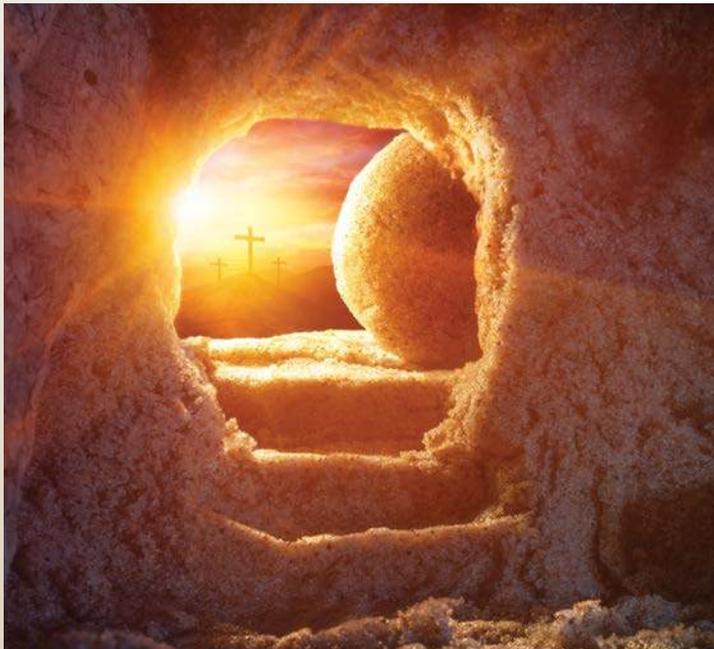
Were you aware that the month of April is dedicated to the Holy Spirit in the Church? The term “spirit” translates from the Hebrew word *ruah*, which means “breath.” Truly, as Catholics, the Holy Spirit has been breathed into each of us, and is part of the garden we have received. Do we turn to Him? Do we rely on Him for strength? Do we even grant that He is part of our very being? We should. We need to, as St. Paul advised, “think of what is above, not of what is on earth.”

May God bless you in all you do, and strive to do!

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Fr. Don, OFM". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

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



Doris and Marty

Sharing a Deep

“Since being involved in the parish, our relationship with God has grown more deeply and helped us realize He is there with us, no matter what the problem. Our marriage and family life has become a lot better because we’re now both more involved. We have a sign — ‘God doesn’t give what we can handle, God helps us handle what we are given.’ This has helped us tremendously deal with life’s situations. God is with us in good times and in bad. He never leaves us.” — Doris Karhoff

Challenges and struggles in life can serve to bring us closer to God, or they can pull us away. Parishioner Doris Karhoff has experienced life’s difficulties doing both.

Born and raised in a large Catholic family, Doris attended St. Francis Solanus Parish and School, as well as Quincy Notre Dame.

Doris’ husband, Marty, however, was not raised with faith.

“The only time I went to church when I was younger was when I stayed with my cousins,” Marty says.

However, difficult life circumstances pulled Doris away from her faith and it wasn’t until her father’s passing, nearly 20 years ago, that she began attending Mass again.

“When my father was dying, he said, ‘Take your mom to church,’” Doris says. “And I did. I thought, ‘There’s got to be something in this religion. There’s got to be something I’m missing.’”

Little did Doris realize that would be the spark that revived her faith. She joined a class called Returning Catholics and began growing in her faith again.

“All those years, God had been there, but I didn’t open my eyes to see it,” she says.

Not only was Doris’ faith renewed, but Marty — who had always been supportive, while watching from the sidelines — also began his own journey of faith. After attending a parish mission, he decided to begin the RCIA process, which Doris attended with him. During that time, he also attended a retreat, which sparked his faith even more. Marty was baptized at the Easter Vigil in 2014.

“I always did believe in God, but going to church,”

Marty says. “I thought, let me try and see what happens.

“It’s changed my attitude,” he adds. “Before, I just didn’t care, and I thought all the Catholic stuff was crazy, but it’s entirely different than what I thought. The people are great, you couldn’t ask for better people in a church.”

“It actually made me appreciate my religion more,” Doris says of going through RCIA alongside Marty. “I had taken a lot of things for granted.”

Now, the couple — who have four children and eight grandchildren — are very active in the parish, both on staff, as well as in various parish organizations. Doris is the housekeeper at the rectory and Marty works in grounds and maintenance. Doris serves on the Liturgy Committee and is an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion and greeter at Mass. They both serve at the Lenten Soup Suppers, and Marty is also an usher. Doris is part of the Ladies of St. Francis and Marty participates in Holy Name Men. They both attended a Cursillo several years ago, and recently joined a couples prayer group.

“Our world has really changed,” Doris says. “We’re involved in a lot.

“Since being involved in the parish, our relationship with God has grown more deeply and helped us realize He is there with us, no matter what the problem,” she adds. “Our marriage and family life has become a lot better because we’re now both more involved. We have a sign — ‘God doesn’t give what we can handle, God helps us handle what we are given.’ This has helped us tremendously deal with life’s situations. God is with us in good times and in bad. He never leaves us.”

“It’s just like the family I didn’t have,” Marty

Karhoff Relationship With God

says. "I've got my church family. I'm just blessed that God gave me a second chance."

For those who may feel distant from their faith, Doris reminds that God's arms are always open, waiting for us to come back.

"God didn't leave me, I left God — He was there the whole time," Doris says. "He takes us all back. He wants us for who we are and He will mold us into who we should be when we come back and ask Him for help."

Doris encourages those who struggle with watching their loved ones reject the faith to persevere in hope and prayer, and also live their own lives as a witness of what it means to be a Catholic.

"Just keep praying for that person," Doris says. "Do your religion the way you're supposed to, because they're watching. It may take time, but just keeping praying that God will touch them and your actions will touch them in some way. My mother always said there was power in prayer and I believe that."

The Karhoffs also hope that fellow parishioners will reap the benefits of becoming more involved in the life of the parish.

"The more you get involved the happier life is," Doris says. "The more you get involved, the more you open yourself up, God is there to help you. You've just got to open your eyes and listen."

"Just try it," Marty says. "Go for it."



Marty and Doris Karhoff (front row, pictured with their family) have experienced the joy that comes from faith and involvement in the parish.

The Challenge of Discipleship

God calls us to give Him everything – our whole heart, our whole soul, and our whole mind. This is the challenge of discipleship – a lifelong process of more fully placing our lives under the lordship of Jesus Christ.

The reason that God can ask such complete service from us is that He made us. Everything we have belongs to Him! This includes our intelligence, our physical ability, our artistic talent, our family, our finances, our government – anything we may typically think of as “ours.”

It takes courage to recognize that we are not the masters of our possessions and ourselves. Furthermore, as Christians, we believe that because everything we have is a gift from God, we are called to give Him thanks. We express our thanks by using our gifts to further His kingdom on earth. This is the basis for our understanding of stewardship.

We refer to “time,” “talent,” and “treasure” in order to differentiate between the various parts of our life that belong to God. “Time” is the duration of life that God has given us. “Talent” includes the special gifts or strengths God has nurtured in us. “Treasure” is what we have earned through our time and talent.

Even though we identify these three aspects of stewardship, they are still part of the same Gospel-based concept. And even when we focus separately

on these parts, it should not signal that one is more important than the other. Instead, focusing on each aspect one at a time helps us to better concentrate on that area in our lives.

Stewardship is, after all, an attitude. If our goal is to become better stewards, we must have a reason in our minds to do so. Here are the basics of a stewardship attitude:

“God made everything!”

A wholehearted trust that God made all things is essential to understanding stewardship. Recognizing God as the Creator is one of the most basic, profound beliefs of Christianity.

“I am truly blessed!”

It takes humility in order to truly acknowledge God’s goodness. Every great triumph and every little pleasure is a blessing from above, and every strong character trait we possess is a gift from God.

“I believe I am to use God’s gifts for His glory!”

What better way to thank God for His goodness than by using our personal gifts to glorify Him? We are not the owners of our time, talent or treasure. But we are caretakers given the responsibility of spreading God’s kingdom on earth.



Reaching Out to Parishioners With Our Home Visits Program

“The whole point is that we share with one another. We show that each person and each household is important and a part of our parish family. We have completed one round of visits. I feel like we are successful in what we have done so far, but I, and the others on the committee, recognize that we still have a lot of work to do.” — Emily Wellman

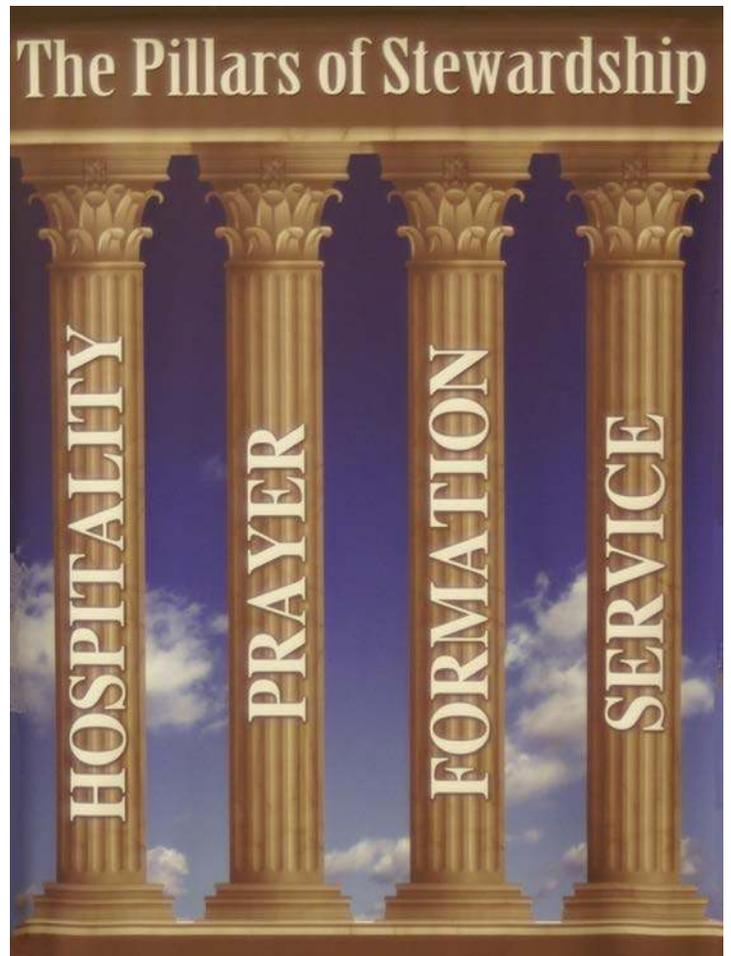
Most of the efforts and developments in stewardship as a way of life throughout the country can be traced directly back to the late Msgr. Thomas McGread and the work he started at his parish of St. Francis of Assisi in Wichita, Kan., in the 1960s. Many regard Msgr. McGread as “the father of stewardship,” and his concepts and teachings serve as the model for our stewardship efforts here at our parish, as they are in Catholic parishes across the country and the world. Msgr. McGread identified what he called the Four Pillars of Stewardship, on which we base many of our efforts here at St. Francis Solanus — Hospitality, Prayer, Formation and Service.

“As you know, stewardship spells getting involved — reaching out to others, welcoming folks who have lapsed to come home, and inviting others to enter the Catholic faith,” says Fr. Don Blaeser, Pastor. “To my way of thinking, Jesus is the model. As He continually dealt with everyone who crossed His path, whether sinners, people who were ill, or even those who reviled Him and wanted Him dead, He showed us the way. What if everyone in our St. Francis Solanus Parish did as Jesus did and reached out to others?”

In an effort to pursue in particular the Stewardship Pillar of Hospitality, Fr. Don has formed a committee to establish and engage in the concept of visiting registered parishioners and, importantly, to listen to them.

“Our goal is to meet with everyone in the parish in the next three to five years,” says Emily Wellman, a member of this committee. “We understand that this is a massive undertaking, but we also understand how valuable it is to allow people to share their thoughts and have something to say about what we do here at St. Francis and how we do it.

“The whole point is that we share with one another,” she adds. “We show that each person and each



household is important and a part of our parish family. We have completed one round of visits. I feel like we are successful in what we have done so far, but I, and the others on the committee, recognize that we still have a lot of work to do.”

For the initial effort, the committee — along with Fr. Don — recruited 26 volunteers who were willing to make the home visits. The volunteers went out in teams

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St. Francis Solanus

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Reaching Out to Others With Our Home Visits Program

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of two — often a husband and wife — to visit with people.

“We are following a guide we have from another parish which has done this,” Emily says. “As part of that, we have a set group of questions we ask, but the significant point is that we wish to establish a dialogue with the people we meet with. As I said, the whole idea is to share with one another.

“We plan to begin round two in summer’s end

or early fall,” she adds. “I would encourage people to watch the bulletin for more information. Because of the huge task in front of us, I would urge those who wish to help to step forward. We provide the training, but the important thing has to do with that whole idea of loving one another. Our teams so far have ranged from people in their early 30s to people in their late 60s.”

If you are interested in becoming involved in this wonderful hospitality initiative, or for more information, please contact Fr. Don Blaeser at 217-222-2898.

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.