

# Saint Francis Solanus



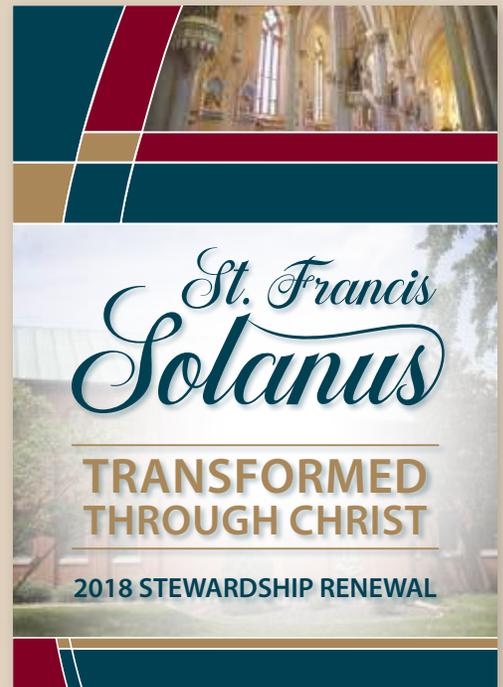
MARCH 2019

## The Highlights of Our 2018 Stewardship Renewal

This past autumn, our St. Francis Solanus parish leadership held our 2018 Stewardship Renewal. This renewal presented each parishioner with the opportunity to take stock of the following: their time spent in prayer; the ways they share their talents with our parish, God and the community; and the responsible stewardship of their finances, and returning a portion of these gifts to God.

We are happy to say that the 2018 Stewardship Renewal demonstrated that stewardship as a way of life continues to grow here at St. Francis Solanus. This month, we are also happy to share with you some of the results of the renewal, which show how the members of our faith community are living out discipleship.

- Of the 518 Commitment Cards received, this was a return rate of 48 percent from active parish households.
- There were 3,138 commitments to prayer — or the Stewardship of Time — from 94 percent of participating households, with each household making an average of six prayer commitments.
- Some of the commitments to prayer included: “Attend Mass every Sunday and Holy Day,” 446 commitments; “Spend 15 minutes a day in personal prayer,” 354 commitments; “Pray for our priests,” 348 commitments; “Pray for my country daily,” 327 commitments.
- There were 2,305 commitments to ministry — or the Stewardship of Talent — from 85 percent of participating households. Of these, 509 were new ministry commitments, while 1,796 were re-commitments to parish ministries.



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# Celebrating the Feast of St. Patrick, *March 17*

This month, we celebrate the feast of St. Patrick. Born in the year 387, Patrick grew up in the Roman province of Britain. He was captured at the age of 16 by Irish raiders, taken to Ireland and sold into slavery. And, despite the precarious nature of his captivity, Patrick managed to learn the language and customs of the Druid pagans who held him.

Throughout his captivity, the young Patrick would often turn to God in times of distress and need. Prayer became Patrick's refuge, and he would spend hours in conversation with God.

Patrick remained in the hands of his captors for six long years. Then, in the summer of 407, he experienced a profound religious transformation. Commanded by God in a dream, Patrick was instructed to leave Ireland via the coast. There, on the rocky shores of the Irish coast, sailors caught sight of Patrick and returned him to Britain and his family.

However, a short while later, Patrick experienced another profound dream. In the dream, Patrick heard the cries of the Irish people, "We beg you, holy youth, to come and walk among us once more." And although it would be years before he returned to Ireland, the prophetic nature of Patrick's dream was inevitable.

Patrick was not destined to stay in Britain for long — he soon moved to continental Europe and began studying for the priesthood in a French monastery. In 432, Patrick was ordained a bishop and commissioned to take the Gospel to Ireland. He reached the Irish shores for a second time on March 25, 433. Patrick would spend the remainder of his life in Ireland, converting the Irish pagans for the next 30 years.

Patrick's legend spread far and wide, and by the grace of God, the saint converted thousands of Druids to the Catholic faith. He built churches throughout Ireland and opened the eyes of ruthless barbarian kings to the grace and love of Christ. Legend has it that Patrick used an ordinary shamrock clover to explain the mystery of the Trinity to the Irish people. Other legends depict Patrick ridding the island of venomous snakes. However, scientists now know that snakes never inhabited the Emerald Isle. But the story symbolically sheds light on Patrick's evangelical mission — ridding Ireland of pagan religions, with the cross replacing the popular Druid serpent.

Today, 93 percent of Ireland is Catholic. We celebrate St. Patrick's Day on March 17, the day of his death. A holiday for all nations, St. Patrick's Day has become a universal opportunity to celebrate friendship and good fortune.



## A Letter From Our Pastor

# Answering the Call for Lent

Dear Parishioners,

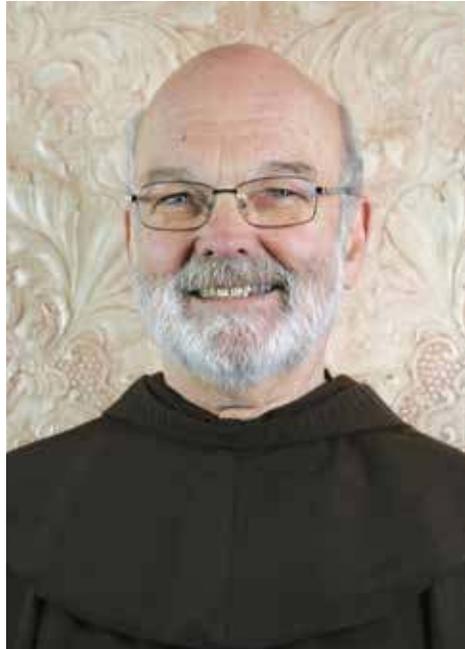
This month, as we proceed on our Lenten journey to Easter, every one of us should ask ourselves, “What does it mean to be a disciple of Christ and how well am I living that out each day?”

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops addressed what it means to be a disciple when they wrote their pastoral letter *Stewardship: A Disciple's Response*. “Who is a Christian disciple?” the USCCB asked and, in turn, they also provided the answer, “One who responds to Christ’s call, follows Jesus, and shapes his or her life in imitation of Christ’s” (9). So, as disciples of Jesus Christ, it is essential that we consider the true meaning of that answer.

The first step in the Christian life is responding to Jesus’ call. Jesus invites every person to develop a relationship with Him. But obviously, not every person is a Christian disciple. Some people are too busy to even hear that invitation or don’t make the effort to recognize it. Others make a conscious decision to reject the call because it demands that they can no longer place themselves at the center of their lives.

On the other hand, for those of us who make an affirmative response to Christ’s call, the most meaningful life possible awaits us, both now and into eternity. However, saying “yes” to Jesus has consequences that affect the rest of our lives.

The first consequence of becoming a disciple is that we now follow Jesus. The Gospel accounts record that when He called His disciples, they left what they were doing and followed Him. The same is true for us today. Becoming a Christian disciple does not necessarily mean that all of us



will leave our present job, or enter into the consecrated life, or serve as a missionary in another country — although that might be where the journey leads you. But it does mean that we offer our work — whether as a doctor, homemaker, mechanic, farmer or teacher — to build up the Kingdom of God.

In following Jesus as His disciples, we should strive to more fully absorb His teaching and then apply it to our daily lives. As we do, we find that we attempt to imitate Him, treating others with the same welcoming and generous spirit. St. Peter was direct when he described

how Jesus acted: “He went about doing good... for God was with Him” (Acts 10:38). That’s the model for how we must live.

Discipleship leads naturally to stewardship as a way of life. The time we offer in prayer and worship will give us the strength and guidance for serving Christ. Using the skills and gifts we have to build the Kingdom will direct our offering of talent. The support of all these endeavors with our treasure will ensure that our lives as disciples and stewards are genuine.

As a Christian steward this Lent, I encourage you to reflect on the changes you can make in growing as a disciple of Jesus.

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

# Adoration Provides Opportunity to and Reconnect

Our lives are filled with noise. We're bombarded with ringing phones, social media notifications, and even the games we play on our phones to relax are filled with dings and beeps. Life in our modern world often means being always plugged in, constantly subject to the ways of world. What if there were a simple way to get away from it all, even if it was just for an hour?

This Lent, we have the unique opportunity to enjoy a quiet space to reflect, pray and decompress in the holy presence of our Lord Jesus Christ through weekly adoration. Like therapy for the soul, adoration means setting aside time to visit with Jesus in the Holy Eucharist. Whether you stop in for 15 minutes or sit



The beauty of Christ's presence within the Eucharist is reflected in our monstrance. Lent is the perfect time to get into the habit of spending time with Him in adoration.

with Jesus for a full hour as a volunteer, you might find yourself truly leaving all your troubles at His feet.

"It's just such a wonderful experience to be able to be in that very quiet space with the Eucharist and think about what we have the opportunity to partake in," says parishioner and adoration coordinator Jan Zeidler. "We're so distracted in our present world that it's wonderful to sit and take that time. It really is a beautiful opportunity and I hope more people take advantage of it."

Starting on Ash Wednesday, the church will host adoration each Wednesday from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. throughout Lent. The service is followed by a brief Benediction and Mass at 5:30 p.m. Fr. Don Blaeser says he'd like to see parishioners make the services part of their Lenten devotion.

"Adoration is such a good way to take time for prayer during Lent," he says. "We conclude it with Benediction, which is always a greater way of coming to appreciation of what the Mass is for us, to call attention to what we have in the Eucharist. We're hoping that a lot of people will participate."

As in years past, the traditional Lenten Soup Suppers have been held on Wednesday evenings after the 5:30 p.m. Mass. Fr. Don says the combined events provide an intentional way for families to spend their Wednesday nights in preparation for Easter.

Because the Eucharist must never be left alone, volunteers are each required to take an hour to sit in its presence.

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— Jan Zeidler

# to “Unplug” from Busyness of Life Connect with Christ

“We have different hours that people can sign up for,” Jan says, adding that an online platform will soon allow parishioners to sign up. “If they want, they can go online and see what spots are available, or call the office. We ask for at least four people to sign up to cover the different hours.”

Jan says she is happy to call volunteers who don’t use the online sign up to remind them when it’s their turn or to find someone to cover for them if they can’t make it. Those who can’t commit a full hour are also encouraged to stop by and spend what time they can.

“It’s open to all parishioners at any time they choose to come,” Jan says. “Whenever you can make it is OK.”



*If you would like more information about adoration, or to offer your time, please call the parish office at 217-222-2898.*

## Our 2018 Stewardship Renewal *continued from front cover*

- Some of the commitments to ministries included: Parish Picnic, 172 commitments; Funeral Dinners-Bring Dish, 158 commitments; Ladies of St. Francis, 150 commitments; Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, 143 commitments.
- There were 374 commitments to the offertory — or the Stewardship of Treasure — from 72 percent of participating households, with the average pledge of \$1,868.

As we look back on our 2018 Stewardship Renewal, and as our community begins to take on its new discipleship efforts, we thank all those who

participated in the renewal. Your devotion to the stewardship way of life is what makes St. Francis Solanus a true stewardship community.

If you did not have the opportunity to fill out and return a Commitment Card as part of the 2018 Stewardship Renewal, we invite you to consider the ways you can share your gifts with God, parish and community. We are all called to discipleship, and even if you’re just starting out, no effort is too small. Carve out some prayer time in your day, consider how you might get involved at Mass, or reflect on how you might give back to the parish and community. After all, “now” is always the perfect time to begin living out the stewardship way of life!

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# Annual Holy Name Fish Fry Cooking Up Parish Fellowship

What began as a simple Lenten meal after Mass on Ash Wednesday has grown after a few years to become a highly anticipated event in our annual Holy Name Fish Fry.

The St. Francis Holy Name Society Fish Fry is set for 4:30-7 p.m. on Ash Wednesday, March 6, in the Parish Center. With Mass at 5:30 p.m., there will be ample time to get to the fish fry.

“Last year we got a huge response, with people requesting to have it after Ash Wednesday Mass,” says Nathan Koettters, President of the Holy Name Society. “We were close to running out as far as the sides on the menu go because we had such a huge crowd.”

Proceeds from the fish fry will go toward parish needs.

“The Holy Name Society donates to whatever the church needs,” Nathan says. “We’re working on getting the restrooms in the basement upgraded, but nothing has really been earmarked yet. Monies go to the Holy Name Society fund and are disbursed for needs throughout the year. When we have our golf outing, all the proceeds go to the school, and we also donate funds to the teachers for their supplies.”

Noting that several other parishes in Quincy hold similar fish fries, our Holy Name Society does not publicize its fish fry outside the parish.

“St. Anthony, St. Dominic and Blessed Sacrament have fish fries,” Nathan says. “We didn’t want to step on any toes. This is more of a community thing, not outside the parish. It’s people coming to Mass and something afterward, and people getting together. To me, this is good to invite our parishioners.”

Diners will have some delicious choices when they come to the fish fry, with Steve Obert in charge of the cooking. Carry-outs are available.

There will be two separate menus — one for children and another for adults.

Kids’ meals are \$4 each and include a toasted cheese sandwich, fries and one side.

Adults meals include your choice of fillet, Walleye for \$8 or Catfish for \$9, and American or German potato salad, baked beans, and applesauce.

Both meals include a dessert and choice of milk, tea or coffee.

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— NATHAN KOETTERS, PRESIDENT OF THE  
HOLY NAME SOCIETY



*Will be it walleye or catfish? You’ll have some choices to make when you attend the Holy Name Society Annual Fish Fry on Ash Wednesday in the Parish Center. There are choices for both adults and children. Proceeds will go toward needs in the church.*

*Anyone with questions about the fish fry may contact Nathan Koettters at 217-242-9382.*

## Stewardship

# The Wise Men's Gifts Symbolize Our Lenten Obligations

We experience great joy when we celebrate the coming of the Magi at Epiphany each year. For many of us, it is the completion of Christmas. Yet, the gifts offered by the Magi — gold, frankincense and myrrh — can serve to guide us as we observe Lent this month.

It may seem strange to connect the joyful celebration of Epiphany with the penitential season of Lent. Yet, our spiritual life should not be divided into separate bits having no connection with each other. In the same way, the Church's liturgical year should also flow from one season to another. The different feasts and seasons certainly have different emphases, but they are intended to build on each other. So let's see if we can connect what the Magi gave Jesus with what we're going to offer Him this Lent.

The basic ingredients for our Lenten rule normally come from what are termed the Three Notable Duties — prayer, fasting and almsgiving. These in turn come from Jesus' Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7).

How do we connect the wise men's gifts with the notable duties? Actually, what the gifts symbolize matches up surprisingly well.

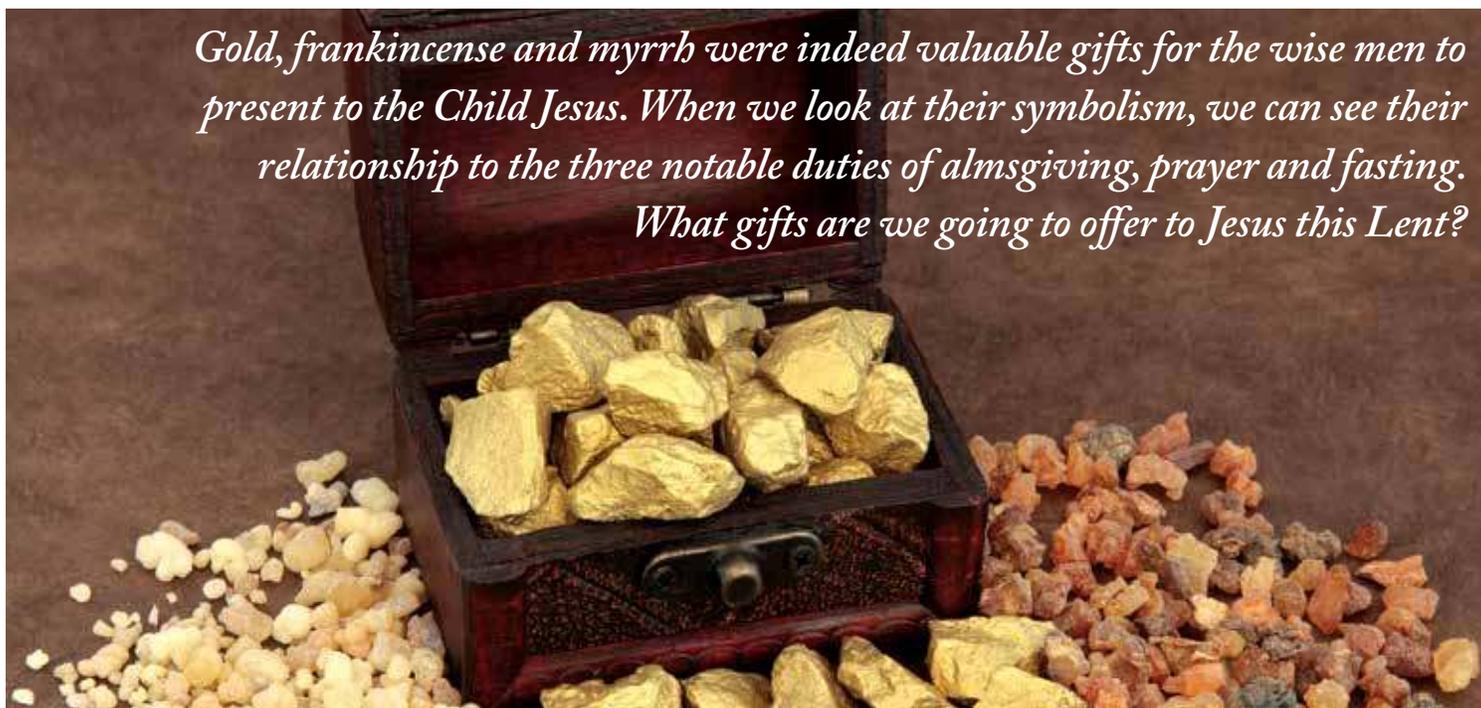
Frankincense is the basic ingredient in the incense used in the worship of God, in the ancient world and in the Church today. Offering it to Jesus points out His divine nature, and so it symbolizes prayer. Our Lenten rule needs to include prayer and worship. Of course, we are bound to worship at Sunday Mass year-round. Maybe during Lent, we might add a weekday Mass. Perhaps we can increase the time we devote to private prayer at home or at adoration. Devotional reading from the Bible or another appropriate book can be added. In addition, don't forget the possibility of adding family devotions during Lent, so that the whole family prays together.

When we offer our gold to Christ to build His Church and to help His poor, we are engaged in almsgiving. While giving from the treasure God has entrusted to us is a duty throughout the whole year, maybe this Lent we can practice being a little more generous than usual. If our giving is a thankful response to the gift of eternal life that God has given us, we will find that the giving is indeed a means of grace.

For centuries, myrrh has been associated with

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*Gold, frankincense and myrrh were indeed valuable gifts for the wise men to present to the Child Jesus. When we look at their symbolism, we can see their relationship to the three notable duties of almsgiving, prayer and fasting. What gifts are we going to offer to Jesus this Lent?*



# St. Francis Solanus

ROMAN CATHOLIC PARISH

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## The Wise Men's Gifts Symbolize Our Lenten Obligations

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fasting. Although myrrh comes from the same family of plants as frankincense, it has a more pungent scent and bitter taste. In the ancient world, it was regularly used in embalming. Generations of theological writers have seen the gift of myrrh as a foreshadowing of Christ's sufferings. And fasting strengthens us in holiness and prepares us to come into God's presence after our own deaths. St. Thomas Aquinas himself linked myrrh with repentance and fasting when he wrote that myrrh represents the penance by which we preserve our souls from the corruption of sin.

Fasting may be the most difficult of the three notable duties for modern Americans. After all, most of the advertising and many of the magazine articles we see are devoted to making us more, not less, comfortable. We usually think of fasting only under the heading of

dieting to lose weight. Instead, try to think of fasting as a way to become more spiritually fit. Body and spirit affect each other. The whole sacramental system is built on the truth that we can receive spiritual grace through material things and physical actions. Our specific requirements of fasting are limited – abstaining from meat on Fridays during Lent, and a reduction in the quantity of food we eat on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. But discipline of our physical bodies for our spiritual well-being does not have to be limited to Lent!

Gold, frankincense and myrrh were indeed valuable gifts for the wise men to present to the Child Jesus. When we look at their symbolism, we can see their relationship to the three notable duties of almsgiving, prayer and fasting. What gifts are *we* going to offer to Jesus this Lent?

### *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.