

Saint Francis Solanus



AUGUST 2019

Solanus Saints Always Ready to Help at St. Francis Solanus School

As a stewardship parish, one of the simple but most profound ways we can understand and live out stewardship is to recognize it as “love in action.”

“What I tell my own kids is Jesus’ message to love your neighbor can be found so many times in the Bible,” says Solanus Saints Coordinator Julie Schuetz. “That’s what it’s all about — love in action.”

A theme that emerged from long-range planning, as conducted by the Academic Excellence Committee at St. Francis Solanus School several years ago, was the need for more one-on-one time with the school’s students.

“Teachers are doing more than they used to and there’s not as much time to work individually with students,” Julie says. “We determined that was a task volunteers could do so teachers can work on curriculum.”

The Solanus Saints are retired men and women, working parents, stay-at-home parents and “everyone in between.” They are there to help with any task to take work off teachers’ plates to help them focus on the classroom and their curriculums.

The group acts on most projects requested by St. Francis teachers and staff. It can be everything from preparing art projects and fixing books, to listening to kids read or helping with mailer preparation. Some projects can even be completed at home. Julie says there are about 25 volunteers working in classrooms with students, and an additional 10-12 people who help with other projects.


“I hear people say, ‘I can’t do that new math,’” says Julie, with a chuckle. “We can take any volunteer and find something they are comfortable with. Not every volunteer works one-on-one with the students.”

With two of her three children attending St. Francis this upcoming school year, along with four nieces and nephews, Julie knows she is modeling volunteerism and stewardship. Volunteering at the school doesn’t necessarily involve working with her own children.



Julie Schuetz helps Henry Miller with reading as part of the Solanus Saints program.

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Stewardship

The Church is More than a Building — It is Our Spiritual Home

Where do you go to church? We've all answered that question hundreds of times before. But have you ever stopped to think about what it truly means?

"I go to St. Francis Solanus," is the usual response, and rightly so, because we do "go to" our church to celebrate Mass together. But as Catholics and as stewards of God's gifts, the Church is much more than a building within which we worship. The Church, as we understand it, is the universal body of believers, the society that Christ established to help us grow in holiness, to bring us closer to Him through the giving of our time, talent, and treasure, and to lead the world to the truth.

Before Jesus ascended to the Father, He commissioned the disciples, "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you" (Mt. 28:19-20). That is the Church's mission in the world today — to make disciples of all nations, to bring all to Christ.

Our parish plays a key part in that. As members of our parish, we are local representatives of the universal Church. Together, as members of this parish family, we work to carry out the Church's mission on a local level. We worship the Lord at Mass, offering Him our praise and thanksgiving, and then we go forth on a mission to make disciples — to encourage our fellow parishioners in their lives of faith and to bring unbelievers into knowledge of the truth.

In addition to being a "local representation of the universal Church," the parish is much like a family. We are communal beings, and we are created to live with others. So, as Catholics, we are members of the Church and, on a more immediate level, of the parish. As such, we gather together for the Eucharistic meal and we grow in faith together throughout the week, supporting one another through our participation in many parish ministries, through prayer, and through the friendships that many of us share.

In a letter written to parish priests throughout the nation, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops explained the important place of the parish in the lives of Catholic faithful: "The parish is a privileged place to announce the Word of God. It includes a variety of forms and each of the faithful is called to take an active part, especially with the witness of a Christian life and the explicit proclamation of the Gospel to non-believers to lead them to the faith, or to believers to instruct them, confirm them and encourage them to a more fervent life."

So, we ought to feel truly blessed to be a part of this parish family. We ought to make a conscious effort to be actively involved, to build relationships with our fellow parishioners and to celebrate the Mass together as often as possible — most especially every Sunday. We are then bound to grow closer to others, to grow deeper in faith and closer to Christ. Then, together as a parish family, we are bound to proclaim the Gospel to others, inviting them to a life of discipleship, thereby, building the kingdom of God.

A Letter From Our Pastor

The Mass is a Gift, to God and Our Parish Community

Dear Parishioners,

It is hard to believe that August is upon us! We are now approaching the returns to school, the completion of vacations, and the time when things here at our parish get busier again.

We call them vacations, but the British call them “holidays.” Of course, it’s easy to see that the words “holiday” and “holy day” share the same roots. There was a time when the only “holidays” people experienced were indeed “holy days.” That included Sunday, to be sure, but the reason people had these “holy days” was to celebrate religious times and occasions.

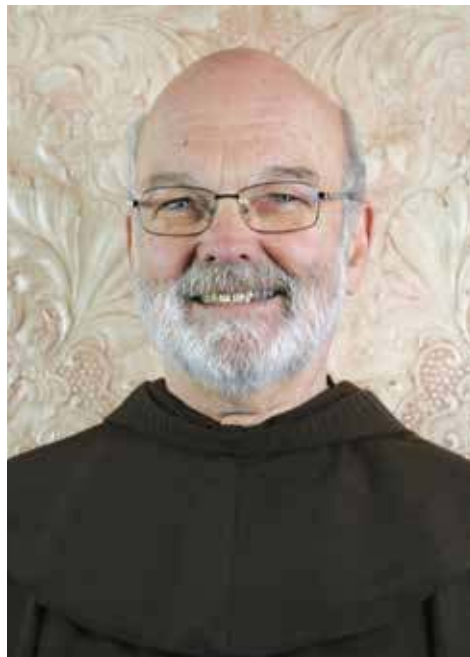
We’re all pretty familiar with the term “Holy Day of Obligation.”

In fact, there is one this month — Aug. 15, the Solemnity of the Assumption of Mary. A solemnity is a feast day of the highest rank in the Church — and as we are told in the *Code of Canon Law* (1247), “On Sundays and other holy days of obligation, the faithful are obliged to participate in the Mass.”

Note that what this actually says is that Sunday is, in fact, a Holy Day of Obligation — we should view our weekly Mass attendance this way, as well. Sometimes in our busy modern lives, we may lose sight of how important this is.

Of course, our Mass attendance goes hand in hand with stewardship — how we take and responsibly use the gifts God has given us, then return and share those gifts with the Lord and those around us. Although going to Mass is a gift to the Lord, it is also a gift to our community and to ourselves. We need that time to step back from our daily worries and concerns, and to look deeper into the meaning of living and of the importance of our relationship with God.

This month, and always, let us each consider how important it is to attend Mass. If we are really going



to be committed to stewardship, we need to realize the significance of setting aside time each week and on designated holy days — Aug. 15, for example — to be with the Lord and with our parish community at Mass. We must be completely committed to living out our Catholic faith!

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



ANSWERING OUR BAPTISMAL CALL THROUGH

Anxious to raise well-rounded, happy children, we parents spend countless hours each week assisting our children with homework, attending sporting events, and driving to dance and music lessons. Yet, caught up in the whirlwind of our daily activities, we're in danger of losing sight of our most important job as Catholic parents — namely, raising our children in the faith. This is why, says Director of Religious Education Michael Holbrook, our Parish School of Religion program, or PSR, continues to play such a vital role in parish life.

"It's important because each parent, when they take their child to be baptized, makes a promise before God and the assembly to raise that child in the faith, to teach them about the commandments, God's love and the ways of the Catholic Church," Michael says. "Mindful of this, the PSR program is there to support parents in fulfilling this promise."

Intended for first through eighth-grade students

not enrolled in a Catholic school, these weekly classes are designed to help provide parish youth with a firm faith foundation. Students meet Monday evenings throughout the school year from 6-7:15 p.m. in the Parish Center. During this time they utilize age-appropriate curriculums, discussions, stories and interactive activities, all with the aim of making the faith come alive for our parish youth.

"Each class is geared for that specific age group," Michael says. "So although they may all hear the same Gospel proclaimed in each classroom, the grade levels are actually catechized based on their ages. When we're discussing the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist, for example, we wouldn't necessarily use the word 'transubstantiation' for first-graders. Instead, we use an age-based instruction designed to help them understand these truths more easily."

Making this possible each year are many generous volunteers, giving of their time each week as catechists



Youth learning about our Catholic faith during PSR class.

UGH *Our Parish School of Religion*

and classrooms assistants. Not necessarily “experts” or “theologians in the faith,” these dedicated men and women have a passion for the Lord and a sincere desire to share that love with others. This, says Michael, is the true recipe for an effective catechist.

“Each year, we need good catechists who are in love with their faith and want to share it, as well as parents who are willing to spend some time in the classroom as a helper,” Michael says. “To truly be effective, all you need is a heart for the Catholic faith. We don’t want someone who is just there to teach knowledge, but rather someone who can impart the spirit of the Catholic faith and really convey Christ’s love to the children. And we try to make it as easy as possible for them, providing them with all the curriculums and materials which they can then model in any way they choose.”

While the catechists come each year to serve and teach, they always end up receiving far more from the enthusiasm and sincere love of the children. This can’t help but inspire the adults, encouraging them to go deeper in their own faith journey and pushing them to embrace the faith more fully.

“The kids are always so happy here,” Michael says. “You don’t see anybody who just doesn’t want to be here. These kids are very active and for the most part they truly want to learn.

“By virtue of our Baptism, we are all called to become a sign of Jesus Christ to others — to foster the growth of Jesus’ Kingdom by proclaiming the Gospel,” he adds. “That’s what we do here with our parish children and what we invite all parishioners to become a part of.”

Registration for the 2019–20 PSR school year is currently open. Registration forms can be found in the back of church, the parish office, and online at www.stfrancissolanus.com/parish/psr/. We encourage parents to enroll their children and to become as involved as possible in this important ministry. And we welcome anyone willing to share their love of Jesus with the children as a catechist. For more information, please contact Michael Holbrook at 217-222-2898.

GETTING TO KNOW

St. Francis Solanus' PSR

As these long summer days roll along and we inch closer to the start of a new school year here at St. Francis, the teachers in our PSR program are gearing up to welcome our children with open arms. The PSR program provides catechetical instruction to children and youth of our parish who attend first through eighth grades in public schools. Our mission is a simple one — to bring the Good News of Jesus Christ and the teachings of the Catholic Church into their young lives, and to assist the parents who have the unique roll of being the primary teachers of the faith to their children.

Sacramental preparation for First Reconciliation, Confirmation and First Holy Communion for our second, third and eighth-graders will also be

provided by qualified catechists who have all taken Protecting God’s Children sessions.

Our year will begin on Monday, Aug. 19, at 6 p.m. with a Mass of thanksgiving and anointing of our PSR catechists and teachers. Registration forms will be available at the church doors and the rectory office in August. Also, these forms are downloadable on the parish website. The tuition fee is \$40 for one child, \$80 for two and \$85 for three or more.

There is nothing a parent can do that is more important than raising their children to know Jesus Christ and His Church and to form their lives in the spirit of stewardship and discipleship. Let us help you in this most important role.

THE FAITH JOURNEY OF ST. GENESIUS

Being a performer and a comedian may sound like a fun way to make a living.

St. Genesius, an outstanding actor, playwright and comedian in late Imperial Rome, certainly did have some fun for a while. But his career and life came to an abrupt end when his work ultimately led him to Christ.

Genesius was a comedian of some renown, but in the fourth century, Christians were often discouraged from becoming actors because ancient Roman comedy was highly sexual, crude and offensive.

In the year 303, Emperor Diocletian launched what would be the last great Roman persecution against the Christian Church. So, Genesius used the persecution as an opportunity to write a comedy about Christianity. He thought it might attract the attention of the Emperor, increase his fame, and make him some money in the process.

Genesius approached leaders of the Christian community in Rome and presented himself as a catechumen seeking Baptism. He was then invited into a period of instruction in the faith, in order to learn the beliefs of the Christians. He was particularly taken by the idea of Baptism. But at the time, he had no plans to convert to the faith – it was all just a part of his plan to research new material to use for his comedy.

But a strange thing happened to Genesius as he began to work on his play, which was to be a

comedy on Baptism. As Genesius began teaching the other actors about Baptism, he began to believe, and a desire to be baptized grew within his heart.

The opening night of the play was a great success, with Emperor Diocletian in attendance. But at some point during the play, the Holy Spirit touched Genesius. He was no longer acting.

“You fools, I wish to die a Christian,” Genesius said. When the other actors asked him why,

he said, “All my life I have been a fugitive, and only today have I found God.”

Everyone, especially Emperor Diocletian, laughed as Genesius spoke. Genesius, standing in a pulpit designed to look like the goddess Venus, began to preach to the audience. He told the crowd how he once hated Christians and enjoyed insulting them. He told the crowd how he deserted his own family as a child because they were Christians.

From there, Genesius addressed Diocletian, stating that he wrote the play to mock Christians, but had been converted on the spot during the course of the play, by the power of Holy Spirit. “I now know that the Lord Jesus Christ is the true God, the Light, the Truth and the Mercy of all who have received His gift of Baptism,” Genesius said. “O great Emperor, believe in these mysteries! I will teach you, and you will know the Lord Jesus Christ is the true God.”

Diocletian was furious and stopped the play, having the troupe arrested and beaten, while Genesius was condemned to torture. Through all of his sufferings, he continued to confess that Jesus was God. When this failed to break his spirit, Diocletian ordered Genesius be beheaded. His final words were, “Our Lord Jesus Christ is God and we shall have life in His name.”

St. Genesius is the patron of comedians and actors. His feast day is Aug. 25.



AUGUST

— 25 —

St. Genesius

Back to the Basics: Parenting 101

It's back-to-school time again.

Parents are scrambling to unearth last year's backpack, purchase a mountain of school supplies, and find the perfect lunchbox that won't become a fading fad a few weeks after school begins.

Yet, these seemingly menial tasks are important—the role of parents in education is vital to classroom success. Studies reveal that increased parental involvement directly correlates to increased academic achievement.

Our role as parents, therefore, is crucial. We take the education of our children seriously and don't hesitate to drop everything to review spelling words, check homework or explain a math concept—not to mention the high volume of energy we exert washing school clothes, finding school shoes, making lunches, and carting children back and forth.

All of this is done in hopes of academic success and future security.

However, in light of these efforts, it is also important to examine what we as parents do for our children's spiritual formation. Many years ago, as we held our children at the baptismal font, we promised to "accept the responsibilities of Christian parenthood" by teaching our children through "word and example."

All too often, however, the spiritual formation of our children is lost in a sea of homework and extracurricular activities. We placate ourselves with the notion that they receive adequate spiritual education during religion class at school or through

the parish religious education program.

Yet, we are exceedingly misled! Religious education is intended to merely *reinforce* what is taught at home. Parents are the *primary educators* of their children and are expected to pass on the faith through "word and example."

"Parents are catechists precisely because they are parents," explains the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops in the *National Directory for Catechesis*. "Their role in the formation of Christian values is irreplaceable. They should speak naturally and simply about God and their faith, as they do about other matters they want their children to understand and appreciate."

Where do we begin? First and foremost, we must start with prayer and ask the Holy Family to guide our efforts in the spiritual education of our children. Bless the food before meals. Establish a simple routine of family morning and night prayer—a recitation of the "Morning Offering" upon waking, and an "Act of Contrition" at night is a sufficient starting point.

Also, keep in mind that it is impossible to pass on the faith to our children if we do not constantly pursue its knowledge and practice it ourselves. Faith formation is a lifelong process and we, as parents, are not exempt! Take advantage of the parish adult faith formation programs and seek spiritual reading—the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* is a great place to start.

Rest assured that your efforts will produce a firmly grounded spiritual foundation for your children.

And the reward? An unwavering hope in life eternal!



St. Francis Solanus

ROMAN CATHOLIC PARISH

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Solanus Saints *continued from front cover*

"Any program we do at the school helps our teachers have more time to be even better teachers," she says.

Julie's family has been a part of St. Francis Solanus for many years. In fact, Julie attended the school, as did her father and grandfather.

"My upbringing was in St. Francis," Julie says. "It was embedded in me to do what you can, when you can, to help your neighbors."

Each week during the school year, Julie tutors in a first-grade classroom and enjoys this time immensely.

"It's the best part of my week," she says. "To see the impact over the year is amazing."

Julie most enjoys the look in the students' eyes when they understand a new concept. Every volunteer has the opportunity to witness an evolution in the students or an overall impact on the school.

"When you do something for another person, that will always grow your faith," Julie says. "Wherever you serve, you connect with Christ."

Julie says helping through Solanus Saints is just like the reward you receive from most volunteer opportunities.

"It makes you feel just as good as those you are helping," she says.

Volunteers are always needed to help with tasks, in and out of the building, and with one-on-one tutoring. Julie Schuetz makes sure to place volunteers on tasks with which they are most comfortable. For more information or to get involved, please contact Julie at 217-440-6781 or jasschuetz@gmail.com.

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.