

# Saint Francis Solanus



JULY 2019

## Sobering Decline in Marriages Leads to New Opportunities

Over the years, as Fr. Don Blaeser notes, there has been an increasing decline in the number of marriages within our parish. In 2009, for example, a total of 49 weddings were held at St. Francis Solanus — in stark contrast, last year brought our parish only 15 weddings. Sadly, these statistics are not limited to our own faith community, but are part of a larger decline in sacramental weddings. Citing data from the *Official Catholic Directory*, journalist Emma Green, staff writer for *The Atlantic*, notes that between the years 2000 and 2012, Catholic weddings dropped by 40 percent.

"These numbers are sad, because it means that fewer people are celebrating and thus benefitting from the Sacrament of Matrimony, which is so very important," Fr. Don says. "And though there are certainly many reasons that can be given for this sobering decline, I believe that this is all part of a much larger picture. Ultimately, I would link it to the family life."

Family life is key, says Fr. Don, because it is the bedrock of both society and the Church. Called to become a "mini church," the family is meant to radiate the love of God to its members and, through them, the world. That's



*A recent wedding at St. Francis Solanus Church*

*continued on back cover*



---

# *Stewardship*

## TAKING OWNERSHIP IN OUR PARISH

---

As Catholics and as stewards of God's gifts, the Church is much more than a building in which we worship. The Church 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 gifts — 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 of 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 — 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.

As stewards and as members of this parish family, we are called to take ownership in our parish. It is our responsibility to make a conscious effort to be actively involved in the life of the parish, to build relationships with our fellow parishioners, and to celebrate the Mass together as often as possible — and most definitely every Sunday. By getting involved and living the stewardship way of life, our entire parish family can fulfill our mission to grow as disciples of Christ, and ultimately help fulfill the mission of the universal Church.



## *A Letter From Our Pastor*

# Remembering America is a Gift from God

Dear Parishioners,

We're all familiar with the song "America the Beautiful." Many of us share the feelings that inspired Katharine Lee Bates when she composed it as a poem.

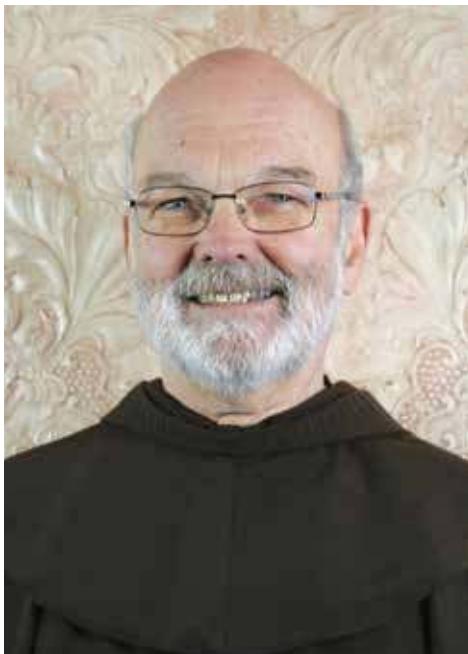
*O beautiful for spacious skies,  
For amber waves of grain,  
For purple mountain majesties  
Above the fruited plain!  
America! America!  
God shed His grace on thee,  
And crown thy good with brotherhood  
From sea to shining sea.*

Katharine Bates drew her inspiration from her experiences during the summer of 1893. An English professor at Wellesley College in Massachusetts, she went to teach summer school at Colorado College, necessitating a journey across the country. The trip's highlight came when she reached the pinnacle of Pikes Peak and could gaze upon range after range of the Rocky Mountains on one side and the expanse of the Great Plains on the other.

Moved by the vistas around her and the varied features of America she had seen, an idea for a poem and some of its words formed in her mind atop the mountain. That night, back in her hotel room, she completed the poem.

I think the reason for the popularity of "America the Beautiful" is that it combines several themes into one coherent whole. The beauty and immensity of America's natural creation, the rich abundance of our harvests, and the recognition of God's generosity are woven together. The final product forms a hymn of thanksgiving for our land that goes beyond national pride to prayer, for God is the spiritual source for all the goodness we have.

I think it's a suitable theme for July, the month we celebrate Independence Day, our national holiday. Thankfulness, after all, is the basis of stewardship, the recognition that we've been given all we have. We're



then responsible to the Giver for the use we make of His gifts.

The gifts we celebrate are manifold. Some are of a spiritual nature — our salvation by Christ and the sacraments, for example. Others are in the natural order, such as the beauties of creation and abundant harvests. Still others relate to social relationships, like families, friends and national life. Whatever the class of these gifts, God is their ultimate source, and they are blessings.

Let us then receive these gifts — the time, talent, and treasure entrusted to us — with thanksgiving. Let us offer praise to the Father of mercies for them, and let us use them in His service.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Fr. Don, OFM".

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



# Families Reconnect with One Another at Christian Family Camp

For the families attending this year's Christian Family Camp (CFC) at Pere Marquette State Park in Grafton, the summer brings an invaluable opportunity to spend quality time coming together in both prayer and recreation. As always, two sessions of camp are offered — July 7 to 13, and July 14 to 20 — with an average of 20 to 25 families attending each week.

Christian Family Camp has been an annual tradition for over 50 years. The camp was founded in 1962 by a group of local families and Franciscan brothers. Today, the camp is under lay directorship and continues to provide families with a unique opportunity to gather for worship and fellowship.

Each day of camp has a familiar "rhythm" that begins with breakfast in the dining hall. Then, parents and children split up to attend faith talks and sharing sessions geared toward their specific age groups. The children and teenagers spend about an hour with their group leaders before heading off to the pool, while the adults have more time to discuss the topic and share with one another.

Following lunch, families enjoy free time by swimming, hiking, doing crafts, and more. During the late afternoon bonfire, campers can sing or perform skits. Family time concludes with Mass and dinner. Then, parents put their children to bed in the care of the camp babysitters and return to enjoy more adult time relaxing and socializing in front of the campfire. One night of the week, teenagers are even invited to a "sleep out" under the stars!

Fr. Bob Barko is a longtime Christian Family Camp attendee. He first experienced and fell in love with the camp back in 1978.

"I remember that first year very vividly," Fr. Bob says. "I was a student here in Quincy and in the summer, I went to campus early to work as a janitor. I was mopping the floor one day and two people who ran the camp were sitting in the cafeteria getting ready to cancel that year's camp because their lifeguard couldn't make it. I went over to them and said, 'I'm a trained lifeguard,' and that's how it all started."

Years later, when Fr. Bob had children of his own to bring to the camp, this annual tradition took on an



# One Another and Their Faith

## Family Camp

even deeper meaning for him. To this day, some of his most cherished memories as a parent are from Christian Family Camp.

"I have two adult children now, and when they were teens, they couldn't imagine not going to the camp," Fr. Bob says. "It can be hard to find a family activity that teenagers like, and the camp is something that most teenagers love doing. There are no phones, very little electricity — it's unplugged. The kids form relationships and become lifelong friends with the other kids they meet at camp."

Just as his children formed close friendships through the camp, Fr. Bob also counts many dear friends from among the people he has gotten to know over so many summers spent together. He also credits the camp with nurturing his vocation to the priesthood, and has witnessed several other young men at the camp receive a call to religious life, as well.

In an age when it has become increasingly difficult for parents and children to spend quality time together and share in their Catholic faith, Christian Family Camp is needed now more than ever.

"The hope is that the children and teenagers who come will learn to connect to their eternal side," Fr. Bob says. "They might not all believe the way their parents do, but at least they will have experienced an authentic spirituality that will help them make choices that connect them to something else. It's a different experience from attending school and church."

By providing families the opportunity to come together without the interruptions of everyday life, Christian Family Camp is a true blessing for many parents and children.

Fr. Bob hopes that parishioners will consider making the camp a part of their summer plans.

"It's a leap of faith that is certainly worth making!" he says.



*Christian Family Camp is held at Pere Marquette State Park in Grafton, Ill. and has been a tremendous source of transformative family relationships and building lifelong friendships with other families. There are two one-week sessions: July 8 to 14, and July 15-21. College-age and young adults are needed to be on staff, which has also been proven to be a life-changing experience for them! Applications may be found on the website at <http://www.christianfamilycamp.org>. For more information, please contact Fr. Bob Barko at [rjbarko@gmail.com](mailto:rjbarko@gmail.com) or 217-222-2898.*

# CHOSEN TO DO HIS WILL

*The Feast of St. Anne — July 26*



*The Feast of St. Anne is celebrated on July 26.*

Did you know that St. Anne is the patron saint of miners? In medieval times, the Virgin Mary and Jesus were often compared to precious metals of silver and gold. Hence, the lives that came from the womb of St. Anne made her the source of precious riches.

Unlike Mary, St. Anne was not conceived without sin — but nevertheless, she would one day raise the Mother of God. That's a pretty big deal! What was it about St. Anne that prompted God to give her such a significant role in the history of salvation? There's no way to know for sure, but there is one thing we can definitely say about St. Anne — God uses those who put themselves at His service, and that is precisely what St. Anne did.

Not much is mentioned about St. Anne in the Bible, but her name derives from the longer name "Hannah," or the Hebrew word for "grace." We understand that, having believed herself to be barren for 20 years, an angel appeared to Anne and told her that she would soon have a daughter that she should name Mary.

When Mary was finally born, after many years of frustration and infertility on her parents' part, Anne did

just as she promised — she dedicated Mary to the Lord, and raised a holy woman who would mother Christ Himself!

Early Christians are said to have been very intrigued by the story of Jesus' grandmother and, around the year 550, erected a church in Jerusalem where St. Anne, her husband, Joachim, and Mary are said to have lived.

Although we do not know much more about St. Anne, we can assume that she was a very holy woman based upon the woman her daughter, Mary, grew to be. Anne was the one from whom Mary learned to be a mother. She was the one from whom Mary learned to serve God. She was the one who instilled in Mary the confidence and faith to say "yes" to God — "May it be done to me according to your word" (Luke 1:38).

There is no doubt that St. Anne was a humble, holy woman. She was given a great gift — a child — who she readily gave back to God. And, thanks to her faith-filled gratitude to God for His gift, Mary opened her heart to the will of God, and became the mother of Christ.

Talk about stewardship in action!



## Catholic Streaming Service FORMED Free for All Parishioners

**R**eading, studying, listening and watching are all ways each of us learns — and these are the learning opportunities offered through the FORMED program.

"FORMED has so much to offer Catholics of all ages," says Mike Holbrook, Director of Religious Education.

FORMED, a program coordinated by the Augustine Institute, meets Catholics where they are at. Our parish has utilized this subscription-based program since this past January. FORMED helps those at all ages and levels of knowledge learn more about the Catholic faith, providing access to thousands of studies, films, audio recordings and e-books.

This online platform, along with its free mobile apps for iOS and Android, "helps individuals and communities know, love and share their Catholic faith."

From adult faith formation options and adult Bible studies, to *Lectio Divina* and award winning movies, FORMED has thousands of options to learn more about the Catholic faith. There are group and individual options and apologetics, which provides information on how to defend Catholic teaching. There is even sacramental preparation information and parenting topics.

"My favorite part of FORMED is the sacramental videos," Mike says. "I use FORMED to supplement our RCIA materials."

In addition, there are leader guides for those who want to lead their own Bible study. With this subscription, groups can choose to form their own

Bible or topic studies and have material to access.

Mike notes the quality of the full-length movies on FORMED — in particular, he recommends that parishioners view *Presence*, "a wonderfully produced film on the real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist," or *Forgiven*, which is about Reconciliation. Mike also recommends accessing the podcasts or reading e-books on FORMED.

There really is no limit to how the content on FORMED may be used in order to increase knowledge of the Catholic faith.

"The Augustine Institute has produced some first-rate productions aimed at helping the faithful better understand what the Church teaches and believes," Mike says. "It has helped me in my faith walk."

In turn, he recommends registering and taking the time to experiment with what you want to learn and how you want to learn it.

"Very few streaming services are free and FORMED has so much to offer Catholics of all ages," he says.

Mike is excited about the potential for our parish and urges everyone to sign up and start exploring. Those that have used FORMED thus far have found great content that guides them in their faith.

"One of our parishioners emailed Fr. Don to thank him for providing a FORMED subscription to everyone at St. Francis," Mike says. "She said their kids love the animated videos, and they are learning all about their Catholic faith and having fun doing it."

To access FORMED on a desktop computer, please visit <https://stfrancissolanus.formed.org>. Visit your smartphone's app store to download the FORMED app. For more information on how to access FORMED or any information on the program, please contact Mike Holbrook at 217-653-5555 or [mholbrook@stfrancissolanus.com](mailto:mholbrook@stfrancissolanus.com).

# St. Francis Solanus

ROMAN CATHOLIC PARISH

1721 College Avenue  
Quincy, IL 62301  
(217) 222-2898  
[stfrancissolanus.com](http://stfrancissolanus.com)

## Sobering Decline in Marriages Leads to New Opportunities

*continued from front cover*

why St. John Paul II wrote in his apostolic exhortation *Familiaris Consortio*, "...the family, like the Church, ought to be a place where the Gospel is transmitted and from which the Gospel radiates...the future of evangelization depends in great part on the Church of the home" (52). And this, says Fr. Don, is the key to turning the tide and restoring the beauty of sacramental marriage.

"We as a community really need to encourage family life, to help restore the respect and love within the family structure," he says. "We also need to better educate Catholics on the important component that the sacraments play in our lives. Far more than a ceremony that lasts one hour in a church, a sacrament is one of those

things that lasts for a lifetime. It's not a single event. As such, it means living in union — not just with a partner, but also with Christ. This means that Christ is there with the couple, helping with the raising of children — helping during the days when things are a struggle and strengthening the relationship between the two."

Therefore, while current marriage statistics may be sobering in and of themselves, there is still great hope. We are provided with a special opportunity to bring about a rejuvenation here within our parish — a greater incentive to strengthen and support Catholic couples in their vocation as spouses and parents, and to uphold the beauty and importance of a sacramental marriage.

*If you have ideas on ministries or events that can help St. Francis Solanus Parish better support the Sacrament of Matrimony, please contact Fr. Don Blaeser at [trailblaeser@aol.com](mailto:trailblaeser@aol.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.