

Saint Francis Solanus



JANUARY 2020

An Inside Look at the Greeter Ministry *Living out the Pillar of Hospitality by Welcoming Our Parishioners and Guests*

We recognize the Four Pillars of Parish Stewardship as Hospitality, Prayer, Formation and Service. Here at St. Francis Solanus, the Greeter Ministry works to lovingly fulfill that first pillar of hospitality. After all, when we are visitors at a parish or have had a hectic morning getting everyone in the car, what could be better than a friendly handshake, smiling face and someone welcoming us to church?

Cindy Reichert has been serving as a greeter for more than 15 years. She believes for our parish to thrive everyone needs to know they are welcome.

"We need to welcome new and old parishioners, and show them that we care about them and want them to come back," Cindy says.

Cindy points out that she has experienced greetings when visiting another parish and understands what a difference it makes in making a guest feel welcome. In addition, the ministry is also helpful with answering questions for visitors.

"A smile or handshake can really make a difference in a person's life," Cindy says. "It is so rewarding to have someone say they would like to be a greeter because they felt so welcomed when they were greeted at our parish."

Cindy encourages anyone — whether families, seniors or singles — to get involved in the Greeter Ministry. All five of our weekend Masses have greeters. This ministry is perfect for those with busy schedules, as the time commitment is only 15 to 20 minutes before Mass.



Betty Kaufmann is greeted by Janice Wiemelt.

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The Patron of Catholic Schools in America

St. Elizabeth Ann Seton

As the first American-born canonized saint, Elizabeth Ann Seton's entrance into history was guided by Divine Providence. Born on Aug. 28, 1774, just months after the Boston Tea Party, Elizabeth's childhood witnessed pivotal events in the formation of our country — the Continental Congress, the Declaration of Independence, and the American Revolution. At the time of the foundation of the new Republic, in a society predominately hostile toward Catholicism, a flower blossomed that would forever change the shape of education in the United States.

Elizabeth Seton was born into a wealthy Protestant family in New York City. Her life, although materially blessed, was not without suffering. Elizabeth's biological mother died when she was only 3, and her younger sister, Catherine Josephine, died at the age of 2. A spark of faith, however, was visible even in her early childhood. When questioned about her sadness concerning her sister's death, Elizabeth simply responded, "Kitty is gone up to heaven. I wish I could go there too."

Elizabeth grew into a beautiful woman, courted lavishly by handsome young men from prominent New York families. At the age of 19, she met a charming New York financier, William Seton, and the couple was wed in 1794. They remained in high society until her father-in-law's passing, which left them to care for William's seven younger siblings, along with three children of their own. Consequently, the Seton finances crashed.

The couple traveled to Italy — it was here that William's health failed him, and he died in December 1803. Providentially, Elizabeth was left in the company of a strong Catholic family where she

witnessed the practice of the faith. In a letter to her sister, Elizabeth wrote, "My sister dear, how happy would we be, if we believed what these dear souls believe, that they possess God in the Sacrament, and that He remains in their churches..."

After an eight-month stay, Elizabeth returned to America, and she began to investigate Catholicism

more deeply. She was besought by Protestant friends who hoped to dissuade her. At this time, Elizabeth prayed repeatedly, "If I am right, Thy grace impart, still in the right to stay. If I am wrong, oh teach my heart to find the better way."

In 1805, after much interior struggle, Elizabeth became Catholic. Abandoned entirely by her family and friends, she resolved her financial difficulties through teaching.

In 1807, Elizabeth was invited to establish a Catholic school for girls in Baltimore. The task was daunting, and Elizabeth labored intensely, explaining how "from half past five in the morning until nine at night, every moment is full — no space even to be troubled." After winters spent in continual hardship and sacrifice, the school flourished and, within years, Mother Seton planted the seed from which sprang the parochial school system — along with hospitals and orphanages.

Before her death in January 1821, she was the active mother of five — although two of her daughters died young — and the spiritual mother of a full-fledged religious congregation known as the Sisters of Charity. She was canonized in 1975, and her feast day is celebrated on Jan. 4.

Thanks to St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, the Catholic parochial school system remains vibrant and active. And as we celebrate Catholic Schools Week, we are thankful for the sacrifice of this loving wife, devoted mother, foundress and all-American saint.



A Letter From Our Pastor

Are We Returning Our Gifts to God?

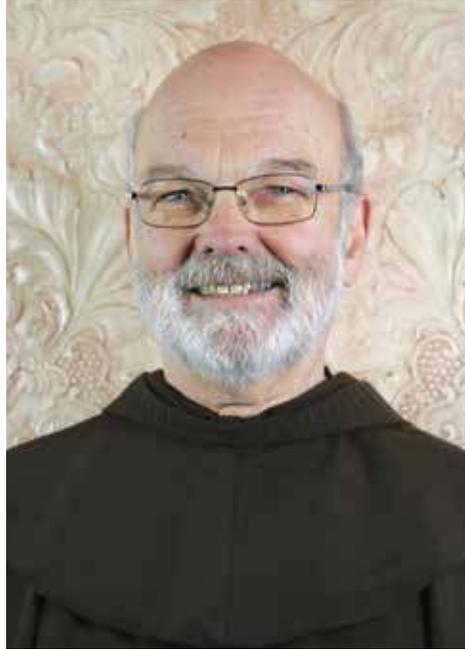
Dear Parishioners,

December, with all of its joy and reflection and feelings, is behind us — but January is no less of a glorious time for us as Catholics. After all, if we have a genuine stewardship attitude, we know that every month of the year is a wonderful month.

Of course, good stewards realize nonetheless that every day and every month is a time to improve our stewardship efforts. We speak of the gifts we have received from the Lord. Our most precious initial gift is life itself. That gift is augmented by the gift of time.

I would like to think that we understand the importance of sharing all we have, including our time. All time is God's time. We each receive the same amount of it, although we also each have been given different responsibilities and opportunities in relation to time. The word "opportunity" is important in our understanding of stewardship. Too often we look at our response to the needs around us, including in our parish, as an obligation, a duty. It is not that we do not have obligations, but in truth we should be pursuing the opportunities we see. In its pastoral letter on stewardship, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops stated through its title what stewardship should be — *Stewardship: A Disciple's Response*. We can conclude from this that stewardship is how we respond to the opportunities presented to us to be good stewards.

Here we are at the beginning of a new year — at least according to the calendar — a year filled with **opportunities**. My hope is that we recognize our gifts, see and pursue the many ways we can share our gifts, and then put all of that into action, for stewardship requires action on all of our parts. I would call on each of you to return a portion of your gifts — time, talent and treasure — to God. Note that I said "return," not "give." Everything that we



have and everything that we are is through the grace of God.

We are fond of using the term "New Year's resolutions." I would challenge you to make your primary resolution an effort to live out stewardship through love. Love really is good stewardship. Let us each resolve in this official first month of the year to share who and what we are through acts of love, which may mean returning our gifts to God in a wide variety of ways. Let us spread God's love to all we encounter and to all we know so that the light of that love shines into every dark corner of our world.

The Irish have always had interesting ways of looking at things. A traditional Irish piece of wisdom which applies to the new year is "Always remember to forget the troubles that pass away. But never forget to remember the blessings that come each day." My prayer is that your new year be filled with blessings and that you live in gratitude for them.

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



Catholic Schools Week to C

Everyone — faculty, students, and staff — at our St. Francis School is looking forward to Catholic Schools Week. It's a time to celebrate all the good things happening there and to share the news of how great our school is all year through!

Catholic Schools Week will take place Jan. 26 through Feb. 1 with the theme, "Learn, Serve, Lead, Succeed." Principal Lori Shepard, the faculty and staff at St. Francis have planned a week packed with activities that will help create memories to last a lifetime.

At St. Francis School, the students are challenged to live a life as Jesus did by being an example to their peers and the younger students. Service to others to the best of their abilities is encouraged through charitable causes and helping with school activities. Our students help with Meet the Teacher Night, Read Night, the Family Dinner Project and Grandparents' Day. St. Francis School follows its mission to provide a Christ-centered academic environment that empowers students to serve God and others.

The students are able to develop leadership skills in a variety of ways, such as serving at Mass, reading or taking up the gifts during the offertory. They help in the lunch room and help as crossing guards.

"They have found success in accomplishing their goals, whether that is in the classroom, on a sports team, at Scouts, or in the band or chorus," Ms. Shepard says. "No matter their interest or talent, they are serving the Lord in many ways, using their gifts they have been given. And throughout their day, their faith life is woven into each part, and with each interacting."

During Catholic Schools Week this year at St. Francis, there will be something new and totally different to celebrate the week.

"We are planning to focus on the curricular areas each day and create some enrichment activities to correlate and pair with the lessons covered in class," Ms. Shepard says.

In one example, classes may partner for math-themed activities with physical education. They will

play games to determine "how high, how fast, and how many," then do math problems to tie it all together. During social studies, the day can include Google expeditions, or a Skype visit with other classes around the world. Students will be able to learn about other religions and how different cultures are celebrated. An English day may include students dressing as their favorite story book character to celebrate reading.

"We may end the week with a talent show to highlight the student talent that we have here at St. Francis," Ms. Shepard says. "We also plan a special liturgy that reminds students of the reason that they attend our school — our love for Jesus! We also include some dress-up days within the week so that the students can show their creativity with their costumes. We



Relay races in the gym during the Winter Carnival celebration in Catholic Schools Week brings out the competitive spirit.

Celebrate St. Francis School

have so much fun each and every year!”

If we look beyond the fun activities in Catholic Schools Week, we find there are important reasons to celebrate Catholic education. There are strict classroom management expectations, higher academic standards, and statistics that show proven success. Tuition assistance and grants help keep tuition costs reasonable, and individual donors often help meet the needs of students so all who wish to attend Catholic School may do so.

“St. Francis is so proud of the ongoing support that they have been blessed with over the years,” Ms. Shepard says. “Parish members have often made it possible for various families to continue on this path. We celebrate the freedom of choice and the opportunity that our students can pray each day, all day long, and share their faith. We celebrate the fact that we come together to pray in gratitude for our gifts and we come together to pray for our concerns.”

St. Francis School’s celebration of Catholic Schools Week not only lets the students and faculty celebrate what sets them apart from public school, but it also provides the chance to showcase to the community what the school is most proud of.

“I love creating memories for our students and watching them have some fun that may be unexpected,” Ms. Shepard says. “It is gratifying to see them smile and share a talent that they have developed, which helps them to connect to their other friends, as well as their family. Catholic Schools Week is a time that each student will remember forever and will appreciate as an adult later in life. It lets children know at an early age that ‘it’s great to be Catholic and you should be proud of your school and your faith.’ We can come together as a faith family to celebrate the love of the Lord for all students, parents and teachers alike.”

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— MS. LORI SHEPARD, PRINCIPAL



This student channels the 1960s during Dress-Up Day.

If you would like information about enrolling a child at St. Francis School, please call 217-222-4077.

Birthright

A Source of Mercy for the



The Birthright Trivia Night and Silent Auction fundraiser



Quincy University Students for Life group donating items they collected in the community for Birthright



Donated items to help clients

About a year and a half ago, President of Birthright Patty Adam experienced God's intervention in an extraordinary way, one that made all of her dedicated work feel worthwhile.

"I had a girl come in and ask for \$650 to get an abortion," says Patty, who has volunteered at Birthright for 37 years. "I asked her why she wanted one, and she gave a lot of 'good' reasons for feeling she needed one. I then asked her if she would at least be willing to have us do an ultrasound, and she was. She was 13 weeks along, so she could see her baby, and it really melted her heart. We then offered to help her with her needs so that she could peacefully have her baby, such as helping her buy a car so she could get to work."

And once again, Patty saw Divine Providence at work through Birthright of Quincy.

"She now has a beautiful little girl," Patty says. "She is a wonderful mother and she takes great care of her baby. At Birthright, we cover everything in prayer. I see God jump in the middle of so many messes and create miracles all the time. I watch Him use us to make a difference so often. We are all Christians at Birthright. We try to 'be Jesus' to them and give them real, concrete help. I love what we do!"

Birthright of Quincy is a volunteer organization that helps women struggling in both crisis and planned pregnancies. According to their website: "The mission of Birthright of Quincy is simple: We are here to offer the non-judgmental person to person help, love, understanding, and basic emotional and practical support that every pregnant woman and girl needs and deserves in order for her to bring her child into the world and beyond. Whether it's planned parenthood or an unplanned pregnancy, we can help her to mobilize her resources and those of the community in order for her to be able to constructively plan for her future and that of her child."

Time and time again, those who come to Birthright find the support they need to make the right choice

of Quincy: *Unborn and their Mothers*

for themselves and their child.

“When a woman comes into Birthright, we provide them with an alternative to abortion — we show them that they do have a choice,” Patty says. “Most of all, we try to be good friends to them, and be there for them.”

Birthright offers various services according to their clients’ needs, such as free pregnancy tests, ultrasounds, baby items, transportation and counseling.

“Their needs are all so different, and we try to help them however we can,” Patty says. “For example, they may need a place to stay, or transportation to get away from an abusive husband or boyfriend. We help them however we can if they want to keep their baby as well, such as by helping them work out financial issues. If they do decide to have an abortion, we are available afterwards to talk to them, since they often have such deep feelings of regret for the rest of their lives.”

This month, we remember Roe v. Wade, the Supreme Court decision that legalized abortion. For more information about how to get involved with this powerful ministry of hope or receive its services, please contact Patty Adam at 217-224-1277 or visit <https://birthrightquincyil.org>. Birthright of Quincy is located at 428 N. 6th Street



Longtime volunteers Patty Adam (President) and Mary Jane Bauer (Treasurer)



A layette given to clients at the hospital when their baby is born

St. Francis Solanus

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Greeter Ministry *continued from front cover*

"The only qualification you need is to be friendly, welcoming and smile," Cindy says.

Sometimes the simplest gestures can make all the difference and Cindy believes this is true of the Greeter Ministry. Periodically giving 20 minutes of your time is a profound way to share Christ's love at St. Francis Solanus.

"The Greeter Ministry is perfect for busy families, without being too time

consuming," Cindy says. "When you are involved in any church ministry, your faith grows stronger. As a person, you feel more happy and blessed by being of service to others."

Cindy is so thankful she became part of the Greeter Ministry and for all the friends she has met along the way.

"There are God moments in everything you do, and I feel very faithful by all of His blessings," Cindy says.



Jill Blickhan (left) is greeted by Cindy Reichert.

If you would like to get involved as a greeter at St. Francis Solanus, please contact Cindy Reichert at 217-257-1627 or cindyr0814@yahoo.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.