

Saint Francis Solanus



MARCH 2020

Readers Faithfully Proclaim the Word and Draw us Into the Liturgy

As Readers Ministry Coordinator Janet Zeidler puts it, proclaiming the Word at Mass is a lot like public speaking, “but with a much more important message!”

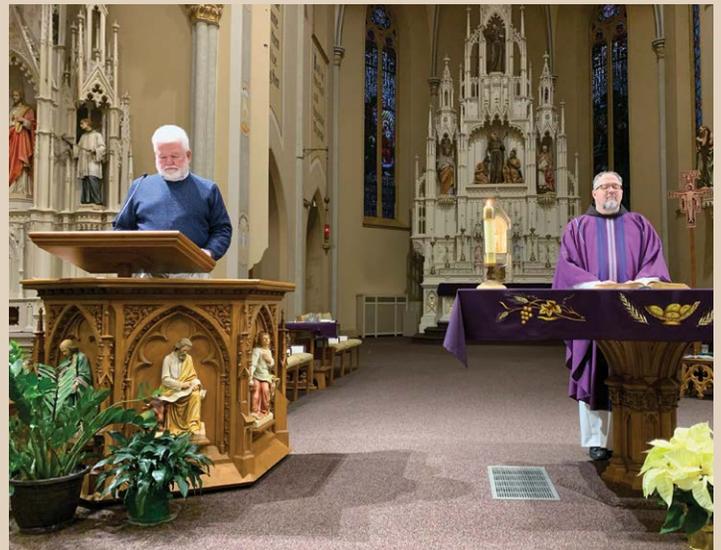
And as a ministry with an important message, it also comes with many blessings.

“Just being so close to the altar, there is a real sharing of God’s Word that gives you more appreciation for the Mass,” Janet says. “For me, this a way to actively participate in the Mass.”

Janet has coordinated this ministry for more than five years, and had already long served as a reader a Mass. She trains new readers and communicates any changes to the current readers. The training for new readers includes a walk-through of the various ministry tasks and the opportunity to practice with the sound system. With having two readers per Mass, each has their own tasks for the liturgy.

“People leave that training feeling pretty comfortable with what is expected,” Janet says. “I want them to know we are here to help and answer any questions.”

Readers are expected to arrive a little early to Mass and also practice the reading several times at home.

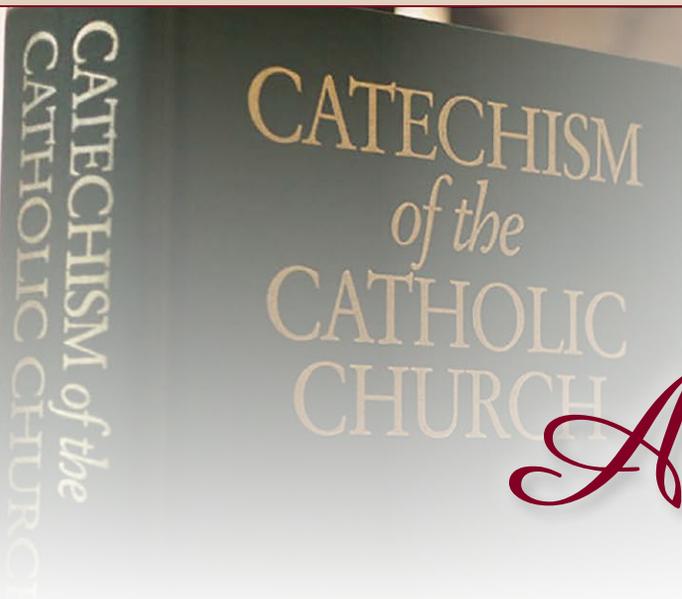


Reader Reg Ankrom proclaims at Mass as Fr. Bob Barko listens.

This allows them to concentrate on truly proclaiming the words, instead of simply reading. There is also a book available at the church to review before Mass, and it includes pronunciations to ensure proper delivery of the message.

“Many of those who have gotten involved as

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FROM THE CATECHISM

What is Almsgiving?

“Giving alms to the poor is a witness to fraternal charity: it is also a work of justice pleasing to God” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2462).

During the seasons of Advent and Lent, it is not uncommon to hear about fasting, prayer and almsgiving. Most of us are familiar with at least two of the three penitential practices — prayer and fasting. We engage in prayer each day, while fasting becomes a regular part of our Lenten routines.

But what is almsgiving?

It is simply giving to those less fortunate than ourselves. This can be through donations of canned goods to the local food pantry, spare change to the Salvation Army during the Christmas season, or even through person-to-person contact with the poor.

This Lent, if your family has not regularly engaged

in almsgiving, consider making a change. Search for opportunities to serve the poor and vulnerable, making their lives easier — even if in a small way.

Things to do with your family:

Place a coffee can in a prominent place in your home, and commit to filling it with loose change throughout the week. Then, donate the money to a local charity.

The next time you shop for groceries, buy a few extra canned goods and donate them to a food pantry or food bank.

Research a charity that works with the poor, and make a commitment to regularly give to that organization.

Resolve to never judge those who are less fortunate, and teach your children the same.

This Lent, if your family has not regularly engaged in almsgiving, consider making a change. Search for opportunities to serve the poor and vulnerable, making their lives easier — even if in a small way.

A Letter From Our Pastor

Fortitude:

AN IMPORTANT LENTEN VIRTUE

Dear Parishioners,

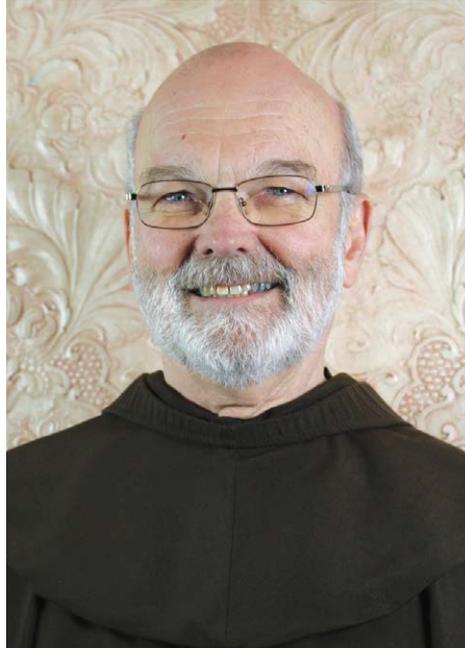
Lent began toward the end of February, and this month we find ourselves right at the heart of this penitential season. And all of the ways you planned to practice prayer, fasting, and almsgiving during Lent — you're keeping up with all of them, right? Just like all the resolutions we made back in January, I suppose.

That's one of the problems with us humans — our feelings come and go, so it's hard to maintain a commitment once the excitement of a particular event has gone away. That's why we shouldn't depend on our emotions to govern our lives — they are too fickle. We really shouldn't worry about our feelings. We cannot control them, usually they are neither morally good nor bad, but they are not constant.

While we recognize that we can't control feelings, we shouldn't allow ourselves to be controlled by them, either. When we have to make a choice, we need to consider the facts, ask God's guidance to discern what is right, and make our decision. Then, we must resolve to follow through with that decision, even if we may not feel up to it the next day, the next week, or the next month.

That perseverance comes from developing the virtue of **fortitude**. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1808) defines fortitude as "the moral virtue that ensures firmness in difficulties and constancy in the pursuit of the good. It strengthens the resolve to resist temptations and to overcome obstacles in the moral life."

Your immediate reaction may be that the elements of your Lenten rule of life are too little to require something heroic sounding like fortitude. They're just minor things, like giving up a single half-hour television program a week to read the Bible, or something similar. But "the moral virtues are acquired by human effort," the *Catechism* tells us (1804), although God's help is needed as well. They



become habitual with repeated practice, and it is only through frequent use in small things that they get developed to be ready for great trials.

What's the easiest way to remind ourselves of our commitments even when the feelings that inspired them have gone away? The best way is to write them down. That way we have something to remind us of what we determined to do. So if you decided to attend weekday Mass every Wednesday during Lent, as one possible example, and a particular Wednesday you're extra tired and it's raining, having a written statement may be the best way to force yourself out of bed and into the Church.

The same practice will serve us well in other areas of life when we determine a particular course of action. It can apply to our Lenten rule of life, or our New Year's resolutions, or our stewardship commitment. Writing them down helps us follow through, even when our feelings have gone away. And by the way, the traditional notable duties we try harder with during Lent fit in well with the main aspects of stewardship. We offer time for prayer; we can fast from self-indulgence by serving others with our talent; and we present our treasure for almsgiving. Maybe our bishops were onto something when they identified stewardship as "a disciple's response" to what God gives.

Have a blessed Lent, and you'll have a joyous Easter.

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

Lent Offers Opportunity for a Spiritual Journey

Like so many things in life, our faith is a continuous journey. By staying connected to the roots of our faith through a commitment to parish life, we are able to draw ever closer to our destination — a close and intimate relationship with our Lord. As Lent approaches, it is time to contemplate how we may best spend these upcoming 40 days of spiritual preparation. By opening our hearts and minds during this important liturgical season, we answer the call to deepen our faith as we journey from Ash Wednesday to Easter Sunday.

As Fr. Don Blaeser points out, we are blessed that God extends us this invitation to take a break from our hectic schedules and reconnect with our faith life in a meaningful way.

“We live in a fast-food culture, an email and text-messaging culture, so we don’t take well to long preparations,” Fr. Don says. “During Lent, we have to try to pull ourselves aside from the fast-paced instant gratification culture that we live in and see that there is value in taking the time to prepare.”

While most Catholics are quite familiar with the 40-day period of prayer and fasting during Lent — abstaining from meat on Fridays and sacrificing some small pleasure from their daily lives — Fr. Don invites all of us to enter more deeply into our spiritual journey this year.

“It’s not just about the negative and giving up stuff,” he says. “What about doing something extra? What about extending oneself a little bit more for those in need, even for loved ones? This could be a phone call to an elderly person, a letter or a visit to someone who is lonely. We can find ways to be positive and see Christ in others — the Christ who suffered for us is there.”

Increasing our commitment to prayer — what Fr. Don refers to as “spending time with the One who loves us most” — is another fruitful way to prepare our hearts

for the Easter season. We may also take the time to attend daily Mass, even if it is just once or twice a week. Participating in the Stations of the Cross on Fridays is another opportunity to walk more closely with Jesus during the Lenten season.

At the conclusion of Lent, the Church celebrates the summit of the liturgical year during the Triduum, beginning with Holy Thursday and concluding on Easter Sunday. The Holy Thursday Mass commemorates the Last Supper of Jesus by recalling the last Passover meal He shared with the disciples, as well as His humble washing of their feet.

The Good Friday service is one of great solemnity with the Liturgy of the Word followed by the Veneration of the Cross and Holy Communion. Catholics are asked to fast and meditate on the passion and death of Christ throughout the day.

Then, like a light suddenly and swiftly dispersing the darkness, the Easter Vigil Mass after sunset on Holy Saturday celebrates the resurrection of our Lord in a remarkable way. The Service of Light begins in darkness, but as the Easter candle is lit and its flame passed from person to person, light fills the church once more. The Liturgy of the Word recounts the history of our salvation, and those who have participated in our Rite of Christian Initiation of



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portunity to

Deeper into Our Faith

Adults (RCIA) process officially enter the Church. As the pinnacle of the liturgical year, the Easter Vigil experience is truly one of immeasurable joy and grace!

Fr. Don hopes that all parishioners will take time out of their busy schedules to attend the liturgical celebrations of the Triduum.

“The Holy Thursday Mass is so special,” he says. “While every Mass is a presentation of the Last Supper, Holy Thursday is that in a profound way, and makes it more present to us. Good Friday is very focused on the Paschal mystery — one beautiful mystery of the death and the resurrection.

“The Easter Vigil Mass focuses right at the heart

of what our faith is all about,” Fr. Don continues. “It gets us in touch with the fact that this goes back centuries. There is a richness in walking with those people through the Red Sea and getting out of slavery in Egypt. It goes way back, before Christ, but all culminates in Him and what He did for us in his birth, death and resurrection.”

By taking advantage of the opportunity to walk more closely with Christ this Lent, we may all experience the Easter season in a more profound and spiritually fulfilling way. We hope all parishioners will join us on this special faith journey right here at St. Francis Solanus!



“It’s not just about the negative and giving up stuff. What about doing something extra? What about extending oneself a little bit more for those in need, even for loved ones? This could be a phone call to an elderly person, a letter or a visit to someone who is lonely. We can find ways to be positive and see Christ in others — the Christ who suffered for us is there.” — Fr. Don Blaeser

“SANCTIFYING THE DAY WITH PRAYER”

The Liturgy of the Hours

What if the busy present moments that constitute our daily lives were consecrated to Christ? Each insignificant moment or mundane activity becomes another opportunity to glorify Him.

The Liturgy of the Hours is a means of not only centering the day on Christ, but also sanctifying the day, offering these moments to Him. It is a prayerful habitual practice of the clergy and religious — yet, in ever-increasing numbers, the laity are also gravitating towards these daily prayers.

Though it has undergone various developments over the years, the Liturgy of the Hours — also known as the Divine Office or the Breviary — has remained relatively the same since the 11th century. The Hours are divided into five parts of “canonical hours” — Office of Readings, Morning Prayer, Daytime Prayer, Evening Prayer, and Night Prayer.

Each of the Hours includes readings of the psalms. Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer, the two most important Hours, include a Gospel canticle.

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) describes the prayers as “a meditative dialogue on the mystery of Christ.” Through Scripture, the Hours invite us into this dialogue, a prayerful conversation that can undergird our daily moments.

From helpful instructional videos on YouTube, to written resources through EWTN and the USCCB, there is a wealth of resources for the laity on learning how to pray the Liturgy of the Hours.

Many Catholic bookstores and even Amazon.com sell the four-volume book set that contains the complete Hours. And if using the actual four-volume set seems daunting, the website divineoffice.org offers the entire Liturgy of the Hours for free. An app is also available to download, therefore providing us with a means of keeping the prayers within reach throughout the day.

Whether with a faith community or in solitary prayer, saying the Liturgy of the Hours situates us within a rich tradition of Catholic prayer and consecrates the present moments of our lives to Christ.

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HIGHLIGHTS OF OUR

2019 Stewardship Renewal

We thank all those who participated in the 2019 Stewardship Renewal. If you did not have the opportunity to fill out and return a commitment card, we invite you to consider the ways you may share your stewardship gifts with God and our parish community!

This past autumn, our St. Francis Solanus parish leadership hosted the 2019 Stewardship Renewal. This gave parishioners the opportunity to discern how we are using our stewardship gifts of time, talent and treasure in return to God within the parish community. We are happy to share with you some of the highlights of the 2019 Stewardship Renewal at St. Francis Solanus.

- There were 513 commitment cards received from 48 percent of active households.
- There were 3,978 commitments to prayer — the stewardship of time — from 93 percent of participating households.
- Some of the prayer commitments included: Attend Mass every Sunday and Holy Day, 447 commitments; Spend 15 minutes a day in personal prayer, 347 commitments; Pray for my country daily, 300 commitments.

- There were 2,120 commitments to ministries — the stewardship of talent — from 87 percent of participating households. Of these, 439 were new ministry commitments, while 1,681 were re-commitments to parish ministries.
- Some of the ministry commitments included: Funeral Dinners: Bring Dish, 188 commitments; Parish Picnic, 169 commitments; Ladies of St. Francis, 145 commitments; Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, 126 commitments; St. Francis Community Assistance, 100 commitments.
- There were 385 offertory commitments — the stewardship of treasure — from 75 percent of participating households. The average pledge was \$1,826.

The image shows three commitment cards for the 2019 Stewardship Renewal, each with a blue header and white body. The 'Time' card is titled 'Spending Time with God in Prayer' and lists various prayer commitments. The 'Talent' card is titled 'Using My Talents in Parish Ministries' and lists various ministries. The 'Treasure' card is titled 'Making a Consistent Gift to the Offertory' and lists various offertory commitments. A fourth card, 'Called to Serve', is partially visible on the right, featuring a photo of a church service and the text 'St. Francis Solanus 2019 Commitment Card My Offering of Time, Talent & Treasure'.

Time
Spending Time with God in Prayer

Using my time on earth wisely; making time for personal prayer, family prayer and quality time with friends and loved ones.

Please check the circle next to your prayer commitments:

- Attend Mass every Sunday and Holy Day
- Attend weekday Mass at least once a week
- Spend one hour a week in Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament
- Invite a friend or acquaintance to Mass
- Pray together with my family
- Discuss our Catholic Faith with my children
- Read the Bible for a half hour a week

Talent
Using My Talents in Parish Ministries

Using my God-given abilities to strengthen the Church and help others, especially through parish ministries and activities.

Continue Involvement Interested in Joining

Clearly write the first name(s) of interested family member(s) on the line.

ADULT FORMATION

- Bible Study
- Catholics Returning Home
- Divorce & Beyond
- Evenings with Engaged
- RCIA — Team Member/Sponsor

Treasure
Making a Consistent Gift to the Offertory

In thanksgiving for God's gifts, each at St. Francis Solanus is asked a specific percentage of income based on the 10% biblical tithing:

- 5% to St. Francis Solanus
- 1% to the diocese
- 4% to other charities

My Offertory pledge to St. Francis Solanus is \$_____ weekly or monthly offertory.

Please complete either:

- Weekly gift \$_____
- Monthly gift \$_____

Called to Serve
St. Francis Solanus
2019 Commitment Card
My Offering of Time, Talent & Treasure

Recent Contact Change

First & Last Name _____

St. Francis Solanus

ROMAN CATHOLIC PARISH

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stfrancissolanus.com



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Readers *continued from front cover*

readers realize there is an importance to God's Word, and they want to share their gift of public speaking with parishioners and our Lord," Janet says.

This ministry also offers the chance to get to know people and build community, especially when a new parishioner participates in the training with Janet. Building community is just one added benefit of volunteering with most ministries at St. Francis Solanus.

It is Janet's hope that more youth will begin to serve

in this ministry — she believes it would be meaningful for them and the entire congregation.

Janet invites anyone who is comfortable with public speaking to share their gift with our St. Francis Solanus faith family.

"For me, it has made me more interested in the Word, and I've found deeper meaning in the Word," she says. "I feel it's connected me to God in a much deeper way."

If you would like to learn more about the Readers Ministry, please contact Janet Zeidler at 217-779-0290 or rzjz2010@hotmail.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.