

Saint Francis Solanus



APRIL 2020

Decorating God's House: The Liturgy Planning Committee

Flowers are beginning to bloom. Birds are beginning to chirp. Signs of life are popping up everywhere. And just as we can observe the change of seasons in the world around us, our Liturgy Planning Committee hopes to fill our church with signs that draw our attention to the change in our Church's liturgical seasons.

"Our group takes care of the 'seasonal' changes in the church calendar," says Joselyn Smith, who has been involved in the group for about five years and currently serves as its Chairperson. "We plan and decorate the church accordingly."

"I have come to realize the visual changes [in the church] that happen overnight are not done by fairies," she adds, with a smile. "Our group puts in tireless, joyful effort into making it a little bit of a spiritual transformation for the parishioners."

The group also helps to organize some of the opportunities for fellowship during Lent, after special Masses and during parish missions. Above all, their goal is to create a prayerful environment in the church — one that invites people to prayer and focus on the



particular themes of the liturgical year.

"For the Lent and Easter, I hope that the parishioners feel the change in climate, a conversion from self-awareness and denial to joy in the salvation of the risen Lord," Joselyn says. "It's not just the physical environment that changes, but the visual cues that we give help with the emotional change, when parishioners walk into the church."

The group meets on the first Tuesday of every month — with the exception of summer — to plan for

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Decorating God's House: **The Liturgy Planning Committee**

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the upcoming liturgical changes. They enjoy the opportunity for fellowship, as they work together to decorate the church, and are often joined by their families to help with various projects.

"I love the group of ladies that are in the group," Joselyn says. "We work together well on preparation days, and it becomes a family affair with husbands, kids and grandkids all helping. We have always had a priest on our committee, which has been helpful in enlightening us over the years. The new ideas they bring are always welcome."

Joselyn has found that being part of the Liturgy Planning Committee has been an opportunity for her to deepen her knowledge of the liturgical calendar.

She's learned about the different ways that the Church invites us to grow, based on the different liturgical seasons.

"I have learned so much about the liturgical calendar over the years," Joselyn says. "Our Catholic faith is grounded in tradition that our group helps to make a visual reminder to the parish."

Joselyn encourages other parishioners to consider becoming involved in serving in this way.

"We would love new members," Joselyn says. "This is a very low-key, easygoing group of ladies — we all learn as we go and build on what we know. Everyone shares their ideas and by the grace of God, the results are always amazing!"



Our Liturgy Planning Committee works hard to create a beautiful setting that invites people to prayer in our church.

If you would like more information, or to become involved in our Liturgy Planning Committee, please contact Chairperson Joselyn Smith at joselynsmith62301@yahoo.com, or call the parish office at 217-222-2898.

A Letter From Our Pastor

EASTER: The Ultimate Victory

Dear Parishioners,

Because Easter Sunday is on the second Sunday of the month, we spend over half of April bathing in the joy of Jesus' victory over death. His Resurrection is the source of our hope for eternal life in the Kingdom of God.

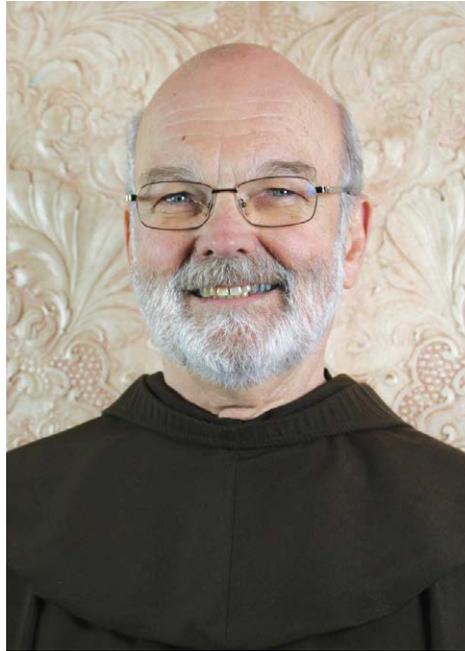
If you were to seek one characteristic word for the Easter Season, that word would be *Alleluia*, which fills the liturgy during this period. Notice how many Easter hymns contain the word *Alleluia*. It comes to us via Latin and Greek from the Hebrew *Hallelujah* meaning, "Praise the LORD."

The Hebrew *Hallelujah* is a word of pure praise, used in the Jewish liturgy and found at the beginning and end of many of the Psalms. It was even recorded in Revelation — see chapter 19 for examples. In fact, the essence of *Alleluia* ought to be at the center of our Christian lives.

What do I mean by "*Alleluia* living," if I may call it that? I guess I'd best summarize my thoughts by saying it means incorporating Christ's victory into the core of our own lives. Knowing that Jesus Christ died on the cross and then rose again from the dead should not be some abstract idea that has no relevance to our own life. Faith in the Resurrection is the basis of Christianity.

Perhaps for most of us death is not very real, or at least not something we think about often. Most Americans don't live on farms where the deaths of animals are regular occurrences. And most people die conveniently out of sight in nursing homes or hospitals, not at home surrounded by their families. We try to keep death out of sight.

But Christianity recognizes that death is real and that it is the final result of sin. Death is hostile to us — St. Paul even states, "The last enemy to be destroyed



is death" (1 Cor 15:26). However, Jesus has won the victory over death. While we ourselves will experience death until Christ's Second Coming, the crucial battle is over and has been won.

We have faith that Jesus has risen, and that fills us with the hope that we too will share in the Resurrection. St. Paul explained it in this way: "For just as in Adam all die, so too in Christ shall all be brought to life, but each one in proper order: Christ the firstfruits; then, at his coming, those who belong to Christ" (1 Cor 15:22-23).

That hope then brings joy to the Christian's life — joy because Christ is victor, joy because He shares His victory with us. That we trust death is not the end is the basis of this joy. And that's what is at the heart of "*Alleluia* living," a joy that radiates through all of life even when we experience pain and suffering, even in the midst of financial turmoil, even during times of personal sorrow.

This Easter Season, let's live out Jesus' reassurance, "In the world you will have trouble, but take courage, I have conquered the world" (Jn 16:33). We can be joyful because we don't need to fear, and with that promise of ultimate security, we then dare to share the time, talent and treasure God has entrusted to us, and use them in His service.

The Lord is risen, alleluia!

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

Supporting Our New Candidates Through

In order for the Church to stay alive, it must continue to grow and expand. This is why evangelization remains a core part of the faith, helping us to live out Christ's command to go forth and preach the Gospel (Mark 16:15). The Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults, or RCIA, plays a crucial role in this evangelization effort by serving as the Church's official process for welcoming in new adults into the Catholic faith.

"It's the process by which the Church grows," says Director of Religious Education Mike Holbrook. "The Church could become stagnant if it doesn't continue to grow. And so it's very important that candidates and catechumens receive the support of the parish family — that the whole community becomes involved in this process."

Currently, St. Francis Solanus is blessed to have one catechumen (non-baptized) and one candidate (baptized) journeying through the RCIA process.

Laura Graham was not raised



Amanda Vandiver and her fiancé, David.

in faith-filled household. So things like reading the Bible or attending church were unfamiliar to her as a child. Yet, as Laura grew into adulthood she began searching for a faith, hungering for something that would fill her desire for a greater purpose. But none of the churches she attended over the years met that need until she attended her first

Mass at St. Francis Solanus.

"I studied other religions while in college and tried several Christian faith churches with friends, but never felt anything," Laura says. "Then I went to Mass at St. Francis with my friend, and for the first time I felt truly moved."

Deeply affected by her experience, Laura later decided to

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"Parishioners and guests are always welcome to join us. We're there to answer questions from the head, yes, but more importantly to help change hearts and move people's lives closer to Christ. And because everyone is coming from a different place, we're happy to meet each person individually. That's why it's a process and not a program." — Mike Holbrook, Director of Religious Education

ates and Catechumens h the RCIA Process

join RCIA as a way of learning about and building a strong foundation in her newly chosen faith. In the process, Laura is gaining a relationship with Christ for the first time in her life, learning new things about Him and His Church nearly every day.

“Through RCIA, I feel like I am gaining a deeper understanding of Christ and His teachings, and it is bringing me closer to Him,” Laura says. “I feel like I am slowly finding faith and a meaningful purpose in life.”

With everything still very new to her, Laura says she has a lot left to learn about the faith. She is so thankful for the patience and support of the RCIA team members and the many parishioners who have welcomed her thus far. Laura’s hope is to receive her sacraments in Easter 2021 after building a more solid understanding of the faith.

Unlike Laura, **Amanda Vandiver** has already been baptized and received a strong faith foundation as a child. It was her fiancé David that led her to finally join RCIA — after years of considering it — desiring to become more unified as a couple before their marriage this May. Thankfully, the process wasn’t nearly as intimidating as she thought

it would be, providing Amanda with lots of opportunities to ask questions and go at her own pace.

“I held out for years because I thought starting the process meant I had to finish it 100 percent at that time,” Amanda says. “You’re actually allowed to take your time and ask questions. That’s why the process is the way it is. It is not intimidating like I thought it would be. I definitely wish I would have investigated it sooner, but I am grateful to be on this journey now.”

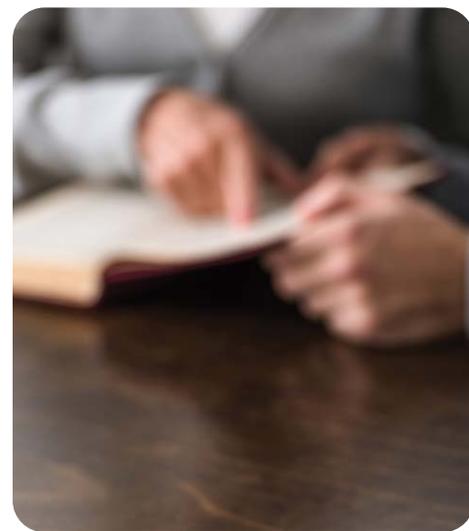
Though fitting in the weekly Thursday night RCIA sessions can be a challenge at times, Amanda feels deeply grateful to be journeying through this process with such a welcoming and supportive team of individuals. It’s provided her with regular opportunities to reflect and meditate upon the faith and has pushed her to become more present in her relationship with Christ.

“I’m so thankful for the opportunities it’s provided me for discussion with my loved ones,” Amanda says. “I have such confidence that this choice is going to strengthen my marriage and enhance the lives of my future children. It is really a special experience.”

We encourage all parishioners to spiritually support Laura

and Amanda as they continue journeying in their faith. If you or someone you know is interested in learning more about the faith, please consider joining the RCIA ministry at one of their Thursday gatherings at 6:30 p.m. in the Bridesroom. All are welcome, no matter where they are in the process.

“Parishioners and guests are always welcome to join us,” Mike says. “We’re there to answer questions from the head, yes, but more importantly to help change hearts and move people’s lives closer to Christ. And because everyone is coming from a different place, we’re happy to meet each person individually. That’s why it’s a process and not a program.”



If you would like more information about the RCIA process at St. Francis Solanus, please contact Mike Holbrook at 217-653-5555 or mholbrook@stfrancissolanus.com.

TEACHING BY EXAMPLE

The Importance of Prayer in a Child's Life

“I want to be just like Mom!”
“I want to be just like Dad!”

Perhaps nothing lifts a parent's heart like hearing these words. While certainly affirming, such words also remind us of the great responsibility that comes with parenthood.

Children often examine the lives of their parents when making decisions that will affect their own lives. For example, a young boy may dream of becoming a physician one day, just like his father. Or a young girl may hope to become a veterinarian, just like her mother. Could the same be said about their parents' faith lives?

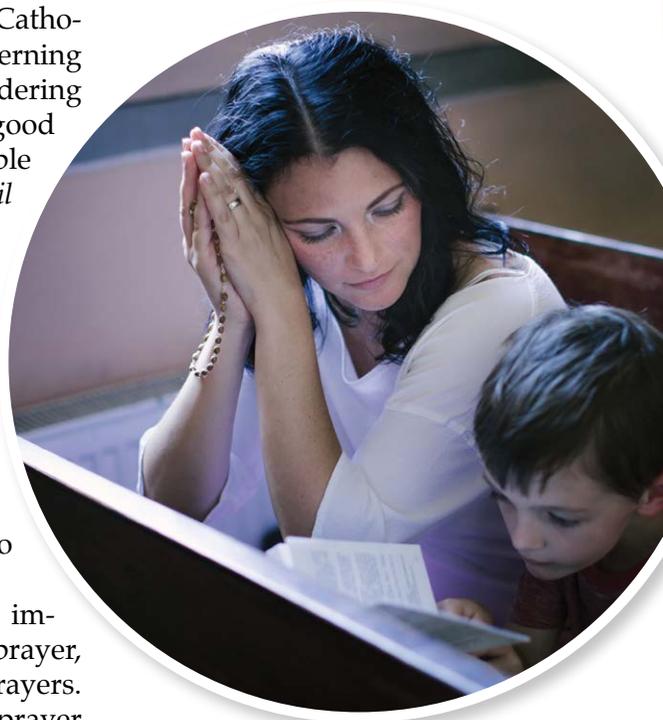
Just as children learn traits and values from their parents, they should also learn the importance and great joy of developing a personal relationship with Christ. And the foundation of such a relationship is prayer — conversation with God.

How should we go about teaching our children to pray? There are several methods, but none works as well as teaching by example. Begin teaching the importance of prayer by praying openly with your spouse. This teaches children that prayer is meaningful and important, and not just a ritual. Also, pray with your children — in the morning and in the evening. Show your sons and daughters the importance of beginning and ending each day in prayer.

While a fortunate dilemma, it's

a dilemma nonetheless — Catholics face the challenge of discerning which prayers to use, considering the thousands available. A good rule of thumb is to start simple — maybe an *Our Father* or *Hail Mary*, and then move into something more complex — *Hail, Holy Queen* or *Prayer to St. Michael the Archangel*, among others. Begin with prayers your children can pick up fairly quickly. Not only will this show them that praying can be fun and easy, but shorter prayers are also usually easier to understand.

Teach your children the importance of spontaneous prayer, rather than just prescribed prayers. Spontaneous prayer is any prayer that is created at the same time it is offered. Another way to think of spontaneous prayer is “praying in your own words.” Structure spontaneous prayers according to the ACTS acronym — Adoration, Contrition, Thanksgiving and Supplication. In layman's terms, this means beginning each prayer with words of adoration, such as “You are the Lord God Almighty. I love you.” Move into a period of contrition, asking God's forgiveness for the sins you have committed. Then, give words of thanksgiving, thanking God for the gifts He has given. Finally, spend time sharing with God your heart's desires. These intentions can be personal or on another's behalf. Following this



format ensures that spontaneous prayer “covers all the bases,” and doesn't become just a mental wish list. While God wants to hear and grant our wishes, He also expects words of adoration, contrition and thankfulness.

The best time to begin praying with your children is right now. The sooner they learn about prayer, the sooner they can begin cultivating their own relationship with Jesus. Many parents even pray with their children before birth, hoping their unborn son or daughter can hear their words in utero. Remember, there is no better way to teach one's children about the value of prayer than by example.

A Great Time for Family Fun

Annual St. Francis Golf Outing

Benefiting Our Grade School

This summer, it will be the perfect time to get your clubs ready, polish your shoes to a “tee” and work on your drive — because the St. Francis Golf Outing is set for Sunday, Sept. 27, at the Westview Golf Course under the sponsorship of our Holy Name Society, all to benefit St. Francis School.

Everyone is welcome to join in the outing that will begin at 11:30 a.m. for registration and lunch, followed by a shotgun start at 12:30 p.m.

“One of the big things about the tournament is it gets people together,” says Dan Hoffman, tournament Chair. “The Holy Name Society does all the work for it and through their work, everyone gets to know each other. They provide the food, such as soup, hot dogs and snacks. They prepare all that, so it’s kudos to them. They are a great help for the event.”

The tournament will include mixed foursomes.

“Two years ago, I played with my grandchildren,” Dan says. “It’s a family and fun time out. The only competition is among the foursomes.”

Although the outing was rained out last year, it typically has brought in at least \$7,000 yearly over the last four years that Dan has chaired the event.

The golf outing has an interesting history as it has grown over the years, according to Ray Wheeler, a

member of the Class of 1967. The event began as a project for classmate Mike Mason to manage.

“Mike got MS when he was about 20 years old,” Ray says. “He has been in a wheelchair for about 40 years. He is a good friend.”

Ray and a number of friends approached Mike about his running a fundraiser to benefit Quincy Notre Dame High School, and the idea of the golf outing came up. The Mike Mason Foundation was organized to raise funds for the high school. However, at a later point Mike suggested he’d like the funds go to St. Francis Grade School.

As a result, the Mike Mason Foundation joined the Quincy Area Foundation to disburse the funds. The donations to the grade school went toward the purchase of computers, software and other educational needs. Between \$25,000 to \$30,000 was raised for the school over a 10-year period.

After that 10 years, however, Mike decided to no longer oversee the outing. Ray then presented the idea to the Holy Name Society, which agreed to take over the event.

As the date for the outing approaches, Dan will be sending out announcements and posting notices in the weekly bulletins. The cost is \$65 per person, and the event is open to parishioners and non-parishioners, alike. A total of 24 teams can play.

Anyone with questions about the upcoming St. Francis Golf Outing may call Dan Hoffman at 217-617-3537.



St. Francis Solanus

ROMAN CATHOLIC PARISH

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An Important Note About the Future of St. Francis Solanus Parish:

The Franciscans, after having the care of St. Francis Solanus Parish for the past 160 years, are very sad to announce that we are relinquishing the parish to the care of the Diocese of Springfield in Illinois. While this is a sad day for both the Franciscan friars and the people of this parish, we are encouraged that the diocese will be able to provide priests to minister at St. Francis. The change will officially take place with the Franciscans leaving on June 30, and diocesan priests taking possession of the parish on July 1, 2020.

We Franciscans offer our prayers and best wishes to all our parishioners. In the coming days until this takes place, we intend to celebrate the 160th anniversary of St. Francis Parish, as well as to ritualize our departure with an appropriate ceremony. In the meantime, we continue to hold each other in God's love.

Holy Week at St. Francis Solanus

Holy Thursday:

Mass of the Lord's Supper, 7 p.m.

Good Friday:

Celebration of the Passion of the Lord, 3 p.m.
Stations of the Cross, 5:30 p.m.

Holy Saturday:

Easter Vigil, 8 p.m.

Easter Sunday Masses:

6:30 a.m., 8 a.m., 9:30 a.m., 11 a.m.

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.