

Saint Francis Solanus



APRIL 2017

Parents Help Pave the Way for Upcoming First Communion

Whether we notice it or not, our parents are our first teachers. Guiding us through every aspect of life – from learning how to button a shirt, to directing us in what to believe – teaching, often by example, is just part of the deal. With that in mind, the parents of some of St. Francis Solanus' youngest parishioners are helping guide them as they receive First Holy Communion.

On Sunday, April 30, 38 second-grade students will receive Holy Communion for the first time at the 11 a.m. Mass. As the excitement leading up to this special day builds, Coordinator of Religious Programs Carol Seifert describes how the preparation process works and parents' important role in help-

ing their children to be ready as they receive this sacrament.

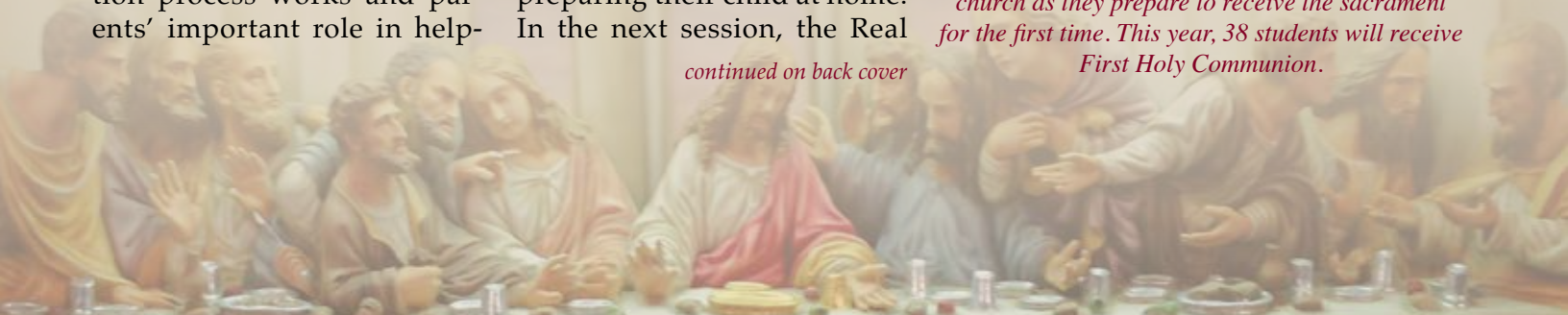
"We have a city-wide preparation process," Carol says. "All four parishes provide the same preparation. This gives parents the opportunity to attend preparation sessions at another parish if they cannot attend at their own."

Sessions at each parish focus on enabling parents not only to be an extension of the Parish School of Religion program, but their child's primary teacher when it comes to growing in his or her faith. Carol says the first parent session focuses on the importance of attending Mass and preparing their child at home. In the next session, the Real

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First Communion candidates process into the church as they prepare to receive the sacrament for the first time. This year, 38 students will receive First Holy Communion.



Striving to Tithe: How You Can Give

As Catholics, we know we have an obligation to support the Church, but we recognize that each family has to decide how much they can give. Some families truly can't afford to tithe – giving 10 percent of income. All the same, we do honor the tithe as a Scriptural benchmark that has been followed for centuries. It began with the Israelites giving 10 percent of their “first fruits” (see Deut. 26:4-10), and has persisted through today in the Catholic Church. It's a good standard to strive toward.

But for many, tithing may seem difficult. In fact, for most of us, tithing *is* difficult – but only at first. Families who tithe invariably say they had to “take a leap of faith” when they started, but they also say they feel great joy and peace knowing that they are putting God first in their finances. And after a while, most say they don't even miss the money. But how did they get to that point? Below are a few steps you can take to begin tithing.

1. Believe you *should* tithe.

The very first step toward tithing is believing that it is a worthy goal that you should strive toward. It has to be an intentional decision to put God first, before anything else. This is contrary to the old investment adage, “pay yourself first” – meaning to first put aside a certain percentage into savings before paying bills. Someone who tithes has modified this mentality, with 10 percent going to *God* first, and then the other 90 percent going towards savings, expenses, etc.

2. Make a budget and stick to it.

Budgeting is simple on paper, but harder in real life. To begin, simply calculate your income and make an honest evaluation of your expenses. Put your tithe as the

first “line item,” and treat it like you would your rent or mortgage payment – something you would never miss. Choose to give to God what's right, not what's left.

3. Cut back and re-prioritize.

Evaluate how you spend your money and find ways to cut back. It costs nearly \$30 for two people to go to a movie and buy popcorn, sodas and candy. The new car you're thinking about may cost \$60 more per month to add a sunroof and leather interior. Are these things you could live without? In our consumer-oriented society, there's no end to what we want to buy. The question is where our priorities lie – do you want a plasma TV more than a vibrant youth ministry?

4. Choose good charities.

A charity may be a friend or family member in need. It may be Catholic Charities or the Salvation Army. To find where your money can make a difference, try visiting CharityNavigator.org.

Contrary to what some televangelists say, if you give God \$100, he's not going to automatically give you a winning lottery ticket. Mathematically, you will have less money after you tithe. But we do know that God rewards those who do what is right – perhaps not in tangible ways, but certainly in spiritual ways. Choosing to tithe will take a leap of faith on your part, but it's one that will surely pay dividends. “Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse... Shall I not open for you the floodgates of heaven to pour down blessing upon you without measure?” (Malachi 3:10).

A Letter From Our Pastor

Give Thanks to the Lord, It Is Right and Just

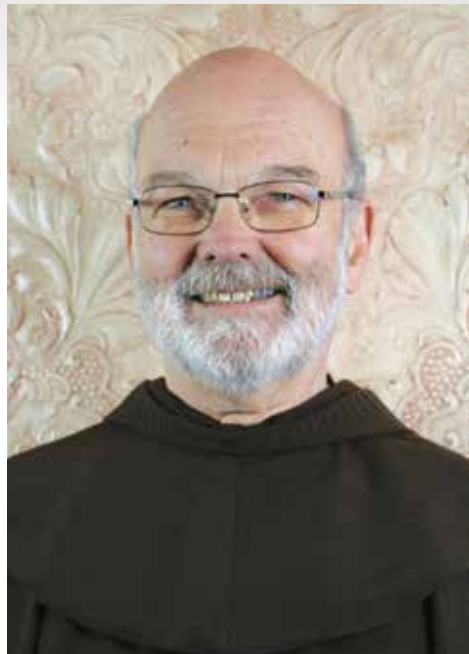
Dear Parishioners,

Every time I prepare my monthly letter to you in this newsletter, I am reminded how blessed I am. Being a priest truly is a blessing. While the job is not always easy — a pastor has many responsibilities — the rewards are equally humbling.

As we complete our preparations and then share in our celebrations of the Triduum and Easter, I am also prompted to think about the holiest things I do. By far, the holiest is celebrating Mass, and especially consecrating the holy bread and wine so Christ is present among us. The very word “consecration” literally means “association with the sacred.” To have that duty is incredible. I have never taken it for granted, and although it may appear at times to be somewhat automatic, it never is for me.

Almost all of us are familiar with the Mass, and with what we do and say leading up to the high point — the Eucharist. But I think we must guard against becoming too casual in our responses and what we say. That is what I work to avoid, but I believe you need to work just as diligently to make sure that you are listening, hearing, and being aware of what you are saying. For us as Catholics, the Mass is the most important sacred act in the Church.

I suppose I could write a whole series of letters or articles on the meaning of everything we say and do at Mass, but I was thinking of one exchange in particular during the Liturgy of the Eucharist. It is some-



thing we may say in sort of a habitual way, but I firmly believe each of us must truly consider what we are saying.

I say to you, “Let us give thanks to the Lord our God,” and you respond, “It is right and just.” Think about what that means, because it is very much at the heart of stewardship. I am saying we need to thank God, show gratitude for everything we are and everything with which we are gifted — and you, at least in words, acknowledge that doing that is exactly what we need to do. The Mass is filled with statements and exchanges of that sort, and I would ask that we really think about what they truly mean.

Even the simple exchange between the Eucharistic Minister and you at the actual reception of the Host is heavy with meaning. We say, “The Body of Christ,” and you reply “Amen.” In that instance, “Amen” means “Yes, I do believe this is Jesus.” Like myself, you are blessed. Sometimes we just need to realize it. Happy Easter!

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

Quilting for a Cause: I



A quilt that Teresa Hesse pieced for herself. The group is currently preparing to quilt it.



Teresa Hesse (left) working on quilting.

“We have a picture of her that sits on the shelf and we talk to her and say, ‘We wish you were here!’” says Rosemary Duesterhaus, speaking of her dear friend, Teresa Hesse.

Teresa began serving the parish as Co-Head of the Quilters, even before Rosemary became involved, in the late 1980s. She passed away this past October, at the age of 90.

“She was such a blessing,” Rosemary says. “She was so good at helping people. She’d say, ‘I’m always glad to help somebody.’ She was somebody that you could really share your problems with and it wouldn’t go any farther. She was a very good listener. And she was so strong in her faith. She [went through many difficult things], but she never gave up.”

With Teresa’s memory close to their hearts, the St. Francis Solanus Quilters continue to serve the parish, as well as support each other. Rosemary now serves as the Co-Head of the quilters, along with Minnie Jo Glisan.

The nine dedicated women of the Quilters meet weekly, usually on Thursdays. They recently moved into a beautiful, new quilting room, located in the basement of the parish hall. Their diligent work creates a queen-size quilt and a baby quilt, twice a year, which are raffled at the Parish Picnic in June, as well as at the Fall Bazaar. The Quilters have begun showcasing the pieces in the narthex before the raffle.

“It’s so much fun to deliver the quilts to people who’ve won, they’re just tickled,” Rosemary says.

But in addition to contributing to the parish’s fundraising efforts, the Quilters have also become a community of faith and fellowship.

“It is beautiful because we get together and we pray for each other’s needs, for people who are sick in the parish or have other needs – we pray for them,” Rosemary says. “It’s such a support for everyone.”

“When we go to church, we look around for each other, and if we see somebody’s missing, we’ll check on each other,” she adds. “It helps us to pray for each other, and keep track of each other.”

Being part of the Quilters has also helped Rosemary grow in her faith and become more involved in the parish.

In Memory of Teresa Hesse

"It's just so much fun getting together with everybody, and when you get finished with it, you have something that's valuable. It really is a good feeling to know that we can contribute and to know that we contribute to each other's lives, as well." – Rosemary Duesterhaus

"Before I got in the Quilters, I didn't go to the ladies' meetings, I didn't go to the St. Anthony's Tuesday morning devotion, and all the ladies said, 'Oh come on, you should go!'" she says. "It really has helped me get connected with what's going on in the parish. I think my faith has really grown stronger and I'm able to trust more and pray more."

Rosemary loves the fact that she and her friends are able to gather to support, laugh, talk, and pray together – and in the end, be able to help support their parish with their efforts.

"It's just so much fun getting together with everybody, and when you get finished with it, you have something that's valuable," she says. "It really is a good feeling to know that we can contribute and to know that we contribute to each other's lives, as well."

Rosemary encourages seasoned quilters, as well as those who've never quilted, to come and join them, or even just come and see what quilting is all about.

"If you're not a quilter, we'll teach you," she says. "If you want to do it, it just takes practice. Stop by and visit with us and watch us."



Teresa Hesse setting up the Quilters display for a parish picnic.



Quilts pieced by Teresa Hesse, quilted by the St. Francis Solanus Quilters.

If you would like more information, or to get involved with the Quilters, please contact Rosemary Duesterhaus at 217-222-0827 or Minnie Jo Glisan at 217-222-6727.

Celebrating the Easter Vigil, the “Mother of All Vigils”

As the sun wanes on Holy Saturday, the universal community of the faithful will gather for the Easter Vigil, the pinnacle of the liturgical year. As sung in the *Exsultet*, the Easter Proclamation, “this is the night.” This is the night when Christ triumphed over sin and death and “rose victorious from the underworld.”

During the Easter Vigil, the Church awaits and then celebrates Christ’s resurrection with a sacred liturgy that draws upon rich symbolic traditions to highlight our transition from death to life, from darkness to light.

The very atmosphere in the church space as we gather on the evening of Holy Saturday prepares us for the Easter Vigil. Tangible signs throughout the church represent Christ’s entombment. The holy water fonts stand empty, the tabernacle lies devoid of Christ’s presence and the sanctuary lamp is fittingly extinguished.

According to the Church’s rubrics for the liturgical year, the vigil should take place during the night, and its unique four-part structure sets the celebration apart from all other liturgies.

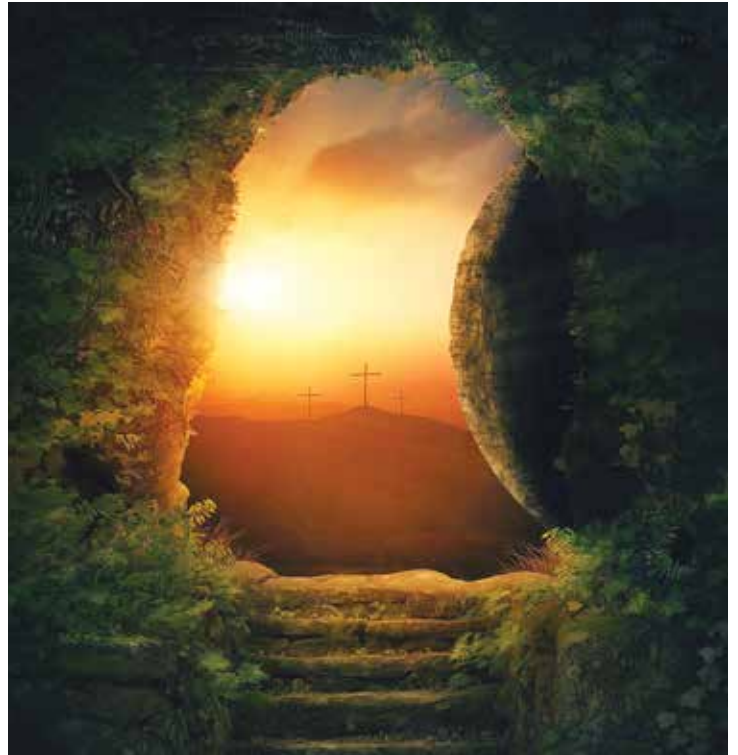
With the church shrouded in darkness, the celebration begins with the Service of Light, during which the faithful gather outside around a blazing fire that draws the community together.

During the Service of Light, the Paschal candle, the central sacramental of the Easter Vigil liturgy, is brought forward. The candle represents Christ, the light of the world, and the faithful process into the church following the candle, which brightens the darkened space. At this time, the candles held by the community are lit from the Paschal candle, and the Easter Proclamation is sung.

Following the Service of Light, the Liturgy of the Word is proclaimed, and passages from the Old and New Testament show God’s intervention throughout salvation history. We sing the *Alleluia* for the first time since the commencement of the Lenten season.

Then, in the Liturgy of Baptism, we welcome the candidates and catechumens who have prepared in a particular way throughout the Lenten season to enter the Church. Alongside the new members of the community, we renew our own baptismal promises during this holy night.

Lastly, in the Liturgy of the Eucharist, Christ – in



His Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity – becomes present in the consecrated bread and wine. The Blessed Sacrament is once again in the tabernacle, and the sanctuary lamp is illuminated.

As we anticipate the Easter Vigil, the “turning point of the Triduum,” we can prepare ourselves for this sacred liturgy by renewing our Lenten resolutions and our desire for complete conversion to Christ. We can read the Liturgy of Word for the Easter Vigil, meditating on Christ’s loving and powerful actions on the behalf of His beloved people.

With the transition from the 40 days of Lent into the 50 days of the Easter season, we can find small daily ways to celebrate this time of rejoicing. Perhaps we will light a symbolic candle each evening, welcoming the light of Christ, or decorate our domestic churches with signs of the Resurrection from white linens to spring greenery.

Throughout these blessed weeks of the Easter season, the Paschal candle is illuminated at the beginning of each liturgy as a tangible reminder of our ongoing faith journey and our daily turning from the darkness of sin to the light of Christ.

A Look at Our Parish Finances

Dear Parishioners,

Some have suggested that it would be good to offer a Financial Report in the Parish Newsletter. Sounds good to me. So, attached are the basic items in our Finance Report a little more than halfway through the fiscal year.

First of all, I want to say thank you to all of you who are contributing. I know that some of you are making real sacrifices, and many are practicing tithing – giving a percentage of your income. Our Finance Council is well aware of the difference this is making. Of course, we want to encourage more of you to do the same. I also want to acknowledge the efforts of our parish and school staffs in keeping our expenses down. We were expecting to see a very negative budget this year, and instead we are pretty much holding our own.

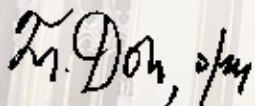
It should be noted that we still owe \$67,713.00 for the Annual Catholic Services Appeal (ACSA), which must be paid by the end of June. And our current outstanding debt for the Parish Center is \$704,932.00.

We are planning to renovate the restrooms on the third floor of our school, which are in bad shape. But we're trying to curtail any other major expenditures, since we can ill afford to go any deeper in debt than we already are.

While we are close to keeping up with regular operating expenses, we have been unable to set aside any reserve funds for future capital projects, equipment replacements, or major emergency repairs. Our operating reserves are at a level where, in an emergency, we could maintain "bare bones" operations for about four-to-six months.

Finance Reports are always a mixture of good news and bad news. The best news, in my book, is that you, the faithful parishioners of St. Francis Solanus Parish, are very generous. In addition to that, I can see that ever since we have started practicing Stewardship as a *Way of Life*, we are growing and improving in many ways. Let's rely on the Lord, and let's each do our part to help our parish thrive.

Sincerely yours in Christ,



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

St Francis Solanus
Parish Financial Report
July 1, 2016 thru January 31, 2017

OPERATING RECEIPTS

Church Support - Collections	\$ 646,953
Other Donations Memorials Etc	70,332
Fundraisers & Church Activities	42,064
Tuition, Fees, Pre & After School	489,013
School Support & Grants	137,372
TOTAL RECEIPTS	\$ 1,385,734

OPERATING EXPENDITURES

Wages, Benefits, Payroll Taxes	\$ 917,451
Contractual Services - Copiers Etc	64,487
Utilities	40,653
Insurance - Property & Liability	37,457
Repairs & Maintenance	7,542
Supplies - School, Textbooks, Office, Church	75,500
Other - Activities, Travel, Speakers, Etc	48,556
Tuition to Other Parishes	29,225
Interest On Debt	10,133
Capital Improvements - Security & Telephone	64,567
TOTAL OPERATING EXPENDITURES	\$ 1,295,571

OPERATING SURPLUS

\$ 90,163

The above amounts do not include restricted receipts used for payment on the Parish Center debt, payments of principal on the debt, receipts from insurance claims, or the storm damage repairs on the church which are being paid for by our insurance.

St. Francis Solanus

ROMAN CATHOLIC PARISH

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Parents Help Pave the Way *continued from front cover*

Presence of Christ within the Eucharist is discussed.

"Parents are given materials to take home and prepare their children for reception of First Communion," Carol says. "This is the most important part of the children's preparation, since parents are the first educators of their children."

In addition, instruction to help children fully grasp the mystery of the Eucharist continues both at St. Francis Solanus School and through the PSR. A second vital step in the Sacraments of Initiation, First Holy Communion builds on the welcoming embrace

of Baptism and provides spiritual food for the journey to Confirmation that these students will take in the coming years.

As a condition for receiving this sacrament, parents and PSR teachers help children to understand what the Real Presence within the Eucharist means and ensure that the child has a desire to receive Christ in the Eucharist.

"It is important that the children are prepared and know that what they are receiving is the Body and Blood of Christ," Carol says.

First Communion preparation typically takes place within a child's second-grade school year whether they attend at St. Francis Solanus School or elsewhere. Parents with questions on the process can contact the parish office at 217-222-2898.

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.