

Saint Francis Solanus



NOVEMBER 2017

Gift Bearers Ministry Allows Parishioners to Enter More Fully into the Liturgy

Put in the simplest of terms, stewardship is all about bringing our God-given resources and talents back to the Lord. We witness a beautiful example of this during each weekend liturgy through the Presentation of the Gifts, when chosen laypeople bring forward the bread and wine for the consecration along with the Offertory collection. Though a simple act in and of itself, the Gift Bearers' procession toward the altar represents the stewardship offerings of the entire congregation. And then soon after, in a truly miraculous way, these humble gifts are transformed into the very Body and Blood of Christ which we are each blessed to receive during Holy Communion.

For parishioner Cindy Reichert, Chair of the Gift Bearers Ministry, this simple act of carrying the gifts to the priest is both a tremendous privilege and stewardship witness. It allows parishioners to more fully enter into the liturgy in a non-intimidating manner and to silently demonstrate to others the importance of living out stewardship.

"I have personally been greatly blessed by this ministry," Cindy says. "A few years ago when my children and grandchildren were in town, we were blessed to carry the gifts up the altar to the priest for consecration. I felt so blessed that my family and I were able to carry the bread and wine that would soon become the Body and Blood of Christ — the very sacrament that we would soon be receiving at Holy Communion. What an incredible honor!"

This beautiful opportunity to serve at the Lord's Table is available to all parishioners both young and old. And



Cindy Reichert and her husband, Tim.

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The Spirit of Thanksgiving Doesn't Have to End in November

The origin of the first Thanksgiving feast is a matter of some debate among historians. But since 1863, Americans have annually set aside the fourth or fifth Thursday of November to give thanks to God for a bountiful harvest. The holiday became a matter of federal law in 1941, as President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed a joint congressional resolution to observe Thanksgiving Day on the fourth Thursday of November. Even as our society has become less agrarian, families continue to gather each November to give thanks to God for each other, and for the many blessings they have received throughout the year.

Most people associate this “spirit of Thanksgiving” with the fall holiday and its many recognizable symbols – brisk weather, cornucopias, family gatherings, and plenty of delicious food. But giving thanks to God in gratitude for the gifts we have received isn’t an attitude we should save for this annual holiday alone. When we live lives of stewardship – sharing of our time, talents, and treasure in thanks to God and at the service of others – we can sustain life in the Thanksgiving spirit throughout the year.

The Church teaches that this daily response of gratitude is an important element of living the life of a Christian disciple. As the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*

states, “Indeed, in the work of salvation, Christ sets creation free from sin and death to consecrate it anew and make it return to the Father, for his glory. The thanksgiving of the members of the Body participates in that of their Head” (CCC, 2637).

And how can we express this spirit of thanks? We can serve others, living the virtue of charity by reaching out to our brothers and sisters in need through acts of kindness. We can give back to God from our “first fruits,” sharing of our treasure in thanksgiving and recognition of the need to return a portion of our gifts to God. We can utilize our unique talents to make our parish and local communities better places. And, as the *Catechism* also points out, we can even express thanks through prayerfully offering up our daily activities to God – “Every event and need can become an offering of thanksgiving” (CCC, 2638).

This Thanksgiving, take a moment to think of ways that you can live in the “spirit of Thanksgiving” on the fourth Thursday of November, and every other day throughout the year. Living the stewardship way of life may not always involve a precisely carved turkey, decorations or a family viewing of *It's a Wonderful Life* – but it will provide lifelong fulfillment and joy rooted in an attitude of perpetual thanksgiving.

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A Letter From Our Pastor

November is a Time for *Thanksgiving*

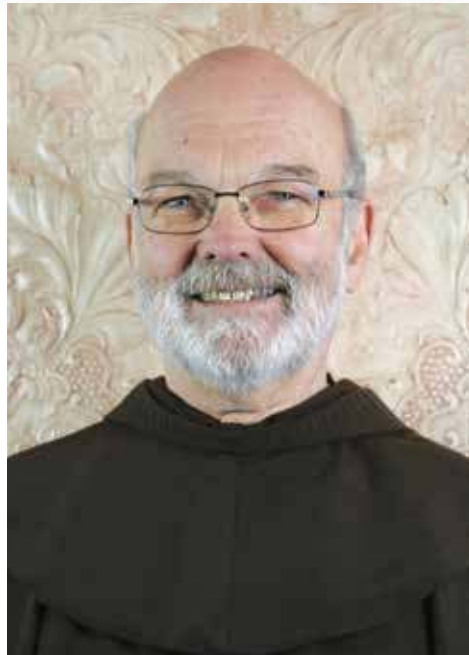
Dear Parishioners,

November seems to automatically bring us to thoughts of thanksgiving and Thanksgiving – it is both a time of year when we tend to think in terms of gratitude to God, and a time when we also formally celebrate our American holiday. My memories of Thanksgiving are filled with food, of course, but they are also filled with thoughts of family and a sense of togetherness and a sense of my faith.

But this is also a significant month in the Church from a number of perspectives. Nov. 1 is a Holy Day, the Solemnity of All Saints. The next day is All Souls Day, a day devoted to all the saints in our lives – living, not living, known, and unknown.

Most of us have people in our lives who have had a profound impact on us – people we can consider our own personal saints. This month is a wonderful reminder to think of them, thank them, and thank God for making them a part of our lives.

Our Thanksgiving holiday falls on Nov. 23, and is a time for families and gratitude. Thanksgiving became official in the United States in 1863, and in his proclamation, President Abraham Lincoln made very clear Whom we needed to thank. “To these bounties, which are so constantly enjoyed that we are prone to forget the source from which they come, others have been added, which are of so extraordinary a nature, that they cannot



fail to penetrate and soften even the heart which is habitually insensible to the ever-watchful providence of Almighty God,” Lincoln said. In other words, we all need to thank Almighty God for our many blessings.

Finally, November also brings us to the end of one Church year and the beginning of a new one. The Feast of Christ the King on Nov. 26 officially begins the final week of our liturgical year, and the First Sunday of Advent is on Dec. 3. From the beginning of the month when we thank God for the example of the saints and the saintly people in our lives, to the end of the month when we thank God for everything we have and everything we are, November is a time to

approach the Lord with a grateful heart. That is what stewardship truly is all about – about approaching God, about approaching each day, and about approaching all those with whom we come in contact, with hearts filled with gratitude and love.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Fr. Don, O.F.M." with a stylized flourish at the end.

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

Fr. Bob Barko: Remaining Open

In Fr. Bob Barko's case, the Hound of Heaven just wouldn't stop calling his name, and eventually, he opened his heart and listened.

"When I was a college student, I thought about becoming a Franciscan friar, but I determined that I was too young, and wasn't ready to make that kind of commitment," he says. "But I loved the friars and kept a great relationship with them over the years. I got married, had two wonderful children, and then underwent a divorce and an annulment. I was living on my own for a long time, and had a great income, a lovely home and an excellent career as the manager of an architecture firm in Chicago. I had no desire to change."

However, a simple little comment soon cracked open the doors of God's grace in a phenomenal way.

"About 10 years ago, one of the friars asked me if I ever thought about discerning with their Order again, and I told him I never had."

Stunned by the friar's comment, Fr. Bob wasn't sure what to think — but apparently, the Holy Spirit did plenty of thinking on his behalf.

"The Holy Spirit was knocking very loudly, and after a couple of years, I knew I had to do something

about it," he says. "Before I applied, I had to go to my boss that I was going to be leaving the firm. He was my best friend, and he was totally surprised, and thought I was stark raving mad! And so, in my 50s, my call to religious life was rekindled — and to make a long story short, here I am! It's a very happy story."

And it's a story filled with many happy chapters. Heeding the voice of the Spirit, Bob finally entered the Order of Franciscan Friars Minor of the Sacred Heart of Jesus Province and completed his studies at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago (CTU). On Oct. 14, he was ordained a priest at St. Peter's Catholic Church in downtown Chicago by Bishop Alberto Rojas, an auxiliary bishop of Chicago. Fr. Bob offered a joy-filled Mass of Thanksgiving on Oct. 15 at St. Peter's, as well as one at our parish on Oct. 22. This past summer, we were blessed to have him at our parish as a transitional deacon. He will now serve as Parochial Vicar of St. Francis.

"I have always dreamed of being a parish priest, and St. Francis is now affording me that opportunity," Fr. Bob says. "I am really looking forward to being more involved with the parish community,



Fr. Bob Barko's ordination

Open to the Divine Call of God

getting to know the parishioners better, and being part of their joys and sorrows.”

Overall, he is enthusiastic about sharing the stewardship vision with our parish family.

“There are so many things I like about this parish community,” Fr. Bob says. “The parishioners are truly involved in building the Kingdom of God. They don’t just sit around, waiting for the priest to do everything. They take stewardship seriously, and treat it as a way of life, not just a program. They really do make their church life a way of life.”

Fr. Bob also shares his advice about promoting vocations.

“I encourage people to invite others to think about it,” he says. “If that brother hadn’t asked me to think about becoming a friar, I wouldn’t have. We need to be not just a hospitable community of believers, but an inviting community as well. Invitation is very, very important.”

Fr. Bob is from the southwest side of Chicago and grew up in a large, mostly Irish-Catholic parish — St. Thomas More. The youngest child of five children, he attended Catholic schools most of his life, and completed his college studies in Quincy in 1981. He is the father of two wonderful children — Charles, 32, and Katherine, 30.

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Fr. Bob Barko's ordination

“Therefore Go and Make Disciples of All Nations” Evangelization, the Church, and Our Commitments as Stewards

According to the Gospel of St. Matthew, Jesus’ parting words to us before He ascended to heaven after His resurrection included these instructions: “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:19-20).

That is, quite frankly, a call to evangelization. Clearly, evangelization is not new to the Church – it is traced to that call from Jesus Christ, a call to His apostles and followers of that time, and that call continues today in relation to us and our lives as Catholics. “Evangelization” has become a bit of a “catchphrase” in today’s Church. Of course, it is not a new idea, nor is it a new call.

Our Holy Father Pope Francis’ absolute first publication – officially an apostolic exhortation – was titled *Evangelii Gaudium*, which means “The Joy of the Gospel.” In that document, the pope had much to say about evangelization, including this: “Every Christian is challenged, here and now, to be actively engaged in evangelization; indeed, anyone who has truly experienced God’s saving love does not need much time or lengthy training to go out and proclaim that love” (120).

Nevertheless, the idea of evangelization is nothing new. Pope St. John Paul II issued an encyclical in December 1990 titled *Redemptoris Missio* – “The Mission of the Redeemer” – in which he called for the church to renew its efforts in evangelization. This has become known as the “new evangelization,” but within, what Pope St. John Paul II says is that the Church “must renew her missionary commitment.” He adds, “Faith is strengthened when it is shared and given to others” (2).

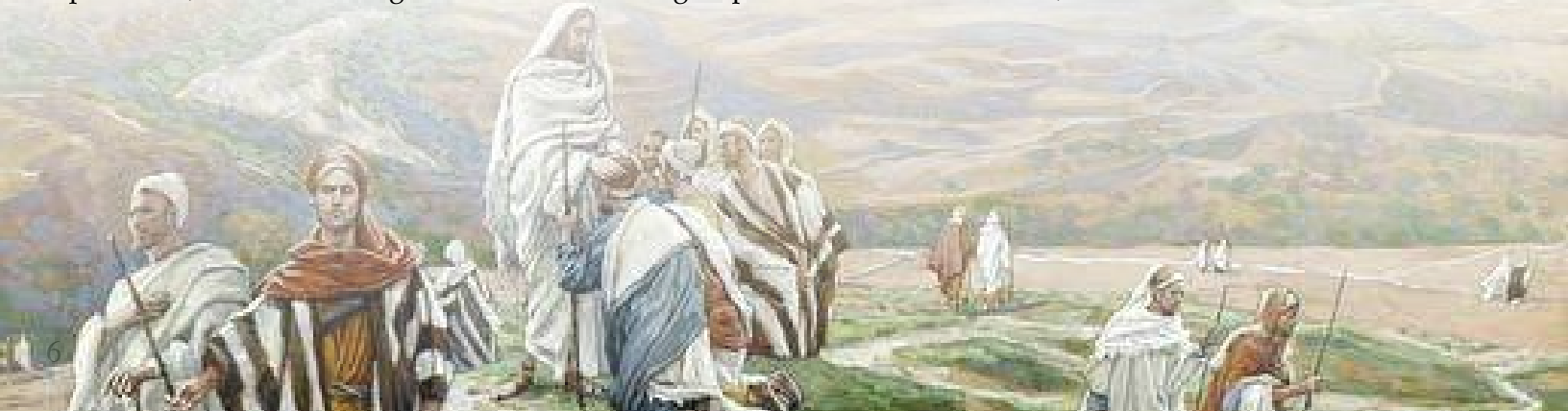
Yet, it would seem that some Catholics resist this call to evangelization, perhaps recalling images of street preachers, television evangelists or door-to-door groups

saying “repent” or talking about the “wages of sin.” Or, we may feel that evangelization is the role of saints or missionaries or Catholic priests. The truth is that evangelization is born from a love of people and a desire that everyone comes to know the love of Christ and the blessings of living as part of His Kingdom.

Over a decade before Pope St. John Paul II addressed this issue, Pope Paul VI issued an apostolic exhortation in 1975 titled *Evangelii Nuntiandi* – “Evangelization in the Modern World” – in which the pope said, “We wish to confirm once more that the task of evangelizing of all people constitutes the essential mission of the Church” (14).

So, what does this mean to us as faithful stewards? Obviously, each of us is called to be an evangelist. That does not mean we go door-to-door or stand on street corners proclaiming our faith. Our own mission statement has a strong flavor of evangelization, especially because of our effort to embrace stewardship as a way of life. In recent years, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops has issued two pastoral letters – one called *Go and Make Disciples: A National Plan and Strategy of Catholic Evangelization*, and the other titled *Stewardship: A Disciple’s Response*. The connection between stewardship, evangelization and discipleship is obvious, it would seem.

Pope Francis also said in his first official statement *Evangelii Gaudium* the following: “An evangelizer must never look like someone who has just come back from a funeral... And may the world of our time, which is searching, sometimes with anguish, sometimes with hope, be enabled to receive the good news not from evangelizers who are dejected, discouraged, impatient or anxious, but from ministers of the Gospel whose lives glow with fervor, who have first received the joy of Christ” (10). That is who we are, or who we should be.



Choir Members

Enjoy Family Spirit of Music Ministry

The people who lead our parish in song as choir members have the awesome privilege of bringing a special form of prayer to the Mass each week. When we join them in singing, we're embracing a form of worship that touches the heart of God and deepens our sense of community.

Each Sunday, at the 11 a.m. Mass, the Adult and Youth Choirs take turns leading parishioners in song. Each choir brings something different to the Mass and allows those in the pews to experience worship in a way that never gets old. We spoke to choir members David Lunt and Jill Steinkamp about their experience with Music Ministry and learned what inspires them to keep singing.

David, who is active in the Adult Choir, started singing at St. Francis in 1991. Among the many ways he's been able to lend his talent to our faith, David has served as a musician at the Great River Teens Encounter Christ weekends and sung with Steve Angrisano during the St. Francis' 150th Anniversary Celebration.

"Music has always been a part of our family life," he says. "I enjoy singing and being part of the Mass. Recently, I've been able to sing with my adult children. That makes it even more special to me."

Jill, who works with both choirs, adds that music has been a special experience for her family, as well.

"I enjoy working with other musicians, younger and older, and I love to see our church family singing and praising God through music," she says. "As my children are getting older, it's exciting to see that they are now participating in the music at Mass by playing their clarinet and electric bass, and by singing."

Both choirs offer parishioners the opportunity not only to join in singing traditional hymns, but to enjoy learning newer songs, as well.

"We perform more contemporary music and traditional music with a more contemporary approach," Jill explains.

"I enjoy introducing parishioners to the music of current Catholic songwriters," David adds. "Some of my favorites are Matt Maher, Ben Walther, Curtis Stephan, and Sarah Hart."

With Advent and Christmas quickly approach-

ing, the choirs will be busy preparing some of the most beloved liturgical music the Church can offer. Jill says matching treasured hymns to the day's readings can be a challenge, but that the seasonal songbook provides lots of inspiration.

"I always look forward to singing Christmas music because it takes me back to my childhood," David says. "I like the way Advent music helps us to prepare for Christ's birth."



Members of the Youth Choir gather with their instruments. Taking turns each week with the Adult Choir, these young musicians provide both contemporary and traditional hymns for the 11 a.m. Mass.

Interested in joining the Adult or Youth Choir? Adult parishioners can reach out to David Lunt at davidlunt1963@gmail.com. Youth may contact Jill Steinkamp at 217-228-9353 or nsteinkamp@sbcglobal.net.

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Gift Bearers Ministry *continued from front cover*

unlike other liturgical ministries, no prior training or scheduling is required. Families or individuals who would like to participate need simply to pick up the cross located on the Gift Bearers table before Mass and then present it to one of the ushers just before the Offertory. And in the

case when the cross is not picked up before the start of Mass, ushers will quietly invite parishioners to serve.

"It's a really nice way for families or couples to participate in the Mass together," Cindy says. "It might not be feasible to be a reader if you have trouble speaking

in front of large groups of people, or if you have small children you might not be able to be a Communion Minister. But to walk the bread and the wine up the aisle to the priest is a fairly simple ministry, while also being a very important part of the Mass."

We encourage parishioners to consider serving as a Gift Bearer for an upcoming liturgy, so as to personally experience the blessings of this ministry.

For more information about becoming a gift bearer, please contact Cindy Reichert at either 217-224-9694 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.