

Saint Francis Solanus



SEPTEMBER 2020

A Breath of Fresh Air: Enjoying the Peace and Beauty of the Outdoors at St. Francis Hills



St. Francis Hills is a great place to enjoy God's creation and spend time enjoying nature.

It's been quite a year so far. And while many things about the start of the school year are uncertain or different than usual, the leaves are still changing, the days are still getting shorter, and fall is still on its way. In the midst of all the adjustments and unknowns, it's the perfect time to connect with God and our loved ones outside, enjoying the change of seasons.

And for St. Francis Solanus parishioners, we have the perfect spot for you to do just that, surrounded by radiant colors and enjoying the crunch of leaves under your feet. Come visit St. Francis Hills!

"The first time I went out there, I thought, 'Wow, this is a hidden gem!'" says Shane McDermott, an adult leader in our Scout troop, who helps to maintain the grounds. "I never had any idea what the property was like. It's a very peaceful environment out there, and it's such a beautiful piece of property."

St. Francis Hills consists of 60 acres of woods, with some trails for walking or hiking, and an open grassy area. The facilities include a covered picnic area with tables, electricity, and an outdoor chapel. There is also a firepit and archery range available for use.

"It's kind of like a big campground," Shane says. "As a parish, we're very fortunate to have access to

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Enjoying the Peace and Beauty of the Outdoors at St. Francis Hills

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it. I'd love to see more people up there. It's a really neat property."

Currently, the site is used by our Scout troop for their meetings when the weather is warm enough, as well as camping, awards ceremonies and other activities. The location is also rented out for use by groups for weddings, campouts and other gatherings. Reservations can be made online at a discounted cost for parishioners of \$50 per day for the first day, and \$10 for each additional day. The fees are used to help to pay for utilities and maintenance of the land.

"If somebody wants to go up there and go for a walk or have a picnic, we don't charge for stuff like that," Shane says. "If somebody's out there, we just want to know."

With no cell phone service at the site, it's the perfect spot to enjoy quiet time alone with God, or connecting with loved ones.

"If you live in Quincy, it's a 10-minute drive to go up there," Shane says. "It's like you're in a whole different world. It's really quiet and peaceful."

"It's away from the city," he adds. "You're getting into that peaceful environment, but you're not very far away. It's nice to have a place you can go and just unwind."

Shane hopes that his fellow parishioners will take the time to enjoy the beauty of God's creation at St. Francis Hills, whether for a quiet hike, a picnic with family, or a special event.

"You can do something as simple as bringing a picnic out there, and when it gets dark, have a fire and roast marshmallows," Shane says. "It's something that could be very simple, doesn't cost a lot of money — just go up and unwind for a couple hours."

"We want people to use it," he adds. "That's what it's there for."



Parishioners are invited to enjoy the beauty of God's creation at St. Francis Hills.



Whether you have a picnic, camp overnight or just take a walk, St. Francis Hills is a great way to get away from the "noise" of everyday life.

For more info, or to reserve St. Francis Hills for your family or event, please contact Shane McDermott at shane@mid-westgis.com or 217-242-1125. For online reservations, go to www.scouting22.com/saint-francis-hills-reservation-request. The reservation fee is not necessary for parishioners who would like to hike or picnic at the site for a short period of time. However, people are asked to call Shane prior to their arrival, to ensure safety and no prior event conflicts.

A Letter From Our Pastor

Passionate for the Stewardship Way of Life

Dear Parishioners,

Often when reading the Acts of the Apostles and Epistles in the New Testament, I recognize that the writers were genuinely passionate about having an opportunity to put into words an expression of the faith they have in Jesus Christ. I am inspired by the passion expressed by those who live what they believe. Having the courage and the enthusiasm to express their thoughts, and to embrace and cherish it as if it were the most important thing in the world, translates into a passion for Christ and a passion to be His disciple.

I ask myself on a regular basis, do I have that same passion as Jesus' disciples? I pray that I do. But if I don't, I have to wonder why, and must reflect upon what is keeping me from being passionate about my faith. Without being genuinely passionate about our faith, can any of us genuinely embrace the stewardship way of life?

The Food Network broadcasts a program called *Chopped*, which features professional chefs who are challenged to use designated ingredients to prepare a dish. Using the time they have been given, and the skills and talents they possess, they must compete against each other while attempting to impress a panel of judges. In what they say and do, their passion for who they are and what they can do with all that has been given them is more than obvious. They demonstrate confidence, enthusiasm, creativity and a desire to use their talent. Even if they get eliminated, they know they have done their best — and will continue to do so, with an ongoing passion.

Should we not have the same kind of passion for being a disciple of Jesus Christ?

Stewardship is the best way to passionately express and live out our call to be a disciple of Christ. The New Testament is filled with passages that confirm



the stewardship way of life. How passionate are we about being those faithful stewards using the gifts given to us by God, and using our precious time to use those gifts for the greater glory of God? How do we move from merely thinking that stewardship is something others do, to being passionate about it enough to live our lives as a committed disciple of Christ? It isn't possible to be truly passionate about something unless we are genuinely convinced it is God's will, and we know it and feel it in our hearts. Genuine passion begins in the heart. Through the gift of the Holy Spirit, our hearts are ignited

to believe that the Word of God is calling each of us to express our love and devotion to Him — and we can do this by living out the stewardship life. Do you think we are up to that? Well, to do so is to be passionate about it.

I pray and hope that we all become better and more passionate about being disciples of the Lord. I believe there is great potential for all of us. If we trust God enough to do what it takes to be passionate about the stewardship way of life, our lives will become the truest expression of discipleship. While the world tries to convince us there are other things to be passionate about, our hearts should be telling us loud and clear that the stewardship way of life is the most important. It always has been, and it always will be.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rev. Steven Arisman". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Fr. Steven Arisman
Pastor

MEET JARED HOLBROOK:

the Man Behind the Masses

In March, when COVID-19 pandemic closed churches around the country, St. Francis Solanus faced an unprecedented challenge — how could we keep the faithful connected to our parish and the Mass during a time of quarantine? At the same time, parishioner Jared Holbrook, a photographer and musician by trade, was suddenly without his usual “gigs.” As it turned out, God had a plan for both the parish and Jared all along.

“Because I’m a photographer and musician, I lost my livelihood immediately,” Jared says. “My weddings, which are how I pay my bills, all started canceling. I didn’t have anything to do, but I had all the equipment to record really good audio and streaming, so I started streaming live music shows from my basement. Soon, people started sending me notes and cards and emails and even money. So when they decided no one could be at church, I went to Fr. Bob and told him if the Internet was good enough, I could livestream the Masses.”

Soon, the livestream of Mass became a daily occurrence at St. Francis Solanus. Masses were scheduled for 3 p.m. to allow Jared to finish any other jobs he had for the day before coming to the church.



Jared Holbrook is grateful for the opportunity to serve the parish through the online Masses, as well as getting to know our parish priests.

Five people were present at each Mass — Fr. Don Blaeser and Fr. Bob Barko, Jared Holbrook, and his parents, Parish Business Manager Sue Holbrook and Director of Religious Education Mike Holbrook. Mike was the lector and server at the Masses, while Jared often took on the dual roles of providing music while managing the livestream equipment.

By streaming the Masses celebrated by our priests in our own beautiful church structure, St. Francis Solanus was able to serve parishioners’ spiritual needs in a unique way.

“Part of my reasoning for streaming Mass was because — unlike watching, say, a papal Mass — this was a time of very specific suffering for people, and I thought they needed specific words and guidance from the priests that they trusted,” Jared says. “It was one thing the lockdown couldn’t take away from us.”

With his specialized equipment and experience, Jared is able to produce a high-quality livestream that attracts thousands of viewers both from within our parish community and across the country. For example, one woman in Arizona left a comment on a livestream video explaining that she had been listening to Mass on the radio before finding the beautiful live Masses from

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— JARED HOLBROOK

Behind the Camera

St. Francis Solanus online. Locally, some parishioners who have been homebound for years have been grateful to “revisit” their beloved home church.

As for Jared, he is thankful for this job and the many blessings it brings, the greatest of which was the opportunity to strengthen his friendships with Fr. Don and Fr. Bob.

“It was just cool because I got to know them so much better,” he says. “After Mass, we would all have lunch in the priests’ dining room and just talk, and if they wanted to have dinner or see some friends, it had to be us. So we’d play cards or watch sports together. I think what’s way more important to our faith than remembering the prayers or being sticklers about the dogmatic things are the personal relationships with each other, and especially our priests. I wish more people would realize priests are human and sometimes they want to clock out, just have their shoes off, wear T-shirts and jeans, watch sports, and talk about funny things.”

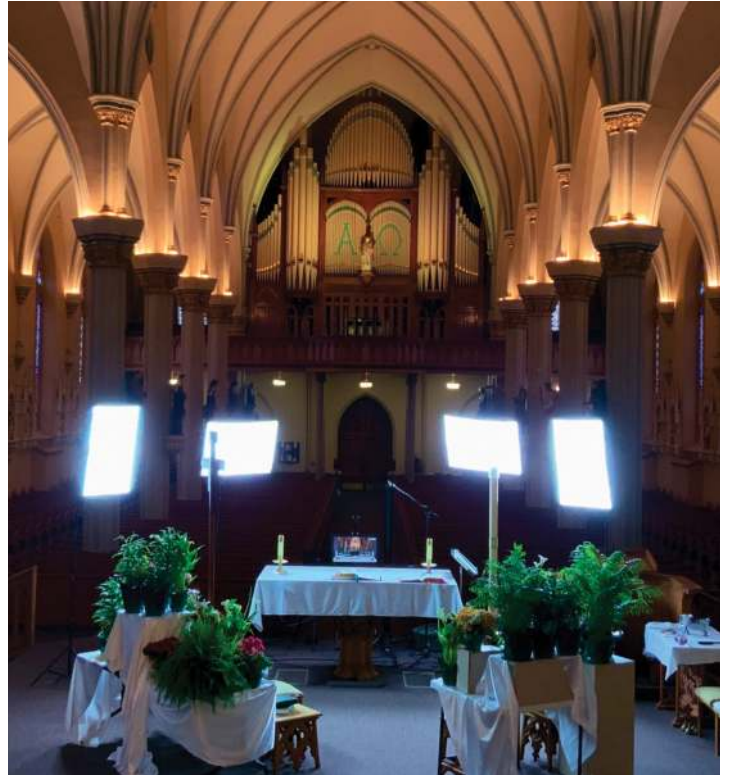
Through months of livestreaming Mass to an empty church, Jared was deeply impressed by the spiritual devotion of Fr. Don and Fr. Bob, who never tired of celebrating the liturgy in front of a lone computer screen. For them, Jared noticed, each Mass was just as important and special as the first.

Jared also has a new appreciation for the need for lay people to participate actively in parish life.

“My faith was pretty strong anyway, but to be with priests and have them ask your counsel and your opinion on how the Mass looks, I realized we have to help them run the Catholic Church,” Jared says. “We can’t just sit back. I become a better Catholic by getting to know the people who bring us the faith. These guys literally give their whole existence to serve us, and the least we can do is acknowledge that this is difficult on some level. We can give them our support, and, in turn, they give us some of their holiness.”

Having witnessed the many benefits of our livestream Masses for our parishioners and Catholics beyond our local community, new Pastor Fr. Arisman and Jared have discussed the possibility of continuing this service indefinitely. As for Jared, he wouldn’t trade the time he has spent livestreaming the Masses for anything in the world.

“It has been a great experience,” he says. “I would do it again in a heartbeat.”



Thanks to Jared Holbrook's specialized equipment, our livestreamed Masses were set up with high quality lighting and audio.



Fr. Don Blaeser and Fr. Bob Barko celebrate Mass via livestream during the COVID-19 church closure.

Building The Domestic Church

Living Stewardship in Our Family as Pandemic Continues

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues, the question of how to strengthen our family faith and continue to live Stewardship as a Way of Life while separated from the sacraments and parish life is being put to the test.

Our priests and parish leaders already have found new ways to minister to our parish family from a distance. Now, it is our own time to shine within our own homes. It is our time to seize this opportunity and continue to build our own Domestic Church.

What is the domestic Church? Simply put, it is our family — the smallest body of gathered believers in Christ. The early Church fathers understood the home was fertile ground for discipleship, sanctification, and holiness. And the Domestic Church plays a key role in this as the primary place where we practice coming to intimately love others.

Even before the pandemic, in recent years, our Holy Father Pope Francis placed great emphasis on the family, asking us as Catholics to explore the meaning and the theology of the Domestic Church.

During his address at the World Meeting of Families during his 2015 apostolic visit to the United States, Pope Francis told us, “Love is shown by little things, by attention to small daily signs which make us feel at home. Faith grows when it is lived and shaped by love. That is why our families, our homes, are true domestic churches. They are the right place for faith to become life, and life to grow in faith.”

Now, as the pandemic continues to distance us from our parish and affects the way we live our faith and

practice stewardship, it is now more important than ever to discern the unique role God has in mind for our lives, and the lives of our family members.

If your family truly is committed to answering the call to live as intentional disciples of Christ, our response to this call starts in the home through stewardship.

As Catholics, we often associate stewardship with sharing our time, talents and resources with our parish. We see it as volunteering and helping to build our parish community. Rarely, do we recognize the need for stewardship in our own homes.

But what can you do to live out stewardship as a Domestic Church?

You can set aside time each day for personal and family prayer. If you are still unable to attend Mass, you and your family can participate in the Sunday liturgy and daily Masses in your home via livestream. Read and reflect each day on the daily Mass readings, which are available online at www.usccb.org/bible. Do some online faith formation together.

Other ideas include simply being kind to each other, doing something extra for your spouse or children, avoiding criticism, or working on being more patient with a family member who sometimes can be challenging to be around. Help a family member financially during these challenging times. Pray for our family members and each of their unique needs. Spend extra time with a child and our spouse — make that a priority worked into each week.

The possibilities for living stewardship within our Domestic Churches are endless. How we treat each other in our homes is as important as praying together when living out stewardship. In a nutshell, live in your home with your faith-filled family celebrating your Catholic identity!

Stewardship is not just something we do within the confines of our parish walls. It is meant to be lived 24/7, to be practiced anywhere and everywhere. And it begins with our Domestic Church — our families.

By focusing on new ways to share our Time, Talent and Treasure together within our own homes — both during the pandemic and after the storm passes — we can make faith the source and center of our family lives and fulfill our mission as the Domestic Church.



KEEPING EVERYTHING CLEAN: In Face of Pandemic, Parishioners Organize Church Cleaning

If someone would have told Russ and Terri Rohrer back in January that they would have been running a new ministry of volunteers who clean after each Mass, they never would have believed it. But the COVID-19 pandemic has changed a lot of things, including the increased need to keep St. Francis Solanus clean and sanitized. When churches were ordered to be closed in March, Russ and Terri realized how much they missed receiving the Eucharist. They certainly appreciated the option to watch the online streamed Masses, even though it wasn't quite the same as being there in person.

"I always took the Eucharist for granted," Terri says. "I found that I wanted to go to church and I wanted to receive the Eucharist."

They also found they missed being around their fellow St. Francis Solanus parishioners. When they heard churches were set to reopen on the weekend of June 6-7, Russ and Terri knew there was important work to be done to keep the worship space, entry, doors and

bathrooms clean. Russ and Terri also knew how badly people missed attending Mass. So, they wanted to do whatever it would take to keep everything clean and help parishioners feel comfortable attending Mass. They both jumped in and told Fr. Don Blaeser they wanted to begin organizing a group to clean after each weekend Mass.

"When Russ and I talked about it, we both had no hesitations that God was calling us to lead this ministry," Terri says.

Russ previously owned the local Stanley Steemer franchise, and he has worked for ServiceMaster. Currently, he runs a home for developmentally challenged adults through Transitions of Western Illinois. Terri has done some cleaning part-time. Both Russ and Terri are conscious of cleanliness and the importance of getting it perfect. Their daughter, Katie Schuecking, also helps out.

"We were afraid that if people didn't have a clean and safe place to come, they wouldn't come back," Terri says.

Currently, Terri organizes a group of about eight

“
This is very important
work, and we take it
seriously. We want people to
feel safe coming to church.”
— Terri Rohrer

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Volunteers work to clean our worship space after weekend Mass.

St. Francis Solanus

ROMAN CATHOLIC PARISH

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people to clean after each Mass. With a group that size, the cleaning takes between 15 to 20 minutes. Terri hopes to have enough volunteers so that each person helps every other weekend at most. She has some people who volunteer to help, without being called in advance.

"One week, I even ran out of rags," she says. "This is a great way to model stewardship to kids. This is something they can grab a rag and help with."

For Russ and Terri, getting involved in the Church was always modeled to them. They are thankful to have this opportunity to serve our parish and model stewardship to their fellow parishioners. Although she is still amazed that she took on the task of leading a cleaning ministry, Terri is more than happy to serve in this way.

"This is very important work, and we take it seriously," Terri says. "We want people to feel safe coming to church."

If you would like to help with this important ministry of cleaning after weekend Masses, please call or email Terri Rohrer at 217-617-7778 or trohrer@earthlink.net.

Liturgy Schedule

Saturday Vigil: 4:30 p.m. | **Sunday:** 7:00, 9:00, 11:00 a.m.

Weekday Mass: Monday - Friday, 6:30 a.m. | T, W, Th 8:35 a.m. | Saturday, 8:00 a.m.

Confessions: 8:30 a.m., 3 - 4 p.m.

Holy Days of Obligation: Vigil 5:30 p.m.; **Holy Day:** 6:30 a.m., 8:35 a.m. on school days, 5:30 p.m.