

St. Francis Solanus

NEWSLETTER

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Welcome Fr. Kenneth Ahanonu, Our New Parochial Vicar *Blessed to Live Out the Gift of the Priesthood*

Growing up in southeast Nigeria, Fr. Kenneth Ahanonu — Fr. Ken — was surrounded by Catholic culture. There was a minor seminary in his village that gave witness to the priesthood and provided a thriving sacramental life with regular Mass and weekly Benediction.

"I got the call to become a priest early in life," Fr. Ken says. "I grew up in a scenario where we attended Sunday Mass, and I saw the seminarians and thought, 'Maybe I will be like them.'"

Although the Catholic Church has only been in Nigeria for less than 200 years, the culture has quickly appropriated the faith, and many families and villages are structured around the Catholic community. It is this explicitly Catholic community that led Fr. Ken to a deep relationship with Christ and subsequently to the priesthood.

"When we were little, my mom always made sure that we said the Rosary," he says. "In the neighborhood I grew up in, we had a 'Block Rosary Crusade,' which was a child-led group that met weekly to pray together."

Fr. Ken's participation in the Block Rosary Crusade was fundamental

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Fr. Kenneth Ahanonu

SHARING THE GIFT OF CHRIST

As Catholics living in an increasingly secular world, we must remember to find ways to keep the true meaning of Christmas — the celebration of the birth of our Savior Jesus Christ. Beyond the exchange of gifts and festive decorations, Christmas is a time to embody the spirit of stewardship. Stewardship involves sharing our time, talent, and treasure to reflect the love and generosity of Christ. Let's explore how to celebrate Christmas properly and reverently in the spirit of stewardship.

Stewardship of Time: A Gift of Presence

Christmas is a season to be fully present with loved ones and, most importantly, with Christ. Make time for prayer and reflection, not just amidst the hustle and bustle but as a daily practice. Attend Advent and Christmas Masses, immersing yourself in the profound liturgy. Consider participating in Eucharistic Adoration, contemplating the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist. Sharing your time in prayer and reflection helps deepen your relationship with Christ and your family.

Stewardship of Talent: Sharing Your Gifts

Christmas provides an opportunity to share your unique talents and skills in service to others. You can create handmade gifts, such as cards, crafts, or baked goods, to show your love and care. Singing, playing instruments, or joining the church choir can enhance the beauty of Christmas liturgies. Additionally, consider volunteering your time and talents at local charities, shelters, or organizations that serve the less fortunate. Your talents can be a source of joy and comfort to those in need during the Christmas season.

Stewardship of Treasure: Generosity and Charity

Christmas is an ideal time to practice generosity and charity. Rather than focusing solely on the material aspect of gift giving, emphasize the true meaning of giving by sharing your treasure in ways that

benefit others. Support your parish and other charitable organizations financially. Consider donating to a local charity, sponsoring a family in need, or contributing to missions that serve vulnerable populations. Your financial contributions can make a significant impact on the lives of those less fortunate.

We also must remember that stewardship isn't limited to just one day; it's a way of life that can be lived throughout the Christmas season:

- **Advent Preparation:** Use the Advent season to prepare spiritually for the coming of Christ. Incorporate prayer, acts of kindness, and almsgiving into your daily routine.
- **Family Traditions:** Create family traditions that emphasize stewardship, such as volunteering together, making charitable donations as a family, or collectively choosing gifts for less fortunate children.
- **Sharing the Nativity Story:** As you gather with family and friends, take time to share the Nativity story and its profound significance. Encourage others to embrace the spirit of stewardship and share in the joy of Christ's birth.

By sharing your time, talent, and treasure, you can live out the teachings of Christ, deepen your faith, and make a meaningful impact on the lives of others. Embracing stewardship during the Christmas season transforms the holiday into a truly joyous and spiritually fulfilling occasion.



A LETTER FROM OUR PASTOR

The Magic of Christmas

Dear Parishioners,

We are entering my favorite season of the year. I have always loved the magic of Christmas. There are so many opportunities to open us to the Lord's love. First, this holy time must be rooted in the Church's season of *Advent*. These weeks call us to prepare for the remembrance of Christ's arrival more than 2,000 years ago, but also for the coming of Christ in our lives today. During Advent, we celebrate the Patronal Feast of the United States, the Immaculate Conception, and the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, who is patroness of the Americas. Mary is a sign of how we are called to bring the love of Christ to others.

The basic truth of Christmas, celebrating the birth of the Messiah, is plenty of reason for us to rejoice and worship. But secular society has piled so much onto Christmas that worship can get lost in the shuffle.

Maybe, though, we can combine our Christmas activities with our stewardship commitments. Treasure, although challenging, is the simplest. Shouldn't the most expensive Christmas present we give be the one to Jesus whose birthday we're celebrating? Risen and glorified, He needs nothing we have. But His Body, the Church, continues Jesus' mission here on earth and always needs additional resources.

Stewardship of our time may be a little more



complicated, but can't we spend a little more of our time in worship and prayer? Drop in to the church and offer a prayer of thanks for the gift of God's Son. Maybe you can attend Mass each day of the Christmas Octave. Have your family gather for prayers together in the morning or at dinner, in preparation for Christmas Day and through the Christmas season.

And talent? There are lots of possibilities. You can help decorate the Church. Or perhaps you might cook or bake for someone who is homebound or a shut-in. Invite someone who will be alone to share Christmas dinner with your family. Offer to work in a soup kitchen. The possibilities are endless.

Yes, with the arrival of Advent and our preparations for Christmas, this time is meant to point us to Christ. With a little planning, we can make this hectic time one of real blessing both for others and ourselves. Pray for me that I can keep Christmas properly and know that you are remembered in my prayers each day.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Rev. Steven Arisman".

Fr. Steven Arisman, Pastor

St. Francis Solanus

Capital Campaign Efforts Commence Full Speed Ahead *Growing in Faith, Building On Our Foundation for the Future*

This past spring, St. Francis Solanus launched an ambitious capital campaign, *Growing in Faith, Building On Our Foundation for the Future*. To complete all the identified updates and fixes in our parish will total \$1.6 million. With that total surpassed in donations and pledges, the work to the parish and school is moving forward in full force.

Fr. Steven Arisman wants to thank people for their generosity — every gift, large and small, has made this work a reality.

“What a success of a campaign,” he says. “The response from people for the vision of what we are doing is exciting.”

A reminder, too, to fulfill the pledges by sending in your committed donations. All of that money is needed for these projects. We are already enjoying some of the capital campaign updates, like the air conditioning and heat.

Fr. Arisman also wants to thank the four people who made up the team for the capital campaign — Julie Erwin, Pattie Paxton, Laura Knuffman, and Barb Holthaus.

“They really helped to spearhead this,” Fr. Arisman says. “They made this possible.”

The A/V equipment also got an upgrade, and we’ve also received new livestream equipment. Much of the equipment, being so specialized, has taken a lot

of time to arrive, which has required much patience from Fr. Arisman and parish staff.

“It’s exciting to see all of these projects in process or being completed,” Fr. Arisman says.

The bell tower has been completed, except for one specialty part that still needs to be installed. Another part of the capital campaign is adding more green space for the school. The church has purchased two houses and is in the process of purchasing two more. In total, there will be six houses purchased by the parish — one of which will serve as a convent, if the parish is able to attract an order of sisters.

“The green space will open a lot of opportunities for the school and recruitment,” Fr. Arisman says. “We also may need to expand in the future, and we need to look at our footprint.”

The last portion of the project is to replenish the savings and endowments, putting our parish on a firm foundation for the future.

Fr. Arisman is thankful to parishioners for answering the call to carry on the legacy of St. Francis Solanus. Those before us build this parish from the ground up, and it’s our responsibility to keep it going, he says.

“The generosity of parishioners isn’t just a response to our need,” Fr. Arisman says. “It’s a response to how good God has been to the people of our parish.”

“I thank all the parishioners for listening to our needs, praying about it, and honoring their commitment. Our parish is thriving, and the success of our campaign exemplifies the generosity and compassion of our parishioners.” — JULIE ERWIN

Need Ahead

Thank You!

Fr. Arisman, along with Pattie Paxton and Julie Erwin, send a big thank you to parishioners.

"This is also a plan for our growth and vibrancy," Fr. Arisman says. "It's looking to the future. We are a vibrant and alive parish."

"I am excited for the technical upgrades for areas in the church to help the hearing impaired," Pattie says. "The clock tower and church bells improvement is exciting — not just for our parish, but the city of Quincy, too."

"I thank all the parishioners for listening to our needs, praying about it, and honoring their commitment," Julie says. "Our parish is thriving, and the success of our campaign exemplifies the generosity and compassion of our parishioners."



Welcome Fr. Kenneth Ahanonu, Our New Parochial Vicar

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to his Catholic upbringing. There were multiple "crusades" throughout the Church in Nigeria that were organically created and acted as child-led youth groups. They were organized by neighborhood and the older children led the younger in the Rosary, catechesis, dance, and other activities. At times throughout the year, the crusades met at the parish level to compete in dance competitions to encourage camaraderie and community building.

Right after elementary school, Fr. Ken entered minor seminary, which is equivalent to high school. After six years of education and formation, he had to pass the national education exam to be admitted to major seminary, where he would learn philosophy and theology. Upon passing the exam, Fr. Ken completed a one-year apostolate walk, during which he grew in prayer and spirituality before going to major seminary. He was ordained a priest on July 14, 2012.

After some time as a parish priest within the Diocese of Nnewi, the bishop sent Fr. Ken to Rome to continue his studies in philosophy. There he received a licentiate degree in Philosophy of Human Studies

and a PhD in Philosophy specializing in Kierkegaard.

"Going to new places broadens one's horizons," Fr. Ken says. "My time in Rome helped me to be more accommodating to others."

Fr. Ken completed his studies in May of this year and was immediately assigned to our parish here in Quincy.

"I found out that I would be a missionary," Fr. Ken says. "When you are a missionary, you see other people and your new area becomes your home."

Fr. Ken feels strongly that his priesthood and missionary life are meant to perpetuate the universal mission of the Church —to save souls. He has been called to care for the souls beyond his home community.

"I will do my best for the souls," Fr. Ken says.

"The best part of being a priest is that you are giving yourself," he adds. "The priesthood is a rare gift, and it is important to live it out."

Now that he is in America, Fr. Ken spends his free time listening to podcasts and exercising.

We are blessed to have Fr. Ken, and all are encouraged to introduce themselves and welcome him to our community here at St. Francis Solanus!

St. Francis Solanus

The Feast of St. Francis Xavier:

A MODEL OF MISSIONARY ZEAL

The Feast of St. Francis Xavier, celebrated on Dec. 3, commemorates the life and work of one of the Church's most revered saints, St. Francis Xavier, a missionary and co-founder of the Society of Jesus.

St. Francis Xavier was born in 1506 in the Kingdom of Navarre (modern-day Spain). He studied at the University of Paris, where he met St. Ignatius of Loyola, with whom he co-founded the Society of Jesus, or the Jesuits. St. Francis Xavier is particularly known for his missionary work during the Age of Exploration. He traveled to India, Japan, and other parts of Southeast Asia to spread the message of Christianity. His tireless efforts and dedication to sharing the Gospel earned him the title "Apostle of the Indies."

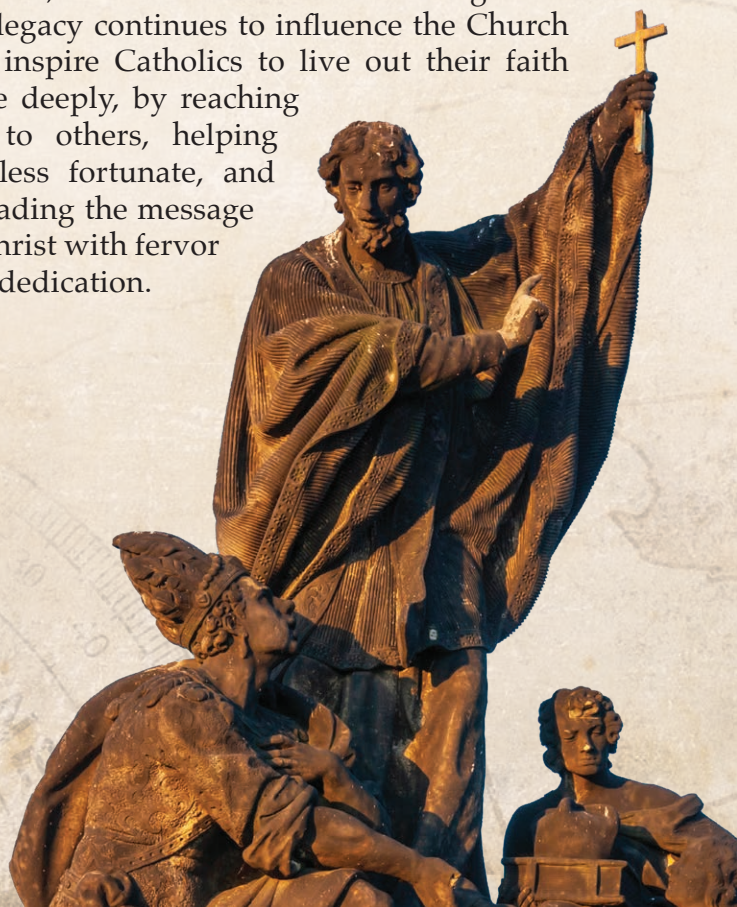
St. Francis Xavier's life and work are of profound importance for Catholics for several reasons:

- **Missionary Zeal:** St. Francis Xavier's unwavering commitment to evangelization and the spread of the Christian faith serves as a model of missionary zeal. His journeys to distant lands to share the Gospel inspire Catholics to be proactive in their faith and to reach out to those who have yet to hear the Good News.
- **Compassion and Service:** St. Francis Xavier was known for his deep compassion for the marginalized and the poor. He worked tirelessly to alleviate suffering and bring comfort to those in need. His example reminds Catholics of the importance of service and charity in the Christian life.
- **Faith and Sacrifice:** The saint's life was marked by sacrifice and selflessness. He endured significant personal hardships and challenges in his missionary work, all while remaining steadfast in his faith. St. Francis Xavier's dedication teaches Catholics the value of faith and commitment, even in the face of adversity.
- **International Impact:** St. Francis Xavier's missionary efforts have left an enduring legacy,

with millions of people in Asia having been introduced to Christianity through his work. His influence reaches far beyond his own time and place, emphasizing the universal nature of the Church and the Catholic faith.

Catholics can celebrate the Feast of St. Francis Xavier by attending Mass and reflecting on the saint's exemplary life and legacy. Prayers and novenas dedicated to St. Francis Xavier can be offered, seeking his intercession for missionaries and those in need.

St. Francis Xavier's feast day is a time to rekindle our own missionary spirit, whether through personal evangelization, supporting missionary efforts, or engaging in charitable works. It is a day to be inspired by his dedication to the faith, his selflessness, and his commitment to serving others. His legacy continues to influence the Church and inspire Catholics to live out their faith more deeply, by reaching out to others, helping the less fortunate, and spreading the message of Christ with fervor and dedication.



Music Ministry Helps Draw Us Into Seasons of Advent and Christmas

Throughout the liturgical year, music draws us into the cycle of seasons. There is something special about the music at Advent and Christmastime that catches our hearts. Whether it's the peace and quiet of Advent or the nostalgia of familiar tunes, for many of us, the music defines this season. At Mass, our choir supports our singing so that we can enter into the music and the liturgy.

Our choir is made up of parishioners who love to sing and are eager to share that love with us. Jana Tuter has been in the choir for many years and though she has no formal musical training, singing has always been part of her life. Jill Steinkamp, our Music Director, has been introducing new challenges.

"I love to sing and Jill is just a joy and makes it so much fun," Jana says. "I love the challenges; she's been teaching us a lot of songs in Latin and I just love when we do harmony."

Through choir rehearsal, everyone develops their musical skills. Jill has introduced three-part singing and Latin to bring the choir to the next level and share a greater variety of music at Mass.

Jana finds that singing helps her to participate more fully in the Mass. She can engage with the readings in a new and prayerful way.

"To me, it's just all part of the Mass," Jana says. "The words to the songs go with what the readings are, so it's kind of like you're repeating the readings in your singing."

Choir member Monica Hinkamper adds that singing in the choir enhances her personal prayer and communal prayer.

"Singing in the choir has grown my faith and added to my prayer life," Monica says. "Singing choir music is 'praying twice.' I'm passionate about learning new music, and therefore, learning a new



prayer. The music that Jill chooses flows nicely with the true meaning of our Catholic Mass and provides our choir the opportunity to share the beauty of the season with all who come to worship."

As Jill prepares music for Advent, she makes special consideration for the preparatory theme of the season.

"It's a joy to prepare special Advent and Christmas music for our liturgies," she says. "We mark the beginning of Advent by quieting the music during Mass to build anticipation."

The choir sings at the 9 a.m. Sunday Mass and rehearses on Wednesday night from 6:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. Alongside their practice in part-singing, Jill hopes to attract more members, especially high school students. No experience is needed to join the choir. The choir serves to guide the congregation and inspire more participation from the pews.

"The choir leads our parish community into worship by picking music that ties to the daily readings, leading and encouraging participation in the Mass settings and Responsorial Psalm, and by the joyful way that we participate in the Mass," Jill says.

*Anyone with a love for singing is invited to join the choir — contact
Jill Steinkamp at jsteinkamp@stfrancissolanus.com.*

St. Francis Solanus

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Christmas Mass Times

Christmas Eve, Dec. 24
4 p.m., 6 p.m., 9 p.m., and Midnight



Christmas Day, Dec. 25
9 a.m.

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. • Tuesday - Thursday, 5:30 p.m.

Wednesday, 8:35 a.m. *during the school year* • Saturday, 8:00 a.m.

Confessions: Wednesday, 4:00 - 5:00 p.m. • Saturday, 8:30 a.m., 3:00 - 4:00 p.m.; **Exposition:** Wednesday, 4:00-5:00 p.m.

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