

St. Francis Solanus

NEWSLETTER

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Bear Program Bringing Jesus Into the Hearts of Our Parish Youth

While St. Corbinian is not a well-known saint, his story is certainly a compelling one. As a German bishop, Corbinian was on a pilgrimage to Rome. En route, a bear killed his pack horse. In turn, he made the bear carry his load — thus, he is often depicted with a bear. St. Corbinian was chosen as the patron for the St. Francis Solanus youth ministry, which is called Bear.

"We know he is looking out for us because a short time after we chose him, a woman contacted Fr. Arisman to have him pick up a drawing she found at a thrift store — she knew it was a German saint," says Jane Ann Petty, who runs Bear. "It turns out it was of St. Corbinian. We know he's watching out for us."

The program meets in the parish hall from 7:15 to 8:30 p.m. on Mondays. It's truly a chance for youth in grades 6-12 to have fellowship opportunities and grow in faith. Jane Ann has run this program for about two years. They are currently going through *Altaration: The Mystery of the Mass Revealed* from Ascension Press. The youth enjoy a snack, game, fellowship, and learn about the saint memorials that are coming that week. There are parents that come help each week.

"I want youth to know that there is no membership," Jane Ann says.

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Our Stewardship Response to the Eucharist, God's Ultimate Gift

The Eucharist, often referred to as the “Source and Summit of the Christian life” in Catholic theology, stands as the ultimate gift from God to His people. It is in this sacred sacrament that Catholics partake in the Real Presence of Christ, an encounter that nourishes our souls and strengthens our faith. In light of this profound gift, stewardship emerges as the natural response to God’s boundless love.

Stewardship is not merely a call to manage our resources wisely; it is a way of life, a spiritual path that reflects our gratitude for the gift of the Eucharist and our commitment to live in accordance with its transformative power.

The Eucharist, at its core, is a divine act of selflessness. In the Last Supper, Jesus took ordinary bread and wine and offered them as His Body and Blood to His disciples. This selfless act, which is mirrored in His ultimate sacrifice on the cross, serves as an enduring reminder of the depth of God’s love for humanity. In response, stewardship compels us to emulate this selflessness. By recognizing that all we have ultimately belongs to God, we are called to use our resources, time, and talents to serve others selflessly. Stewardship, then, is a living testament to the selfless love embodied in the Eucharist.

The Eucharist fosters a deep sense of community among Catholics. As we partake in the Body and Blood of Christ, we become part of a global and timeless family of believers. This sense of community, born in the Eucharist, parallels the essence of stewardship. Stewardship is not a solitary endeavor, but a collective one. It calls us to work together, to join hands with our fellow Catholics and, indeed, all people of goodwill, to address the needs of our

communities. In this spirit of togetherness, we seek to build God’s kingdom on earth, just as we share in the divine communion of the Eucharist.

Moreover, the Eucharist teaches us to be grateful. When we approach the altar to receive the Body and Blood of Christ, we do so in an attitude of profound thanksgiving. Stewardship, as an expression of gratitude, is our way of giving back to God for the countless blessings we have received. We recognize that all we have, whether it’s material wealth, skills, or time, are gifts from God. In gratitude, we commit to using these gifts wisely and for the betterment of others.

The Eucharist is a celebration of transformation. As Catholics, we believe that, through the power of the Holy Spirit, ordinary bread and wine are transformed into the divine. Similarly, our response to the Eucharist should lead to a personal transformation. Stewardship is a means by which we become more Christ-like, more selfless, and more compassionate. It is through stewardship that we, as individuals and as a faith community, seek to live out the teachings of Christ, becoming beacons of love, justice, and hope in a world that often hungers for such transformation.

As the Eucharist is the ultimate gift from God, stewardship is our heartfelt response to that gift. By embracing stewardship, we acknowledge the selflessness, community, gratitude, and transformation inherent in the Eucharist. Stewardship is not a burden, but a joyous calling — an opportunity to reflect God’s love and to bring Christ’s message to life. In the spirit of the Eucharist, let us strive to be faithful stewards, sharing our blessings and transforming the world with God’s love.



A LETTER FROM OUR PASTOR

The Great Sunday and Its Fifty Days of Joy

Dear Parishioners,

Everyone knows the number “forty” is associated with the season of Lent. As the hymn puts it:

*Lord, who throughout these forty days, for us did fast and pray,
Teach us with you to mourn our sins
and close by you to stay.*

In repentance for our sins and in preparing to renew our baptismal promises at the Easter Masses, we follow Our Lord’s example and teachings about the place of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving in our lives.

But not everyone knows that the number “fifty” is associated with the season of Easter. It begins with the Easter Vigil Mass, the first Mass of Easter, and it concludes with Pentecost Sunday fifty days later. The Easter season is “a week of weeks” — that is, seven weeks of seven days, plus one day for the Feast of Pentecost. And this whole season was named “the Great Sunday” by St. Athanasius and it is properly observed as “Fifty Days of Joy.”

I think that, for many people, forty days of penance comes more readily than does fifty days of rejoicing. An example might be that it is easier to hold

a frown for a long time than it is to hold a smile.

And yet, these Fifty Days of Joy hold out a challenge to us that is to our mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual benefit. These days speak to us who can be burdened with depression, discouragement, and disappointment. They assure us that Jesus has truly conquered the sin and death of this world and that, even now, we already share in His victory.

As another popular hymn puts it:

*Alleluia! Alleluia!
Hearts to heaven and voices raise.
Sing to God a hymn of gladness.
Sing to God a hymn of praise.
He who on the cross as Savior for the
world’s salvation bled,
Jesus Christ, the King of Glory,
now is risen from the dead.*

There is so much to ponder about what Jesus did for us by His passion, death, and resurrection that one day alone, Easter Sunday, is nowhere near enough time to take in all the facets of Jesus’ gift of Himself to His Heavenly Father for all of us.

So this year take the time that these Fifty Days of Joy offer us to do just that: to rejoice in the

victory of Jesus Christ. Do this by attending Mass every Sunday. Why? Every Sunday during the Church year is known as “a little Easter.” We cannot get enough of Easter in just one season of fifty days. So we celebrate His Easter victory every Sunday all year long.

Take this joy into your prayer and reflection, your reading and time with the Lord in prayer and adoration, especially during these Fifty Days of Joy.

And do not hesitate to enjoy some fun activities with your families and friends. If the truth be told, sometimes it can take more effort to be joyful than to be penitential. But it is worth every bit that it takes to bask in the joy of this Easter season.

As Mother Teresa of Calcutta advises us, “Never let anything so fill you with sorrow that you forget the joy of the Risen Christ.”

I wish you and all those you love a grace-filled Easter season as we mindfully celebrate “the Great Sunday and its Fifty Days of Joy.”

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Fr. Steven Arisman, Pastor



Children's Liturgy of the Word

Helping Our Little Ones

Any parent of young children understands the challenge of getting their little one to sit quietly through Sunday Mass. For many little ones, it can be hard to understand and appreciate the deeper meanings of the many responses, prayers, and songs. Fortunately, the Children's Liturgy of the Word Ministry, led by Liz Gengenbacher and her team of volunteers, helps children better understand the readings so they can participate in the Mass in their own developmentally appropriate way.

During the 9 a.m. Mass, children ages Pre-K through second grade are invited to participate in a kid-friendly program during the Liturgy of the Word. The adult leader leads them to a classroom and shares the readings and the Gospel, presenting

them in a way that better suits that age range. Liz also uses the time to help the children to pray.

"We do a prayer circle and talk about what's on their minds, and then we bring them back for the Liturgy of Eucharist," Liz says.

Adult volunteers rotate from week to week from September through May to instruct the group of little ones, which number anywhere from 10 to 30 children on a given week. Liz coordinates the schedule of the small team, which currently is made up of only three volunteers, including herself. She would like to have a few more volunteers to add to the rotation.

"No teaching experience is required to volunteer for this ministry," Liz says. "If you have a calling to give back to the Church, this is a great role. As volunteers, we try to get the children excited about the readings, and hopefully, they will share that excitement with their families."

Liz explains how she presents the readings in a way to keep them engaged and open to understanding.

"I present the readings and the Gospel to them, and I break it down," she says. "I want them to put themselves in the position of whoever we're reading about that day. For example, how would they feel if they were Jesus' best friends? I try to get them excited about it. I also try to give them an opportunity to get their wiggles out. We dance, shake, and move so when they go back in the

"I just get so happy when I see the lightbulbs go off in their heads, or when they get excited about the Word. It really fills me with so much joy and peace."

— LIZ GENGENBACHER



s Participate in the Mass

church, they understand to be reverent."

Liz explains the impact it has had on her own faith and is delighted when the children connect with the readings.

"I just get so happy when I see the lightbulbs go off in their heads, or when they get excited about the Word," she says. "It really fills me with so much joy and peace."

Liz's daughters, who are now 10 and 12, used to participate in the Children's Liturgy of the Word when they were younger. Sometimes they help Liz when it is her turn in the rotation. Liz says the ministry is a very easy entry point for anyone considering a way to serve the parish.

"It really is one of the easiest ministries to volunteer for, and you get so much out of it," she says.



If you are interested in helping out with the Children's Liturgy of the Word Ministry, contact Liz Gengenbacher at 217-257-5369 or lizgengenbacher@yahoo.com

Bear Program *continued from front cover*

"They can come whenever it works, whether once or every week."

These nights aren't necessarily about what the youth learn, it's more about their friendships with others who share their faith and values.

"They know they have other kids that are there they can lean on," Jane Ann says. "This gets them started on stewardship in the church. It only moves on from here."

Maybe youth don't always think of church as fun. But when they come to Bear, they can be sure they will have a good time of fellowship and faith.

"This brings Jesus into their hearts," Jane Anne says. "This helps them bring more when they come to church."

Anyone is welcome to attend Bear, even those who aren't Catholic.

"When they come, they are excited to see each other and enjoy time together," Jane Ann says. "That's my favorite thing to see. It's about the fellowship."

The weekly meetings occur during the school year, and periodic gatherings are offered during the summer.

Jane Ann wants to thank all the parishioners who supported the Bear bake sales around Christmas and in February. From the Christmas sale, part of the money went out to the community, and part will fund future Bear events. The February event supported some youth attending the March for Life at the Illinois capitol.

All youth in sixth through 12th grades are welcome to attend Bear at 7:15 on Mondays in the parish hall.

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Celebrating

the 2025 Jubilee Year
in the Catholic Church

Pope Francis Declares Theme,
“Pilgrims of Hope”



The Catholic Church's 2025 Jubilee Year, themed “Pilgrims of Hope,” offers Catholics worldwide a profound opportunity to deepen their faith and rekindle their relationship with Christ. A Jubilee Year, rooted in the biblical tradition of restoration and renewal, is a special time set aside by the Church to foster spiritual growth, encourage reconciliation, and celebrate God's abundant mercy. Declared by Pope Francis, this Holy Year is an invitation for all Catholics to embrace hope as a guiding light in their spiritual journey.

At the heart of the Jubilee Year are pilgrimages, particularly to Rome, where the Holy Door of St. Peter's Basilica will be opened as a symbol of God's grace. Walking through the Holy Door signifies a

passage into a renewed life with Christ. In his apostolic letter introducing the Jubilee, Pope Francis emphasizes the need for hope in a world marked by challenges, encouraging the faithful to rediscover their role as witnesses of Christ's love and mercy.

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) echoes this sentiment, urging American Catholics to see the Jubilee Year as an opportunity for renewal and a deeper commitment to discipleship. The bishops have outlined several ways for Catholics to participate in the Jubilee, including pilgrimages to designated shrines across the United States, special liturgical celebrations, and communal acts of prayer and service. The USCCB also encourages parishes to focus on Eucharistic devotion, as the Jubilee aligns with the National Eucharistic Revival, emphasizing the transformative power of the Eucharist in Catholic life.

Special events and devotions will highlight the year. Many dioceses will host local pilgrimages, mission retreats, and reconciliation services to inspire spiritual renewal. Parishes are encouraged to organize events

fostering community and prayer, such as Eucharistic processions, adoration, and acts of charity. These activities aim to remind the faithful of their call to stewardship and their role in building up the Body of Christ.

Catholics across the United States can celebrate the Jubilee Year in their daily lives by embracing discipleship and stewardship. Engaging in regular prayer, receiving the sacraments, and participating in acts of service and charity can deepen their connection to Christ. Families might consider creating home altars, praying the Rosary together, or reading Scripture to mark this holy time. Small groups or parish ministries can focus on themes of hope and renewal through study and discussion.

Ultimately, the 2025 Jubilee Year is a call for all Catholics to walk as “Pilgrims of Hope” — to rediscover the joy of the Gospel, renew their faith, and strengthen their commitment to Christ. By participating in the Jubilee's spiritual and communal opportunities, the faithful can grow closer to God and embrace their mission as stewards of His hope in the world.



Rejoicing in the Easter Season

Easter Sunday falls this year on April 20. But even when the glorious day comes to a close and we soon look towards the springtime days of May, remember that Easter is far from over — the celebration of the greatest feast day of the Church year continues for the next 50 days.

On Easter Sunday, we celebrate Christ rising from the dead, following His gruesome passion and death. On that glorious Sunday — three days after He died — Christ fulfilled His promise, “Destroy this temple and I will rebuild it in three days” (Jn. 2:19) and the promises of the Old Covenant, “I will put enmity between you and the woman and between your offspring and hers. They will strike at your head while you strike at their heel” (Gen. 3:15).

Through His resurrection, Jesus broke the chains of sin and death, opening for us the way to eternal life. Yet, His mission was not yet over. He was back with His disciples, showing them that what had been promised to their fathers had been fulfilled.

“Thus it is written that the Messiah would suffer and rise from the dead on the third day and that repentance, for the forgiveness of sins, would be preached in his name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things” (Lk. 24:46-48).

Yet, again, there is still more.

After all, Jesus is not still walking the earth,

showing us Himself, is He?

Forty days after His resurrection, Jesus Ascended to His Father’s right hand. That day falls on May 29 this year, but the Feast of the Ascension is a movable feast and will be celebrated this year on June 1. And 50 days after Easter, the Father sent His Spirit, just as Christ promised He would. And with that (the feast we now celebrate as Pentecost, which falls on June 8 this year), Christ’s salvific mission was accomplished, and it is with the celebration of that great feast that we conclude the Easter season — a season of joyful recognition of the salvation Christ won for us.

Having been beaten and killed for our sins, Christ rose from the dead breaking the bonds of sin. Then, after He ascended to His rightful place in heavenly glory, the Lord sent the Spirit, and now, armed with the power of the Spirit, the Church serves as the sacrament of salvation on Earth — offering us sanctifying grace (a share in the life of Christ Himself) through the sacraments.

As you can see, the Easter season offers us a time to commemorate some of the most important events in the history of salvation. In fact, it can rightly be called the most important season of the Church year, for it is now — during these 50 days — that we celebrate the fruits of Christ’s sacrifice.

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Rejoicing in the Easter Season

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Today, though Christ has won the victory over sin, we are all still living in a tainted world. We still feel the effects of sin because we do not yet fully partake of the fruits of Christ's victory. That we will only know when (and if) we, by the grace of God, enter eternal glory in the heavenly kingdom.

Let us all take the time this Easter season to thank God for the gift of salvation. Spend time reflecting on how much we have opened our hearts to the grace He pours upon us. May we all be more aware of the glory Christ has won for us, and, in so doing, willingly detach ourselves from the fruits of this world so that we may be more receptive to the fruits of His grace.

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.