

THE *Spirit* OF
ST. FRANCIS
St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church

In Loving Memory

G.E. MULLAN
1943-2015



Winter 2016

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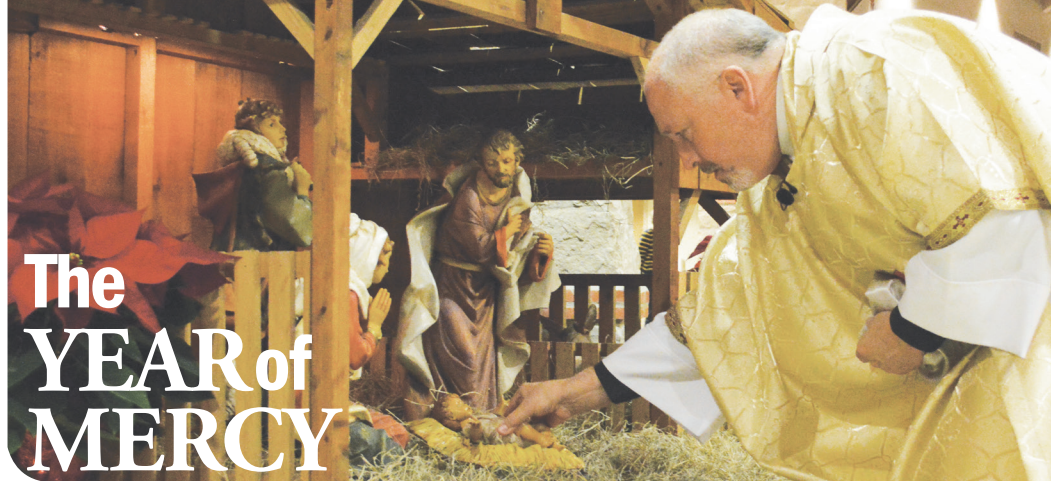
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Parish founders model God's love

Cover Photo: Founding parishioner G.E. 'Buddy' Mullan poses for an RCIA portrait in September 2015. Story on page 5. Credit: Eric Bowden

The *Spirit* of St. Francis

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Comments? Questions? Creative ideas? Awesome!
Talk to Charles. Email him at cramirez@sfasat.org



The YEAR of MERCY

By Rev. Larry Christian, Pastor

How quickly this Holy Season of the Holidays has come upon us! I wake up some mornings and I think, "Didn't school just start again?" But the days are crisper and shorter, and we know that fall and winter are here. Fall and winter may be the external seasons taking place, but there is a new and entirely different season taking place within our faith. It is the beginning of an extraordinary season called the Year of Mercy, a special Jubilee Year proclaimed by our Holy Father, Pope Francis!

There are two profound theological features about this Jubilee Year that I don't want you to miss. The first is that jubilee years are a tradition found in the Holy Bible that were meant to be a time when neighbors forgave the errors and faults of their other neighbors, families that had experienced alienation reached out to try to reconcile with those from whom they had become estranged, debts that could not be repaid were forgiven, and the poorest were allowed to glean the harvest from the land. How far have we drifted in the modern world from this idea of the divine jubilee! It is illogical in our modern mentality, yet the ancients knew that in order to allow for the possibility of peace in the world, a time of forgiveness was the only real solution.

The second feature of this extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy is the focus that Pope Francis is placing on mercy, itself, in this year. He is asking us to reflect on the quality of mercy, itself, so that we may know the meaning of God's mercy by experience and then extend that mercy in our relationships with others. My question to you is: what is your experience of mercy? Has someone ever been merciful to you? How have you received it? What is it like for you to be merciful to someone else? Is there someone you need to be merciful to? In this Year of Mercy, can you do it? Can you extend mercy to someone who needs it, even if they don't deserve it?

I invite you to cross the threshold of God's great mercy in this wonderful Jubilee Year! Don't let another opportunity to share in God's grace pass you by, unnoticed and unseen. Don't go to your grave unforgiven and unforgiving! It is then that the darkness will overtake you, and the burden of judgment will be upon you. You will have allowed the option for happiness to have passed you by. This is the time! Today is the day of salvation! This is the year for special forgiveness, for mending what may have seemed to be hopelessly broken. Let God's wonderful mercy reign upon the earth! Amen! ■

Photo: Fr. Larry Christian places a baby Jesus statue in the Nativity scene (above) and celebrates the Eucharist (below) at the 11 pm Mass on Dec. 24, 2014. Credit: Charles T. Ramirez.



IN WAITING WE ARE RENEWED: THE ADVENT SEASON

By Larry Perry, Director of Faith Formation Ministries

Most of us remember well the days on the elementary school playground when, after some failed attempt, we yelled as quickly and as loudly as possible: “Do-over!” Wouldn’t it be great to get “do-overs” throughout our adult lives as well? Those of us who play golf are all too familiar with the “Mulligan,” a second chance to hit the ball better than that last horrid swing. It feels so good when the ball goes long, straight, and true with that “do-over” swing. Maybe that’s a good way to think of the days during Advent.

Every year in south Texas, we are relieved to feel the intensity of summer’s heat give way to the refreshing, cooler days of autumn. We are reminded that it’s time to “winterize” our lawns and landscape. We know that fall is the time to renew and replenish the nutrients in the soil so that during those cold and apparently lifeless days of winter, new life can be replenished and fortified in the roots to break forth in the bud and blossom of spring.

The strength, vitality, and new life of springtime will be established and sustained by the nutrients that combine with the quiet resting days of cold winter. As we begin the new liturgical year, the Advent season is the perfect time for us to “re-do” and replenish. It is a time to prepare ourselves to celebrate the birth of Jesus and to seek new ways to be Christ-bearers in our world.

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THE HOLY YEAR AND HOLY DOORS

During the Advent parish mission, we opened our celebration and observance of the Jubilee Year of Mercy which has been proclaimed by Pope Francis. The theme for this Jubilee is “Merciful Like

“The Advent season is the perfect time for us to ‘re-do’ and replenish.”

the Father.” The Holy Year of Mercy began on Tuesday, Dec. 8th as Pope Francis opened the Holy Doors at St. John Lateran Cathedral. Pope Francis has charged us to “make more evident the Church’s mission to be a witness of mercy.” The Holy Year is a time of pilgrimage, conversion, repentance, and special opportunities to experience God’s grace and mercy through the sacraments, especially reconciliation.

In solidarity with the universal Church and the opening of the Holy Doors at St. Peter’s, we have also constructed our own Holy Doors at St. Francis of Assisi which are located in the Gathering Space of the church. The Holy Doors were opened at our Advent mission and celebration of the sacred liturgy in honor of the Immaculate Conception on Tuesday, Dec. 8th. The doors will remain open throughout the year to serve as a reminder that we are on a pilgrimage into receiving God’s mercy and that we are called to become “Merciful like the Father.” So, whether you journey to Rome to enter through the Holy Doors of St. John Lateran or you enter through the Holy Doors of St. Francis, we all journey together as a community to seek

“We are also constructing our own Holy Doors at St. Francis of Assisi...”

the Father’s mercy and to be witnesses of mercy.

We invite you to enter the sanctuary by walking through the holy doors of St. Francis, praying for God’s mercy and praying to become more merciful in your life. In doing so we will proclaim together with Isaiah the prophet: “The spirit of the Lord God is upon us, because the Lord has anointed us to bring good news to the afflicted, that we have been sent to bind up the brokenhearted and to proclaim liberty to captives, to

release those who are bound up, to proclaim a year of the Lord’s favor, to comfort those who mourn, anointing them with the oil of gladness, and to wrap them in the mantle of praise.” ■

WHAT IS MERCY?

In his letter proclaiming the Jubilee Year of Mercy, Pope Francis defines mercy as “the fundamental law that dwells in the heart of every human person who looks sincerely into the eyes of his brothers and sisters on the path of life...the bridge that connects God and man, opening our hearts to the hope of being loved forever despite our sinfulness” (April 11, 2015).



Photo: (Above) A young man proclaims the word at the 4:00 pm Christmas Eve Mass in 2014. (Below) Parishioners reflect on the homily at the same Mass. Credit: Charles T. Ramirez



Happy New Year!

ADVENT CELEBRATES A NEW LITURGICAL YEAR

By Don Bernhard, Director of Music Ministry

Advent celebrates a new liturgical year marked by beautiful readings and music, deep blue and purple colors, and images of candles and lights. We celebrate God's coming: the advent of our God to us. Though we celebrate this every year, it is not so much a cycle to which we return yearly. Rather, it is more like a spiral: each year, we grow in our understanding of Christ as we find God coming to us in new ways.

PREPARING FOR THREE COMINGS

During Advent, we prepare ourselves for three comings of Christ. The first coming is proclaimed two weeks before Advent when we heard from the Gospel of Mark, "And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory" (Mark 13). On the first Sunday of Advent, we hear essentially the same message from the Gospel of Luke.

The second coming is a little less obvious. St. Bernard of Clairvaux preached that it is the coming of Christ to us, his elect, in spirit and power. On the second and third Sundays of Advent, we heard John the Baptist call us to "Prepare the way of the Lord" who will "baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire" (Luke 3). As we did in baptism, we prepare to accept Christ into our hearts and renew our commitment each time we celebrate the Eucharist.

Finally, on the fourth Sunday of Advent, we hear of the third coming in the great Gospel of hope when Mary visits

her cousin, Elizabeth. Filled with the Holy Spirit, Elizabeth rejoices with Mary upon hearing of God coming to earth as a human child. Together, with the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception on Dec. 8, these readings bring us to the coming of God through his incarnation among us.

TWO ANCIENT WORDS

Two ancient words have made their way into our Advent liturgical music. The first word, Maranatha, means "The Lord is coming" and early Christians used it as a greeting. St. Paul used this Aramaic word in his letters as a greeting to remind disciples that we are waiting for Christ to come again.

The second word, Immanuel, is Hebrew and means, "God with us." Isaiah uses this word when he prophesies the birth of Jesus: God born as a human child to live among us (Isaiah 7). Our

Roman Church adopted the Latin version of the word as Emmanuel, but the meaning remains the same.

WAYS TO PREPARE

On Friday, Dec. 18, we will celebrate our Advent/Christmas Concert at 7:00 pm. By this time in Advent, we are fully into the hectic, secular shopping season. You will have probably heard lots of Christmas music in the malls and on

"First, prepare your heart to receive the Christ who came into our world and into our hearts many years ago."

TV. Our Music Ministry hopes to present a joyous program of fresh, prayer-filled Advent and Christ-

mas music, produced by the talents of children, teens, and adults of our own community.

However you plan to celebrate Christmas this year—whether with family and friends, in church, at parties, with wonderful music, and rich food and drink—remember to first prepare your heart to accept the Christ who came into our world and into our hearts many years ago. He comes into your heart again this year and will continue for many years to come. ■

Photos: (Above) Don Bernhard leads the Christmas Concert in 2014; (Below) Our adult choirs sing together at our Christmas Concert 2014. Credit: Charles T. Ramirez.



Our Newest Patron Saint

We Remember G.E. 'Buddy' Mullan

By Sr. Rose Kruppa, CDP, Pastoral Associate

Founding parishioner and internationally recognized artist, G. E. Mullan, known by many as 'Buddy', passed away on October 27, 2015. With gratitude, great love, and high esteem, we dedicate this issue of *The Spirit of St. Francis* to Buddy. He embodied the Spirit of St. Francis! He spent more than 35 years dedicated to the project of "building a church"

in this community. Every aspect of parish life that we enjoy today gives evidence of Buddy's gifts of creativity.

With simple yet profound generosity, he contributed values and principles to build a physical church conducive to full, active participation. He collaborated in the design of our church sanctuary and designed the stained glass windows depicting one of St. Francis of Assisi's hymns, *The Canticle of the Sun*.

He also designed our official parish logo and Stations of the Cross (coming Lent 2016). All contribute to our personal and communal spirituality. An extraordinary man of faith, he lived by the principle that art and faith nurture each other.

Equally important to him was the formation of a community that worships here and celebrates the sacraments with bold symbols and tender attention to individuals, especially those engaged in the RCIA process. Buddy was a member of the parish's first RCIA formation team. Buddy loved all things liturgical and

insisted that whatever happened in church was truly "the work of the people."

His best friend and wife of 46 years, Celina, was truly his partner in all that he did. He connected many of us to the church worldwide when he and Celina led us in pilgrimages to historical, sacred places. With Celina, he founded the Pilgrimage of Art and Faith, providing hundreds of pilgrims the opportunity to explore historical, cultural and holy places in Israel, Italy, Ireland, France, Spain, and Turkey.

For the last 20 years, he worked exclusively in sacred art, designing missal covers for World Library Publications, creating commemorative commissioned pieces for religious institutions and, in collaboration with renowned story-teller, John



Shea, publishing *Canticle: Biblical Songs Illuminated*.

Who will ever forget the stories of the saints that Buddy told? Every adult confirmed at St. Francis drew from Buddy's extensive knowledge of the saints—their attributes and personalities, their passions in life, and the gifts they gave to our Catholic faith. If an RCIA candidate was at a loss about their choice for a patron saint, Buddy would know just where to direct them.

The study of saints will remain forever incomplete, unless we celebrate our own St. Buddy, the new patron saint of building the church and the community. Buddy had us all believing that we could be saints in our ordinary, everyday holiness! St. Buddy, pray for us! ■



Photos: (Clockwise) G.E. 'Buddy' Mullan in his studio; Buddy and Celina Mullan pose together at the Easter Vigil reception in 2014; *The Supper at Emmaus* by G.E. Mullan.



THE G.E. MULLAN ART & LITURGY FUND

The G.E. Mullan Art & Liturgy Fund has been established to continue Buddy's legacy and passionate commitment to art and liturgy at St. Francis of Assisi. This fund will be used for future church environment enhancements throughout our liturgical seasons that Buddy loved. Download a donation form now at www.sfasat.org/GEMullanFund.

PURCHASE ART

View more of Buddy's work and purchase his art by visiting www.GeMullanStudio.com



A STUNNING NIGHT OF FUN

Our 4th Annual Christmas in Assisi Dinner Dance

By Kenneth Caruthers

"There's something magical about this community at St. Francis," said Women's Council president, Nita Hotard, "and Christmas in Assisi just seems to feed right into that magic to help people form more bonds with one another."

Back in 2012, members of the Women's Council, the Men's Club, and the Knights of Columbus got together and collaborated on an idea for an elegant dinner dance like none other the parish had before experienced. Nita's husband and Men's Club treasurer, Rick Hotard, recalls the original idea.

"We wanted to see if the three organizations could get together and put on a dinner dance for an elegant evening to enjoy good music, good food, promote community, and celebrate Christmas,"

said Rick, "and we succeeded."

"The thing that I like about it is that it's not a fundraiser," Rick said. "It's just, 'Let's come and have a good time.' All I want to do is make sure we put together a fun, entertaining evening."

Irma Flores has attended Christmas in Assisi with her husband, Tony, since it first started. Her favorite part of

"This dance brings everyone together to enjoy great music, good food, and the time to foster our friendships."

the evening is to see everyone formally dressed as they dance the night away while enjoying each other's company.

"There are a number of fellow parishioners that we don't get to see on a regular basis, and this dance brings everyone together to enjoy great music, good food, and the time to foster our friendships," Irma said.

"People sort of have a preconceived notion that it's only the older folks who go to Christmas in Assisi, but it's really not," Nita said. "It's a good mix of parishioners across all ages. There are no limits on who can come. It's really a wonderful opportunity for the entire community." ■

DECEMBER 12 | HENKE HALL

6 pm Champagne Reception
7 pm Dinner with one free adult drink
8 pm Dance with *Oh So Good Band*

Attendees will receive a surprise gift!
Childcare will be available.

Photo: (Above) Friends take a photo together at Christmas in Assisi 2014. (Below) Attendees enjoy the music at the 2014 dance. Credit: Eileen Kleffner.



SACRIFICIAL Giving 2016

"ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI WAS A RICH YOUNG MAN... He had ideas of glory. But Jesus, in the person of a leper, spoke to him in silence, and he changed him. He made him understand what truly mattered in life: not wealth, not power of weapons, not earthly glory, but humility, mercy, and forgiveness."

—Pope Francis, Oct. 4, 2013

St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church
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www.sfasat.org

SACRIFICIAL Giving 2016

During weekend Masses in the month of November, Fr. Larry preached on the importance of sacrificial giving. Additionally in November, all parish families received a letter from Fr. Larry enclosed with a Sacrificial Giving 2016 brochure. In the letter, Fr. Larry asked you to reflect on the many sacrifices you make in life and the blessings for which you are grateful.

Each year, we ask our parish families to

commit a percentage of their first-fruits to our community. If you have not yet returned your 2016 Sacrificial Giving commitment, please complete it and return to the parish office by January 1, 2016. Maybe you would rather complete it online? No problem. Scan the QR Code below, complete the form, and submit.



Thank you for supporting the mission of St. Francis of Assisi—to welcome all, to follow Jesus' command to make disciples, and to serve the poor. May God's blessings be yours in abundance.



TEEN ACTS RETREAT IN ADVENT

By Monica Harness, Director of Youth Ministry

"The Lord is near. Have no anxiety at all, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, make your requests known to God." -Philippians 4:5-6

St. Paul's words to the Philippians serve as the theme for our Teen ACTS Retreat on December 10-13, 2015. Teen ACTS retreats offer weekends filled with prayer, joy, laughter, tears, and sharing. These retreats compose part of our youth ministry program and the ACTS ministry at the parish. Similar to adult ACTS Retreats, teen retreats focus the Paschal Mystery at the center.

"One of the greatest things about Teen ACTS is that teens take on the leadership of the retreat."

One of the greatest things about Teen ACTS is that teens take on the leadership of the retreat. Teens serve as director and co-director for each retreat and I have the privilege of journeying with them through the formation process. The rest of the team includes teens and adults. Throughout our meetings, we pray together, learn more about each other, and share our faith lives with one another. Teen ACTS started at St. Francis in the late 1990s and, like the adults retreats, two opportunities are scheduled annually for teens to go on retreat. One of the retreats is usually

held in late fall and one in the spring. We invite all high school teens, parishioners and non-parishioners, to join us on our retreats. Retreats begin on a Thursday night and end Sunday evening at the 5:00 pm Mass. Teens will have to miss a day of school on Friday.

I highly encourage parents to talk to their teens about attending one of our Teen ACTS Retreats. A teen's faith life can be ignited and renewed through this Spirit-filled weekend. If you're wondering what a teen can expect over the course of weekend, here are several things:

- Great food from our volunteer cooks from the parish
- A chance to pray in community and participate in the Sacraments
- Time with friends, listening to and sharing their faith journeys
- Most importantly, an encounter with Jesus Christ
- And SLEEP—No, that is not a typo! This is also something very different from adult ACTS. We have more time to rest.

Registration forms can be picked up in the parish office or you can find them online on our website. Please don't let cost be an issue. Scholarships are available. Please keep our team in prayer as they continue to pray through the theme for this retreat, as well as the retreatants. ■

Photo: Life Teen seniors pose together one last time to celebrate high school graduation in 2015.
Credit: Monica Harness.

Join Us for 2016 ACTS Retreats

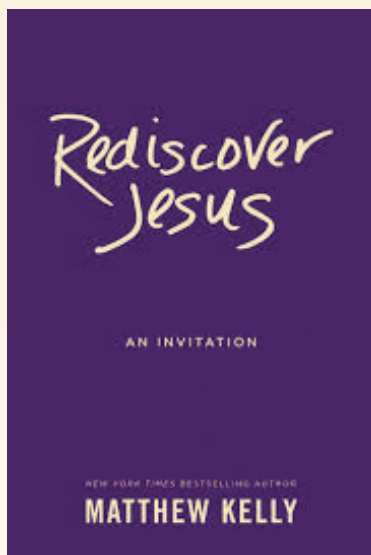


An ACTS retreat weekend strives to place great emphasis on community and pastoral care within our parish. Participants experience God's love and joy through the weekend, return to their faith community with a deeper love for each other and an increased desire to become more involved in their parish community. Register online soon.

Men's ACTS	January 28-31	Oblate School of Theology
Women's ACTS	June 23-26	Omega Retreat Center

Photo: The Women's ACTS Team from the spring 2015 retreat gather for a photo.
Credit: Provided by ACTS.

OUR *Advent* GIFT TO FAMILIES



The parish will gift each family with Matthew Kelly's new book, *Rediscover Jesus*. At a time when so many people are spiritually disillusioned and searching for ways to live, love, work, and play that nurture the soul rather than destroy it, Matthew Kelly once again delivers a powerful book that encourages us in our weariness, challenges us in our comfort, and invites us to rediscover the beautiful possibilities God places before us daily.

Rediscover Jesus is a profound invitation to seek deeply personal answers to our deeply personal questions. Each page seems to effortlessly reach into every aspect of our lives, providing spiritual wisdom and practical insights that help us to know both Jesus and ourselves in a new way.



Matthew Kelly has dedicated his life to helping people and organizations become the best version of themselves. Born in Sydney, Australia, Matthew is an internationally acclaimed speaker, America's best-selling Catholic author, founder of The Dynamic Catholic Institute, and a business consultant at Floyd Consulting, a Chicago-based management consulting firm serving more than fifty Fortune 500 companies.



RCIA WELCOMES OUR NEWEST MEMBERS

By Sr. Rose Kruppa, CDP, Director of RCIA

The Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens (Rite of Welcome) is the first of the "threshold rites" of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA), and the first public ritual. In the Rite of Acceptance, a change of identity takes place: those previously known as inquirers become catechu-

mens. They are officially welcomed by the Church as disciples on a journey.

These catechumens (unbaptized) join with candidates, those who are preparing to make a Profession of Faith as Catholics after being baptized in another faith.

Other candidates include Catholics who have not completed their sacraments of initiation (Reconciliation, Eucharist and Confirmation).

On Nov. 15, accompanied by sponsors from our St. Francis Community, each received a sign of the cross on all their senses, heart, shoulders,

"Each received a sign of the cross on all their senses, heart, shoulders, hands, and feet."

hands and feet. If you or someone you know is interested in the Catholic Faith or if you have not completed your Sacraments of Initiation, please contact Sr. Rose Kruppa at the parish office. ■



Catechumens



Rachel Aldaz



David Alan Garcia



Ben Sheppard



Brady Moran

Catholics Completing Initiation



Elaiza Ocampo



Ryan Avila



Leslie Zavala



Joe Garcia



Christopher Garcia



Susan McKinney



Luis Ocampo



Karl Rivas



Kris Silva



Christopher Vega



Kassandra Butcher



Christina Cortez



Cristine Hernandez



Lauramay LaChance



LeeRoy Perez

Profession of Faith



Eric Bowden



Isaiah Butcher



Michelle Aguillon



Krista Dentinger



Wade DeRouse



Samantha McCombs



Michael Onianwa



Des'Ree Holmes



Wayne Marinek



George Flores

PRAYER OF SIGNING

at the Rite of Welcome

Receive the sign of the cross on your forehead. It is Christ himself who now strengthens you with this sign of his love. Learn to know and follow him.

Receive the sign of the cross on your ears, that you may hear the voice of the Lord.

Receive the sign of the cross on your eyes, that you may see the glory of God.

Receive the sign of the cross on your lips, that you may respond to the word of God.

Receive the sign of the cross over your heart, that Christ may dwell there by faith.

Receive the sign of the cross on your hands, that Christ may be known in the work which you do.

Receive the sign of the cross on your feet, that you may walk in the way of Christ.

These catechumens have been signed with the sign of Christ's cross: make them living proof of its saving power, and help them to persevere in the footsteps of Christ. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.



Frank James



LEARN MORE

Interested in Catholicism? Scan this QR Code to learn more about the RCIA process.

Not Pictured

Brittany Hawes
Kaitlin Morales
Jordan Stewart
Reid Walston
Albert Estrada
Michael Garza
Priscilla Hernandez

Holy Matrimony

A VOCATION TO SAINTHOOD

By Kenneth Caruthers

“Without God right there with you, marriage will never survive,” said parishioner Joanne Thompson. She and her husband Kenneth have been married for 50 years and they say that God must be centered in a marriage for it to succeed.

“Marriage is like a seesaw. The husband and the wife sit on each end, and sometimes it can be hard to keep the seesaw balanced,”

Joanna said. “That’s why it’s so important to have God there in the marriage. He’s the fulcrum of the seesaw holding it up in the middle.”

Parishioners Virginia and Tom Peterson have been married for 44 years and have three children. They also say that affirming God in their marriage makes it successful.

“I think it starts with loving and respecting each other,” Tom said, “and then you have to include prayer and regular worship.”

The Thompsons know the important role that healthy marriages play in the Catholic Church.

“Good, strong marriages are what make the Church continue,” Joanne said. “If you look at all of the sacraments, most of them, other than marriage, involve one person. With marriage, it takes two people to make it work.”

Kenneth says that a good marriage

also influences the couple’s children.

“Staying close to your kids is very important. In some ways, you as parents remind them of the presence of God in their lives,” Kenneth said.

Virginia believes that the environment the children are raised in plays a big part in their faith formation.

“It helps being in a vibrant community like St. Francis with lots going on for children,” Virginia said. “Certainly the parents are the first and

best teachers, but I like the idea that it takes a community to raise a child.”

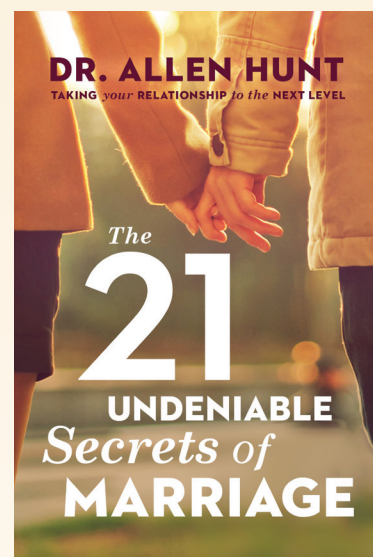
Kenneth asserts that people do not have to look far to find other inspirational couples who live lives of holiness.

“We have some couples in this parish who are models of holiness for today, like Buddy and Celina Mullan,” Kenneth said. “A lot of people have the makings of saints in this parish; though they might not get recognized by the pope and go through all of that formality, they’re still just as valid role models as any canonized saint out there.” ■

Editor’s Note: During the publication of this issue of The Spirit of St. Francis, G.E. ‘Buddy’ Mullan passed away. Eternal rest grant unto him, oh Lord, and may perpetual light shine upon him.

Photo: Courtesy of Liturgical Publication, Inc. © 2015

Our Christmas Gift TO COUPLES

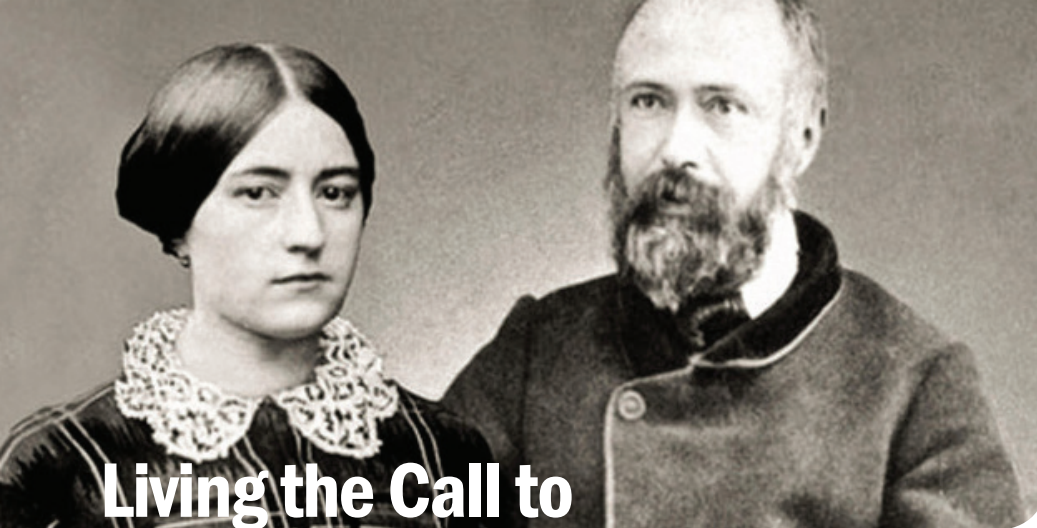


The parish will gift each couple in our community with Dr. Allen Hunt’s new book, *The 21 Undeniable Secrets of Marriage*. In this amazing book, Dr. Hunt shares the life-giving principles that are necessary for success in your relationship. Growing and building a great marriage does not happen by accident. Taking your relationship to the next level requires attention and effort. Even people in great marriages face challenges and encounter difficulties. What tools can you place in your hands to build the marriage you desire? Utilizing his decades of experience with couples, Dr. Hunt shares real-life wisdom and help for your marriage. Pick up your copy during our Advent Parish Mission.



Dr. Allen Hunt serves alongside Matthew Kelly as the Vice-President of Strategy and Content at The Dynamic Catholic Institute. He is a nationally

known speaker and best-selling author. His books include: *Confessions of a Mega-Church Pastor: How I Discovered the Hidden Treasures of the Catholic Church*; *Everybody Needs to Forgive Somebody*; and *Nine Words: A Bible Study to Help You Become the Best-Version-of-Yourself*.



Living the Call to HOLINESS

Catholics Celebrate First Married Couple Saints

By Kenneth Caruthers

Pope Francis recently made history at the Synod on the Family on Sunday, October 18, 2015 when he canonized Louis Martin and his wife, Marie-Azélie Guérin, making them the first married couple in the Catholic Church to be named saints. Who was this married couple?

Though most Catholics haven't heard of Sts. Louis and Zélie Martin, they might have heard of their more famous daughter—a saint and Doctor of the Church—St. Thérèse of Lisieux. Though the Martins lived in France in the 1800s, their lives still provide a model example for married couples today.

EARLY LIFE

Years before they met, both Louis and Zélie initially intended to enter religious life, however, they were providentially rejected. A monastery rejected Louis from joining the monks at an abbey because

he did not know Latin and a convent rejected Zélie due to her poor health. Alternatively, they each decided to begin their own businesses: Louis became a watchmaker and Zélie became a lace-maker.

After Louis and Zélie met in 1858, they fell in love and married just three months later. For the first 10 months of their marriage, however, Louis and Zélie lived as brother and sister, embracing a life of abstinence and prayer. Eventually, their spiritual director advised them to have children and they had nine altogether. Although only five daughters survived childhood, they all became religious sisters.

MODELS OF CHARITY

Though Louis and Zélie were busy with childcare and work responsibilities, they still made it a point to attend daily Mass at 5:30 am and pray as a family

each evening. When their extended family needed help, they did not hesitate to offer their aid. For example, when Zélie's father could not find a suitable housekeeper, the Martins welcomed him into their home.

Louis and Zélie's generosity did not end with family. Zélie treated all of her maids like they were family members, taking care of them herself when they fell ill so as not to burden their families. Louis was a member of the St. Vincent de Paul Society, and he and Zélie always tried to help beggars and other people they encountered on the streets. In a story reminiscent of the Good Samaritan, Louis and Zélie saw a homeless man on the side of the road that everyone else simply passed by. They stopped to help the man, brought him to their home, fed him, and provided him with better clothing.

LATER YEARS

On August 28, 1877, Zélie died of breast cancer. Her daughter, Thérèse, was only four years old. In 1889, Louis suffered two paralyzing strokes that impacted his memory and he was hospitalized for three years. After he returned to Lisieux, his daughters cared for him until he died on July 29, 1894.

No matter the challenge that Louis and Zélie faced, they strived for holiness and found God in their charity to others. In Pope Francis' remarks on the Martins at the canonization Mass, he lauded them for "creating day by day an environment of faith and love, which nurtured the vocations of their daughters." ■

Photo: Sts. Louis and Zélie Martin. Courtesy of www.CatholicExchange.com © 2015

70 Years Married



Congratulations to founding members of St. Francis of Assisi, Mr. Bob and Ruby Wilson, on completing 70 years of marriage on December 13, 2015. Your example shines for many others to see! Thank you for modeling the love of God in your love for one another.

2016 PICTORIAL DIRECTORY



Sign up for your family portrait session today! LifeTouch Photography will be on site Jan. 5–31, 2016 to take photos for our 2016 Pictorial Directory. Scan this QR Code and schedule your session today!



St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church

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Mass Celebrations

Sat 5:00 pm

Sun 8:30 am | 11:15 am | 5:00 pm

Mon, Tue, & Thur | 8:30 am

Wed | 6:00 pm

Fri | 6:30 am

Reconciliation

Saturday | 3:30 pm - 5:00 pm

Liturgy of the Word & Communion Service

Monday - Thursday | 6:30 am

Save the Date

December

- 4 | Taize Prayer Service
- 10 | Teen ACTS Retreat begins
- 12 | Christmas in Assisi Dinner Dance
- 13 | Our Lady of Guadalupe Mass
- 18 | Christmas Concert
- 20 | Blood Drive
- 24 | Christmas Eve
- 25 | Christmas Day
- 31 | New Year's Eve

January

- 1 | New Year's Day
- 28 | Men's ACTS Retreat begins
- 30 | Anniversary of Parish Founding

February

- 5 | Beyond Cana Retreat begins
- 10 | Ash Wednesday
- 13 | Valentine's Day Dinner Dance
- 20 | Women's Lenten Retreat
- 21 | Lenten Mission begins
- 24 | Lenten Reconciliation Service
- 27 | Liturgical Minister Training

Christmas Mass Schedule

December 24	4:00 pm Children's Choir
	4:00 pm (Henke Hall)
	6:00 pm
	10:00 pm (Caroling)
	11:00 pm
December 25	10:00 am
December 31	5:00 pm
January 1	10:00 am