

THE *Spirit* OF
ST. FRANCIS

St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church



Summer 2017

The Joy of New Life

Summer 2017 CONTENTS

- 2 We Welcome and We Celebrate
Online Giving Update
- 3 When a Pastor Says Hello
Fr. Tony on Transition to St. Francis
- 4 Coming to America
Fr. Krzysztof Settles in at St. Francis
- 5 Pastoral Priorities Update
Collaborative Efforts Lead to Progress
- 6 Hidden Havens
Places to Pray on Campus
- 7 Our New MLF Core Director
An Introduction from Cedar Joiner
- 8 A Formula for Success
Moms Expand to Thursday Night
- 9 We Worship in the Same Language
Spanish Mass Continues to Grow
- 10 Our First Class Relic
A Brief History of Our Relic
- My Pew Art
A Showcase of Our Children's Artwork
- 11 Nurturing Faith
Pre-School Faith Formation

Cover Photo: Gabriela Tikhonova joyfully emerges from the waters of baptism at the 2017 Easter Vigil.
Photo by Kenneth Caruthers

The *Spirit* of St. Francis

Pastor **Rev. Tony Vilano**
Editor **Sr. Rose Kruppa, CDP**
Layout Design & Copy **Kenneth Caruthers**
Comments? Questions? Creative ideas?
Awesome! Talk to Kenneth. Email him at
kcaruthers@sfasat.org.



We Welcome and We Celebrate

Completing Sacraments of Initiation

Thomas Alvarado
Royce Alvarez
Natalie Nicole Barrios
Jemima Crystal Cornidez
Jessica L. Craig
Angel Azucar Espinoza
Olivia Iglesias
Hernan Jaramillo
Joaquin Daniel Labrado
Richard Harvey Medina
Cyndi Oldt
Mari Picarrazzi
Lauren Elisa Pratz
Emily Renee Rodriguez
Rick Ygnacio Serrato
Andrea Silva
Rhianna Lynn Toonen
William Trevino
Gaebril Alexander Velasco

Catechumens

James Kevin Cree Hart
Angelus "Angel" Leticia Espino
Aaron Torres Hernandez
Kevin Jones
Ryan Jones
Hermogenes Lopes
Kailey Elizabeth McKay
Anthony Daniel Orozco
Elisiana Love Orozco
Blane Peery
Autumn Reynosa
Roberto Santos
Sofia Santos
Carlos "Charlie" Santos Toonen
Gabriela Tikhonova
Alan Turrizza
Ben Vuong



Profession of Faith

Rich Osgood
Graydon Tolcher
Kim VonBertrab
Troy Anthony Wright
Christopher Pena
Robert "Steven" Brown
Kelli Grant
William Charles McCallum, Jr.
Matthew Noah McKee



ONLINE *Giving* UPDATE



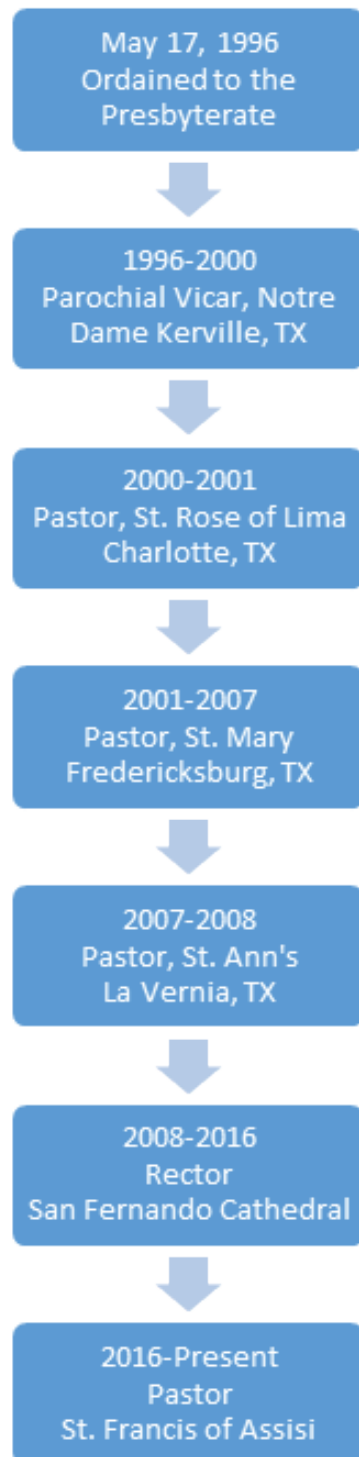
St. Francis is switching online giving platforms. The green "Make a Donation" button on the home page of the parish's website that redirects to myowngiving.com will become obsolete in February 2018. All online donors who have not switched over to our new platform by that time will notice that their recurring gifts have stopped. Our new online giving platform is hosted by ConnectNow. The new platform at connectnowgiving.parishsoft.com can be accessed by clicking on the ConnectNow Online Giving button on the home page of the parish's website. We encourage users to select the "Use Check" option when making a donation on this new platform; the parish saves money when that option is selected. Users should opt out of the old myowngiving.com when they switch to the ConnectNow online giving to avoid unintentionally giving twice. Thank you for your understanding and cooperation as we make this online giving transition.

Photos: (1) The Elect pray the Litany of the Saints prior to their baptism. (2) The newly baptized children wait to be anointed with the sacred chrism. (3) Fr. Tony baptizes Alan Turrizza into the Catholic Church. Credit: Kenneth Caruthers

When a Pastor Says Hello

Fr. Tony Vilano Talks about his Transition to St. Francis

By Kenneth Caruthers



On July 1, 2016, Fr. Tony Vilano became the sixth pastor of St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church. He was formally installed as pastor by Archbishop García-Siller on Sunday, October 2, 2016, the morning of the parish festival. Fr. Tony recently spoke about his transition to St. Francis of Assisi and his goals for the parish.

What was the transition to St. Francis like for you?

"It was an easy transition from San Fernando to St. Francis. That's partly due to my experience as a pastor in other parishes, and it's also thanks to the hospitality and acceptance that the parishioners of St. Francis welcomed me with. If I had gone to another parish that wasn't as welcoming and accepting, I could see the transition being much more difficult."

What excited you most about moving to St. Francis?

"The most exciting thing for me is that I'm back in a parish setting where I get to know families and get to celebrate the sacraments with the families. I'm excited that we have a community of believers who live in the area. A lot of the people who come to San Fernando are tourists, so it's hard to build connections when a lot of those people are only there that one weekend."

As pastor, what are your goals for St. Francis?

"My first year is basically just going to be me watching and learning, and then once I've had time to actively observe I'll really know what the goals for the parish should be. Right now, I'm focused on the goals that were established under Fr. Larry Christian as our pastoral priorities. I usually don't start thinking about the broader picture of the parish until I've been present for about a year learning where we should be going

with particular ministries and that sort of thing."

What is the most rewarding part of being the pastor of a parish?

"I think the most rewarding thing for me is just walking with people on their faith journey and being a part of their spiritual life."

How do you plan to grow vocations at St. Francis?

"St. Francis is already on the right track as far as vocations go. We're doing a good job cultivating vocations with all of the youth and young adult ministries we have. There's something at every level, whether you look at our new Pre-School Faith Formation, EDGE, Life Teen, College Life, or the Young Adult Ministry. That's the biggest thing in the push for vocations. You have to involve the youth and young people and offer them great catechesis that gives them a taste of what the Catholic Church is all about."

What are some of your hobbies?

"I like to travel. I have friends all around the United States in places like Charleston, so I like to visit different areas of the country."

What is something not many people know about you?

"I was in the music video for Brooks & Dunn's song 'Red Dirt Road.'"



Left: Fr. Tony, Sr. Rose, and his friends from San Fernando Cathedral enjoy the 2016 Parish Festival Kick-off Dance.



Right: Fr. Tony consecrates the Eucharist at Mass. (Photos by Kenneth Caruthers)

Coming to America

Fr. Krzysztof Pawlowski Settles Into His Role as Parochial Vicar of St. Francis of Assisi

By Kenneth Caruthers with Natalie Hernandez

If not for the influence of the Holy Spirit, Fr. Krzysztof Pawlowski could have pursued an entirely different vocation.

"I wanted to go to the university to study mathematics, but the Holy Spirit left a seed in me that, with time, started growing," Fr. Krzysztof said. "I decided to give the seminary a chance after high school when I was 19 or 20 for a year or two to see if it was a good fit, and it was."

Fr. Krzysztof, or Fr. Kris as he is fondly called at St. Francis of Assisi, was ordained to the priesthood on June 2, 2001. Following his ordination, Fr. Kris spent six years in his native Poland before settling in Peru for eight years beginning in October 2007. During his time in Peru, Fr. Kris became adept at speaking Spanish while he served as pastor of a parish of 56 towns.

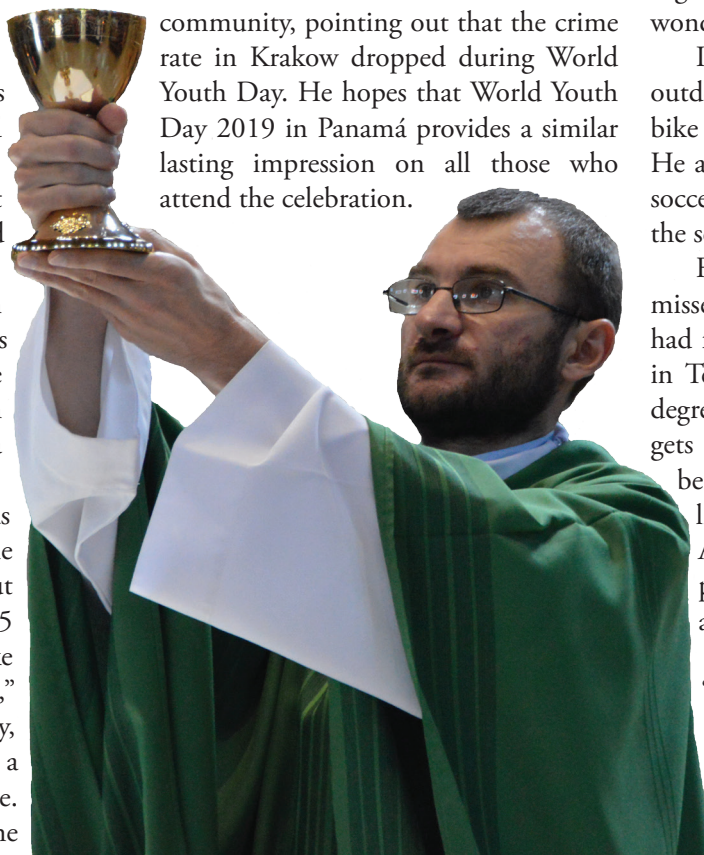
"The parish I was at was the farthest parish from the diocese. I was worried about the parish when I left in 2015 because it often seemed like that parish got abandoned," Fr. Kris said. "Thankfully, that parish is finally getting a Peruvian priest assigned there. I am relieved to know the parishioners are getting a priest who actually wants to be there."

Once his time in Peru was up, Fr. Kris returned to Poland to prepare for his next move to San Antonio. While in Poland, Fr. Kris was fortunate enough to go to World Youth Day in Krakow. He describes it as an incredible, unforgettable experience.

"World Youth Day was something so powerful, unlike anything I have ever experienced before! It was incredible

to see Krakow flooded with so many youth from around the world, and it was amazing how all the youth came together as one. Even though they spoke different languages and came from different cultures, they were all united by their faith," Fr. Kris said.

Fr. Kris believes that World Youth Day left a positive impact not only on the youth who made the pilgrimage to Krakow, but also on the entire community, pointing out that the crime rate in Krakow dropped during World Youth Day. He hopes that World Youth Day 2019 in Panamá provides a similar lasting impression on all those who attend the celebration.



In August 2016, Fr. Kris arrived at St. Francis of Assisi. He lists learning how to speak English as the most challenging part of adjusting to life in San Antonio, but he enjoys serving at our parish and appreciates how well organized everything is here.

"At one of my previous parishes, I had to do all of the church's administrative work since they did not have a parish staff, but here we have a full office staff

and coordinators for different ministries. That helps things run smoothly and makes it easier for the priests," Fr. Kris said.

Fr. Kris has also been impressed with the giving spirit of St. Francis of Assisi's parishioners.

"I really like how so many people of the parish come together to give themselves to the parish's needs. The organizations and ministries are doing wonderful work here," Fr. Kris said.

In his spare time, Fr. Kris likes being outdoors. Oftentimes, he will ride his bike through the parks around the city. He also enjoys playing sports, especially soccer and basketball, which he played in the seminary.

Fr. Kris admits one of the things he misses about Poland is that it actually had four different seasons, whereas here in Texas we only have slightly varying degrees of heat year-round. When it gets too hot to be outside, Fr. Kris can be found reading, playing logic games like Sudoku, or watching movies. As Fr. Tony Vilano and several parishioners have attested, Fr. Kris is also a talented guitar player.

"You should see him play 'Stairway to Heaven' by Led Zeppelin. He's so good!" Fr. Tony said.

Back in Poland, Fr. Kris has a sister whom he often chats with. He will be visiting her this summer during part of his vacation. He will also be traveling to Fátima during his time off to prayerfully celebrate the centennial of the Blessed Virgin Mary's apparitions there.

Fr. Kris thanks the parishioners of St. Francis of Assisi for welcoming him and making this his home away from home. We pray for his safe travels this summer as he goes abroad.

Photo by Kenneth Caruthers

Pastoral Priorities Update

Collaborative Efforts Contribute to Outstanding Progress

By Sr. Rose Kruppa, CDP

What makes a Catholic parish thrive? What is going on in a parish that is successfully nourishing its families? Let's look at St. Francis of Assisi!

One year ago, we embarked on a journey of identifying Pastoral Priorities that would help us to plan for the advancement of the St. Francis parish mission. Inspired by Archbishop Gustavo's vision for the diocese, we were asked to engage our parishioners in participative processes, in our case "listening sessions," where we would identify our goals.

Several months later, we can report outstanding progress in attaining those goals, thanks to the collaborative efforts and leadership of many in our parish family.

New Evangelization

Out of our ACTS retreats and RCIA groups in particular, we have five new Small Church Communities (SCC's). Kathy Hassenger and her team have trained several new Extraordinary Ministers of the Holy Eucharist, hospitality ministers, altar servers, and lectors. Additional liturgical ministers trained for the new Spanish Mass.

Thanks to the initiative and leadership of Marilyn Murphy and David Aguilar, a group of 15-20 parishioners gather every Wednesday after the 8:30 am Mass for a ministry of outreach to senior members of our community. All are welcome for good conversation, coffee, and small pastries.

If you would like to engage in the assessment and reorganization of bereavement ministry, please call Sister Rose. We especially invite singers to join us as a choir for funeral Masses.

Catechesis and Formation

Miriam Flores, our Elementary Faith Formation Coordinator, has identified catechists for the Pre-School Faith Formation offered on Sunday mornings in Henke Hall. Child care is being offered

for both 5 pm Masses every weekend, in addition to our Sunday morning Masses.

Our Beyond Cana team has adapted the retreat experience for an on-site venue, thus lowering the cost for couples. In addition, Miriam and Andy Flores have organized and presented two different talks, "Marriage as a Sacrament" and "Biblical Concepts of Marriage," for marriage enrichment. Both talks can be viewed on St. Francis of Assisi's YouTube channel.

If you would like to participate in our review of any catechetical programs offered at St. Francis, please contact Larry Perry.

Youth and Young Adults

Our new Young Adult Ministry launched in February 2016. The group meets twice monthly at St. Francis for faith sharing and discussion, in addition to volunteering with Mobile Loaves & Fishes and having at least one social outing a month. They participated in the Habitat for Humanity house construction, volunteered at the parish festival, and have enjoyed outings to Government Canyon State Natural Area, Top Golf, an escape room, Theology on Tap, YCP Executive Speaker Series, and the Spurs and Rampage Catholic Nights.

Staff facilitators for the group are Kenneth Caruthers and Larry Perry. All young adults in their twenties and thirties are welcome to join the group at any time. The group can be reached at sfa.youngadultgrp@gmail.com or at fb.com/groups/sfayoungadult.

Our middle school EDGE and Life Teen groups are thriving. We enjoy seeing them serve as altar servers and hospitality ministers during Masses. Our Scouts and CYO athletes are becoming more visible to us in Church ministries as well. And our attendance at the Diocesan Youth Spectacular increased our visibility in our diocesan Catholic community.



From Top to Bottom: (1) The Young Adult Ministry enjoys a night together at Top Golf. (2) Retreatants from the Beyond Cana on-campus marriage retreat in January pose for a group photo in the Day Chapel. (3) One of St. Francis' Small Church Communities. (4) Mary Simmons and Gloria Hanna chat at our Midweek Coffee & Conversation in Henke Hall.



Hidden Havens: Places to Pray on Campus

By Kenneth Caruthers

Our St. Francis of Assisi campus boasts several amazing places to pray outdoors. However, many don't know about these hidden havens. With the flowers in bloom and green everywhere, it's the perfect time to take advantage of our gorgeous campus.



1) Outdoor Blessed Sacrament Chapel

Sit in the presence of the Eucharist any time of the day or night at our outdoor Blessed Sacrament Chapel. With a large picture window

looking into the indoor chapel, the outdoor space serves as a less formal extension. Two flanking benches make the outdoor space comfortable and intimate, while the surrounding trees provide perfect shade for time with Jesus.



2) Marian Grotto

Honor our blessed mother with prayers and flowers at our Marian Grotto. Inside a stone grotto stands a statue of Our Lady Queen of Peace adorned with flowers from

visitors. Relax in an adjacent bench, enjoy the flora around you, and listen to the melodic wind chimes in the trees.



3) Prayer Labyrinth

Patterned after the design found in France's Chartres Cathedral, our prayer labyrinth offers a structured prayer that centers the mind and heart. The labyrinth is

a metaphor for our own personal, sacred journey inward, a journey to the divine within each of us. Unlike a maze, the labyrinth's single path to the center symbolizes our unity with God. To pray the labyrinth, slowly walk the path to the center while meditating on each step and focusing on your breath.



4) RE Amphitheater

Situated on a grassy courtyard, the amphitheater offers a great view of the church while you pray. Bask in the sun on the lower steps, or sit closer to the RE Building to take advantage

of the shade. Remember how this space is full of activity and energy during Vacation Bible School in the summer and the blessing of the animals at the Festival, joyful laughter from little children playing and chasing bubbles during Kid's Day Out, or prayerful worship on Palm Sunday or the Easter Vigil.



5) Prayer Garden

Imagine praying in a lush, green garden near a small pond flanked by a statue of St. Francis. Discover the quiet peace of our St. Francis Prayer Garden. Trees provide a shady

canopy to relax and take a breath.



6) Table Between the Parish Office and the RE Building

A perfect spot to enjoy a snack or small lunch and contemplative prayer, the table between the parish office and the RE Building is covered by

arching trees and surrounded by beautiful plants and flowers that are often visited by butterflies and even hummingbirds helping to pollinate the different blossoms near the wood deck.



7) CYO Bleachers

Think of times spent with family and friends on the field at the Festival: the look of excitement on children's faces when they see the carnival rides, the gentleness

with which they approach the animals at the petting zoo, the adrenaline of conquering the rock climbing wall. Think of the pride you feel when watching our St. Francis CYO teams exhibit commendable sportsmanship in victory or defeat. Think of the appreciation you feel when you see your fellow parishioners coaching our children and teaching them how to handle obstacles they might face in a game or life in general. Think back to your days as a child on a sports field and thank God for the amazing capabilities of our body.

Where is your favorite outdoor place to pray on our campus?

Send us a selfie of you at the spot on any of our social media platforms by using the hashtag #MyHiddenHaven.



Left: Two women share a conversation at the Marian Grotto. (Photo by Sr. Rose Kruppa)
Right: A parishioner spends some time praying on the steps of the RE Building.



Introducing Our New MLF Core Director

By Cedar Joiner



"Every one of them is Jesus in disguise." - St. Teresa of Calcutta

I am honored to be given the opportunity to serve as the new St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church Mobile Loaves & Fishes Core Director. I thank the Lord every day for this opportunity to follow in Julie Mellin's footsteps. I have seen the great work she has done as well as all of those involved with MLF. I know that together we will continue the great work of feeding and clothing those less fortunate.

Eight years ago, my three children and I joined the MLF ministry. We have been volunteering on the second Saturday of each month, preparing and delivering lunch meals and clothing to those in need. It has been such a beautiful and humbling experience.

Each month, my children remind me of our service day, making sure we don't miss it. I watch my children take charge with their loving hands, preparing the meals and sorting out the clothes for our trip. Then we hop in the truck with Rich Martinez and Adam Cortez, our teammates, say a prayer, and head out to our two locations on the southside of San Antonio. The laughter and stories as we travel have become very special to our team.

When we arrive, the people, some new, some very familiar, are waiting lovingly for us with their smiles and hugs. They have become part of our family. I can't tell you how touching it is to watch my children serve these people. I thank MLF for creating such a beautiful experience for my family. We are so blessed to have been given this opportunity to follow in Jesus' footsteps.

I invite all of you to come experience this ministry with me and our MLF volunteers! Email volunteermflf@gmail.com to get started.

Pray for me and all our brother and sisters who we serve as we continue the journey that Jesus so humbly taught us.



Members of the parish's Mobile Loaves & Fishes celebrate 10 years of ministry at St. Francis after the 11:15 am Mass on April 9, 2017. (Photo courtesy of Glenda Bibb)



A Formula for Success

Moms Ministry Expands to Thursday Nights

By Charles T. Ramirez

"It's easy to have the misconception that we get together to eat and talk about the latest brand of sippy cup," said English Miller, Moms Ministry member. "But our mission is wide, and our program includes mothers of all ages who have children of all ages."

"We laugh together, we cry together, and we learn together," said member Angely Allen. "The best part is having so many different moms in the group to relate to and learn from."

The Moms Ministry has recently exploded in growth, expanded in activities, and has proven to be a model for other organizations. With over 50 moms on their email list, over 30 attending monthly meetings, and a new Thursday evening session, the ministry has found a formula for success.

"The Moms Ministry is for any mom!" Angely said. "From a soon-to-be, first-time moms to great-grandmas and everyone in between. We have sessions every month that teach moms skills they can use to enhance their home lives."

"Throughout the meetings in the year, we cover seven important topics," English said. "We cover basic necessities in the home, marriage, parenting, family life, self-care, teaching our children sexuality, and faith. All of these topics, our support system, and all that we do are important in our mission to build our domestic Church and help mothers to become the best version of themselves."

"Being a part of this ministry has changed my life in so many positive ways," Angely said. "I have this amazing support system that I can lean on, go to for prayer, and hang out with. I've also learned so much: Natural Family Planning, estate planning, marriage enrichment, budgeting, and so much more. All in a supportive and fun environment!"

English strives to replicate the warm welcome she felt during her first Moms Ministry meeting.

"When I arrived, I found a welcoming and lovely decorated room where we enjoyed breakfast and listened to an inspiring talk on motherhood and faith," English said. "It inspired me as a mom and gave me more confidence in my vocation."

This year celebrates 11 years since the Moms Ministry had its humble start in 2006 when a simple idea inspired a group of mothers.

"In addition to teaching the faith to our children in family life, a group of moms thought it was also beneficial to teach them amongst peers in a group setting. They began a pre-school faith formation class one Friday a month with a few of the moms as the teachers and, while the children were in class, the moms not teaching decided to get together as women of God to pray together," English said.

The Moms Ministry meets one Friday morning and one Thursday evening per month. To learn more and to register, please email sfamomsministry@gmail.com.

How did the Moms Ministry grow so quickly?

1 "The first step was listening to what moms needed and desired in our group. God helped me realize that more importantly than having wise words or advice was listening to the needs of the moms, hearing what inspired them to come, and then including their wonderful ideas and skills in the ministry which in turn helped them to feel appreciated and take ownership in the group."

2 "Second, I think really establishing a solid foundation with our mission statement and what we are about was another incredible key. Continuing to focus on these goals that we set and the vision for our group has given us the confidence we need to continue our successes and persevere through all of the trials we have had."

3 "Third, we greatly desired that this group survive. Our moms have fantastic ideas that they bring to the table which help continue to improve our ministry and provide what moms need. These dedicated and ambitious moms desire greatness and holiness for their families and themselves in their journey as mothers."

What other activities does the Moms Ministry do?



Last Supper for Children

"It started in my own home after my second child was born. She was two-weeks-old during Holy Week, and

I was not in shape to make it to Holy Thursday Mass. I also had a three-year-old son. To help teach him the message of Holy Thursday, we read a simple version of the readings, did our own foot washing, and broke bread and grape juice together. Two years later, a few families from the Moms Ministry participated together to prepare the children before going to Holy Thursday Mass. The next year we opened it up to our Moms Ministry, increasing the number of families to seven. The following year, we had 30 families participate. We hope to continue this important event each year."



Trunk or Treat

"Attracting families to an event with candy and costumes where they could bring out their creativity

didn't take a whole lot of arm twisting, and convincing children to walk around collecting treats amongst friends wasn't so hard either."



We All Worship in the Same Language of Love

New Sunday Spanish Mass Continues to Grow

By Kenneth Caruthers

When St. Francis of Assisi parishioner Beatriz Medina-Lozano heard that our parish was starting a weekend Spanish Mass beginning on the First Sunday of Advent in 2016, she could not contain her excitement.

"I was overcome by joy," Beatriz said. "A lot of people were ready to commit right away and help fill different ministries to make this Mass successful."

Beatriz and her family lived in Monterrey, Mexico, before moving to San Antonio five years ago. They have been parishioners at St. Francis since the move.

"We understand we live in the United States and English is the predominant language, but it's something special to have the opportunity to worship in our native Spanish tongue," Beatriz said.

Many St. Francis parishioners share Beatriz's sentiments.

"I speak English all the time, but I pray in Spanish," said one St. Francis parishioner. "It just feels more natural to me, and it allows me to connect with the Mass on a much deeper level."

When she was living in Monterrey, Beatriz and her husband served as Mass coordinators and Eucharistic ministers

at their parish. After moving to San Antonio, they decided to take a break from liturgical ministries, but their daughters inspired them to get involved in the Mass again.

"Our daughters knew all the names of the sacred vessels, and they kept telling us we should serve as liturgical ministers again," Beatriz said. "When Fr. Servando started the Thursday evening Spanish Mass during Lent last year, we knew then that God was calling us back to serving at the Mass. Once we learned about the new Sunday Spanish Mass, we did not waste any time volunteering as Mass coordinators."

The Sunday Spanish Mass has been bringing in around 200 people each weekend, and Beatriz sees that number continuing to grow.

"Each week, there's notable improvement with the Mass. Whether it's the choir continuing to grow and improve or more people signing up to be Eucharistic ministers or readers, we are noticing this organic growth," Beatriz said. "People say they are comfortable at St. Francis thanks to our welcoming atmosphere. We see a lot of new faces each week, but we also have our regulars.

We're finding that these new families come to the Sunday Spanish Mass, then they go home, tell their friends, and come back the next Sunday with other people they have invited. Hopefully this word-of-mouth communication continues to bring in families who may live in the area but were going to other parishes for their Spanish Masses."

Another parishioner encourages people to step out of their comfort zone by taking a break from the Mass they usually attend and trying out the Spanish Mass, even if their grasp on the language is not the best.

"We hope more people branch out and come worship with us at the Spanish Mass. It is a great way to meet different families you may not interact with otherwise," the parishioner said. "We have several Mass times at St. Francis, but we all make up one community. The Catholic Church is universal, and we all worship in the same language of love."

The Sunday Spanish Mass takes place every weekend at 1:30 pm. If you are interested in helping with music, being an altar server, or serving as a reader or Eucharistic minister, please contact Beatriz at 210-954-2488.

Attendees of St. Francis of Assisi's first Sunday Spanish Mass pose for a group photo after the Mass on November 27, 2016.



Left: The certificate of authenticity for the first class relic of St. Francis of Assisi. **Right:** The statue of St. Francis of Assisi sculpted by Jack Carolin. **Below:** A closer look at the first class relic housed in the statue.
Photos by Kenneth Caruthers

Our First Class Relic

By Kenneth Caruthers

Did you know that we have a first class relic of St. Francis of Assisi?

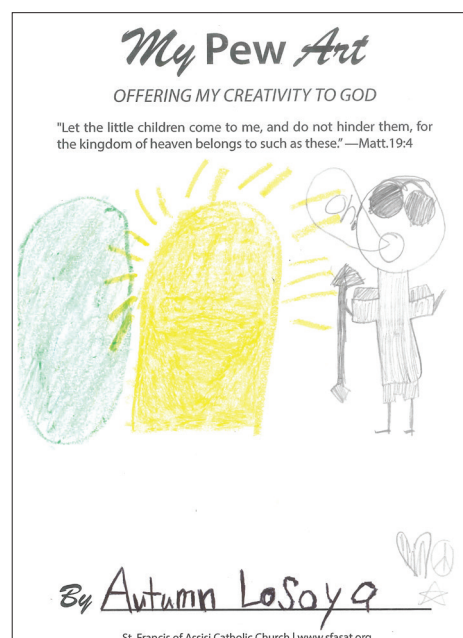
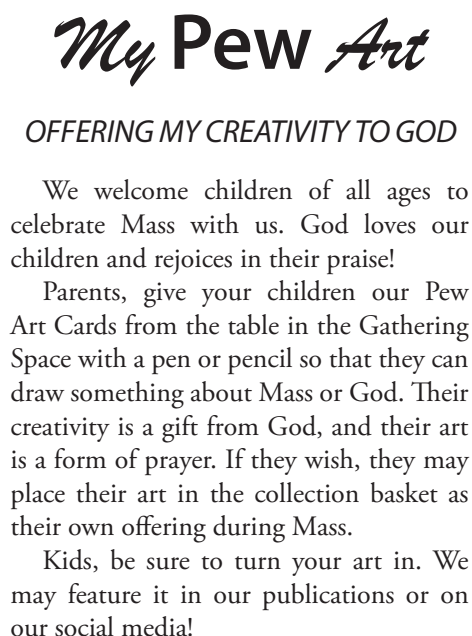
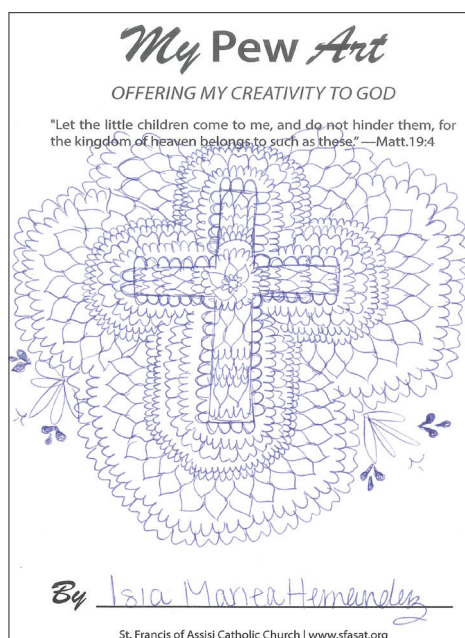
St. Francis of Assisi's first pastor, Robert Kownacki, was given the relic by a parishioner. It was not displayed until the present church was built. It was kept by each pastor until Fr. Jim decided to place it with the statue of St. Francis that one of our parishioners, Jack Carolin, carved. The statue was in the first church and the relic was added when it was moved to its current location.

The word "relic" comes from the Latin word "relinquo," which means "I leave." The Church categorizes relics into three different classes. A first class relic is a part of the saint's body or an instrument of Christ's passion. A second class relic is a piece of the saint's clothing or something used by the saint. A third class relic is an object which has been touched to a first or second class relic.

Relics remind us of the special intercessory ability which the saints hold in



heaven because of their close relationship with Christ the King. For more information on relics, see Can. 1186-1190 in the Code of Canon Law at www.vatican.va/archive/ENG1104/_P4D.HTM.



Nurturing Faith

Pre-School Faith Formation Introduces Children to Jesus at a Young Age

By Kenneth Caruthers

For parishioner Mari Picarazzi, St. Francis of Assisi's Pre-School Faith Formation program has been just as much of a blessing for her as it has been for her three-year-old daughter, Isabella.

Mari holds a degree in early childhood education. She taught first grade for six years, but she left her career to start her family. She and her husband, John, now have two beautiful children, Isabella and Giovanni. When a mother in the Mom's Ministry told Mari that Miriam Flores, Elementary Faith Formation Coordinator, was starting Pre-School Faith Formation at St. Francis, she felt like her prayers had been answered.

"I've been out of the classroom now for five years, and I felt like I could be useful to the Church. I have been attending St. Francis for 12 years. It has been a place of faith and strength for me," Mari said. "My daughter is now three, and I wanted her to attend some sort of children's church during Mass. However, I realized that she wasn't quite old enough. Our Pre-School Faith Formation was all my prayers wrapped into one. My daughter could attend faith formation, and I could use my talents for the Church. It has been such a blessing."

Miriam decided to start Pre-School Faith Formation at St. Francis for three to five year olds because it is important to introduce children to our faith at an early age.

"When kids are at that age, they are beginning to form their own basic relationships with others, and I can't think of a more beautiful, meaningful relationship than one with Christ," Miriam said.

In addition to introducing children to Jesus at a young age, Pre-School Faith Formation also benefits parents.

"All parents know that it can be difficult to focus on Mass when you have kids at that young age. With Pre-School Faith Formation, parents can drop their kids off in the hall and then go to Mass uninterrupted, really focusing on the readings, the homily, and the mystery of the Eucharist," Miriam said.

Miriam hopes that the children walk away from Pre-School Faith Formation with a better understanding of Jesus, and she also hopes they have fun and want to come back the next week. Mari and the

our faith, enjoys working with young children, and is willing to dedicate time to the program. Mari believes that there is something especially rewarding for those who serve as volunteers for Pre-School Faith Formation.

"Serving in any capacity is rewarding, but teaching young children about our faith takes serving a step further. It gives us an opportunity to instill in them teachings that help them with their continued growth in the Church," Mari said.

Going forward, Miriam hopes the program will continue to grow, of course, but she knows that is not the most important thing in the long run.

"The ultimate goal is to have families come together as one at the Eucharistic table, so we want to nurture that faith early on in these children," Miriam said.

For her part, Mari appreciates the immense joy this opportunity has brought her.

"I adore watching the love of Jesus Christ flourish in our young children. I taught so many lessons in public

schools and was always amazed at how much children can learn," Mari said. "Now I have the opportunity to teach three to five year olds about the love, grace, and sacrifice of our Lord, and to see them understand that love is overwhelmingly joyful and extremely gratifying."

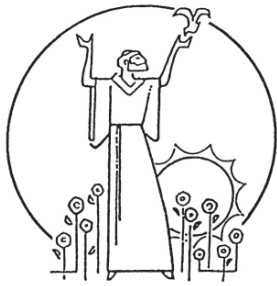
Pre-School Faith Formation meets in Henke Hall during the 8:30 am and 11:15 am Masses on Sundays during the school year. For more information or to volunteer as a catechist or assistant for Pre-School Faith Formation, please call Miriam in the parish office at extension 213 or send her an email at mflores@sfasat.org.



other teachers offer hands-on activities aligned with each week's readings to try to entertain and educate the children.

"The children participate in prayer, engage in faith-based activities, and enjoy fun crafts like building wreaths during Advent, creating homemade ornaments during the Christmas season, and making nets and fishing poles for the 'fishers of men' gospel," Mari said.

Miriam is always looking to bring in additional catechists and assistants for Pre-School Faith Formation to grow the program. With each volunteer, she looks for someone who knows and practices



St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church

4201 De Zavala Road
San Antonio, TX 78249
(210) 492-4600 | www.sfasat.org

NON PROFIT ORG
U.S. POSTAGE

PAID

SAN ANTONIO, TX
PERMIT NO. 775



Mass Celebrations

Saturday 5:00 pm
Sunday 8:30 am | 11:15 am | 1:30 pm (Spanish) | 5:00 pm
Monday, Wednesday, & Thursday | 8:30 am
Tuesday | 6:00 pm
Thursday | 6:00 pm (Spanish)
Friday | 6:30 am

Reconciliation

Saturday | 3:30 pm – 5:00 pm
Tuesday | 5:30 pm

Liturgy of the Word & Communion Service

Monday - Thursday | 6:30 am