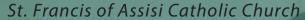
THE Spirit OF ST. FRANCIS St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church







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Cover Photo: Sr. Rose celebrates her Jubilee Anniversary of 50 years of vowed life as a Sister of Divine Providence. Photo by Eric Bowden

The *Spirit* of St. Francis

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











OUR PARISH

FamilyTRADITION

Celebrating Our 37th Anniversary Festival

By Kenneth Caruthers

It is Fall Festival time! This year's festival will take place on Sunday, October 8 from 10 am-6 pm. We invite all parishioners, friends, and neighbors to come celebrate.

As the largest family gathering of the year, one of the best features of the Parish Festival is that people establish new friendships and renew old ones with our warm spirit of welcome and hospitality. Each year the festival gets larger, making way for more opportunities for family fun!

Through the Parish Festival, we work together on a common project, we grow in our participation in parish life, and we raise much needed funds for life-changing programs in our parish.

As always, we ask you to pray for the success of our Parish Festival. We especially thank our festival co-chairs, Irma and Tony Flores, and all of our hardworking volunteers who have dedicated countless hours towards planning this joy-filled family event. They cannot do it all alone, though; check the next page for ways you can help make our festival a success.

May the spirit of St. Francis shine forth for all to see as we celebrate 37 years as a faith community!











From top to bottom: 1) Josh and Melanie Herbst volunteer at the Cascarones Booth (Photo by Andy Parsons). 2) A girl enjoys the challenge of rock climbing (Photo by Don Bernhard). 3) Steve August serves the Men's Club's famous BBQ chicken (Photo by Kenneth Caruthers). 4) Two young children have fun drumming around. (Photo by Eileen Kleffner).

4 Ways to Make OUR FESTIVAL A SUCCESS

SELL

The largest profit margin from the festival comes from your participation in our raffle. Registered parishioners were mailed their tickets. This year there are 25 chances to win, with a grand prize of \$3,000!



VOLUNTEER

Our Parish Festival celebrates you, our parish family. Just like a real family, the workload is reduced if everyone pitches in. Just one hour of your time goes a long way. Sign up at www.sfasat.org/festivalvolunteer.



DONATE

Some of our booths rely on your generous donations. You can donate store-bought cakes to the Cake Walk on the day of the festival. You can also donate plants and herbs to the Plant Booth and books, CDs, and DVDs to the Book Booth.



INVITE

With delicious food, live entertainment, and fun games, there is something for everyone at our festival! This is a great chance to show your friends why St. Francis is so special. Your furry friends are even invited for our special blessing of the animals!



Start off Festival Weekend on the Right Foot at Our Kickoff Dance!







Photos by Kenneth Caruthers





Celebrating 25 Years of ACTS at St. Francis

Participation in ACTS Retreats Gives Enthusiastic Witness to the Workings of the Holy Spirit

By Sr. Rose Kruppa, CDP

Anniversaries provide wonderful opportunities to reflect on accomplishments, to value the meaning and effects of experiences over the years, to acknowledge with gratitude the efforts of individuals and groups, to tell significant stories about events in the history of the organization and to dream about and plan for the future. The celebration of ACTS retreats at St. Francis of Assisi will provide those opportunities and many others yet to be imagined or defined.

ACTS retreats have blessed the lives of countless members of our parish and beyond. Through participation in retreats as retreatants and as subsequent team members, they give enthusiastic witness to how the Holy Spirit works in guiding individuals and groups to rediscover who Jesus is in their lives. They also experience forgiveness and find new hope, witness the faith journeys of others, and reflect on their own faith. Most of all, they discover a deep sense of belonging, make new friends, discover a community, and commit to service in the Church community.

Knowing our parish, we know that there will be wonderful stories told that will bring the ACTS history at St. Francis to life! We also know that the Holy Spirit will continue to inspire our celebration with ideas for our year-long observance—opportunities to grow in Adoration, Community, Theology, and Service!



Top: Our Men's ACTS retreat from May 30-June 2, 1996 (Photo by Joe Hemmi). Bottom: Our Women's ACTS retreat from April 20-23, 2017 (Photo by Rita Schuenneman)

An Inspirational, Life-Changing Experience

St. Francis Parishioners Describe the Impact of Their ACTS Retreat

To help commemorate 25 years of ACTS at St. Francis, we asked you to tell us some of the biggest takeaways and lasting effects of your ACTS retreat. Here are some of the responses we received. If you'd like to share your ACTS retreat experience, visit www.sfasat.org/acts25.

"My biggest takeaway is that God loves me and forgives me and accepts me as I am."

"I've belonged to many parishes in my life. St. Francis is the first parish in which I've been involved in ministry. My involvement has grown my faith through the faith I see in others on ACTS retreats."

"The bonds I made with other sisters in Christ will last a lifetime. The peace, love, acceptance, and joy that was shared have made a lasting imprint on my heart and have inspired me to serve more and continue to go deeper into the Catholic faith."

"When I was younger, I was blown away by the 'fire' I saw in the teens on retreat and knew that was something I wanted to be a part of. I told my parents I wanted to switch to St. Francis for confirmation classes that year, and then I became actively involved with ACTS, confirmation, and Life Teen. Most recently, I've experienced community and theology through my husband's RCIA journey, and we now bring our children to St. Francis. None of this would've started without that first ACTS retreat."

"My faith in God is more firm. I go to Mass, I help with Mobile Loaves & Fishes, and I am currently going through RCIA."

"The call to service at St. Francis and throughout the greater community is what I believe to be the most dynamic result of the ACTS experience."

"The Church is more of a family to me, and I have many, many Church friends. I don't just attend Mass; I am active in several ministries now."

"I now have a community of brothers in Christ who I can turn to for support, for inspiration, for guidance, and even for ministry. I have become more involved with the Church, and my faith has definitely been given a muchneeded boost."

"My retreat improved my prayer life, increased my Bible reading, and reduced my tendency to judge myself or others."

"My retreat imparted a sense of acceptance and love. I felt worthy of being loved by God and by others." "During the retreat I realized that I was truly missing the community aspect of being a Catholic woman. I went to Mass but had very little interaction. I now have a wonderful and diverse community of friends who have a solid foundation on Jesus Christ. The most amazing surprise was getting to meet folks who prayed for me during my retreat. St. Francis has excellent follow up to the retreat, such as SCC (Small Church Community), outreach programs, and weekday Masses."

"My biggest takeaway from the retreat is that no matter what you're going through, you will always have someone to turn to in the ACTS family."

ACTS Anniversary Mass & Reception

To celebrate 25 years of ACTS at St. Francis, we will have a special Mass at 5 pm followed by a reception in Henke Hall on October 28. Your participation in planning this event or the year-long activities is welcomed. Please contact Jody Nash at jnash207@gmail.com or Nanci Smith at nanci_young@yahoo.com for details.

Join Us for Our Upcoming ACTS Retreats



An ACTS retreat weekend places great emphasis on community within our parish. Participants experience God's love and joy throughout the weekend and return to their faith community with a deeper love for each other and an increased desire to become more involved in their parish community. Registration for the Women's ACTS retreat is open at www.sfasat.org/womensactsnov. Registration for the men will open soon; contact John Knape at 830-931-5215 for more information.

Women's ACTS Nov. 16-19 Men's ACTS Jan. 25-28 Omega Retreat Center, Boerne Moye Retreat Center, Castroville

Photo: The St. Francis of Assisi community celebrates the return of an ACTS team and retreatants at the 11:15 am Sunday Mass.



By Libby Osgood

Each of us is tailored by God and drawn towards a path that helps us to express God's love most fully. That desire to share God's love in a certain way is your vocation, whether as a married person, consecrated single person, diocesan priest, or part of a religious community as a sister, brother, or religious priest.

God tailored each of us, giving us specific talents and desires to help us live more fully to share joy, love, and eternal hope with the world. Discerning your vocation is figuring out which way is your ideal path, and it's not a quick process that you can decide one day, no matter how hard you pray. My advice: let it simmer deep within you, and in the meantime, enjoy everything God puts in your way. It took me until I was 32 for me to be ready for my vocation, but others mature more quickly and know earlier. It's important to listen to God's voice, even if it's a quiet whisper, as it was for me.

I travelled the world, went scuba diving with sharks, sky-dived, wandered through Thailand on my own, and had two different careers helping to build satellites and then teaching at university. I needed to explore and see first, so I could really understand that so many of the things that I loved about the world and loved to do were available as a religious sister.

I listened to that quiet whisper from God that was deep inside, just waiting for the right time when I would be ready to act on it. I had a lot of ideas about what being a sister was, and I was so wrong. I thought it was giving up the chance to love, as Hollywood claims love can only happen if you fall into it with one other person, passionately and physically to be able to live happily ever after. It turns out that by not committing yourself to love one person, you actually get to be free to love everyone more fully and without attachments. That may sound like just words, but for the last two years, I have been constantly enveloped by love and have been able to give it much more freely, with an awareness of how God is present in each conversation.

"Discerning your vocation is figuring out which way is your ideal path, and it's not a quick process that you can decide one day... My advice: let it simmer deep within you, and in the meantime, enjoy everything God puts in your way."



Before I realized I was discerning, I went on dates and though I loved spending time with these great mates, I realized each one wasn't for me. It just didn't feel right. I am glad I trusted that instinct, and simultaneously glad I stepped out there and tried. Realistically, I did have to decide whether I was okay with not having kids, and that was a harder decision. But when I saw how close the sisters are to their families, I realized I could still have little ones in my life. I simply wouldn't be responsible for the diaper changes and late night feedings, just the awesome adventures and exciting game nights. That was fine for me.

I also misunderstood the vow of poverty. It sounded so cold, as I have owned a convertible sports car, a few houses, and a giant wardrobe. God prepared me for this slowly over 10 years, as a quiet call to simplify my car, then downsize to a condo, then reduce my clothing, and eventually to get down to books, my bike, and my favorite hammock. A vow of poverty looks different for each religious community and is not necessary for all diocesan priests. In the novitiate, we share a television in the community room, each of the sisters has laptops and iPads, and we have what we need to fulfill each of our individual missions. Some communities have fewer material things and restrict the time spent on social media or wear specific clothes each day (called habits), so it is really important if you are being called to religious life to spend time with the sisters and brothers to see if their way of living the vows matches how God is calling you to express them. I feel I have everything I need and more than I did in some ways (like cable) than I did when I lived alone.

The vows exist to help remove barriers and temptations from our mission and help us love others more fully, whether that is as a lawyer working immigration cases, a counsellor helping clients, a teacher writing an equation on the whiteboard, a nurse caring for an elderly person, or a caring soul on the streets of Calcutta. Each order has a different mission and different charism, which is how they choose to live the gospel. My order has mostly teachers, and we practice liberating education, allowing me to continue to teach engineering. We also have a sister working at the United Nations to advocate for social justice, lawyers, counsellors, and nurses. The vow of obedience doesn't mean stopping the use of your brain and never making your own decisions; it means bringing in your community for the big decisions, to ensure those decisions will help you live the gospel more fully.

If you are discerning any vocation—whether to marry your girlfriend or boyfriend or pursue religious life—stay open to God through prayer and take the opportunities presented to you.

Follow Libby on her journey!













Vocation: What Would You Have Me Do, Lord?

Continuing to Grow in My Understanding of Providence

By Sr. Rose Kruppa, CDP

Tell me, what is it you plan to do with your one wild and precious life?

Mary Oliver's poetry appeared in vocation promotion materials some time ago, and I have used that same question in conversations with young women and men who might be discerning their vocation their unique call to be the best version of themselves that God wants for them. In fact, my year of celebrating 50 years of religious profession has provided so many opportunities for me to remember what I've been doing with this "one wild and precious life." The plan has been God's—of that I am absolutely sure. Providence has led me all the way.

The major factors leading me to consider religious life were my large Czech family and a parish community where worship and service were what everyone does, without question. We lived the corporal and spiritual works of mercy and enjoyed lots of "working together" experiences.

Although I had five aunts who were Benedictine Sisters in Lisle, Illinois and cousins who were Incarnate Word Sisters in Victoria, the Sisters who "lured" me to religious life ultimately were the CDP's (Congregation of Divine Providence) who taught me at Bishop Forest High School in Schulenburg. I loved the interest they had in

each of us, a love and care that was extended to our families. I wanted to be just like those

I didn't have a plan. I only promised God that I would try the life. Fifty-two years later, I continue to grow in my understanding Providence through daily interactions with the staff and parishioners of St. Francis of Assisi as well as the larger civic community. I am confident that my ministries of teaching high schoolers, serving in elected leadership, being a consultant to many women's religious communities and other organizations and now pastoral leadership in a parish are the revelation of perpetual possibilities to live PROVIDENCE.

Recently, I came upon this quote from John Henry Newman. When I reflect on these 52 years of formation and ministry, I know these words to be so true.

God has determined, unless I interfere with his plan, that I should reach that which will be my greatest happiness. He looks on me individually, He calls me by name, He knows what I can do, what I can best be, what is my greatest happiness, and He means to give it to

-Blessed John Henry Newman, Meditations and Devotions (London: Burns and Gates, Ltd., 1964) p. 5



Photos by Eric Bowden and Kenneth Caruthers

Living as Missionary Disciples

Young Parishioners Prove It Is Never Too Early to Make a Difference

By Kenneth Caruthers

Part of our parish's mission statement calls us "to emulate our patron, St. Francis of Assisi, by focusing our greater concern on the building of our people, giving our time, talent, and treasures, in reaching out to others." Thanks to our tremendous family involvement, this attitude of missionary discipleship begins at a young age.

Unlike most kids his age, 11-year-old Fintan Villanueva-Delaney never wants presents for his birthday. When he was nine years old, he asked his parents if he could do something to help families at MD Anderson Cancer Center after his grandmother received treatment there.

Fintan began a toy drive to help cheer up the children at MD Anderson. He has collected hundreds of toys and donations to use to go shopping for the toys. When his birthday rolls around each year, Fintan's invitations specifically request donations only for the children at MD Anderson.

"You can tell how much Fintan enjoys going shopping for the children," said Rosemary Villanueva-Delaney, Fintan's mother. "One time, he asked his birthday invitees for superhero toys to help the children fight their cancer. The hospital told him that many of the children like to hold the superheroes when they are undergoing treatment."

Fintan's volunteer work does not stop there. After longtime Mobile Loaves & Fishes volunteer Dominador Soriano passed away earlier this summer, Fintan took his place on the MLF condiment assembly team. Fintan felt inspired by Dominador's service, and he wanted to continue his legacy of volunteer work with MLF.

"He loves doing things for other people and loves working in our parish," Rosemary said. "His faith and our parish life are very important to him. He decided to get his First Communion at our parish and not just at his school so that he could receive it sooner and be able to volunteer as an altar server at our Masses. He's also been involved in the children's choir and has served as a lector for Children's Liturgy of the Word."

Like Fintan, Katelyn Lester, 16, also felt called to volunteer with MLF.

"I worked on meal prep for many months, and then I helped out as a photographer as I became more interested in photography. Most recently, I was a mentor for new meal prep teams," Katelyn said.

Katelyn has since slowed her work with MLF to focus on her Girl Scouts Gold Award project.

"My project is linked with Seton Home here in San Antonio. I will be doing a photoshoot for the moms and kids there. Through this photoshoot, I hope to raise their self-esteem," Katelyn said.

In the time leading up to the photoshoot, Katelyn has been conducting fundraisers to buy props, photo albums, and frames, all of which will be donated to Seton Home.

"I believe that service work not only helps those you are helping but also yourself. It has made me a more grateful person, and I no longer take for granted the little things in life," Katelyn said. "There are so many people here in our community that could use a little help, and we could be the ones to do it."

Fellow 16-year-old Clare Ferrell demonstrates that part of living as a missionary disciple involves continuing to grow in knowledge and using that knowledge to educate others. This past June, Clare spent 12 days in Eastern Europe as part of the intensive Holocaust Study Seminar. The seminar also involved 15 educational sessions in San Antonio.

"I'll be honest, I was kind of messed up when I got back, but still I would return and learn more in a heartbeat," Clare said. "While I was there, I felt like a ghost sometimes. Surrounded by all this devastation, it's hard not to get depressed. Every story I heard, every artifact I saw, made it easier to think that no one cared, that people were cruel and awful at their core. I resent that thought, though. It's up to us to care. We have to be the ones that help and love and learn and teach because if not us, then who?"







Left: Fintan with one of his toy drive collections (Photo courtesy of Rosemary Villanueva-Delaney). Center: Katelyn conducts a bake sale as part of her fundraiser at St. Francis (Photo by Kenneth Caruthers). Right: Clare explains her project at the Holocaust Study Seminar Open House & Reception (Photo courtesy of Clare Ferrell).

St. Francis Life Teen: A Home with a Heart

Life Teen Alumni Reflect on the Key Values St. Francis' Life Teen Program Instilled in Them

By Dillon Duke



When my older brother went through the Life Teen program at St. Francis, he told me almost every night how awesome the programming was. I was curious, if not skeptical, about how amazing it really could be, so I started going when I became

a freshman. While the Teen ACTS retreats that St. Francis puts on are what drew me in, the familial atmosphere that the Life Teen nights foster is ultimately what left me wanting to go to Life Teen every night.

A big reason why Life Teen at St. Francis made such a big impact on me was (and still is) the incredible Core team. The adults selflessly lead teens closer to Christ and make you feel like you're simply having a normal conversation with them, creating a friendly atmosphere for everybody there. Although I can't count how many Life Nights I've been to, I can clearly remember almost every night and what we learned. Everything from breakdowns of biblical stories, going deep with the sacraments, examining the lives of saints, and everything in between; Life Teen answers questions that young Catholics like myself had growing up.

When I started going to the University of Houston, the key values that the Life Teen program had instilled in me became the basis for keeping my faith in college, like reliance on the Eucharist. I was honored to work at Life Teen Camp Hidden Lake this past summer when St. Francis took our teens, and fellow missionaries commented on how the community within this St. Francis group was unlike anything they've seen. Ultimately, the Life Teen community at St. Francis is one that every teen should be in because it is a place where you can be yourself and get real, virtuous friendships to walk closer to God.

Dillon is currently studying Communications at the University of Houston. He occassionally blogs for Life Teen; you can follow him at www.lifeteen.com/blog/author/dduke.



Dillon Duke, Grace Westerman, Hannah Matecko, Emma Niemiec, and Juliette Espinosa take a senior picture at St. Francis before their high school graduation (Photo by Monica Harness). Profile photos courtesy of Dillon Duke and K. Trimble Photography.

By Emma Niemiec



About a month ago I was sitting in the JP II Room surrounded by mentors and friends and people I consider family, wondering how a place could be so the same and so different all at the same time. I looked around and saw new decorations,

new faces, new leaders, yet I felt more at home than ever.

St. Francis Life Teen is not a resume builder or simply a program in a building on our church campus. It is a home with a heart. As I went through Life Teen, I grew to know a love and a sense of belonging I have yet to find anywhere else, and if that isn't home, then I don't know what is.

Life Teen's heart is made up of its people, and let me tell you, the people are unparalleled. My friend Maggie told me once that the word "religion" comes from the word "relationship," so to take part in religion is to take part in a relationship with God AND others. Sure, I always got the relationship with God part of religion, but up until Life Teen, I was missing the whole part about the relationship with others. I had friends but never really those tried and true relationships that are supposed to carry you through life.

Life Teen taught me that taco-in-a-bag dinners, pun-filled eating contests, and endless small groups can create not only authentic, tried and true relationships with others but an intimate relationship with God. Life Teen cultivated friendships where people showed up every single time, whether it's midnight on a Saturday or my lunch period on a Tuesday because that's what God does for us always. Life Teen ultimately gave me a home, rooted in a relentlessly loving Father, where I could discover who He is and who I am, while being covered with His love through the people around me.

Emma is currently studying Public Health and Economics at Vanderbilt University to be on track to become a nurse practitioner.

It's Not Too Late to Register for Life Teen at St. Francis!

High school teens: Are you looking for a familial environment where you can grow in your faith and grow closer in your relationship with God and others? Contact Monica Harness, our Director of Youth Ministry, at mharness@sfasat.org to learn more about our Life Teen program today!



Nourishing Faith

Mobile Loaves & Fishes Celebrates 10 Years and 500,000 Meals

By Sr. Rose Kruppa, CDP

Mobile Loaves and Fishes has reached another milestone! This summer, we surpassed 500,000 meals served to our brothers and sisters, many of them children, in various locations throughout the city of San Antonio. More recently, we were also asked to provide meals for some of the refugees from Hurricane Harvey.

MLF is also celebrating their 10th anniversary this year. We give praise and thanks to God for this ministry in our community. We know that our following

of Jesus' command to love our neighbor and to feed the hungry, to show mercy and compassion, and to share God's love with all whom we meet is bearing good fruit. Our discipleship continues to grow as new volunteers, many of them whole families, are making new friends and forming community through their service.

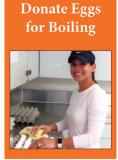
To learn more about this ministry and to volunteer, please go to www.sfasat.org/mlf.

Ways to Help Our Mobile Loaves & Fishes Ministry











Top Photo: Fr. Tony blesses the MLF truck for the ministry's 10 year anniversary alongside Core Director Cedar Joiner.





Meet our 2017 family! Dad, Manuel Espina, and mom, Carla Aguirre, are very excited about being part of the home buying program and for the opportunity to become homeowners. Their children, Yadiel, who is five, and Mia, who is three, are beyond thrilled to have their own bedrooms.

"We are very happy that we will finally have a home of our own. Renting a one bedroom has been very hard for us. Now we are giving our children the home they deserve. They will also have a backyard they can enjoy. We are very happy! Thank you."

Since 1999, St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church has teamed with Habitat for Humanity of San Antonio, Inc. (HFHSA) to build an affordable home every fall here in San Antonio. This year, our build began on Friday, September 15 and ends with a landscaping day on Saturday, November 18. We continue to sign up volunteers to build, paint, bring lunch, provide water, and support our crew with their presence and enthusiasm on site.

Please visit www.sfasat.org/habitat to sign up as a volunteer for the build, download the liability waiver, and find more information or contact Rich Osgood at osgood@sbcglobal.net.



St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church

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The Archdiocesan Capital Campaign is underway. Learn more about the campaign at www.sfasat.org/archsacapitalcampaign.

Save the Date

October

- 6 | Parish Festival Kickoff Dance
- 8 | Parish Festival
- 11 | Confirmation Meeting
- 20 | Men's Club BBQ Chicken Sale
- 27 | Mom's Ministry Trunk or Treat
- 28 | 25 Years of ACTS Mass & Reception

November

- 1 | All Saints' Day
- 2 | All Souls' Day
- 4-5 | Holiday Bazaar
 - 9 | Grief and the Holidays
- 16-19 Women's ACTS Retreat
 - 23 | Thanksgiving Day

December

- 1 | Taize Prayer Service
- 4-6 Advent Parish Mission
 - 6 Advent Reconciliation Service
 - 8 | Immaculate Conception
- 15 | Advent/Christmas Concert
- 25 | Christmas Day

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 Thursday | 6:00 pm (Spanish)

Friday | 6:30 am

Reconciliation

Saturday | 3:30 pm - 5:00 pm

Liturgy of the Word & Communion Service

Monday - Thursday | 6:30 am

