

# THE *Spirit* OF ST. FRANCIS NEWSLETTER



Your Official News Source for St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church, San Antonio, Texas



Parishioners gather outside after Sunday Mass. Photo by Oscar McNally.

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## Survey Results Convey Opportunities

The 2013 Parish Survey results are in and the Visioning Committee has presented recommendations to the Parish Council. The Parish Council has subsequently met to do some initial implementation planning.

### The Process

The Visioning Committee's purpose included these tasks:

- ✓ Identify strategic priorities of our parish
- ✓ Address common needs of our parish
- ✓ Provide strategic recommendations to the Parish Council

The Visioning Committee reviewed and analyzed the 2010 Parish Life Survey as well as the results of the three Listening Sessions conducted

last year. Using our Parish Mission Statement, the Pastoral Vision of the Archdiocese and the previous survey results, members of the committee developed and administered a new Parish Survey.

Two hundred seventy-three parish members responded to the survey conducted online during a two week period in September.

### Key Findings

The respondents identified five key priorities:

- ✓ Develop outreach programs to young families and young adults
- ✓ Broaden awareness within the parish regarding Teen ACTS, Adult Faith Formation,

Family Counseling and Youth Programs

- ✓ Provide support for Mobile Loaves and Fishes, ACTS, College Students/Young Adults and St. Vincent de Paul
- ✓ Financial support priorities should be for paying down debts, sound system improvements, nursery, and disability accommodations
- ✓ Increase volunteerism and vocations

An additional theme that surfaced is the desire for more financial transparency.

### Recommendations

The recommendations as presented

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# Father Larry's Reflection



During the Season of Lent this year, we will take the opportunity to look more deeply into the life and spirituality of our patron saint, Francis of Assisi, and the impact of Pope Francis as he completes the first year of his pontificate. Through his simplicity, humility, and love, St. Francis helped to transform the Church of his time; and Pope Francis is having a major impact on the life of the Church in our time. What are the parallels of these two men? And, what might we look forward to in the life of our world-wide Church and our local parish church during this remarkable pontificate?

There are some comparisons and some contrasts to be noted in the history of the Church in St. Francis' time and Pope Francis' time. In both instances, the Church was going through complex changes in society and economics. In both moments of history, there was great tension between the Christian west and the

Islamic east. And in both moments, the Church's own hierarchy seemed divided between whether to go backwards or forwards to reform the Church. The trouble in St. Francis' time was the mix up between politics and the Church's leadership. Many times, the bishop of an area was also the Prince, or a relative of the Prince, King, Duke, or Earl of a certain territory. These kinds of mixtures tended to lead to corruption and a lack of fidelity to the Church's mission of bringing Christ to the world. In our own time, this admixture of political and ecclesial leadership is not the problem. Rather, the problem has been one of a Church wherein the leadership has too often tried to replicate corporate leadership, with some resulting "corporate culture" problems of defensiveness and "group think."

St. Francis, through the process of his own personal conversion, wanted to call the Church back to the simplicity of the gospel message, an attitude of service to the poor and needy, and a beautiful and participative liturgy. In our time, Pope Francis is reminding us of the priority not of defending Church structures, but rather of focusing on evangelization through service, love, and communion. Pope Francis reminds us that this must be direct and personal. He shows us the way through the example of his own life and way of doing things. He does not feel bound to the omnipresent phrase, "We've always done it this way!" Like St. Francis, he

is calling us all back to a direct and simple encounter with the gospel, and direct and simple expressions of the love of Christ.

Pope Francis' recent document, *Evangelii Gaudium*, the Joy of the Gospel, is his reflection on the results of the Synod of Bishops on the question of the New Evangelization held a little over a year ago under the leadership of his predecessor, Pope Benedict XVI. In this document, the Holy Father reminds us that the Church exists for the purpose of spreading the good news of Jesus. Moreover, he reminds us of the urgency to do so in a world where Christians, themselves, need to be strengthened, where many are living a post-Christian life, and where even more have never heard the good news of Jesus. So compelling is this mission that he has said that all Church structures need to be re-examined regarding their usefulness in achieving the goal of being an evangelizing community.

Together with our parish staff and lay leadership we will examine how well situated we are at St. Francis parish to be an evangelizing community! What are we doing well? How can we improve? Are there things we are doing that are OK, but really focused on the mission? And, together with all of us, we will move our parish community to be an even greater source of outreach, love, and communion for those the Lord sends our way. May God bless you!



# Journey

## Of Changing Our Hearts

By Sister Rose Kruppa, CDP

No Lenten observance is complete without the frivolity of a party the night before Lent begins! The ACTS Core at SFA is preparing Sharon Manning's famous culinary creation for our parish wide Mardi Gras Party on Tuesday evening, March 4. We will enjoy "red beans and rice with sausage" and party in a family atmosphere beginning at 6:30 p.m. Masks and other décor are optional.

**Ash Wednesday:** March 5th is the official beginning of our Lenten Journey. Ashes will be distributed 4 times during the day: At Mass at 6:30 am, at our Liturgy of the Word service at noon, at Children's Liturgy of the Word service at 5 pm, and finally at Mass at 7 pm.

On March 7th, we will gather at 7:00 pm for a parish **Taize prayer** experience. This meditative prayer time includes candle light, music, chant and readings.

On March 9th, the 8:30 am Mass will include the **RCIA Rite of Sending and Rite of Election** of Catechumens and Candidates. Our journey to the waters of Baptism and completion of the Sacraments of Initiation takes on a serious emphasis on conversion. The catechumens and candidates will meet Archbishop Gustavo at the Cathedral in the evening for the Rite of Election.

On March 12<sup>th</sup>, we will have a **Parish Prayer Service Celebrating the First Anniversary of Pope Francis' election**. The prayer experience will celebrate the leadership of Pope Francis, examine the meaning of his various messages to us, and resolve to become ever more faith-filled and



Purple is the liturgical color of the season of Lent. It reminds us of penance, repentance, and renewal. Christ was robed in a purple cloak in mockery before He was crucified.

joyful followers of Jesus. The celebration will include music, readings, song and the participation of many of our church ministers who model for us Pope Francis' mandate of being a church of and for the poor. Pope Francis reminds us that, "A prayer that does not lead you to practical action for the poor, the sick, those in need of help, a brother in difficulty, is a sterile and incomplete prayer."

Our **Lenten Mission** begins with the preaching at all Masses the weekend of March 15-16. Father Larry will lead us in reflecting on Pope Francis and the calls to conversion that he invites us to in each spoken and written message. On March 17th at 7 pm, Father Larry will speak about "The Joy of the Gospel: The Impact of Pope Francis' Messages to Us." A

Children's Mission will be held concurrent with the Parish Mission on Monday evening. On Tuesday evening, we will enjoy "Face to Face with St. Francis," a Reader's Theater presentation on the life of St. Francis and his good friend, Clare. This presentation includes children in the audience. On Wednesday, all in attendance will celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Child care will be provided for those children not of age for Reconciliation.

The **Season of Lent** will provide us with many opportunities to pray, fast, and give alms. May our Lenten Journey be blessed and filled with graces. Look for announcements about the Triduum in our next issue.



Choreography is incorporated in the show.



Kathy Hollis, Maria Moryl, and Karen Geri show off their blast from the past.

## The 2014 Women's Council *Luncheon and*

"What I enjoy most about the event," begins Barbara Burger, style show coordinator, "is that I get to see ladies let their hair down and enjoy themselves in a way that they normally don't. With the music and dancing, they all have such a good time." The annual Women's Council Luncheon and Style Show is back again—this time with the funky rhythm and blues that spans decades of toe-tapping, hand-clapping, tambourine-shaking Motown classics!

The Women's Council luncheon and style show is annual tradition that offers parishioners the opportunity to enjoy a delicious meal, experience captivating, live entertainment, and share quality communion in a relaxed, social setting. Held on Saturday, February 22 in Henke Hall, the event begins with lunch served at 12:00 pm, catered by San Antonio's own, Charlie's Kitchen. Doors will open at 11:30 am.

Guests will enjoy a mouthwatering meal that is guaranteed to satis-

fy. Beverage choices include smooth, select wine, ice-cold tea, or steaming-hot coffee. After a delectable lunch shared at table with friends and family, the event continues with the style show at 1:30 pm. Women from the parish will model timeless fashion pieces, strutting down the runway to the rhythm and blues of classic Motown hits.

### Style Show Teaser

Found on the St. Francis of Assisi Facebook page: How to make a nun costume? Did any of our readers see the movie, *Sister Act*?

Women's Council member Eileen Kleffner agrees with Barbara and declares that the goal of the event is "to bring people together to do something outside of the sanctuary to celebrate who we are. [This event] is a celebration of who we are as a community and I like that parishioners bring their friends or family members along because it shows that this is not set up just for St. Francis."

Indeed, the contagious joy of the luncheon and style show leads previous attendees to bring a friend or family member the next year that they attend. Eileen appreciates the far reach that the event has attracted. "I so much appreciate," Eileen says, "seeing people from the parish that I don't know. I enjoy seeing generations together and I love seeing so many of the people that work so hard all the time having a chance to enjoy a really nice event."

In the spirit of our patron, St. Francis of Assisi, the Women's Council incorporates charitable giving in the luncheon and style show. Attendees will enjoy a silent auction with proceeds to benefit the parish's Society of St. Vincent de Paul, an outreach organization that provides food and utility assistance. Additionally, attendees are asked to bring a donation of canned food, clothing, or household toiletries to benefit the society's efforts. Maria Geissler, communication chairperson of the Wom-





Sandy Cantu, Tawnya Zepdek, and Nanette Laudadio pose for a photo show.



Barbara Burger shares a laugh at the show.

# Style Show

By Charles T. Ramirez

en's Council, says this event simultaneously "builds the community of St. Francis and raises money for a good cause."

For the first time in the show's history, sponsorships will be available for those who would like to help off-

set the cost of necessary expenses, including the runway, decorations, wine, and advertising. Sponsorships are available in Gold (\$250.00), in Silver (\$150.00), and in Bronze (\$50.00). Your gift will be graciously received and donors will be recognized in the

printed program and by the host at the event.

The Women's Council wants to debunk the myth that this event is exclusively for women. Husbands are actually encouraged to attend! "Husbands always enjoy the show because it's not just a typical fashion show," says Barbara. "We always incorporate choreography and it's just fun. It's entertaining for everyone."

Tickets will be sold on the weekends of Feb. 8/9 and Feb. 15/16 after all Masses. The cost is \$35.00 per ticket and seating is limited. Full tables of 8 may be reserved for \$280.00. All guests are encouraged to wear a "timeless" hat. This year's show promises to have everyone dancing in their seats to the groovy, jazzy jams of Motown. Join us for this momentous party! "This is a great way to bring people into a really vibrant community that likes to celebrate," says Eileen. "It's a delicious lunch! It's a fun event! The energy is unbelievable!"



Mary Catherine Fuchs wins a door prize at the 2013 Luncheon and Style Show.

# Staff Profile:

# Stephen Wright

Director of Operations  
Director of Catechumenate for Children



By Charles T. Ramirez

"In ministry, you learn to be an acrobat with a lot of things that have to do with managing people, managing parishioners. You have to be multi-functional with many things."

Stephen Wright's voice conveys a calm assurance and assertive confidence. He leans back in his chair and smiles. The brief silence is interrupted by the ring of his office phone. A problem with a lock on one of the main Church doors has him writing notes and mentally planning his next step to resolve the issue. He hangs up the phone and launches right into the numerous facets of his new role at his home parish.

Stephen serves the community of St. Francis of Assisi as the Director of Operations and the Director of the Catechumenate for Children. Though Stephen joined the office staff in October of 2013, he and his wife, Judy, have been parishioners since 2000. "Part of the reason this job came up for me was because Deacon Mike Portele was offered a job by the Archdiocese [of San Antonio]," he states and jokingly adds, "and Father Larry and Mike probably began thinking, 'Who could possibly want *this* job?'" However, more se-

riously, Stephen says, "I think a few parishioners might have appealed to Father Larry that I might be a good choice to get involved in parish administration. So, I had some help with a few parishioner referrals."

As Director of Operations, Stephen oversees all parish administration, finances and budget, and serves as chief of staff. Why would the average parishioner need to speak with Stephen? Several reasons include receiving authorization for future parish projects, approving dates for events on the annual parish calendar, requesting purchases on behalf of organizations, and addressing concerns related to the community, facility management, and ground maintenance.

Though the position has pastoral aspects, it also has many of practicality. "It's not a job that you fall into easily," Stephen says, "because you have to learn every nook and cranny of every building and every electrical system and all the stuff that goes on here. You have to figure out how it all works and then learn every group in the parish. It's a learning process for me. But in the long run, I'm the right hand of Father Larry, so-to-speak, so I can help him

minister to our families."

In addition to his position as Director of Operations, Stephen is also the Director of the Catechumenate for Children, a responsibility that he undertakes with total joy. He states, "I have always had a real passion for helping people walk the journey on the path to what it means to be Catholic. The passion for me is to be involved in the formative, educational aspect of this faith community. I am excited that I get to know people. I get to be a part of many families." Stephen's love for education is witnessed in his ministry with the faith formation of the youth.

When Stephen is not working at the parish, he enjoys many hobbies. He likes to exercise in the health club, he enjoys playing golf, and he enjoys walking his dogs with Judy. He and Judy also enjoy reading, watching movies, and traveling. Visiting family around the country allows them to take advantage of their joy of traveling. When asked about his favorite saints, Stephen said he often turns to St. Thomas Aquinas and Catherine of Siena. He jokingly adds, "As I get older, and things turn up missing, I

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turn a lot to St. Anthony to help me find what I've lost!"

As a parishioner and now a staff member, Stephen has a unique perspective of the strengths of the parish that make her so unique to other communities. At St. Francis, the opportunities abound for involvement and participation. "This is a parish where you can get your hands dirty, so-to-speak, and be people who get involved. But you can't be shy. You need to take the risk and say that this is where I want to be and I'll help you do this or do that." The welcoming spirit of the parish fosters participation and involvement but it's up to all parishioners to continue fostering this aura. As Stephen states, "All of us have a responsibility for inviting people and creating a path by which they can get involved. We have to create a means by which other people can feel that they can connect and that they have an identity. This is the strength of our community at St. Francis of Assisi."

Stephen Wright can be reached in the parish office at 210. 492. 4600 or via email at [swright@sfasat.org](mailto:swright@sfasat.org)

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### The *Spirit* of St. Francis NEWSLETTER

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Please send comments, feedback, questions, and creative ideas for future publications to Charles at [cramirez@sfasat.org](mailto:cramirez@sfasat.org).

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## SURVEY Continued from Page 1

by the Visioning Committee include the following:

- ✓ Assess and prioritize the financial and volunteer support needs of Mobile Loaves and Fishes, ACTS, St. Vincent de Paul. Invite annual presentations from these groups to the Parish Council.
- ✓ Support young families through a nursery enhancement plan: Assess needs and identify resources needed.
- ✓ Develop a communication plan to broaden awareness of these identified areas: Teen ACTS, Adult Faith formation, Family counseling, youth programs, volunteerism and vocations
- ✓ Make restroom doors in the church handicap accessible.

## *Special Thanks*

We thank the following members of the Visioning Committee for their generous and comprehensive work.

Beverley McClure  
(Chair)

Peter Braeuler

Irma Flores

(Secretary &

Liaison to the Parish Council)

C.J. Fremin

Amy King

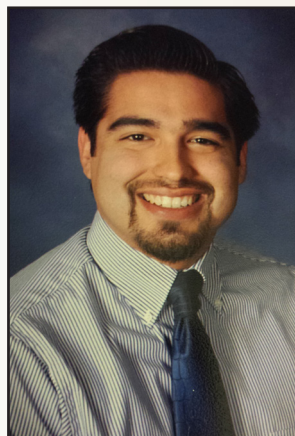
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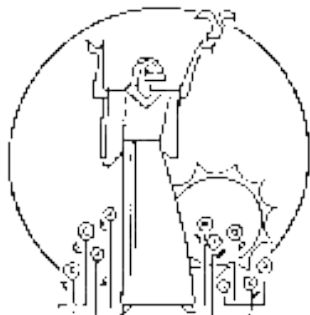
Jody Nash

Tyler Scheuerman

## Hello From a Familiar Face



New Year's greetings and blessings to my St. Francis of Assisi family! I cannot express the extent of my excitement and joy to be back with you in this ever-changing community. For those who may not remember me, I am Charles T. Ramirez and I served the parish as Administrative Assistant in the office from June 2011 through December 2012. As you have recently learned, I have returned to the staff to use my skills in a media communication capacity. I will be responsible for the monthly newsletter, the weekly bulletin, the Friday email e-newsletter, the website, and various social networking platforms. With a degree in English Communication Arts from St. Mary's University, I am confident that my new responsibilities acutely parallel my expertise and my passion. You will see me at events capturing photos, conducting interviews, and writing notes, all in an effort to highlight our dynamic community. I look forward to working with all our ministries and organizations as we begin this New Year full of opportunity and possibility. As I embark on my new ministry, I ask for your prayers and I assure you of mine. Together, we shall continue to build this beautiful microcosm of parish life whose example will shine for the world.



# St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church

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## Liturgy Schedule

### Weekends

Saturday - 5:00 pm  
Sunday - 8:30 am | 11:15 am  
5:00 pm

### Weekdays

Mon., Tue., & Thurs. - 8:30 am  
Wed. - 6:30 pm | Fri. - 6:30 am

### Liturgy of the Word & Communion Service

Mon., Tue. Wed. & Thurs.  
6:30 am

### Reconciliation

Sat. | 3:30 pm - 5:00 pm

## Save the Date

Feb 7-9	Beyond Cana Retreat
Feb 14	K of C Valentine's Day Dance
Feb 22	Women's Council Style Show
Mar 7	Taize Prayer
Mar 13	Pope Francis' Election Anniversary
Mar 16-19	Lenten Parish Mission
Mar 19	Lenten Reconciliation Service
Apr 19	RCIA Easter Vigil Retreat
May 1-4	Women's ACTS Retreat
May 3	Casino Night
May 21	Sacrament of Confirmation
Jun 1	Women's Council Ice Cream Social

**"To evangelize it is necessary to open ourselves to the horizon of  
God's spirit, without being afraid of where He leads us."**

- Pope Francis, From *We Feel the Joy of Evangelizing*,  
Given at St. Peter's Square on May 22, 2013