



# ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI

Newsletter of St. Francis of Assisi Parish, Winter 2022, Volume 2, Issue 1

## St. Francis Youth Receive Confirmation—and Call to Action

By Ann Elwell, parishioner

Seven young people made a public and deeper “yes” to the Holy Spirit and to the Church when they received the Sacrament of Confirmation at Mass on Feb. 27. Bishop Edward Rice addressed each candidate with the words, “Be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

Like the apostles at the first Pentecost, our youth were made stronger by Confirmation and called to action. Here is a little about the journey each has made:

**Mason Kindell**, grade 8, Nixa Junior High, asked his grandfather to be his sponsor “because it’s family tradition.” He credits his mother as a good role model for living the Catholic faith: “She teaches me about God,” Mason explained. He is the son of Stacy and Matt Kindell.

**Zuriel Martinez**, grade 8, Nixa Junior High, sees “my faith increasing” through the Holy Spirit and believes Confirmation will bring him closer to God. As his role model, Zuriel’s dad explains, “You don’t have to understand the language they talk to understand what they mean.” He is the son of Marianna and Antonio Martinez.

**Abigail Muniz**, grade 9, Nixa High, believes Confirmation will “hopefully help me understand God’s teaching. I can see myself following the Holy Spirit into adulthood.” Abigail looks to her mom as role model. “She has been influencing me with the faith since I can remember.” Abigail is the daughter of Cindy Muniz.

**Avery Muniz**, grade 8, Nixa Junior High, sees the Holy Spirit working when she’s feeling down. “I close my eyes and start to think



*Service is at the heart of preparation for Confirmation. On a Sunday afternoon, candidates assembled “God Loves You” bags for our homeless friends, using goods donated by St. Francis parishioners.*

about Jesus and the answers slowly come to me.” Avery points to her mother as role model: Using passages from the Bible “. . . she calmly tells me the right and wrong.” Avery is the daughter of Cindy Muniz.

**Arowyn Roberts**, grade 9, Springfield Catholic High, pointed to parishioners Don and Shirley Schortgen as role models: “They have been so dedicated to us and our journey to spiritual living.” When confirmed, “I’m looking forward to continue to grow in my faith,” Arowyn said. She is the daughter of Reid and Kelli Roberts

and Shira O’Higgins.

**Joseph Sarnes**, grade 11, Nixa High, said Confirmation means he’s “made the decision that I want Christ in my life.” He looks to the Knights’ fish fry crew as role models, especially Daniel Baltz whose guidance “made me feel like I also could contribute in service to the church.” Joseph is the son of Harold and Sandra Sarnes.

**Lily Sloan**, grade 9, Glendale High, believes through her Confirmation, she’ll “become closer to God and the Church.” Her grandma is her role model “because she’s . . . taught me a lot about the Church.” Lily says Confirmation service projects have enabled her to help others “and it makes me happy to see people get help.” Lily is the daughter of Sue Sloan.

**Check out a photo of our Confirmation class on Page 2**

## Who’s in the Pews? — Denise Antley

By Karen Wegand, parishioner



If you attend Mass on Saturday night, you have probably met Denise Antley who often serves as a reader or usher at that Mass. Denise serves as a caretaker for her husband who has stroke-related disabilities. The couple has two sons and daughters-in-law and four very loved grandchildren.

Denise has been at St. Francis since 2014, the family having spent time in the military in Illinois, Virginia and Louisiana.

She says her favorite thing about this parish is that the smaller size makes it easier to get acquainted with other parishioners.

She lists the things she enjoys as cleaning (yes, you read that right), playing with her grandchildren and walking in the great outdoors. It’s always nice to see her smiling face.

## Proving that Ice Cream Solves Everything

By Karen Wegand



Some of those who regularly attend Wednesday night Mass at St. Francis of Assisi have begun what has almost become a tradition. Many parishioners have answered the call to “Meet at Braum’s” and there never seems to be the same crowd twice in a row. Even Fr. Tom occasionally joins in the ice cream brigade. As the saying goes, “Life is better with friends—and ice cream.”

Pictured (from left) are Kent and Marge Welch, Rosie and Larry Brookner, Art and JoAnn Schweiss, and Pat Chambers.

## Hospitality Ministry Provides Warm Welcome to All

By Karen Wegand

One of our most multifaceted ministries and one of the first committees formed in our parish is Hospitality. We see the smiling faces of those serving coffee on Sundays, but there’s more to this ministry than that.

Serving, cleaning up, and/or cooking are all done with an eye toward helping our parishioners celebrate or entertain while enjoying each other’s company. If you really want to get acquainted with others in the parish, consider serving in some capacity with our Hospitality Ministry.

Let’s start with Sunday coffee. The secretary schedules volunteers and the coordinator notifies the buyer of supplies needed and provides support for the coffee team. These volunteers make coffee, put out donuts and restock napkins and condiments before Mass. Afterward they wash pots, clean tables, sweep floors and empty trash. A “donut hero” picks up donuts at a nearby location before Mass. Adults as well as high school youth are welcome to sign up for these jobs.

This ministry also includes a coordinator and team for two dinners we have each year for priests who help with parish Penance services. The coordinator meets with the team to decide the menu, gets a count from the secretary then contacts adults to prepare food and/or help with the dinner.

Funeral dinners are much the same. The coordinator gets an estimated count, discusses the menu, contacts teams to provide food

and/or help serve and clean up. Team members may choose to cook at home and drop off food to be served.

The last thing in the Hospitality Ministry is the receptions/sacramental events team. The coordinator works with the team to plan receptions or special events such as the First Communion reception. He/she schedules adult team members to help set up, serve and clean up for the events.

The common thread, of course, is working together to help our parish thrive. With so much to choose from, couldn’t we all help a little?

To find out more, contact parish secretary Sheri Duncan, 417-725-1975.



*Sure, they pour coffee but our Hospitality Team also meets, greets and assists at Sunday fellowship time and special events. Here, Don Schortgen, left, Marge Welch and Jean Stehle serve beverages.*

## Bishop Rice Confirms Seven St. Francis Youth



Our Feb.27 Mass was made special with the Confirmation of seven young parishioners by Bishop Edward Rice. Pictured are (front row) Fr. Mike McDevitt, Abby Muniz, Zuriel Martinez, Arowyn Roberts, Lily Sloan, Fr. Tom Reidy and (back row) Joseph Sarnes, Avery Muniz, Bishop Rice, Mason Kindell, Deacon Gary Steffes. Read more about each student on page 1.





## Lenten Fish Fries: It's Not Just a Meal; It's a Tradition

By Ann Elwell

No kitchen, just a few borrowed deep fryers. A small utility sink for cleanup. Cramped serving space and limited seating in the strip mall church.

But tried-and-true recipes, dedicated volunteers and hungry patrons assured our St. Francis fish fry would become a Lent tradition for both parish and Nixa community.

From this humble beginning 16 years ago, Knights of Columbus Council 13748 and Ladies

Auxiliary have developed a system that feeds an average of 100 diners each Friday in Lent. "All the volunteers work well together," said Grand Knight John Clarke. "They're pretty high on each other."

Mark Schweiss, credited with bringing the tradition to St. Francis, said the idea was to create a family, a community out of the new parish. "It's about breaking bread together," Mark said. The first menu was built around Schweiss family recipes with German origins.



*It takes a team to accomplish a successful fish fry every Friday in Lent. Several team members recently met to iron out details for the popular tradition.*

There's a core work crew but many others, including those who aren't Knights or Auxiliary members, join in. "For lots of them, this is their first time to be part of a parish project. It's how they get started," John explained.

The suppers attract hungry diners from the community, too. "They come the first time because they saw our signs," said John. "After that, they come because the food is so good."

The outbreak of the pandemic challenged the fish fry tradition. In 2020, half the dinners were canceled. Last year, a drive-up dinner was initiated—and there were glitches. The work flow had to be altered. "It's just logistics," said John. "It works because it's good people who really work together."

Though COVID persists, so do the Knights. The drive-up version was so popular it will be repeated this year. Besides keeping customers and crew safe, the drive-up dinners require fewer workers for cooking and cleanup.

Linda sees the fish fries as stewardship: "It's community building," she explained. When the fish fries are in person, "people sit with those they don't know—and they get to know them." The dinners don't happen by accident, Mark said. "You have to think: Why are we doing this? It's all about being together."

Proceeds allow Knights and Ladies to fundraise for specific charities. Carl Schimek, Knights financial secretary, explained: After generous annual donations to the parish, the Knights contribute to local charities like Care to Learn and to others like Special Olympics.

### "It's about breaking bread together."

The star of the dinner, a flaky white fish called Swai, is fried to golden. Classic cornmeal hush puppies are a staple. The most requested side is Linda Howard's coleslaw, which she's been making since the first dinner. "Once I made it, everyone loved it," Linda said, "so I make it every Friday, for six weeks." The rest of the menu might change year to year.

## What Will Be Your 'Word of the Year?'

Commentary by Karen Wegand

Are you aware that you can make a word a prayer? My sister and several of my friends are in the practice of choosing a word of the year as the calendar turns. Some folks spend weeks deciding on a word that would be a constant positive light in the darkness, a lift to their sails, a song in the silence. Others are content to pray to the Holy Spirit, then wait until the word is given to them. I don't think it matters how we get it as much as what we do with it.

Take the word "kindness" for example. It can be used to help remind children as in, "Was that a kind thing to do?" We can use it

when we face a decision with two very different outcomes. Do I offer to mow my neighbor's lawn when he is ill or do I just complain about how bad his grass looks? Shall I offer to shop for what my mother needs at the grocery store or choose to spend a few more minutes with my friends? Positive versus negative, all held within the decision to ignore or practice the "kind" word.

Seems to me that in a year's time, a person would often be challenged by the word he has chosen, so much so, that choosing "kindness" would become a habit. One step closer to being the person God wants us to be. Who knew it could be so easy?

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## Onward to Volume 2

Our first issue of 2022 triggers Volume 2 of the St. Francis of Assisi parish newsletter. As before, our stories and photos focus on you, our parishioners, and the many ways you serve the Lord and others. We hope you enjoy reading it. Share your ideas and comments by contacting one of our team members, below. New issues are published three to four times per year. Thank you for reading!

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## Families, Friends 'Fun-Raise' for Three Charities

Strikes, spares and an occasional turkey were part of the fun Feb. 6 at the Knights Striking Out Bowl-a-Thon at Century Lanes, Nixa, as well as Sunshine Lanes and Enterprise Lanes, Springfield. More than 100 bowlers helped the Knights of Columbus raise about \$34,000 for Least of These (Christian County's food pantry), The Kitchen, Inc.

and Catholic Charities of Southwest Missouri. It was the 27th year for the event. Raffle winner for a two-night stay at Chateau on the Lake and a \$500 Visa card was Virginia Pojar. Gift card winners were Julie Clarke and Jan McLoud. *(Photos by Julie Clarke, parishioner)*

