

THE STILLWATER CATHOLIC

SERVING ST. FRANCIS XAVIER AND ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST PARISHES

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MAY 2017

Growing in Faith Through the Spanish Choir

Even in the Church's earliest days, music was an integral part of the Eucharistic celebration. Here at St. Francis Xavier, our Spanish Choir helps Spanish-speaking parishioners to fully participate in the Mass, bringing the community together in faith through familiar music and hymns.

"The Spanish choir is an essential ministry because it adds a special connection to Scripture," says choir member Brenda Morales. "Some of us have a more palpable connection with God and His holy Word through the music in Mass. Spanish-speaking parishioners have stated that the Music Ministry is an essential part of the Mass, to feel closer to God. It gives them a special connection and moves them, through the blessings of the Holy Spirit, to not only listen to Scripture, but also to feel it."

The Spanish Choir has been a part of St. Francis ever since the inception of the Spanish Mass in 2002. The choir currently has nine members who sing, some of whom also play guitar or percussion instruments such as the claves and tambourine.



"We sing every Sunday during Spanish Mass, and on holy days such as *Día de La Virgen de Guadalupe*," Brenda says. "Sometimes members of the congregation will ask us to sing as part of special celebrations, such as *quinceañeras* or weddings. As of right now, we practice one hour before the Spanish Mass – every Sunday at noon."

The choir plays both traditional and contemporary Christian music in Spanish, using *Flor y Canto* as the main songbook.

"Some of our favorite songs are 'Abre mis Ojos,' 'Pescador de Hombres' and 'Tuyo Soy,'" says Brenda. "The Spanish Choir also works with English Choir for special bilingual

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Stewardship

HANNAH

THE GOOD STEWARD

What should we do when our prayers are answered? Is there anything left to do after we have sincerely thanked God for His favors? If God were a human peer, we would probably try to reciprocate by granting Him a favor in return. But the truth is that God cannot be made greater by anything that we do for Him. Instead, God receives our thanks and tells us to “go and do likewise.” That is, He tells us to share with others the good that He has bestowed on us. And in doing so, we are really sharing God Himself. That is the definition of stewardship!

The Old Testament Book of Samuel contains one of the most poignant examples of stewardship in the entire Bible. The first chapter teaches us of an unhappy, barren woman named Hannah. Desperate in her barrenness, Hannah prays that God will give her a son, vowing that she will raise him to be a man of God.

Imagine Hannah’s elation when she was granted her prayer! When Samuel was born, her heart’s desire had come true! Imagine further the pang of motherly sorrow, as Hannah kept her promise to God by taking Samuel at a

young age to be the servant of Eli, the high priest. The Book of Samuel tells us that once Samuel became Eli’s servant, Hannah saw her young son just once a year.

Indeed, Hannah knew that Samuel was truly a gift from God – an answered prayer. Hannah’s response is that of the Good Steward – with an attitude of both gratitude and sacrifice, she gave up her son to honor God. One imagines that Hannah probably struggled with this sacrifice during those first years. She probably did not know what God had in store for her son. Yet, through her faithfulness, God used him as a gift to an entire nation. Samuel would, in time, become one of the greatest prophets of Jewish history.

Sometimes it is difficult to understand the sacrifices we make in the name of stewardship, while the results may just be impossible to miss! However, He asks that we continue to be faithful in either case. God has undoubtedly bestowed gifts on all of us – at whatever the cost, we are to “go and do likewise.”



We Cannot Be Part-Time Christians

Dear Parishioners,

May is traditionally celebrated in the Church as the month of Mary, our Blessed Mother. As the Mother of the Church, she provides us with an example of what it means to be a servant of God and our fellow humans, as well as how to obediently fulfill the promptings of the Holy Spirit.

As Catholics, we are called to model the life of Jesus. That can be difficult, and there are certainly challenges to living as a disciple of Christ. But living stewardship and discipleship brings intense contentment and joy to those who take that risk. As we hear in St. Paul's letter to the Romans, "All things work for good for those who love God."

After Jesus Himself, we look to our Blessed Mother as an ideal steward and an example of what stewardship means. As the Mother of Christ, she lived her life and her ministry in a total spirit of faithfulness and service. She responded to the call to be a disciple. For us to be disciples, we also need to be good stewards of the gifts we have received. Our Church and our parish are gifts to us from God.

At no point in Holy Scripture does Jesus tell us that following Him is easy. We know it is not always simple and effortless. It requires dedication and commitment. Pope Francis has said on more than one occasion, "We cannot be part-time Christians and Catholics! We should seek to live our faith at every moment of every day."

We suspect that is how Mary lived her life from that moment she turned it over to God and His Will. So, let us vow together during this month of Mary to follow her example, and seek

to be the kinds of good stewards that will make our faith community even stronger and more effective.

We pray that we all can find the strength to live and practice our faith as we should. This means being faithful to the sacraments and looking for ways to help and serve one another. We have a great parish – let us make it even greater.

As we hear in Holy Scripture, "May the Lord bless you and keep you. May the Lord make His face shine upon you, and be gracious to you! May the Lord look upon you kindly and give you peace" (Numbers 6:24-26). Pray for us, as we pray for you.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Fr. Ken *Fr. Kerry Wakulich*
Fr. Kenneth Harder and Fr. Kerry Wakulich
Pastors

*"All things work for good
for those who love God."*



Faith, Friends What Our Youth Mean



Trunk or Treat was an opportunity for our young people to have fun while also serving our parish community and younger children.

It's been a busy year for the youth of St. Francis Xavier and St. John parishes. With our new youth minister Ashleigh Martin rounding out her first year in this role, our middle and high school students have had many opportunities to grow in their faith, while building friendships and having a lot of fun at the same time.

Through our weekly sixth through eighth-grade Edge and ninth through 12-grade YDisciple programs on Sunday evenings, young people from both parishes have had the opportunity to deepen their relationships with God. The groups, which help the young people go deeper in their understanding of the faith, have also provided an opportunity for our youth to build strong friendships with their peers.

"Through YDisciple, it's easier to connect all the Bible stories and all the lessons we're learning about in Mass to teenage life," says Sydney Weiser, a junior who will also be confirmed this year, "My favorite part is

small groups. It's definitely helped me in a positive way.

"By having friends with the same values and beliefs, it makes it easier to believe – you're not by yourself," she adds.

Outside of the weekly meetings, teens also have opportunities to be involved in the larger "youth group" that includes both middle and high school students. From our first parish-wide Trunk or Treat and the Diocesan Youth Conference last fall, to canoe and ice-skating trips, there is always something fun going on to encourage our young people to become more engaged in our parish family, affirming that this truly is their community, too.

"I feel like the teens have gotten closer as a group," says Ashleigh of the difference she has seen since she started last July. "I think those younger ones start looking up to the older ones, and the older ones become kind of mentors to



Young people from the parish have the opportunity to build friendships through events such as our canoe trip.

them. The group has gotten a lot closer."

"I really enjoy being one of the older kids in the group," Sydney says. "Being able to be a role model for the younger kids has encouraged me to be a better person and to delve more into my faith, and to be able to answer the questions that the younger kids have."

Ashleigh also thinks the new monthly youth Masses – during which teens serve as readers, altar servers, and in the choir – have had a great impact on helping teens become more engaged, as well as reminding other parishioners of their importance in our parish family.

"Not only do they feel like they're part of the church, but the congregation gets to see the future of the Church and how they're there, serving at our church," she says.

Relationships and Fun Youth Ministry Is All About

Although our weekly Edge and YDisciple classes and youth Masses will be taking a break for the summer, there will still be plenty of ways to become involved. From retreats and service opportunities, to good old-fashioned fun, our Youth Ministry program hopes that the youth will stay connected over summer break.

A group of 30 teens, along with their chaperones and Fr. Ken, will be attending the Steubenville Youth Conference in Springfield, Mo., July 21-23. This retreat is an opportunity for youth from our parishes to join with young people from all across the country to have their faith ignited and inspired.

“Your faith gets so full at Steubenville, you just come back so energized and want to go and share your faith,” Ashleigh says. “It was a life-changing event, that’s what I hear from the ones who went last year. They want to go again because it was so powerful. I’m hoping everyone gets that experience this year.”

“It was an amazing experience,” says Sydney, who attended Steubenville last year. “I’ve never seen so many Catholics in one room, and it was so great to pray with so many people of the same faith. Last year, I was struggling with my faith a lot and Steubenville definitely helped me grow in my relationship with God.”

The youth will also be going to serve on mission in Mound Bayou, Miss. Young people will have the opportunity to help those less fortunate, through giving of their time and talent, on this trip. Ashleigh also plans to offer local service opportunities, reaching out to those in need, right here in Stillwater.

“I hope that they see how other people live and are reminded of the importance of doing things for others,” Ashleigh says. “I think it’s important for them to see people less fortunate and see there are things that we can do.”

Ashleigh encourages young people who haven’t yet become involved in the Youth Ministry to give it a chance, this summer.

“Give it a try,” Ashleigh says. “I want our kids not only to have the faith foundation, but also the relationships to go with it. I want them to have fun, to do service together and to learn together.”

If you would like more information on upcoming Youth Ministry events, or to become involved, please contact Ashleigh Martin at 405-269-3786 or catholicyouth@brightok.net.



Last summer, teens got to experience praying with Catholic young people from all around the country at the Steubenville conference. This year 30 teens, their chaperones, and Fr. Ken will share the experience of deepening their faith.



Youth from our parishes attended the Diocesan Youth Conference in Tulsa last October.

An Update on Our New Church Project



Photo 1 – April 4, brick work, looking south, on parish hall (left), parlor/library in hyphen (center), and east wall of nave (right), by Mark Pruitt.



Photo 2 – April 11, ceiling grid and HVAC diffuser installation in classroom, by Mark Pruitt

Nabholz construction, our general contractor, has alerted us that they need to claim the 19 lost working days due to weather, such that our substantial completion (and occupancy) date has been moved to Oct. 9, 2017. While progress has been very good, Nabholz now believes that they will not be able to make up the lost workdays, hence, the move-back of our occupancy date.

Our sub-contractor for our geothermal wells, Fire and Ice, Weatherford, Okla., is finishing up earthwork as of this writing (second week of April), and expects to complete this work by the end of April. All pressure testing of the buried lines has been satisfactorily completed.

Brickwork has continued at a good pace, with most masonry completed on the education wing, parish hall, and hyphens between them, as well as the church nave (Photo 1). Masonry on the east, north, and west sides of the nave is well underway. McElroy Road was opened as of this writing, so drive-by viewing will show the handsome appearance of this work.

Acoustical tile ceiling grid work has been installed in the education wing (Photo 2) and has been started in the administration wing. Bathroom tile work has been completed in the education wing (Photo 3) and at the parish hall entry.

In the nave, vaulted ceiling framework is almost completed (Photo 4). The first shipment of indoor HVAC heat exchanger and circulating fan units has been received, and installation has begun in the education wing. In the gym, hardened wallboard has been installed, taped and floated, and electrical wiring for lighting has begun (Photo 5).

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An Update on Our New Church Project *continued from page 6*



Photo 3 – April 11, tile in bathroom in education wing, by Mark Pruitt

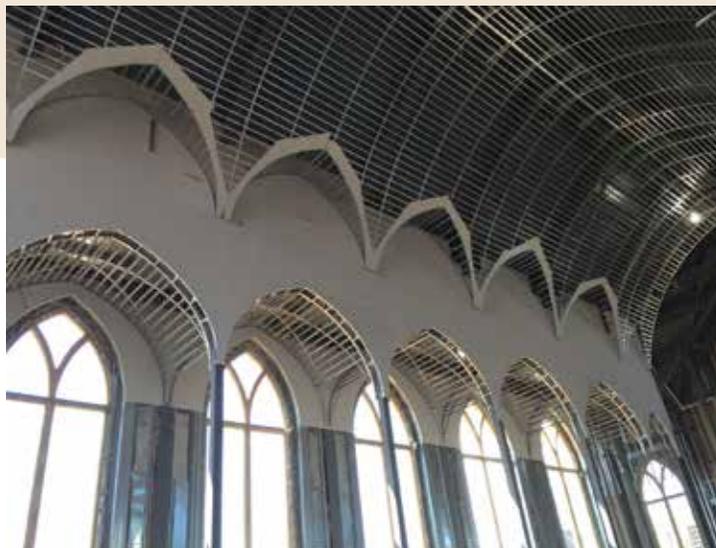


Photo 4 – Ceiling grid work in nave, looking northwest, by Mark Pruitt

For the liturgical items outside our construction budget, a number of parishioners have stepped up with additional pledges, and we now have pledged more than half of the \$370,000 needed for the items important for holding services (although a number of additional items, including some statuary and smaller sanctuary items, have not yet been funded). We are most grateful for the generosity of these contributors.

Again, we ask God's help for successful completion of this project, and His special blessings on all those who have contributed and continue to contribute.



Photo 5 – April 11, interior of gym, looking northwest, by Mark Pruitt

THE CATHOLIC COMMUNITY OF STILLWATER

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St. Francis Xavier

Sunday Mass

Saturday Vigil, 5 p.m.

Sunday, 8 a.m., 10 a.m., 1 p.m. (Español)

Daily Mass

Tuesday - Thursday, 8 a.m., Friday, 12:10 p.m.

Sacrament of Reconciliation

Wednesday, 5:45 - 7 p.m.

Saturday, 3 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.

St. John the Evangelist

Sunday Mass

Saturday Vigil, 6 p.m.

Sunday, 9:30 a.m., 11:30 a.m., 5 p.m. during semester

Daily Mass

Mondays at 12:10 p.m.

Tuesday, Thursday, Friday, 5:10 p.m.

Wednesday, 12:10 p.m. & 9 p.m. during semester

Sacrament of Reconciliation

Saturday, 4:30 - 5:30 p.m.

Change Service Requested

Growing in Faith Through the Spanish Choir *continued from front cover*

holiday Masses. We really enjoy working together to provide the community with beautiful Christian music."

Throughout her time in the choir, Brenda has been able to grow immensely in faith.

"God speaks with me through music," she says. "There have been times in which my prayers are always through music, and I will even stay after Mass just singing to God and being taken over by the Holy Spirit."

The choir has also been a way for its members – and the community as a whole – to grow in fellowship.

"Because of the connection that the parishioners feel through the Spanish Choir, there is a unity through music in our community," Brenda says. "People who have never sung before, as well as people who sing all the time, come together to be a part of the Music Ministry. I would love to thank Helen Clemens, who has been in the choir since the beginning and continues to contribute – not only through her voice, but also through her time – to make the choir very successful. *Gracias, Helen!*"



The Spanish Choir always welcomes more members, especially those who are willing to share their talents by playing instruments. For more information, please call or text Brenda Morales at 405-269-6784.