



The Crossroads Messenger

The official newsletter of St. Francis Xavier Catholic Church • Mount Washington, Kentucky

Lent 2026



The Taste of St. Francis February 14th 2026

Your chance to win \$10,000 is just around the corner at The Taste of St. Francis. This year's event is being held on Valentine's Day, leaning into the theme of LOVE – Love of Food, Friends & Fellowship. You won't need to fight the crowds to share dinner with your special someone or share laughs with friends.

We are switching up the format and bringing in a catered Italian Dinner. The "Tastings" will be in the form of local wine and beer, included in the price of admission.



In addition to the \$10,000 Raffle that will draw at 9:30PM, the On-line Auction, Wine & Bourbon Pulls, and Dollar Raffles promise to provide on-going entertainment and opportunities to win some great items.



The past 2 years have seen sell-out crowds and seats will be limited, so get your tickets now by calling or stopping by the SFX office.

Purchase your \$10,000 Raffle Ticket
On-line through the QR Code.

Charitable Gaming Lic #ORG0001325





The Seven Gifts of The Holy Spirit

For Holiness Sake

Throughout the Advent and Christmas Seasons this year I explored the seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit and how they are given to us at our baptism so as to enable us to reach holiness. Each week I explored a different Gift, preaching the Gift at our Tuesday Mass and sending it out via email on Friday. Here is a synopsis of the Seven Gifts:



Father's Finger-prints



Wisdom:

A **desire** to contemplate God *through* creation.



Understanding:

An **ability** to see the reasonability of our faith.



Counsel:

A supernatural **insight** into what God would have us do.



Fortitude:

A **strength** to follow through on what supernatural insight suggests.



Knowledge:

An **ability** to gauge world through the Truth of our Catholic teaching so as to see ourselves as God sees us.

Piety:

A **motivation** to worship God from a place of love as opposed to a place of mere duty, routine, remorse, or fear.



Fear of the Lord:

A **desire** (as well as a surety or trust that it is possible) to not offend God because of our love (and not because of a fear of reprisal).

Taken together these two desires, two abilities, a strength, an insight, and a motivation become the matrix from which our “yes” to God’s Will can result in a holy life. Yet, because God will not force them upon us, they remain “gentle nudges” that we must seek out, recognize, and then cooperate with if they are going to be effective in our faith journey.

Our upcoming Season of Lent will be an opportunity to repent from ignoring the Holy Spirit’s “nudges” because of busyness, disordered priorities, or sin. Lent will be an opportunity for our life of holiness to begin again.

Remember, at our Christmas Masses

we asked, “How do we unwrap God’s gifts to us?” We embody them! We embody the desires for Wisdom and a Fear of the Lord; we embody the abilities to see the reasonability of faith and to see ourselves as God sees us; we embody the motivation to worship, the insight into what God’s Will, and the strength to follow through in doing that Will.

At Christmas we celebrated that Jesus was the perfect embodiment of the Seven Gifts as he, “emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.” (Philippians 2:7)

Now, of course St. Paul himself never celebrated Christmas because in his day

the Holy Spirit had not yet inspired the Church to create the holiday. Rather, when St. Paul wrote to the Philippians his eyes were fixed on Easter, the celebration to which Christmas points.

It will be there at Easter that our Christmas present from God will be ultimately unwrapped. It will be there where Jesus will ultimately “empty himself” so as to pour out the Holy Spirit’s seven-fold gifts of holiness to the many.

This Lent may our hearts return to God and may the Holy Spirit’s Gifts awaken anew.

Fr. Jeff



St. Francis Xavier

155 Stringer Lane
Mount Washington, KY 40047
502.538.4933 - or - 502.955.5366

Office Hours

Monday - Thursday: 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.
Friday: 9 a.m. - 12 p.m.

www.sfxmw.com



The Crossroads Messenger

Lent 2026

The Lenten Season - A Spiritual Journey



Deacon's Desk

Earl Baker

We find ourselves once again at the doorstep of the Lenten Season. This season holds a profound significance for us as a time of spiritual renewal and preparation for the glorious celebration of Easter. Spanning forty days, Lent mirrors the forty days Jesus spent fasting and praying in the desert, a period of deep reflection and temptation. It's a time for us to join in this spiritual journey, not only to recall Christ's sacrifice but also to prepare our hearts for the ultimate celebration of His resurrection.

At the heart of this season is the invitation to repent and grow closer to God. The Church encourages *prayer*, *fasting*, and *almsgiving*—each of which serves to redirect our focus from worldly distractions and material desires to spiritual growth. Prayer strengthens our relationship with God, allowing us to seek His guidance, forgiveness, and grace. Fasting teaches us self-discipline and detachment, helping us to identify areas where we might be overly attached to comforts or excess. And

finally, almsgiving calls us to live out Christ's command to love and serve others, particularly the poor and marginalized.

Through these practices, Lent becomes a time of conversion. It invites us to examine our lives, acknowledge our need for God's mercy, and make space for spiritual transformation. By entering into the suffering of Christ through repentance, we are better able to understand and appreciate His ultimate sacrifice on Good Friday, as we prepare ourselves to celebrate the joy of the resurrection on Easter.

Lent is not simply a time of penance, but also of *hope* and *anticipation*. By walking with Christ through these forty days, we are reminded of the incredible gift of salvation that He offers us. Lent prepares our hearts to rejoice fully in the victory of Easter, a victory that promises new life and the hope of eternal communion with God. Lent is an invitation for us to form life-giving habits that will lead us to discover the abundant life that God has planned for us!



Christmas Cantata Blessings



Carrie Gary
Director of Music

On the Fourth Sunday of Advent, December 21st, the faith community of Saint Francis Xavier Church was blessed by a prayerful Christmas Cantata featuring music of both Advent and Christmas. Presented by our

Adult and Youth Choirs, the program drew a strong and supportive gathering of parishioners along with friends and family. The music created a meaningful space for reflection, joy, and anticipation, serving as a wonderful catapult into the sacred celebrations of Christmas week.

Since 2015, the music ministry at Saint Francis Xavier has offered this annual Christmas preparation program, helping hearts and voices enter more fully into the season. Many of the selections thoughtfully “piggyback” into our Christmas liturgies, enriching worship throughout the following week. I extend heartfelt gratitude to our dedicated choir members—adult, and children—for their time, talent, and faith-filled leadership, as well as to our entire parish family for their encouragement and presence. Special thanks to our pastor, Father Jeff Nicolas, for his support of the music ministry and for shepherding our community with care and joy.





Friends Of Saint Francis

With this issue of Crossroads Messenger, we continue our new series on individuals or families who pattern their lives after our patron, St. Francis Xavier. By living lives of strong commitment and deep spirituality, they deserve the title "friends of St. Francis Xavier." We hope you will enjoy getting to know these members of our faith family.

Miles Spalding



St. Francis Xavier is quoted to have said "The deeds you do may be the only sermon some persons will hear today." Actions matter; words are not always required. Our parish is resplendent with individuals who act out their faith on a daily basis and elevate

the spiritual wellbeing of their neighbors. We acknowledge these people as "Friends of St. Francis Xavier."

As friends of St. Francis Xavier, Mike and Kim Zygmunt, preach a daily sermon by the pattern of their lives. A little background information on the Zygmunt's will help illustrate the importance of their Catholic faith in their lives. Natives of western New York, the Zygmunt's moved to the Mount Washington area thirteen years ago, when Mike was transferred to the local Ford plant. Mike and Kim have two sons, Kevin (soon to be married) and Brenden. Family is very important. Kim is a cradle Catholic but both have seen their faith grow in Kentucky as twelve-year members of St. Francis Xavier.

Our patron, St. Francis Xavier, was known for his missionary zeal. He was a force of nature as demonstrated by his charismatic evangelization and piety. While Mike and Kim are humble about their roles, they are no less forces of nature in our parish. Mike has been Grand Knight of our chapter of Knights of Columbus for four years. No doubt you have seen him and Kim at the Lenten Fish fries. He partners with Eric Guy to organize this incredible effort. Mike and Kim work as an amazing team, with Kim often acting as Mike's administrative assistant. Mike has worked with the High School group at SFX. He is currently a sacristan, a Eucharistic minister and serves on the Parish Council. Mass is key components of the Zygmunt's faith. Their faith life is elevated by time spent intimately with God, whether it be praying the Rosary or during Eucharistic adoration.

One would think that between their work and church activities, they would have little time for anything else, but Kim and Mike have been busy volunteering at Bullitt East High School. You may have seen them working the concession stand at a Chargers game. They were "instrumental" in helping the high school acquire a semi-trailer for all their

band equipment. Mike and Kim are proof that we all rise when we lift others.

Any church would be fortunate to have parishioners like Mike and Kim. When asked why they chose St. Francis Xavier as their church, Mike said it is the welcoming communal aspect. People are friendly and it is easy to make new friends. The opening of the Xavier Center has created a vista of new opportunities.

Being a friend of St. Francis Xavier has helped Mike reveal a softer spiritual side. Like St Francis Xavier, Mike learned the benefits of charity work. Mike joked that if 50-year-old Mike told 20-year-old Mike he would be doing all this charity work, he would laugh. The Zygmunt's are proof that living your faith is the best sermon you can preach.



Paula's Ponderings

Lent: How Mass Feels Different This Season

If you walk into church during Lent and sense that something is quieter, simpler, or even missing you're not imagining it. The Church deliberately changes the look and sound of the liturgy during these forty days, not to make worship dreary, but to help us feel the season and enter more deeply into its meaning.

According to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Lent is "a 40-day season of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving that begins on Ash Wednesday and ends at sundown on Holy Thursday." Because our attention can falter and our spiritual focus weakens over time, the Church provides this season to renew our conversion through prayer, fasting, and almsgiving.



Paula Silliman
Pastoral Associate



Why Everything Turns Purple

During Lent, the Church is clothed in violet. Historically, purple was the color of royalty, rare and costly. In the Passion, it also became the color of mockery when soldiers clothed Jesus in a purple robe as they hailed Him sarcastically as "King of the Jews" (John 19:2-3). Therefore, violet holds two meanings: Christ's kingship and His suffering. It signals repentance, humility, and quiet expectation. On the Fourth Sunday of Lent

No Flowers Or Music

During Lent, the altar is not decorated with flowers, and musical instruments may be used only to support singing, not as a solo performance (GIRM, nos. 305, 313).

The Sound Of Silence

Two familiar elements disappear during Lent: The Gloria is omitted on Sundays and weekdays of Lent (General Instruction of the Roman Missal [GIRM], no. 53), except on solemnities.

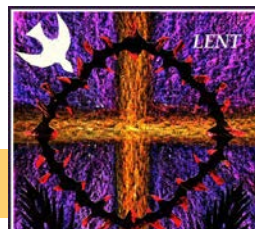
The Alleluia is completely absent, not replaced or paraphrased, but entirely set aside (GIRM, no. 62).

The word Alleluia comes from the Hebrew Hallelu-Yah, meaning "Praise the Lord." It appears frequently in the Psalms and is associated with joy and festivity. Lent's total fast from the Alleluia, even in hymns and choral music, helps us feel its absence so that its return at Easter is unmistakably joyful.

Antiphons, Chants, Sacred Language

You may notice more chanting during Lent, especially the Entrance (Introit) and Offertory Antiphons. These short texts, usually drawn from the Psalms allow us to pray Scripture together.

You may also hear familiar parts of the Mass, such as the Sanctus and Agnus Dei, sung in Latin. The Second Vatican Council encouraged the preservation of Latin in the Roman Rite, particularly for common acclamations. Latin functions as a sacred language, one set apart from daily speech, signaling that we have stepped into sacred time.



Veiled Crosses, Hidden Glory

Beginning on the Fifth Sunday of Lent, crosses and images may be veiled. This practice is explicitly permitted by the Roman Missal, though it is optional. In the dioceses of the United States, the Missal states: Crosses remain covered until the end of the Celebration of the Lord's Passion on Good Friday, while images remain covered until the beginning of the Easter Vigil (Roman Missal, Fifth Sunday of Lent, rubric).

The General Instruction of the Roman Missal (GIRM) governs the structure of the Mass, while practices such as veiling are regulated instead by the specific rubrics of the Roman Missal and approved adaptations for particular countries. The temporary "hiding" of sacred images intensifies our focus on Christ's Passion and makes their reappearance at Easter all the more striking.





Lent & The Scrutinies: A Church Preparing For New Life

One of the most profound aspects of Lent occurs through the Scrutinies, celebrated on the Third, Fourth, and Fifth Sundays of Lent for those preparing to enter the Church through the Order of Christian Initiation of Adults (OCIA). Despite the name, these rites are not examinations. They are solemn prayers of purification and strengthening, asking God to reveal what is wounded and to heal it.

While these rites are directed toward the elect, they also call the baptized to ongoing conversion. As we pray for those preparing for baptism, we are reminded that repentance and renewal never truly end.

Lent is not meant to make church feel gloomy. It strips away excess so that what matters most can finally come into focus. When the Alleluia returns, when the Gloria rings out again, when flowers and music flood the sanctuary, we will know, viscerally, that something miraculous has happened.

May this Lenten season renew our hearts and prepare us to proclaim with joy what we have been fasting to say:

Alleluia. Christ is risen.

THE THREE PILLARS OF LENT

FASTING



To deprive ourselves from good and bad things that are keeping us from devoting our hearts to Christ. It can deepen our awareness of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross.



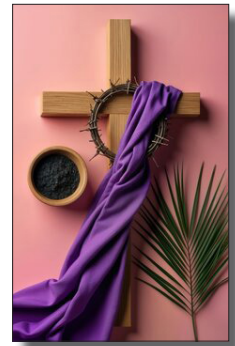
ALMSGIVING

To love others as Jesus loved us; to live our profession of faith not just through our words, but also through our actions to those around us each day.

PRAYING



To help us be close to Christ and in constant dialogue with Him. We take time away from distractions to turn our focus back to Jesus throughout our day.



From *Thoughts in Solitude*

"My Lord God, I have no idea where I am going. I do not see the road ahead of me. I cannot know for certain where it will end. Nor do I really know myself, and the fact that I think that I am following your will does not mean that I am actually doing so. But I believe that the desire to please you does in fact please you. And I hope I have that desire in all that I am doing. I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire. And I know that if I do this you will lead me by the right road, though I may know nothing about it. Therefore, will I trust you always, though I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death. I will not fear, for you are ever with me, and you will never leave me to face my perils alone."

- Thomas Merton

10 THINGS TO DO WHEN YOUR LENT PLAN FAILS



ACCEPT IT
ACCEPT IF AND
HOW YOUR PLAN
HAS FAILED



**GO TO
CONFESSION**
MAKE AN
EXAMINATION OF
CONSCIENCE AND
START OVER



GET BACK UP
REMEMBER YOUR
LENTEN
RESOLUTIONS
AND BEGIN AGAIN



**WHAT WENT
WRONG?**
PONDER ON THE
SERIES OF
EVENTS THAT
LED YOU HERE



PRAY
PRAYER HELPS
YOU REVIVE YOUR
SOUL. LISTEN TO
GOD'S VOICE



FAST
FASTING
ENABLES US TO
DOMINATE OUR
DESIRES



GIVE ALMS
WHEN WE GIVE
ALMS, WE DO
OURSELVES AND
OTHERS A GREAT
THING



LISTEN
FOLLOW THE
ADVICE FROM
THE PEOPLE IN
YOUR LIFE



FOCUS
FOCUS ON
ACCOMPLISHING
WHAT YOU SET
OUT TO DO



**ASK FOR
HELP**
LEAN ON YOUR
FRIENDS, PRIEST,
MENTORS, AND
FAMILY

SOURCE: CATHOLICEXCHANGE.COM

 **CatholicLink**

Get Ready For Adventure!

When: June 15-18

Time: 5:30 - 8:30 p.m.

Mark your calendar today!
We need some volunteers,
so please contact Lauren
Battcher via e-mail for more
information!
lauren.battcher@fxmw.com

See YOU There!



**RAINFOREST
FALLS**
Exploring the Nature of God

**VBS
2026**

do something
{*everyday*}
that will
lead you
{*closer*}
to God

Resolutions & Gifts From God

Miles Spalding

How are those New Years resolutions going? You are a month into 2026, so perhaps you have already realized that you overestimated your determination, or you are well on your way to realizing your goals. You may even be one who doesn't believe in resolution. There is nothing wrong with that. Some say that resolutions go in one year, and out the other. Whether you choose to make resolutions or not, we can all agree that becoming the best person you can is a noble goal that God calls us all to pursue.

The beautiful thing about making faith filled resolutions is that they usually pay direct dividends. Your New Years resolutions can dovetail nicely into your Lenten resolutions. Here are some suggestions.

Resolution #1: Work to make Jesus the center of your life. In this busy world where your entire focus is on your family, your job, the latest Facebook posts or your favorite sports team, stop for a moment to consider the Force in the universe that gives all these elements context. It takes a bit of humility to remove yourself from the middle of the madness and allow Jesus to work in your life. Perhaps your resolutions are as simple as praying on your way to work or singing more at Mass.

Resolution #2: Be nice to those around you. The nature of this goal improves your chances of people being nice in return. This is not such a hard resolution, but its impact is huge and the instant reward will promote your being nice to more people. The hook for the Christian is to also love those who don't love you in return. I challenge any Christian to be nice to someone they don't like and I bet, no matter how hard it is, they will ultimately feel better for it.

Resolution #3: Resolve to love yourself this year. Expect a lot from yourself in 2026, but be realistic and ready to forgive yourself when you fall short of your own expectations. Studies show that if your resolutions are too big or too vague, they are more difficult to achieve. Create clear goals that include petitions to God when the struggle "gets real." It is difficult to fulfill the first two resolutions if you are not on firm footing with the third resolution.

May God bless your resolutions with success. God loves to give us new gifts, but he often does it by breathing new life into what has already been given us. Know that the more time you spend with Jesus, the more you will become like him. What better resolution can we aspire to?

