

**ST. FRANCIS
DE SALES**

*Our Hearts & Doors
Are Always Open*

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PARISH NEWSLETTER

FEBRUARY 2022



We Walk Together

By Father Phil Kelly

Synodality is a word we don't hear much in the Roman Catholic vocabulary up until now. It is, however, well known to our Orthodox Christian sisters and brothers. It is a vital part of their polity, in other words, how they see the Church working. Synodality strictly speaking means walking together. Based on the experience of the early Church, authority and power were exercised in a way that was far more conciliar and consultatory than hierarchical. The Church in the West as much as it influenced culture, was also influenced by culture — in our case the Roman Empire with its very hierarchical structure.

This is not to say that

Orthodox Christianity lacks hierarchy or that Roman Catholicism has been without a conciliar history. The Orthodox Church certainly has a hierarchical understanding of itself in its priests, bishops and metropolitans and their functions within the structure of the Church. What they have stressed in their polity is the synodal quality through the regular gathering of their bishops and the exercise of their authority as well as the limits of that power.

The West developed in a way that put greater emphasis on the centrality of Rome. Ecumenical Councils that drew bishops from all parts of the world were certainly a part of the history and tradition that formed the Roman Catholic understanding of Church structure and governance. The purpose of these Councils was to discern the promptings of the Spirit

through history and translate that into Church law and practice.

The Ecumenical Council with which we are most familiar is, of course, the Second Vatican Council. The twentieth century, and its ability to quickly transport people from one side of the globe to the other allowed for an unprecedented participation of bishops from far off corners of the world. It was the beginning of a real globalization of the Church. Many local Churches which had been missions were now being represented by their own clergy. Bishops from Africa, Asia and Latin America were now taking their place alongside European bishops in deciding the future of the Church.

Pope John XXIII who called the Council was desirous that the fathers of the Council pay close attention to the signs of the times

and bring the Church into the 20th Century. Many of these bishops brought with them their own theologians, periti (Advisors), who had closely studied many of the issues and questions facing the Church. John Courtney Murray, an American Jesuit, was instrumental in helping to refocus the Church in its understanding of religious liberty and the primacy of conscience.

The American experience had formed the Church in the United States with a great appreciation for the separation between church and state. For centuries the Universal Church had been guided by its experience in Europe of close alliances between Church and State. Murray could see that separation between Church and State was beneficial to the practice of the faith. His insights were largely responsible for

the document on religious liberty, “Dignitatus Humanae” with its stress on the primacy of conscience. By listening to the experiences of local Churches, the universal Church was strengthened, and the local Church enlivened by what was particular to culture and practice.

Another major theme running through the documents of the Council was the Church as the People of God. A people called through baptism to be formed as the Body of Christ in the world. This is a key concept to understanding the Church in the world and history. While hierarchy is a part of our structure it should not be all defining as to the nature of the Church.

Far more important is the baptismal call to holiness and participation.

Another important aspect of the Council was what is referred to as re-sourcement or going back to the original sources and tradition found in scripture, the early councils, Patristics, etc. Scholars found in studying the early Church a dynamic and far more nuanced structure that offered insight into the process of discernment and exercise of power and authority.

The early Church as we read in Acts of the Apostles, was dynamic and fluid in its ability to respond to the needs of the times. The Apostles had no blueprint for how to proceed, other than

a fidelity to the kerygma, the message of Jesus’ life, death and resurrection. Structures emerged as needs presented themselves.

A synodal or conciliar practice of listening to and journeying with one another was constitutive in the Church’s process of self-understanding. Pope Francis is calling us to continue the work of the Second Vatican Council by unpacking the concept of the Church as the People of God; journeying together, learning from one another and discerning what God desires from us at this moment in time. The Pope has called the Universal Church to a Synod on Synodality. Each diocese and parish are being called to reflect on our co-respon-

sibility for the Church.

We will be speaking of synodality frequently in homilies, meetings of our Parish Council, indeed in all aspects of parish life. Already our Faith Formation team has begun a process of prayer and discernment as we seek to plan for a new way to catechize in this time of great change. As Pope Francis says this is not a time of epochal change but a change of epoch that we are experiencing. The pandemic and its continuing effects are challenging us to rise up to the moment. Synodality offers us a model of Church where we are shoulder to shoulder and consequently stronger and better equipped to meet the challenges of the moment.



The Hope Walk

By Goziem Ononye

We made our preparations at Frank’s Cafe which involved making turkey, peanut butter sandwiches and assembling the bottles of water in a bag. We said a prayer before we went out to the streets to give out the sandwiches, water, juices, hats and gloves.

We encountered eight people along the walk. I recall the occasion when we met a man with cardboard paper asking for help; I saw

the joy in his eyes when we provided him a few bags of food and drink followed by praying for him. One of our volunteers, Marty who has led this effort in the Bronx was very perceptive in spotting people and places who needed assistance while we walked the streets; “See that encampment, Someone lives there.” He was right and the person we met thanked us so much for the assistance. One of our vol-

unteers, Virginia told me that “Though I had seen the carts by the side of the sidewalk piled high with things and the structures by the wall, I had never thought that **SOMEONE LIVES THERE**”.

I was amazed when we all nodded in agreement that despite the cold weather “Today is probably the most important day to be out here, because anyone who is out today really needs us.”



The Hope Walk that took place here in our community on January 15th was one that I will not forget. First of all, it was one of the coldest days of the new year and I thought many people might not show up. This was not the case as they were 9 of us who showed up ready to serve.



Getting to Know our New Music Director

Welcome John Stanley

Where Does John Come From?

Honest to goodness, John hails from a place called Goochland. That's not in Jersey, but down south in the great state of Virginia. From the age of 10 John has been making music in churches, beginning at St. Mark's Baptist Church. His first musical loves were country, R&B and Gospel music as well as Bluegrass and Motown. In talking with John about his career it quickly becomes evident that no matter where life on the road took him, he always looked for a church home to stay rooted in his faith.

John studied at Morgan State College in Baltimore until an unexpected audition gave him the opportunity to jump into professional performance. John has performed on many hallowed stages: Radio City, The Apollo, Lincoln Center with many celebrities; most notably Miss Patti Labelle and Josh Groban to name a few.

John's Dream

John had always dreamed of coming to NY and when the opportunity came his way, he was happy to make his home in the Big Apple. At St. Francis we have come

to see in these few months what a gifted and talented singer and musician he is.

As Advent began and our choir was able to lead us in prayer once again at the 11:00 Mass we began to witness more of John's incredible talent and his greatest love: that of directing a choir. He has worked miracles with some very talented people up there in that choir loft! So many harmonies from just a few folks! And to talk to the choir members they immediately rose to the occasion — they are willing to do the work, and are enjoying themselves immensely! They have

nothing but praise for John and love working with him.

John says that church music helps him find a sense of stability in what can be a crazy life of a performer. He loves church and loves God even more. He believes that he is fulfilling his purpose here at St. Francis de Sales.

We are grateful to be able to be a part of John's dream and grateful too that God has brought John to us. We hope that with his help we will be able to take our music program to another level, one that helps us praise and worship God with our hearts and voices all the more.

Stewardship Update

As we look ahead to Spring 2022, we are hopeful that our pandemic days are soon to be history. We have flourished in new ways these last two years because of God's goodness and your generosity. October and November 2021 gave us an opportunity to do an 'increased offering campaign' with the help of the Archdiocese. Here is a snapshot of where we are today thanks to your faithful support.

As of this writing we have over 700 persons/families registered as parishioners. Eight years ago there were perhaps 300 registered parishioners. *This is an increase of 133%!!!*

Of these parishioners, 132 are giving online through Tithe.ly or WeShare.

We saw an increase of 37% in online giving as a result

of our campaign. (We increased from 70-98 persons using online giving.) On Tithe.ly we had 28 new parishioners sign on, and a total of 15 parishioners increase their gift (between both platforms)

We also saw an increase in envelope and weekly/monthly checks mailed in.

According to the numbers; our collection for Oct/Nov 2020 was \$58,531.35. In 2021 that number increased to \$62,562.52...for an increase of 7%

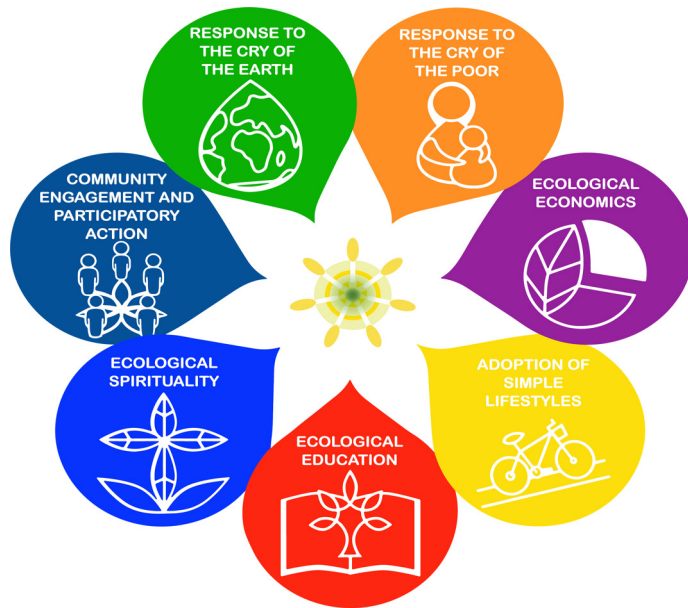
Thankfully, we continue to 'set the table' together so that all may be welcomed and find a home when they join us for Sunday worship.

Laudato Si' Action Plan

The Laudato Si' Action Plan is a seven year action plan promoted by the Vatican to act on Pope Francis's encyclical Laudato Si'. Religious congregations, parishes, dioceses, educational institutions and community groups are encouraged to develop plans to care for our planet and all of its people.

Unfortunately the need for such action has become increasingly evident. Severe changes in climate have caused melting glaciers and rising sea levels. Fires and droughts are driving people, often the poor, from their communities, livelihoods and food sources. And our planet is getting hotter every day.

The seven goals of the Plan



St. Francis de Sales Has Joined

Father Phil Kelly, our pastor, has pledged participation in the Laudato Si' Action Platform. Since last October, our parish has an active Care for the Earth Team.

Our actions so far include:

Bulletin announcements encouraging

- Food scrap drop Off
- Meatless Mondays
- Reusable water bottles
- Bird watching in Central park during migration seasons

AAD – Adopt A District – Ongoing meetings with Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney encouraging her to sponsor or support Earth friendly bills in Congress.

Development of our own Laudato Si' garden. Watch for bulbs blooming in the Spring at the Church entrance.

Hope Walks – Bringing sandwiches to people on the street, talking with them and praying with them.

- First one in our neighborhood 1/15/2022

Homily by Father Kelly describing the importance of participating in the Laudato Si' Action Plan – 12/6/2021

Join us in solidarity and become a member of our team as we work together to Care for our Earth.

For further information and to learn when our next meeting is contact: Sr. Virginia Dorgan, vmdorgan@gmail.com.

Learn more at <https://www.laudatosi.org/laudato-si/laudato-si-movement/>

Stewardship Also Means Sharing Time And Talent!

To the folks in Social Justice who help us learn each day how to care for one another, and our planet, how to live our Catholic Social Justice teachings: Goziem, Coleen, S. Virginia and all who work with them...

To Mary Braza and our Book Club members, who continue to offer us ways to grow in our faith through education...

To Br. Tim, Alice, Wendy and Nick for their service on our RCIA/Initiation Team...

To our Catechists: Mary T., Carmen and Mike P., Richard A., Kathy KF., Wendy S., and Alice B., as they help our families form our children in our faith...

To our new Leadership Team for Faith Formation: Krissy, Lisa G., Lisa K., Yadira, Erin U., Michael and Carmen, Annie B., Christina S., and Danielle V, as we dream a new vision...

To our Lectors who proclaim God's Word to us each week...

A heartfelt THANK YOU! May God continue to bless each of you!