

# THE STILLWATER CATHOLIC

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

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FEBRUARY 2018

## St. Francis Xavier Welcomes

### *Fr. Brian O'Brien*

## as Our New Pastor

By now, you have almost certainly seen the smiling face of our new pastor, Fr. Brian O'Brien, either at Mass or out and about around the parish! Fr. O'Brien arrived in mid-January and is excited to join our vibrant, growing faith community here at St. Francis Xavier Catholic Church.

Prior to his arrival last month, Fr. O'Brien had been serving our diocese as the President of Bishop Kelley High School in Tulsa. While he came to the high school to fill that position nine years ago, his history at the school actually goes back quite a bit further. And it played a significant role in his call to the priesthood.

A native of Houston, Fr. O'Brien arrived in Oklahoma in 1998 after earning a degree in theology and political science from Boston College. He then earned a master's in education through the University of Notre Dame's Alliance for Catholic Education (ACE) program in 2000. Through ACE, Fr. O'Brien



taught theology and civics at Bishop Kelley from 1998 to 2002.

Although the teaching program was not designed to be a long-term commitment, God certainly had bigger plans in mind for Fr. O'Brien right here in the Diocese of Tulsa!

"I finished my two years and stayed for a third year of teaching, and that is when I really started thinking about the seminary," Fr. O'Brien recalls. "I had good influences from my family being good, solid Catholics, and from priests, but Bishop Kelley was the first place I was really immersed in my faith

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## Fr. Brian O'Brien *continued from front cover*

and could teach the faith, and I just loved it. I thought, 'how can I do this more?' And the idea of the priesthood just kept coming back around."

Following his ordination in 2007, Fr. O'Brien spent two years as an Associate Pastor at Christ the King in Tulsa and as a chaplain at Bishop Kelley before becoming president of the high school. During his time as president, Fr. O'Brien felt blessed to be working with wonderful people and helping students through what can be a pivotal time in an individual's faith life.

One of the things he enjoyed most about his time at the high school — the pastoral care side of his position — is one that translates well to parish life.

"Probably the best thing, especially as a priest, was being able to be with students in those critical times," he explains. "Maybe it was the death of a family member, or — the longer I was there — doing the weddings and baptisms of alumni. It was awesome seeing them mature in the faith and seeing the fruit in that."

Father is excited to be arriving at St. Francis Xavier as pastor during this unique time of growth and energy in the parish.

"The building project will be done in March, so the top priority will be managing the move, planning the dedication of the church, and just

getting used to our new surroundings," Fr. O'Brien says. "The Catholic community in Stillwater is growing, so it's an exciting time."

Since learning about his assignment to our parish, Fr. O'Brien has been reading up on our patron saint, and looks forward to incorporating the life of St. Francis Xavier into our parish's mission.

"St. Francis Xavier had in his mind a constant emphasis on evangelization, and I think the way he lived his life can be a good life for the parish — to ask ourselves, 'what can I do today to bring people to Jesus?'" Fr. O'Brien says. "He was Spanish, and went to India, China and Japan, but there are a lot of people right here that need to hear the Good News.

"So that will my emphasis, both personally and to help the parish have the same mindset," Father continues. "There will always be internal things to work toward, but the more we look outward, the more dynamic we'll be."

As his time at St. Francis Xavier gets underway, Fr. O'Brien asks for our prayers and our patience as he learns about a new town and meets so many new people! He greatly looks forward to getting to know all of the parishioners, being a part of their lives, and helping them to draw closer to the Lord. Father encourages anyone seeking to strength their faith life to

challenge themselves to go beyond weekly Mass attendance.

"Sunday is the springboard, but during the week you have to live your faith and also grow in knowledge about your faith — whether it is listening to Catholic radio, reading about the faith, or doing a Bible study," he says. "If you are only hearing it on Sunday, you won't get the whole thing and you won't be able to preach to people in your life because you won't know it well enough."

As Fr. O'Brien begins his assignment here, two of his favorite Scripture passages come readily to mind. The first, which is Bishop Konderla's episcopal motto, is particularly relevant as we prepare to move into our beautiful new building: "Unless the Lord build the house, they labor in vain who build" (Ps 127:1).

The second verse is one that has long been close to Father's heart.

"I've always been inspired by the end of the Gospel of Matthew, when Jesus commands the people to go out and baptize all nations," he says. "That's a pretty bold vision."

Here at St. Francis Xavier, we are happy to welcome Fr. O'Brien and hope, with his guidance, to continue "building the Lord's house" and sharing the Good News right here in Stillwater!

*"Sunday is the springboard, but during the week you have to live your faith and also grow in knowledge about your faith — whether it is listening to Catholic radio, reading about the faith, or doing a Bible study. If you are only hearing it on Sunday, you won't get the whole thing, and you won't be able to preach to people in your life because you won't know it well enough."*

*— Fr. Brian O'Brien, Pastor of St. Francis Xavier Catholic Church*

# Lent 2018 Brings Changes and Blessings to Our Community

Dear Parishioners,

**T**he upcoming season of Lent will bring many graces and challenges to our community. First off, Lent is always a time of grace. As we prepare for a worthy celebration of Christ's resurrection of Easter, we have the opportunity to grow spiritually as disciples of Jesus Christ. What would it take for this to be the best Lent of your life? Have you taken it easy in Lenten of the past? Giving up something easy or taking on something light? Did you start strong and fizzle out? That's what happens to a lot of us, but how can Lent 2018 be different? Between now and Feb. 14 (Ash Wednesday) take it to prayer. What are your next steps in growing with the Lord. How can your gifts be put at the service of Christ and His Church?

Lent will also bring changes to where we worship. On March 11, the new St. Francis Xavier will be dedicated by Bishop Konderla. I hope you'll be there. As we are grateful to God for this beautiful new building, parishioners at St. John the Evangelist will be saying goodbye to their spiritual home. The church will still be there and I know Fr. Kerry and the students of OSU will welcome you any time and will count on your continued support, but leaving regular worship there will be tough for many. Would you join me in praying for the St. John parishioners who will call the new St. Francis their new spiritual home?

For the parishioners of St. Francis Xavier, Lent will bring a permanent goodbye to a building that has served us so well for decades. The St. Francis Xavier church building on 6th Avenue will close permanently on March 10th following the 5 p.m. vigil Mass. Will you join me in praying for the St. Francis Xavier parishioners who will call the new St. Francis their new spiritual home?

In the run up to the March 11 dedication, we will be praying for each other and in Thanksgiving to God for these buildings and for the new one in our future. Lent will be bring changes to be sure. Changes to where we worship but also, with God's help, changes to the way we live. May God make it so!

Stay tuned for details about the dedication and the transition to our new parish home. May God bless you this Lenten season!

St. Francis Xavier, pray for us!

In Christ,



Rev. Brian O'Brien  
Pastor, St. Francis Xavier Catholic Church



# The Legacy of a Good Cindy



*In addition to her service as Business Manager, Cindy Beckman has spent the past 15 years serving as the Bazaar Chair for St. Francis Xavier.*

“Well done, my good and faithful servant” (Matthew 25:21). After 18 years of dedicated service to our St. Francis Xavier community, these are the words that Business Manager Cindy Beckman hopes to leave behind upon her official retirement on Feb. 6.

Cindy first came to our community 20 years ago, when she and her family moved here from Louisville, Ky. in order to be closer to home. Seeking a means to help support her family financially, a friend mentioned that the parish was looking for an office secretary.

“I was really reluctant at first to work for the church because I really didn’t feel worthy,” Cindy says. “But I eventually said ‘yes’ and it was definitely the best decision that I ever made.”

Initially hired to work three days a week, Cindy’s job quickly evolved to include increasing responsibilities, growing into a full-time position. From paper work and paying the bills, answering the phones and greeting visitors, recording sacraments in the church registry, and maintaining the weekly bulletin, Cindy has worn many different hats throughout her time at St. Francis Xavier. For many of us, she has been the face of our parish, ever present to answer questions or connect us with the right people or ministry. And that, says Cindy, is what she hopes to be remembered for more than anything else.

“Sure, I was the lady who kept the books – but more than that, I want to be remembered as someone who used her talents and laid a good foundation for our parish as we grew and moved on, that I was a good servant,” Cindy says. “A lot of our parishioners have called me over the years if they have a question. I’ve been a sort of ambassador of the parish for a lot of people and it has been such a privilege and a blessing.”

# Lead and Faithful Servant Beckman

And in being that ambassador, adds Cindy, she's been blessed to meet and learn from so many beautiful people — people who unselfishly give of their time and talents in truly inspiring ways; people who have supported her through some of life's most difficult moments and who continue to encourage her in her own faith journey.

"I've grown to consider a lot of the people of the parish my extended family," Cindy says. "Just having that support in life, especially during difficult times like when my father passed away six years ago, has been a real blessing for me. I've never really felt comfortable in any other parish that I've belonged to except this one. I'm sure that had a lot to do with the fact that I worked here. But even still, I've always been amazed by the number of people who have stepped up to offer help over the years. It's difficult at times for staff to keep up with everything, but so many people willingly step up to do extra for the church on top of their jobs and other responsibilities."

And though Cindy does hope to enjoy a well-deserved rest after her retirement, she plans to follow in those parishioners' example by continuing to give to the community in whatever ways she can, just as she has here in the parish office for all of these years.

"It has been such a gift to be able to serve the people," Cindy says. "I really do feel like the office and what we do in the office is so much more than a job. It's not all about paperwork, writing checks or doing the bulletin. Ultimately, it's a ministry because we come in contact with so many people for so many different things, and over time, we become involved in parishioners' lives in nearly every aspect. So I truly do see it as a ministry and I hope that I've been able to serve that ministry well over the years."

*"I've always been amazed by the number of people who have stepped up to offer help over the years. It's difficult at times for staff to keep up with everything, but so many people willingly step up to do extra for the church on top of their jobs and other responsibilities."*  
— Cindy Beckman

## A Significant Moment in Our Prayer

# *The Presentation of the Gifts*

Occasionally, you might hear someone jokingly refer to “half-time” during Mass – the interval following the Prayers of the Faithful, as the Liturgy of the Eucharist begins. It can be easy, even tempting, to zone out as you sit, waiting for the collection basket to make its way to your pew.

But if you pay attention, you’ll have the opportunity to enter into something deeper – a significant moment in our prayer.

It’s mentioned by St. Justin Martyr, one of the earliest Christian writers, when describing the Mass in the second century, “Bread is brought up and wine and water...”

This practice, of people bringing up the gifts, has been part of our Catholic tradition from the very beginning. Although we might think of this action as being merely practical, in reality, it serves a much deeper spiritual purpose.

Each Sunday Mass, someone is chosen, whether an usher, or another member of the parish, to bring forward “the gifts” – bread, wine, and in many cases, the collection of money that has been gathered moments before, from the generosity of the congregation. These gifts not only symbolize, but also in reality, are the work of human hands. The bread and wine are fruit of God’s creation, which, through the effort of human hands, are made into the gifts that we present to the Lord.

Certainly, the collection that is presented to the priest also serves to represent the work and sacrifices of the previous week. Sharing our monetary “treasures” is one of the ways that we embrace stewardship. It’s an opportunity to generously give back to the Lord, from the fruit of our work.



In his book *What Happens At Mass*, Fr. Jeremy Driscoll, OSB explains, “...We should not think of the collection of money at this point as some sort of banal, dirty but necessary affair. Money is our work. Money is hours of our lives. And now we give it away, we sacrifice it, for the work of the Church.”

In his letter to the Romans, St. Paul instructs Christians to “offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God” (Romans 12:1).

The physical act of carrying the gifts forward to the priest is meant to

serve as a tangible reminder of the fact that we are all called to stewardship. We are all called to present to God our lives – our work, our talents, the struggles and victories of the past week – as an offering and gift to God.

Those who bring forward the gifts each week have the privilege and responsibility of remembering what their action represents – that we are called to give generously of our time, talent and treasure to God, who gives us His very self, at Mass. And for those sitting in the pews, tempted to “check out” for a few minutes, seeing the gifts being brought forward should serve as a powerful reminder to offer our lives back to God, through serving and honoring Him.

So next week, don’t just sit back and wait for the “half-time show.” Come to Mass a few minutes early and approach an usher to ask if you and/or your family may bring up the gifts that week. Don’t be surprised if you start to notice a change in your heart and a desire to be even more generous with God in the coming week!

*The physical act of carrying the gifts forward to the priest is meant to serve as a tangible reminder of the fact that we are all called to stewardship. We are all called to present to God our lives – our work, our talents, the struggles and victories of the past week – as an offering and gift to God.*

# An Update on Our New Facility Project

**N**abholz Construction Co., our general contractor, has confirmed that we may expect occupancy of our new church facility the third week of this month, although there will remain a substantial number of uncompleted construction items. Given this, we continue to target Sunday, March 11, as the target date for dedication of this new church. The cold weather during January has slowed progress on outdoor items, including finishing the flat copper roof over the west stairwell to the balcony, concrete paving of sidewalk areas in front of the church, laying asphalt in the parking and driveway areas, completing installation of the irrigation system, and installation of remaining gutter downspouts. In spite of this, installation of railings on the east side of the gym has begun (Photos 1 and 2), and a contract for installation of volleyball court fencing has been finalized. Laying of ceramic tile in the sanctuary, transepts and side aisles of the nave is well underway (Photos 3 and 4), and finishing of the nave ceiling is underway (Photo 5).

We're getting close! Please continue with your prayers and financial support.



*(left) Photo 1, Jan. 12, new railings along walk east of gym and east sidewalk leading to Education Wing, looking southwest, by Larry Hoberock*



*(right) Photo 2, Jan. 12, new railings along walk east of gym and east sidewalk leading to Education Wing, looking northeast, by Larry Hoberock*



*continued on back cover*

# THE CATHOLIC COMMUNITY OF STILLWATER

## St. Francis Xavier Catholic Church

PO Box 909 • Stillwater, OK 74076

Web: [www.stfrancisxavierstillwater.org](http://www.stfrancisxavierstillwater.org)

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## St. John University Parish and Catholic Student Center

201 N. Knoblock St. • Stillwater, OK 74075

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Phone: (405) 372-6408

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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, 5:30 - 6:30 p.m.

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

### St. John the Evangelist

#### Sunday Mass

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

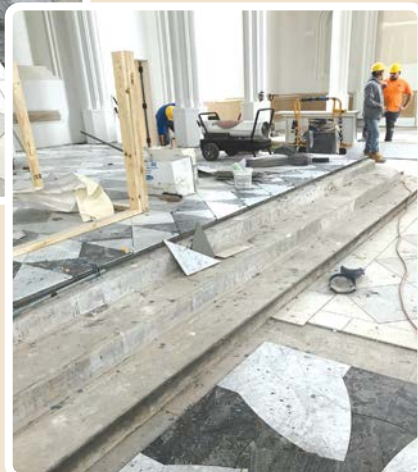
Saturday, 4:30 - 5:30 p.m.

Change Service Requested

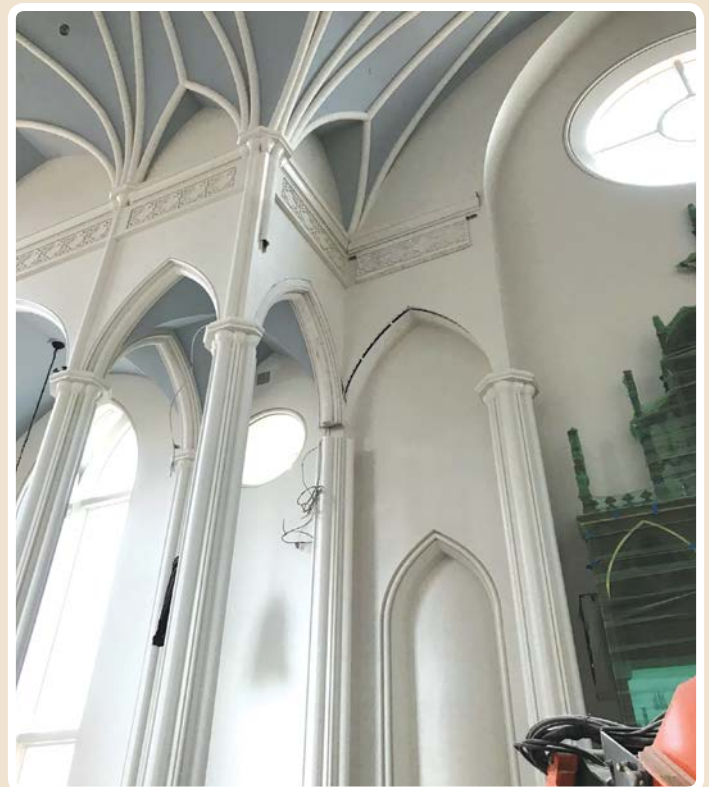
## Update *continued from page 7*



*(left) Photo 3, Jan. 15, progress on ceramic floor tile at west side aisle in nave, looking north, by Mark Pruitt*



*(right) Photo 4, Jan. 15, progress on ceramic floor tile in sanctuary, looking northeast, by Mark Pruitt*



*Photo 5, Jan. 15, progress on ceiling west of sanctuary and reredos, looking northeast, by Mark Pruitt*