



The Crossroads Messenger

The official newsletter of St. Francis Xavier Catholic Church

• Mount Washington, Kentucky

Fall 2026



Lauren Battcher
Director of Religious Education

Summer was full of faith, fun, and adventure for the children of St. Francis Xavier and our community during Rainforest Falls VBS! From June 15-18, more than 100

children journeyed into an Amazon rainforest adventure to discover who God is. Throughout the week, they explored the wonderful truths that God is our Creator, all-knowing, loving, eternal, and our safe place.

Each day was filled with exciting Bible stories, hands-on science experiments, games, crafts, music, and snacks that helped bring these truths to life. It was a joy to watch children grow in their faith while

building new friendships and creating lasting memories.

To top off an incredible week, the Mt. Washington Fire Department surprised everyone by creating our very own Rainforest Falls “waterfall!” The children had a blast cooling off and celebrating a wonderful week together.

As summer comes to a close, we hope all of our Children’s Ministry families and volunteers have enjoyed a season of rest and renewal.

We are excited to welcome everyone back for Wednesday Night Children’s Faith Formation, beginning September 2. We look forward to another year of growing in faith, building friendships, and helping our children come to know and love Jesus more each week. We can’t wait to see you there!



Birthed Faith



Father's Fingerprints

When teaching future permanent deacons how to preach this summer I came across an interesting question from a student in my class. I had just finished sharing that according to St. Paul in his letter to the Romans faith is “born from preaching.” Here is the exact quote: (Romans 10:17), “**Thus faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the word of Christ.**” This was a part of a larger point I was making in saying that faith is born at the pulpit from the proclamation and preaching of the Gospel (the Good News of Jesus’ Paschal Mystery) and then is nourished at the altar. The student’s question to me was this, “Can faith only be born from preaching or can it be birthed another way?”

I found this to be an interesting question because of some things I learned at this year’s Presbyteral Assembly with Archbishop Fabre at the beginning of the summer concerning young people in their 20’s and 30’s. This is a group of people who span between Generation Z (born between 1997 and 2009) and the Alpha Generation (born in or after 2010). For perspective, the start of the Alpha Generation coincides with the debut of iPads and will be the first generation to never know a time without social media!

While we can find optimistic online assessments such as this statement concerning the Alpha Generation, “With Generation Alpha, expect to see a new group of people who are more accepting of differences, more socially adept, tech-savvy, and perhaps more cognizant of complex issues like climate change. Though that may sound like a lot to saddle on a single generation, these spritely young people will likely turn out to be even more extraordinary than anyone could have guessed.” [Who Is Generation Alpha? What Parents Should Know? by Sarah Cottrell. Parents. February 20, 2026], our Assembly presenter painted another reality.

We were told that statistically young people today in their 20’s and 30’s find themselves in a crisis of faith. Many have little or no trust in anyone, having been raised with no religious roots within a society skeptical of truth. Experiencing the empty promise of technology to connect them with others, they find themselves profoundly lonely. Although they may have many “followers”, they actually have very few real friends. Raised in a reality where everything they do

can be captured on camera and posted for all to see forever, they are risk-avoidant. (It was even said that many don’t dance because they never learned how and are afraid of being captured on camera doing it poorly!)

Interestingly, this same group of untrusting, lonely, risk-avoidant people are demonstrating a keen attraction to and admiration for Eucharistic Adoration and the rituals that surround it. We were told that these young people are drawn to Catholicism’s historicity in their search for real Truth. They may not have a theological understanding of ritual aspects of Adoration (such as the meaning and use of incense) but they find the experience “peaceful.” Raised on images they take in reality visually and not audibly (a real challenge to preachers!), yet they have an instinct that there must be more to life than the health, wealth, and revenge which society tells them they should obsess over.

All of this is the background I found myself against when asked by my student, “Can faith only be born from preaching or can it be birthed another way?” Ultimately, the Holy Spirit led me to another letter of St. Paul for insight: Hebrews 11:1 (“**Faith is the realization of what is hoped for and evidence of things not seen.**”) I find myself wondering if perhaps today’s young people who find such peace in the silence and ritual of Eucharistic Adoration are experiencing a birth of hope in the practice, a hope that can then become an openness to the possibility of faith. This hope can then be “realized” into faith through the proclamation (preaching) of the Good News of Jesus Christ. I wonder.

In the end, just as when I answer the question of whether Confession is the only way God can forgive and I say, “God can forgive however and whenever God wants, we simply believe Confession is a SURE means of experiencing God’s forgiveness.” So too, I am hesitant to definitively state faith is ONLY born of preaching. (God can create anything from nothing.) However, I can unreservedly say preaching is a SURE way faith is born in anyone searching in hope for Truth. May our restless hearts rest in Thee, O Lord.

Fr. Jeff



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Office Hours

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

www.sfxmw.com



Pinted-Sized Parishoners



Earl Baker

Deacon's Desk

There are many ministries available here at SFX which allow Parishioners to grow in their faith life and to serve their human needs. For example, there are the Bible Study groups, Community Outreach Program, the Women's Club, Catholic Men's Fellowship, Prayer Blanket Ministry, the JOY

(Just Older Youth) Club, the Youth Group, and Children's Faith Formation just to name a few. In fact, our Parish mission states "We are a welcoming community of faith. We are dedicated to the celebration of the sacraments and the teachings of the Church. We serve the spiritual, emotional, intellectual, and physical needs of our Parishioners. Our goal is to meet these needs through various Parish organizations and through community ministries."

As Catholics, we know that the home contains the domestic church—it houses the families that teach children how to believe

in God, to pray, and to live according to the Catholic faith. And to support SFX families with infants and toddlers, a new ministry has begun and is called "Pint-Sized Parishoners". This is an opportunity to assist these families in raising their children in the Catholic faith. Their gatherings will consist of sharing a potluck meal, socializing, learning activities and family fun. Ben and Joanne Pitcher and Matthew and Bethany Vogel have graciously volunteered to coordinate the meetings which will be held about once a month. Watch for a bulletin notice if you think that your family or another family that you know would be interested in this opportunity.

While the ministry is in its early stages of formation, the group is open to any ideas to share the Catholic faith, such as sharing children's bible stories of Jesus' life, stories of the saints, or even enjoying play time together on campus or off campus at a nearby park to experience the beauty of God's creation.

Please consider reaching out to other young couples in the Parish that may like to be a part of this group. May God bless us in all of our Parish ministries!

The Art Of A Good Catholic Conversation: Sharing Our Faith Naturally



Paula Silliman
Pastoral Associate

Throughout the Gospels, Jesus was a master of conversation. He met people where they were: fishermen at the shore, a tax collector in a tree, disciples walking a dusty road, and strangers gathered around a dinner table. He asked questions, listened carefully, and spoke the truth with both clarity and compassion. Rarely did he begin with a lecture. He began with a relationship.

The Church has always understood that faith is shared person to person. Long before podcasts and livestreams, the Good News was spread because ordinary believers talked about what Christ had done in their lives. Most of us will never preach from the ambo, but all of us can witness through everyday conversation.

So, what makes for a good Catholic conversation?

Listen. Listen more than you speak. Listening is one of the greatest acts of charity. People are often more open to hearing about faith after they know they have been truly heard.

Be natural. You don't need to quote the Catechism. Speak about how prayer has sustained you, how Sunday Eucharist gives your week direction, or how God's mercy has surprised you.

Authenticity is more persuasive than polished speeches.

Keep hope at the center. The world today has plenty of anxiety and division. A good Catholic conversation should leave people with a sense that God is present and still at work.

Remember, a smile goes a long way. Pope Francis stated that an evangelizer should not look like someone who has just returned from a funeral (*Evangelii Gaudium*). Joy is contagious. So, greet the new family, linger over coffee after Mass, or check in with someone sitting alone. You never know when an ordinary conversation may become an extraordinary encounter with Christ.

After all, the Holy Spirit has been

known to work through coffee, donuts, and conversations just as effectively as through a carefully prepared homily. Sometimes the most important thing we can do is simply say, "Tell me your story," and trust that God will take it from there.



Reprinted from Sycamore.fm



A Parish Tribute To Helen



Fr. Dale Cieslik

I first met Helen when I arrived at St. Francis Xavier Church in 2012. She was the Business Manager of the Parish and was 'the key person' to help me make transition from St. Elizabeth Seton Church.

As I learned about my colleague in ministry, Helen was a dedicated and steadfast person in her commitments. By nature, she was a quiet introvert but was always approachable by staff and Parishioners in lots of confidential and trusting ways.

Beyond the "call of duty", Helen brought about the present awareness and work of the Little Way Pregnancy Center (to whom she was personally dedicated) as well as Love the Hungry programs to SFX. It was in her nature to reach out in a ministry-type way to those on the Parish staff, the Parish-at-large, colleagues at ArchLou.org and the Community of Mount Washington. Helen and I rejoiced in watching the 'one flashing yellow-light town' of Mt. Washington grow and thrive (as it continues to do today). As a businesswoman, Helen always knew who in the Parish could be helpful stewards and resourceful to any Parish project and she was always willing to do 'The Ask' in the Parish's name. I saw that a lot in her work for The Taste of St. Francis Xavier, summer picnics, Youth Group fundraising needs, Religious Education for the kids, the campus enhancements of signage, faithfulness to the work of the Finance Committee (and the endless internal and external audits), the board of The Xavier Center, Parish staff meetings, the list is truly endless.

During her tenure, Helen completed, with great foresight and sheer tenacity, TWO capital campaigns for the Parish of SFX: the first one was for the current church worship space and the second one for The Xavier Center built during the challenges of the Covid years. Follow-up and follow-thru were the steps that Helen took on any of her commitments. I saw her step-up much more than step-aside in her prayer and work (ora et labora). I admired her positive 'can-do' attitude because it was rooted in her faith which can be traced to her New Haven (Kentucky Holy Land) roots.

There are just some people who, it is most difficult to realize, are now with God and no longer at the end of an email, text, or voice mail. Helen is one of those people to me. I miss her swift email responses, dry wit, love of dark chocolate and coffee. In short, our communal loss is truly heaven's gain.

God bless us in our remembering of Helen Hagan, a servant leader.

Miles Spalding

Helen Hagan was employed at St. Francis Xavoer from July 2005 to November 2022. She was hired by Father Scott Wimsett on the recommendation of his aunt, Sister George Mary. Father Scott and Helen had been friends since their elementary school days at St. Catherine's in New Haven, KY. Prior to working at St. Francis Xavier, Helen enjoyed successful careers as a teacher for people with disabilities and in marketing and sales for IBM. She was instrumental in the capital campaigns for the building of the new church, the construction of the Xavier Center, and renovation of the upper Parish hall. It was a proud day in her tenure when the church loan was paid in full. She brought the Love the Hungry program to SFX for the first time in 2020. Helen put as much love and energy into her family as she did her work. Her love, compassion and business acumen made Helen the amazing person she was.

When reflecting on the legacy of Helen Hagan, a passage from Khalil Gibran reminds us that we are only caretakers of the passing fire. "You are the bows from which your children as living arrows are sent forth. The archer sees the mark upon the path of the infinite, and He bends you with His might that His arrows may go swift and far. Let your bending in the archer's hand be for gladness; for even as He loves the arrow that flies, so He loves also the bow that is stable." Helen was that stable bow that guided the direction of our faith community and inspired us to dream bigger and to achieve greater things for the glory of God.

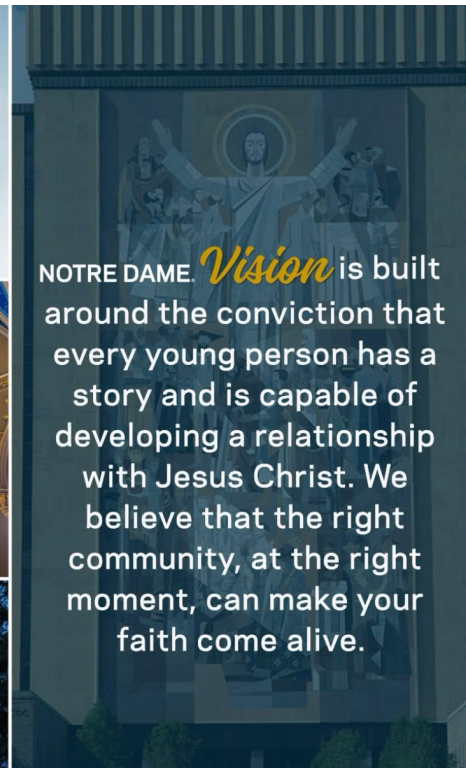
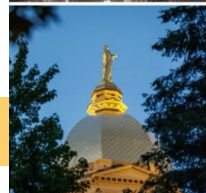
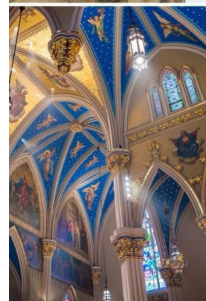
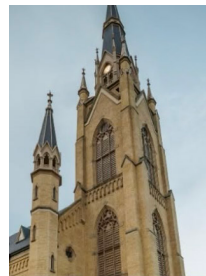
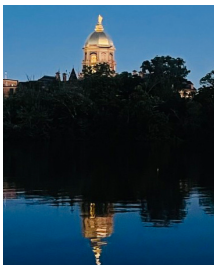


Vision 2026

Have you ever experienced something that made you think in a new way or see the world in a different way? Some people speak of amazing epiphanies or shocking moments of realization. More often than not, we gradually come to a new realization or world views. Whether this new awareness occurs in the form of rolling thunder or a tiny whisper in the wind, there is usually a primary source of inspiration. For many of the St. Francis Xavier youth who attended the Notre Dame Vision retreat, opportunities for personal and spiritual growth came in waves.

Eight students and three adults from St Francis Xavier attended the Notre Dame Vision retreat over the last weekend of June. The goal of the retreat was to give our youth group a chance to grow in their Catholic faith while connecting with other young people from across the country who share similar values. By attending for a full week, the kids were able to step away from the distractions of everyday life, strengthen their relationship with God and reflect on how God may be calling each of them to use their own unique gifts to spread His word.

The Notre Dame Vision retreat consisted of representatives from the U.S., Canada, India and Spain. Upon arriving, all of the kids were assigned





a small group that had 6-8 kids. During the week the students studied, discussed and attended all activities with their small groups. All eight of the SFX students were put in separate groups. The SFX youth group spoke of the relationships that they developed with their groups and how close they all became.

The Notre Dame Vision retreat is well known retreat in Catholic Youth circles. Noted for its positive outcomes and student appeal, this retreat was greatly anticipated by our youth group. Everything that the youth group experienced, whether it be classes, keynote speakers, daily Mass, rosary, small group discussions or

entertainment events were fantastic. Lisa Pence, the Youth Group leader, said she will always remember the evening Mass that occurred on the first full day. All students and adults attending the conference went to Mass at the seminary. "It literally brought tears to my eyes to see 340 teens gathered together loudly and joyfully proclaiming their love for Jesus Christ. It was truly beautiful!"

Plans are already being made to send a Youth Group from SFX to the Notre Dame Vision retreat in 2027. Thanks to Lisa Pence, the chaperones and the students who helped make this retreat a memory for a lifetime.



Picnic Perfection

2026 SummerFest Recap



Wende Aubrey
Engagement Coordinator

Our heartfelt thanks go out to everyone who helped make St. Francis Xavier SummerFest 2026, held on June 6, an incredible success! Thanks to the generosity, hard work, and enthusiasm of our Parish family and community, this year's festival was filled with fellowship, fun, and lasting memories.

Guests enjoyed a full evening of activities and attractions, including the exciting \$20,000 Super Raffle, the always-popular Cake Wheel, the Gift Card and Bath & Beauty Booths, and plenty of excitement at the Split the Pot, Poker and Beat the Dealer games. Families with children spent the evening enjoying the inflatables and kids' games, creating smiles for our youngest festival-goers.

One of the day's highlights was the delicious Chicken Dinner prepared by our Knights of Columbus and served by our dedicated kitchen volunteers. Their outstanding meal was enjoyed by many and marked the return of a SummerFest favorite.

As the evening continued, the Five Below Band kept the crowd entertained with fantastic live music that had people singing along and enjoying the wonderful atmosphere. Their performance was the perfect way to cap off a beautiful day of celebration.

SummerFest simply would not be possible without the countless volunteers who gave their time before, during, and after the event. We are deeply grateful to our SummerFest Chairs, booth captains, committee members, Parish staff, donors, and every volunteer who worked so tirelessly to make the festival a success. We also extend our sincere appreciation to everyone who attended, purchased raffle tickets, enjoyed the food and games, and supported our Parish through their participation.

Events like SummerFest are about much more than fundraising. They strengthen our Parish community, bring together families and friends, welcome new faces, and remind us of the joy of sharing our faith through fellowship and service.

Thank you to everyone who made St. Francis Xavier SummerFest 2026 such a memorable day. We are truly blessed by your generosity and support, and we look forward to celebrating together again next year!







August 15

The Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Miles Spalding

Mark your calendars for August 15th, which is the Feast of the Assumption. This is the date that Catholics have long celebrated as the Assumption of the Virgin Mary. The Feast of the Assumption celebrates both the joyful parting of Mary from this life after her natural death, and her assumption bodily into heaven. There is a key distinction between the terms ascension and assumption. Ascension refers to Jesus Christ rising to Heaven by his own divine power. On the other hand, Assumption refers to the Virgin Mary being taken up into Heaven by the power and grace of God.

If you are a lifelong Catholic, you may feel like you know all there is to know about the Feast of the Assumption, but did you know the Bible does not directly describe Mary's assumption?

Many Christians connect to the verse in the Book of Revelation that mentions a woman in heaven who wears a crown of stars as Mary. Another interesting fact is that many people think Mary never died. However, official church teaching states she did die. The Eastern Church calls this feast the Dormition (falling asleep) of Mary. Many people think that the Feast of the Assumption has been celebrated on August 15 for

centuries, when in actuality, this feast did not become dogma until 1950 under Pope Pius XII.

Why is Mary so important to us in this day and age? She represents the ideals of purity, obedience, and ultimate self-giving love that all Christians should aspire to. Mary is highly relatable. Scripture describes her as a fully human woman who felt deep pain. Through our prayers, we see her as someone who can intercede for us to God because of her unique and loving connection to our Lord, Jesus Christ. She is the ideal teacher, who by her example, lights the way to the Father.

For these reasons, it is especially important that we honor Mary on her Feast Day. Let us make every effort to attend Mass at St. Francis Xavier on August 15 at 9 a.m., and pray to Mary on her special day!



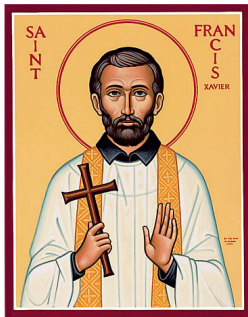
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Friends Of Saint Francis

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

One could say that our patron, St. Francis Xavier, formed the first Christian Joy Club. From 1542 to 1552, he travelled to what is today India, Malasia, Japan and China. He spread the good news to the children in Goa, India by walking through the streets ringing a bell, inviting children to hear the word of God and explaining the catechism to them. He travelled to the pearl fisheries on the southern coast of India to preach the Good News.



Tina Stewart, a member of our Parish family, has travelled no fewer miles than St. Francis Xavier. As the chairperson of the Joy Club, she guides an important ministry for Parishioners 55 years and older. You may be asking, what is the Joy Club? It is an outward looking club whose goal it is to bring members of our faith family together for fellowship, friendship, food and adventure. The club meets on the first Tuesday of the month to have a potluck meal in the lower Parish Hall. The event typically includes an activity like playing cards or bingo and provides a venue for Parishioners to catch up with old friends or make new ones. Other activities have included visiting Mike Linings and having a picnic at the Parklands.

Perhaps the highlight of the Joy Club is the

trips they take together, usually one in the spring and one in the fall. Past trips include Mt. Rushmore, the Badlands, Cape Cod, Mackinac Island, Savannah, St. Augustine, Jacksonville, Albuquerque, Yellowstone, and Charleston, SC. If you are new St. Francis Xavier or an "old timer" who just wants to get out and you are looking for an easy way to meet like-minded people, the Joy Club may be the just what you need.

Tina grew up as a "cradle Catholic," and attended St. Clement School. She married her husband Charlie (now deceased) in 1981. She has two sons, Brian and Aaron, eight grandchildren and two great grandchildren. She moved to Mount Washington in 2018 and joined St. Francis Xavier that year. In addition to leading the Joy Club, Tina is on the Bereavement Committee. Tina is humble about her contributions to St. Francis Xavier, but people like Tina are the thread that holds everything together. She constantly demonstrates that she is a friend of St. Francis Xavier by the pattern of her life.





Children's Faith Formation

Register by August 28 for Sept. 2 start

Children's Faith Formation (CFF) Registration is open! Classess will resume Wednesday Sept. 2, from 6:45-8:45 p.m. Registration is online at www.sfxmw.com/news-events/childrens-faith-formation-registration/

Join us for a Meet The Teacher Donut Fellowship on August 30, after the 9 a.m. Mass, and meet with Faith Formation volunteers and other families who will share the '26-'27 CFF journey!

Fall Bunco Scheduled For Sept. 10

St. Francis Xavier Women's Club is having the Fall Bunco on Thursday, September 10th! The Xavier Center doors open at 5:30 and Bunco starts at 6:30. You must be 18 for admission. The dice are calling, and they said your name! Join us for a night of rolling, laughing, snacking, and pretending we totally meant to roll that. No experience required—just bring your lucky vibes and your sense of humor. There are exciting prizes to win, so bring your spouse or a friend! Come for the Bunco, stay for the laughs... and maybe a little friendly competition. See you there!



Come "Hear The Spirit" At Annual Concert



Carrie Gary
Director of Worship

Mark your calendars for Sunday, September 27, and join us for Hear It for the Spirit!, an inspiring afternoon of music centered on this year's theme, "Here I Am." Through both sacred and uplifting secular selections, we will reflect on the call to each of us and our response to serve with open hearts and willing spirits.

Our Parish music ministry will present a variety of inspiring songs that celebrate faith, hope, love, courage, and the many ways God works through our lives. Whether you're a longtime lover of choral music or simply looking for an uplifting afternoon, everyone is warmly invited.

Following the concert, our Youth Group will host a cookout featuring hot dogs, hamburgers, chips, and water. Stay after the performance to enjoy good food, fellowship, and the opportunity to spend time with our Parish family.

Invite your family, friends, and neighbors to this joyful afternoon of music, community, and celebration as together we answer His call: "Here I Am." We look forward to sharing this special event with you!

