



# Faith in Education



## Parish School Board Established

A parish school board has been established to advise Fr. Dan in all areas relative to the development, implementation and operations of our future St. Francis of Assisi School.

The Board accomplishes its work through four committees:

**Operations Committee:** Develop a school mission statement, a school program outline, a school governance process, a school admissions policy, a school curriculum and a plan to staff the school.

**Facilities Planning Committee:** Develop and implement a plan for the expansion of St. Francis of Assisi facilities, including a K-8 school.

**Financial Planning Committee:** Develop the overall financial plan for the school.

**Capital Campaign Committee:** Develop and implement a capital campaign for expanded parish facilities, including a parish school.

You are asked to think about and pray about participating on one of these committees. If you are interested in being considered for any one of these committees, please fill out the enclosed School Volunteer Application.

## Inside

*Vision from Fr. Dan*

*Volunteer application*

*Information meetings*

# Our Pastor's Vision of a Franciscan School



In the last issue of *Faith in Education*, I shared with you my belief that a parochial school at St. Francis would be an important addition to the mission of our community. The time has come for us to respond to the request of so many of our parents to assist them in a more direct way with the moral instruction of their children. And I believe, as a Franciscan parish, we can do so in a way that is unique. In

the history of the Church, the Franciscan movement, since its beginnings in the 13th century, has been very much involved in the ministry of education. Some of the Church's greatest theologians, philosophers, scientists, mathematicians, artists, musicians and poets have been those touched by the spirit of St. Francis. Such is the case in our own day, as well. Currently in the province to which I belong, there are as many friars involved in the full-time ministry of education as there are in parish ministry.

But there is something *unique*, something *distinctive* about the Franciscan approach to education, just as there is something unique, something distinctive about the Franciscan approach to parish ministry. I'd like to briefly address what I would consider to be something of the unique and distinctive spirituality of St. Francis, that I believe many in our parish have come to know as they have attempted to live out our current *Mission Statement*. I would also like to tell you why I believe the addition of a Franciscan school to our parish, at this time in our history, could be a wonderful outgrowth of the good that God has begun in us.

**FIRST**, the Franciscan spirit as we have come to know it in our parish is rooted primarily in Francis' profound experience of the *Goodness of God*. Because of this experience of God as loving and not condemning, Francis possessed a rare sense of the dignity of every

human person. Each person created by God was a reflection, for Francis, of Christ. Many of us here at St. Francis share that vision of life. And therefore, a

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Franciscan school in our parish, above all, would need be one that would emphasize the dignity and value of each person. The singular gifts and talents of each student would need be cultivated.

Special attention would always need be given to special needs.

To be a significant influence in the unfolding of a child's personhood would be for me to define a Franciscan school community. But, the Franciscan tradition of education teaches that the recognition of human dignity can be significantly furthered through an academic curriculum which reflects excellence in all its parts. A Franciscan school is one that would need be convinced that the greater the quality of its academic program, and its commitment to the arts, the more effective vehicle it would have to free the student of prejudice, slavery to false values and a limited understanding of his or her personal worth. A Franciscan student learns to love beauty and goodness!

But, not only did St. Francis give the Church a clear understanding of human dignity, he also taught a fresh recognition of the sacredness of creation as a reflection of the goodness of God.

Francis loved creation because it reflected the God whom he loved. A Franciscan school would see as a priority a commitment to teaching respect for the environment. It would teach students to be wise stewards by creating an atmosphere of learning that would be supportive of prayer, reflection and wholeness in surroundings that were simple.

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**SECOND**, St. Francis, led by the *Spirit of God*, experienced a *freedom* which to this day is a genuine characteristic of his spirituality. He believed that he was personally being led by God, and his openness to the Lord's direction resulted in a unique spirit of freedom,

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renewal, spontaneity and adventure. A Franciscan school would certainly be one that created a learning environment that was open, spontaneous and flexible. In teaching that the Spirit of God is within each person, it would develop a curriculum *for students and parents alike*

that would emphasize collaboration, shared leadership and authority that is derived through service to the community.

**THIRD**, the way of *faith and radical self-emptying* was for St. Francis the *only* response to God's love in sending Jesus Christ to be his Savior. And St. Francis followed Jesus in a unique way. He embraced lepers and dedicated his life to serving the poor. He was a peacemaker. Proclaiming peace, and efforts to establish it, were the essence of his vocation. If a school were to be Franciscan, it would constantly need to identify and serve the poor, be they made poor by class structure, or race, or by the disintegration of family life or by their own choices in life. A Franciscan School could never be a haven for those who would dichotomize social justice from the mandate of the Gospel. A Franciscan School would need always shape its curriculum to reflect the Beatitudes of Jesus Christ and thus prepare its students, through instruction and an *extensive program of outreach* to serve the poor, the unwanted, the suffering, the dispossessed. Bringing an occasional can of string beans to class to feed the hungry would never suffice in a Franciscan School as a pedagogy of Gospel learning any more than an occasional contribution to charity would suffice in a Franciscan parish. Likewise, a school formed in the spirit of Francis would need endow itself through sacrificial giving to assure that the most needy in the area would never be denied admission.

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**AND FINALLY**, given what I've said of Francis' response to the goodness of God and his perception of being led by the Spirit as he followed in the footsteps of Christ, perhaps there is no other more visible characteristic among those reflecting a Franciscan spirit than that of *fraternity*. The genius of St. Francis was his quiet and simple example of building a brotherhood where one had no hesitation in telling another ones

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need and where forgiveness was experienced even before the asking. A Franciscan "spirit of community" is always one that is rooted in a fundamental

experience of reconciliation. To forgive is to know the depths of God's love and in that, to continually be committed to renewing human relationships, the only way to create hope for future living. It is a response to the Spirit's movement among us. Such was the essential inspiration of the life of St. Francis.

A Franciscan school, a Franciscan school community, would need be based on Francis' vision of fraternity. It would have to be rooted in the belief that we are all loved by God and formed in the image of Jesus, no matter what our faith or lack of it. In other words, it would need be ecumenical, open to all and continually attentive to not becoming a community turned-in on itself. It would need always be reconciling. A Franciscan School would be one, then, in which warm concern for others, genuine openness, mutual trust and loving friendships are "caught as well as taught." Its strength would be built on fraternity and found in the manner in which faculty, students and parents would confront their differences and the hurts which spring from the weaknesses of the human condition. The hallmark of true fraternity is always reconciliation. A Franciscan School would, of necessity, have to teach that all human persons are equal, that all are in service of one another, that all equally share in the human condition as well as the experience of God's grace. (Continued on pg 4)

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**Faith in Education**  
Newsletter



## Information Meetings

Find out more about the proposed school:

<u>Date</u>	<u>Day</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Place</u>
April 22	Wed.	7:30 PM	Church
May 19	Tues.	7:30 PM	Church

These meetings will include a presentation on the Vision for a Franciscan School and a question and answer period. The meetings are scheduled on two dates so that as many parishioners as possible will be able to attend. The agenda for both meetings are identical.

## Facilities Plan

The Facilities Planning Committee will conduct a survey of all parish ministries in order to gather information for a long range facilities plan. As our parish grows and plans for a school are made, we need to consider all of our future needs for additional facilities. Any future building must be multipurpose so that our many ministries can have room to meet the needs of the future.

## Vision (cont'd)

What I have attempted to share with you is my vision as a follower of St. Francis. And, quite frankly, it is a vision that I have experienced more deeply in the past five years of my life serving here in your midst than I had experienced in the twenty-five years of Franciscan living that preceded my becoming a member of this parish. Were the vision of a Franciscan School to become a reality in any parish, I believe it could be in ours. For the spirit of St. Francis lives in this place and will continue to live here even if the day were to ever come that brown-robed friars no longer minister here. The spirituality of Francis rooted here has made this community of faith unique and special to many, and has enabled this parish to reach out and tend to the needs and demands that have come its way in the past.

The *new* need, as expressed by so many in our community, for a parochial school here at St. Francis, I believe is one that we can tend to. I believe it is a natural outgrowth of our mission and one that, though challenging to meet, will not misdirect our mission. It will only enhance it.

*Don*

# School Volunteer Application

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
(Last) (First) (Middle)

Address \_\_\_\_\_  
(Street) (City) (State) (Zip)

Home Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Work Phone \_\_\_\_\_ FAX \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail Address \_\_\_\_\_

- Interest Area:            Operations Committee            \_\_\_\_\_  
(Check One)            Facilities Planning Committee            \_\_\_\_\_  
                                 Financial Planning Committee            \_\_\_\_\_  
                                 Capital Campaign Committee            \_\_\_\_\_  
                                 Other (specify)            \_\_\_\_\_

Education, Work Experience, Volunteer Experience, Hobbies, Talents and Skills related to Interest Area:

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Other Education, Work Experience and Volunteer Experience: \_\_\_\_\_

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Please either mail this application to the parish office:  
St. Francis of Assisi School  
11401 Leesville Road  
Raleigh, NC 27613  
or bring it to the receptionist desk at the main entrance of the church building.