



The Feast of the Annunciation

The Feast of the Annunciation stained-glass window was sponsored by Frank Xavier Sweitzer's family. Frank was an older brother to John, featured in a previous newsletter article about the window with Mother Mary and her mother, St. Anne.

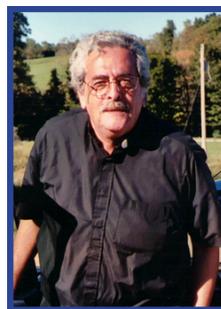
Frank was born in Germany and came to America around 1861 at the outbreak of the Civil War. He enlisted and served in the war. Toward the end of the war, he returned to Germany and immediately came back to America with his younger brother, John. Though initially living in Ohio for a short time, Frank and John found their way to Cobden, where they settled and lived for the rest of their lives.

Frank was born on November 20, 1840, in Germany, and died on January 19, 1899, in Cobden. Only 58 years old, he was survived by his wife, Maria Flamm (b. 1858; d. 1931). Together, they had nine children, although three of the children died either in childbirth or shortly thereafter. According to census records, Frank was a life-long farm laborer. Presumably, he worked with his brother John all his life. Four of Frank and Maria's children lived and died in Southern Illinois. One of the children, Louis, moved to Pennsylvania, where he died. Emma moved to San Bernardino, California, where she died. *(Continued on back.)*

Priests of the past

Rev. Federico Higuera 1988–2009

Father Federico Higuera served St. Joseph from 1988 to 2009. Born in Toluca Mexico, Fr. Fed came to the United States in the early 1970s. He moved to the Diocese of Belleville and was ordained a priest in 1982. A year after ordination, he was assigned to St. Mary Parish to begin a full-time ministry to Hispanics in our area. Father Fed was named administrator of St. Joseph in 1988 eventually becoming pastor.



Father Fed

Father Fed moved back to St. Mary in 2009. He served there until his passing in 2018. At his Mass of Christian Burial Father Robert Flannery said, "Father Federico had a tremendous devotion to the Eucharist, the Blessed Mother, and to the Divine Mercy piety with its saying, 'Jesus, I trust in Thee.'"

Father Fed's devotion to the Lord is very apparent when talking with parishioners.

Jill and Geof Skinner remember Father Fed as a priest with an incredibly large heart.

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The Annunciation



*The Annunciation
This window can be found in the front of St. Joseph on the south side of the altar area.*

Father's corner: The Annunciation

Fr. Uriel Salamanca

We turn our attention to one of the most significant stained glass windows in our temple: The Annunciation. Personally, it is the one I refer to most often.

Beginning with the biblical account in Luke 1:26–38, we are given the opportunity to reflect on the great moment of the Annunciation. This event is the clear manifestation of God's plan of salvation for humanity. Only God himself wanted to become man, to live among men, to become like one of us, except in sin. He did this in a way that was closest to our human experience, while also manifesting His power; for with God, nothing is impossible. He has given us His love by coming in the person of Jesus and dwelling among us.

That announcement is full of profound revelations. God sent the angel Gabriel to show the world that the Messiah promised centuries ago has arrived—that the fulfillment of the promise of salvation has become a reality in the person of Jesus. This is the total manifestation of God Himself in Jesus.

However, God did this in a very special way by choosing to be born of a woman. He chose the one whom He Himself prepared, the one who was filled with grace and preserved from original sin. Because this was not just any birth, but God Himself coming into the world, He required another who would meet the most perfect conditions to carry Him for nine months: the Virgin Mary.

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Annunciation (CONTINUED)

As was remembered in the article about John, the Sweitzer family has a long history of deep devotion to the Blessed Mother. The Feast of the Annunciation, commemorating the visit of the archangel Gabriel to the Virgin Mary, may have been chosen by Frank because in Germany, where he grew up, this is a significant feast day.

March 25th (the date of the Annunciation) marked the return of swallows from their winter migration and the beginning of preparing the fields for crops. Germans at that time offered special Masses, Marian devotions and other celebrations on this day.

Farmers used to bury "Annunciation bread" crumbs for protections against blight. They also placed pictures of the Annunciation in their seed barrels, asking Mother Mary's blessing on their harvests. This combining of deep theology with cultural traditions tied to nature, agriculture and Marian piety, was likely embedded in the happy memories of Frank's childhood. Without knowing for certain, we can only assume this was a significant factor in his decision to sponsor the Annunciation window. And to this day, we enjoy the beauty of that beloved window.

~Thanks to Karol Sweitzer for the article

Father's corner (CONTINUED)

God called her "full of grace," meaning Mary possessed a special condition, having been preserved from sin. She was "full of grace"; God was in her, and she would become the mother of Jesus, the Savior. Because Mary is the mother of God the Son—who is both true man and true God—we call her the Mother of God.

We can highlight that God's plan of salvation requires the response from Mary, the chosen one. After listening to the angel, her response was: "Let it be done to me according to your word". This is Mary's resounding "yes". It was her way of saying, "I want to respond to God and follow him in total obedience, that his will be done is the most important thing above any human situation." Mary knew that great tribulations and difficulties would follow this decision and she was willing to face them. She trusted God completely.

The scene in this window serves as an invitation for us to surrender ourselves totally into the hands of God, to trust Him fully, and to know that even in moments of trial, God will always be with us. That is faith.

Father Fed (CONTINUED)

He was kind, caring, giving and generous with his concern for others.

Father Fed celebrated the Sacrament of First Communion with our son, Nathaniel. He also shared some welcomed support for us when Nathaniel was going through some very tough times in his life.

Jill was parish director for three and a half years while Father Fed served as the priest here at St. Joseph. She said he was "the best boss ever." As a member of the Parish Council, Geof found Father Fed to be supportive of the council members and the work they were doing.

Jill and Geof both served as teachers in the parish's CCD/PSR faith formation program during Father Fed's time with us. As with the parish council, he supported the volunteer work done by the teachers. When Geof "retired" as a teacher, Father presented him with a copy of "The Compendium to the Catechism of the Catholic Church." He wrote a special note in the book: "May the light of Christ that you so faithfully shared with us for so many years illumine your way to eternal life."

As many people know, Father was an artist. We have two of his paintings in our home. One of the paintings

depicts rays of light shining through a forest scene. While Father was working on the painting, Geof commented to how much he liked it. Not long after that, Father gave the painting to Jill as a gift for her birthday.

Molly Cerny recalls Father Fed sharing bold and frank truths with great wisdom. He celebrated the Mass

reverently with homilies mimicking the Gospel.

She says he had a deep dedication to serving the Hispanic community, "He started a Stations of the Cross with the Hispanic community which included the whole church. We would walk from Cobden to Alto Pass dramatizing the Passion of Christ."

She remembers his personality saying he loved to laugh and he regularly did a little jig. Molly says, "He always took time for the people in most need.



*Photo/light in forest
Father Fed created this painting, which he gave to Jill Skinner as a birthday present.*