Welcome to Our New Parish Newsletter!

Dear Parishioners,

Welcome to the first issue of our new monthly parish newsletter!

As our parish community continues to grow and develop stewardship as a way of life, we recognize the need for increased communication. Through this newsletter, we hope to share stories that will help us all to better understand who we are as Catholics and what we are doing as individual members of Christ’s family. In upcoming issues, we will focus on what’s going on in the St. Augustine community, and how those activities and events are changing hearts and minds and helping parishioners grow closer to Christ and each other. Each article will ultimately focus on Christ at work within our community through the stewardship way of life.

Our hope is that this newsletter will be a successful means for ongoing education and formation in our faith, and I pray it will be a vehicle through which you are informed and inspired to become more actively involved in the life of Christ and the parish.

Another way I hope to improve our parish’s communication efforts is through a comprehensive parish survey that will be conducted in spring 2016. Through the survey, I want to hear from you regarding our parish and its future. A survey will be mailed to each home, and then I will ask you to take the time to fill it out and return it as soon as possible. Your input will be very important, and it will give the Pastoral Council and me a better understanding of your thoughts about our parish.

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What comes to mind when you hear the word “stewardship”?

Do you think of it as just another way to talk about money? Do you quickly dismiss it as a notion that has nothing to do with being Catholic?

Stewardship is actually a concept that is Scripturally based, and is absolutely vital to our life as Catholics. God tells us, in the very first book of the Old Testament, “Be fertile and multiply. Fill the earth and subdue it. Have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air and all the living things that move on the earth” (Gen 1:28).

What does that mean to us today? It simply means that God is telling us, “This is yours, so take care of it.” One of the first things God tells us to do is to be good stewards of the gifts He has entrusted to us!

The Old Testament is not the only place where we can find references to stewardship. Indeed, of the 36 parables in the New Testament, more than half of them deal with time, talent, possessions, or money. Therefore, if Jesus spoke of stewardship that much, it should be a very important part of our lives!

As Catholics, we refer to the three facets of stewardship as “time, talent and treasure.” Although these are three concrete ways to express and measure stewardship, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops tells us that stewardship is part of discipleship. Stewardship is a way of responding to God’s call in every aspect of our lives.

The Scriptures and Church traditions teach us one important point that cannot be overstated—that stewardship is primarily based on our need to give in gratitude, not on the Church’s need to receive. Of course, both the Catholic Church and our particular parish will always need money. However, we are not asked to give simply to defray costs and fund charitable programs. We are instead asked to remember our need to gratefully return a portion of our time, talent and treasure to God, recognizing all that He has given to us.

It is important to remember that stewardship is a way of life, and not a program. True Catholic stewardship involves an ongoing call to live as followers of Christ. It takes time to find and define personal goals. You can begin by examining your personal commitments to the parish. How do you live your faith in your daily life with your family and friends? How much time do you spend in daily prayer, going to Mass or being involved in parish ministries and activities? What percentage of your income should you give back to God every week? What talents do you have that could be used to strengthen our parish family?

The coming months will see us increasing and intensifying our education and communication on stewardship. We will be developing a better understanding of how stewardship is a way of responding to God’s call to discipleship. And with God’s help, changes will occur in each of our hearts as we devote ourselves to a stewardship renewal within our parish. Examine how you are currently responding to God’s call to stewardship. If God called you home tomorrow, would He proclaim, “Well done, my good and faithful servant”?

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“This Act Strengthens My Faith and Belief in Christ’s Presence”

Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion

When her three children grew a little older, Linda Del Castillo felt that it was the right moment to give more to the faith community. What she didn’t foresee, however, was the abundance of graces that would follow from this “yes.”

“Being a Eucharistic Minister has helped me deepen my prayer life and my relationship to the Mass by contemplating, recognizing and adoring the Real Presence of Christ,” says Linda, who serves as St. Augustine’s Worship Commissioner. “It brings peace to my heart that I can share with others.”

Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion have the honor to offer the Body and Blood of Christ to the members of our faith community. In recent decades, many lay people have stepped forward to support our clergy in this and other ministries integral to the celebration of the liturgy.

Since joining St. Augustine in 1974, Linda and her children have become involved with the liturgy in a variety of ways. Both her sons were baptized at the parish and received their Confirmation here alongside their sister, who was baptized in the Philippines.

“When my sons were younger, they served as altar servers for eight years,” Linda says. “Currently, my oldest son serves as a reader, like me. I’m the Reader Coordinator and also serve as a catechist for the First Year Confirmation class.”

Before becoming a Eucharistic Minister, parishioners attend a two-day workshop hosted by the Archdiocese of San Francisco. They also have an additional training session at the parish before the commissioning.

Every few months, the ministers gather for a meeting to discuss concerns or questions.

Personally, Linda chose to become a Eucharistic Minister because she realized what an opportunity and blessing it would be to humble herself in sharing the Body and Blood of Christ with those who come forward for Communion.

“This act of sharing Communion with the community, in front of my children, strengthens my faith and belief in Christ’s Presence,” Linda says. “Simultaneously, it provided a significant understanding of how my children might involve themselves with the parish community.”

After taking this step, Linda realized how serving as a Eucharistic Minister has shown her many more ways that she could give back to her community.

“I serve as a Eucharistic Minister as much as I can,” Linda says. “This role has acted as a gateway to other ministries and activities that expanded my relationship with the parish community.”

All are welcome to give of themselves in this liturgical ministry that draws ministers into an intimate relationship with Christ and an integral connection to our faith community.

“I firmly believe choosing to become a Eucharistic Minister is an obvious sign of Christ’s grace in your life,” Linda says. “Growing in your relationship with God means knowing His people better and loving and serving them with your whole heart. As an Eucharistic Minister, you are blessed with the duty to enliven His communion with the faithful.”

For more information about becoming an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion, contact Linda Gamboa at 650-438-8446 or lfgamboa@yahoo.com.
There is little doubt that, with age comes wisdom. Yet, we must remember that our youth also have unique and optimistic perspectives to offer the world, as well as new ideas and voices that should not simply be ignored.

“All any young person wants is to be heard and acknowledged for who they are,” says Coordinator of Youth Ministry Melanie Macaraeg.

Melanie knows the truth behind these words firsthand, having felt them herself as a youth within our parish. For her, involvement in the Youth Group was a way to make a difference within our community while also receiving the necessary support and formation. By the time she was a senior in high school, Melanie had become an active member of our parish, giving countless hours in service to youth-oriented programs. So it seemed natural for her to take over the ministry’s leadership after graduating.

“St. Augustine Youth Group has played a major role in my life,” Melanie says. “Although I joined the Youth Group eight years ago, I still have strong relationships with the other leaders, and I’m continuously being taught new things about myself and my faith through it.”

Over the years, Melanie has come to feel that youth ministry is crucial in enabling youth to properly express themselves, to form lifelong friendships, and to come to know and serve God. Youth group empowers young people, providing them with much needed support and showing them that their lives have meaning and purpose.

“It has the ability to remind our members that they matter and they are not alone,” Melanie says.
“It also shows that our young people can make a difference in our community through the service they offer, no matter how young they are.”

Here at St. Augustine’s, Youth Group gatherings take place the second and fourth Sunday of each month from 3:30 to 5 p.m. in the Youth Center. There, middle and high school youth are able to socialize in a positive environment, listen to peer testimonies and guest speakers, participate in prayer and, most importantly, encounter Christ.

“It’s truly special being able to see the positive influences youth group has on the younger generation,” Melanie says. “Our Catholic youth can be impressionable so the people they are surrounded with have the power to ultimately help shape who they are and what decisions they will make.”

Mindful of this, another important component of the youth ministry program is leadership formation. Building upon teens’ innate desire to be part of something that matters, the program is designed to help draw the youth into active discipleship.

“St. Augustine Youth Group emphasizes that if a young person wants to be a leader, all they have to do is show up and participate,” Melanie says. “We encourage anyone who is even a little bit interested in being an active disciple to just come by our youth group meetings or choir practices.”

Through the Service and Leadership Team (SALT), teens are taught to take initiative by planning youth group meetings and prayer services, publicizing events, and producing the group’s monthly newsletter, *The Bungalow*. Other teens use their talents in the St. Augustine Youth Ministry Choir (SAYMC), which sings monthly at the 5:30 p.m. Sunday Mass, or through becoming involved in the 1st/2nd Year Confirmation Retreat Teams, a chosen group of high-schoolers dedicated to planning and executing the annual Confirmation Retreat.

Although there have been many blessings from her years of service to youth ministry, witnessing the youth transform into confident leaders has been the greatest experience for Melanie.

“I have seen many of our leaders go from being exceptionally shy in public speaking to confidently sharing their testimonials in front of 50-60 people,” Melanie says. “I feel so extraordinarily humbled to be part of this ministry.”

The St. Augustine Youth Group is always looking for new teens to “step to the plate” as leaders and choir members. Just come and get involved! For more information, email saygministry@gmail.com, or follow us on Twitter, Instagram or Snapchat @saygupdate.

Some of St. Augustine’s teen leaders at the Youth Congress in Anaheim along with youth ministers Melanie Macaraeg and Daniel Diaz.

![Service and Adult Leadership Team (SALT) members facilitated a face-painting station for youth during the Parish Family Festival.](image-url)
Putting God First: A Look at Small Christian Communities

Despite having a pretty busy day-to-day life, Malou Salumbides was compelled to sincerely ask God, “What do you want me to do?”

“I have a husband, a family, cooking, housework, homework for the kids, and we were both working,” Malou says. “And then I heard a voice that said, “Me first.” I realized God was telling me that He has to be first in my life. I’ve put Him first and I don’t regret it a single bit. I’ve grown and my life has been better.”

Since deciding to put God first, Malou’s journey has continued over the past 15 years, as she became involved in a Small Christian Community at St. Augustine. Before then, Malou had found herself going through the motions of Catholicism in a very mechanical way.

“There was a time in my life that I was angry at God and I was just going to Mass just because it was my duty to go,” says Malou, who now coordinates the Small Christian Communities. “[My relationship with God] was very mechanical, until I got God’s message that He was to be first.”

Although Malou became involved in the parish in a number of ways, Small Christian Communities have made the biggest difference in her life. From helping her grow deeper in her understanding of the faith and its application in her daily life, to finding a community that feels like a family, being part of a Small Christian Community has shown her what it really means to keep “God first.”

So, what exactly is a Small Christian Community? In Malou’s words, it is “A group of people who are called by the Holy Spirit to meet and share their faith, with the purpose to strengthen our faith to serve God.” The small groups of anywhere from three to 10 people meet weekly, in homes or at the church, to read and discuss Scripture, ask questions and, most importantly, share how the Word of God has an impact on their daily lives.

“As a big church, you can’t know every one. But when you join organizations, you get to know others. Small Christian Communities – it becomes your community, you have ownership of it. You feel like, ‘This is my family, the ones I call when there’s something I need, when I need prayers.’” – Malou Salumbides

Small Christian Communities gathered for three Sundays this fall to hear speakers on the topic of Mercy, in preparation for the Year of Mercy.
of visiting with each other after Mass, caring for members in times of need, and participating in service projects together. Members often find other ways to become involved in the parish, as fellow members of their Small Christian Community recognize their unique gifts and encourage them to find ways to use them, serving God and the parish.

Malou encourages anyone who would like to go deeper in their relationship with God and start putting “Him first” to consider joining a Small Christian Community.

“We’re all learning,” she says. “Some have already traveled the road, but it’s nice to have friends doing it with you.”

To learn more about joining a Small Christian Community, please contact the parish office at: 650-873-2282.

Small Christian Communities provide an opportunity to learn more about the faith and how to apply it to daily life.

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community and we talk about what the Lord is teaching us,” Malou says. “You learn from other people. The purpose is to apply the values of the Gospel to every aspect of our lives.”

Small Christian Communities are also opportunities to create smaller “families” within the larger parish community.

“As a big church, you can’t know everyone,” Malou says. “But when you join organizations, you get to know others. Small Christian Communities – it becomes your community, you have ownership of it. You feel like, ‘This is my family, the ones I call when there’s something I need, when I need prayers.’

“We’re bonded because every time we meet, we do faith sharing and then we eat,” she adds, with a laugh. “This is when we get to know each other.”

Aside from the regularly scheduled weekly meetings, the members of Small Christian Communities make a priority of visiting with each other after Mass, caring for members in times of need, and participating in service projects together. Members often find other ways to become involved in the parish, as fellow members of their Small Christian Community recognize their unique gifts and encourage them to find ways to use them, serving God and the parish.

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This fall, we will conduct our Annual Stewardship Renewal. The Renewal is the time each year when we ask each other to re-prioritize the way we use God’s gifts in the Church. It is the time we write down how we will become more devoted to Christ over the next year with our commitments of time (using my time on earth wisely; making time for personal prayer, family prayer, and quality time with friends and loved ones); talent (using God-given gifts to strengthen the Church through service to parish ministries and other activities), and treasure (the wise and just management of my financial resources; giving a proportionate amount of my income to the parish).

As we strive to develop stewardship as a way of life at St. Augustine, the support and involvement of each individual parishioner is necessary to sustain the life of our parish. All of you have a place here, and all of you have a role to fill in the life of the parish as we live our lives as disciples of Christ.

May the Holy Spirit renew and refresh all of us as we work together to build our parish family through the use of our time, talent and treasure.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

[Signature]

Rev. Rene Ramoso
Pastor