The life of stewardship is a life focused upon others. While we often talk about stewardship as giving our time, talent and treasure in our communities, our individual acts of stewardship are often spurred by the Holy Spirit moving us as we interact and engage with the people around us. Responding to the true needs of others is at the heart of stewardship and requires an ongoing responsiveness to God’s presence in others.

Each week, the hospitality ministers at St. Augustine’s spend their time responding to the needs of guests and parishioners alike by completing their liturgical duties in a kind and reverent manner.

Parishioner Salvador “Buddy” Gueco has been involved with the Hospitality Ministry team for many years. His involvement in this ministry has helped him to see the responsibility that comes with stewardship. Not only do hospitality ministers welcome parishioners, making them feel like part of the church family, but they also ensure that Mass is carried out smoothly, allowing parishioners and guests to more fully participate without distractions.

“I believe it was 1983 or 1985 when I started helping with the hospitality team,” Buddy says. “They kept asking me to be one of the leaders, Hospitality ministers make guests and parishioners alike feel welcomed by sharing the warmth of a smile and sincere greetings as people arrive to or leave Mass. continued on page 5
The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops has told us that stewardship is part of discipleship and is a way of responding to God’s call in every aspect of our lives. We refer to the three facets of stewardship as “Time, Talent and Treasure,” and when we consider the importance of these three Ts of stewardship, the “time” component comes first by design.

When we talk about stewardship of time, we are referring to prayer time. Prayer is of the utmost importance in a disciple’s life, and it serves as the fertile ground from which the gifts of talent and treasure blossom. Only by spending time in prayer each day and receiving the sacraments are we able to consistently and generously donate our talent and treasure to the Church.

When looking for examples of how to live our lives as disciples of Christ and as stewards of God’s gifts, we can always turn to the great saints of our Church to guide us. And when it comes to the Stewardship of Time, the life of St. Damien is just one example of how prayer, or “Time,” is the foundation for our lives of stewardship.

Shortly after being ordained a priest, St. Damien volunteered to serve a colony of lepers isolated on the island of Molokai, Hawaii. From May 1873 until his death in 1889 (at the age of 49) St. Damien worked to restore within the lepers a sense of personal worth and dignity.

Although for some time St. Damien took the necessary precautions to ensure that he did not contract leprosy, he knew that physical touch was necessary to communicate his love and concern to those afflicted with the disease. He embraced the lepers, dined with them, cared for them, and anointed them in the sacraments. With great humility and sacrifice, St. Damien offered his own life in order to save the lives of others.

From where did St. Damien draw his strength? What was the source of his inspiration? “Were it not for the constant presence of our divine Master in our humble chapel, I would not have found it possible to persevere in sharing the lot of the lepers in Molokai,” St. Damien wrote. “The Eucharist is the bread that gives strength... It is at once the most eloquent proof of His love and the most powerful means of fostering His love in us. He gives Himself every day so that our hearts as burning coals may set afire the hearts of the faithful.”

St. Damien found his strength in the Mass, the greatest prayer of the Church. Prayer was the impetus behind the generosity of this faithful servant of God, and is the fuel that ignites every heart to flame in love. Without prayer, without the grace that flows from the sacraments, we are incapable of leading lives of service and responding to God’s call!

How much time do you dedicate to prayer each day? One hour? Fifteen minutes? None at all? Before you consider joining a parish ministry or volunteering your talents in service, and before you discern your gifts of treasure to the Church, be sure that prayer is your foundation. Identify a prayer schedule that is manageable. This may entail arising 20 minutes early each day to offer your work to the Lord, or attending daily Mass once a week. Every prayer commitment is unique and personal. Yet, no matter what, this time offering, this dedication to prayer, is the key to serving the Lord with faithfulness, generosity and joy.
All Things and All People Are Made New

Dear Parishioners,

We associate the Easter season with springtime — a time of new life and new beginnings — and Holy Scripture addresses this idea of newness many times. In one of our readings during April, God declares, “Behold, I make all things new.”

This idea of being “new” is important to us as Catholics, and it is important to our parish. We need to strive to do this on a regular basis — even on a daily basis. Think of the fact that all was once new. Regardless of how you view the development of this earth and those of us who occupy it, all was once new.

During this ongoing Easter season, we need to retain that idea of being “new.” And being “new” means conversion, and we have often pointed out that conversion is at the heart of a life of stewardship.

As the Catechism of the Catholic Church (§654) puts it, “The Paschal mystery has two aspects: by his death, Christ liberates us from sin; by his Resurrection, he opens for us the way to a new life.”

In other words, Christ’s Resurrection is the source of our new life — our own future resurrection. St. Paul wrote about it to the Romans in the following words (Rom 6:5): “For if we have grown into union with him through a death like his, we shall also be united with him in the resurrection.”

Hope for a new life beginning now and extending on into heaven is the result of Jesus’ Resurrection. What greater grounds for thanksgiving can there be than this Easter hope? We should sing with joy about God’s promise to us: “Behold, I make all things new!” (Rev 21:5).

St. Paul also wrote (Col 3:1-2): “If then you were raised with Christ, seek what is above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Think of what is above, not of what is on earth.” Jesus’ Resurrection and His promise of a new life for us means that we need to live in conformity with our status as adopted children of God.

How do we show our joy and our gratitude to God for this amazing gift He has given us? We join in worship, and praise God by word and song. We share the Good News of Jesus’ victory over death with our family, friends and neighbors. And we offer back to the Lord a portion of the time, talent and treasure He has entrusted to us.

Yes, the Easter message that we share in the benefits of Christ’s Resurrection indeed makes all things new — the ultimate foundation for all Christian stewardship.

The Lord is risen, alleluia.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Rev. Rene Ramoso
Pastor
Many of us have experienced a time when we had to take a leap of faith and place our complete trust in God as we moved forward into an uncertain future. When Jun and Colette Panelo brought their family to the United States from the Philippines almost 30 years ago, they knew that this life-changing move would require an unwavering faith in God’s plan for them.

“When we came over here, it was really very hard to get started,” Colette says. “I always tell my children, we can only thank God for everything we have – we cannot thank Him enough!”

Indeed, Jun and Colette are thankful for the ways in which they saw the Lord at work in helping them get settled in San Francisco – including the practical help received from Colette’s cousin, who was already living in the area when they arrived, and the spiritual home that the family found here at St. Augustine.

Jun and Colette immediately became active in parish life and have been very involved with the church ever since. Jun was a charter member of the Knights of Columbus, and currently serves as a Eucharistic Minister.

“Being a minister of the Holy Eucharist gives me a feeling of intimacy with our Lord Jesus Christ, and a more loving relationship with the other celebrants and parishioners,” Jun says.

Colette also finds great fulfillment in her roles as a Eucharistic Minister, treasurer of St. Augustine’s Fil-Am Society, and catechist.

“I love teaching the first-graders Religious Ed,” she says. “I try to help them in their love for God, to teach them about God so they know that they have someone up there who is really watching over them. And I love being a Eucharistic Minister. Jun and I serve at the 11 o’clock Mass because our grandchildren are members of the Children’s Choir, so the whole family goes to that Mass.”

For the Panelos, faith and service are most definitely a family affair! In addition to the five grandchildren who sing with the Children’s Choir, two of their grandsons hold leadership roles in the parish’s Youth Ministry program. Their daughters, Noemi, Nancy and Nelly, have all served as catechists, and their son, Nestor, serves as a lector.

The Panelos’ eldest son, Noel, who is the director of the Adult Faith Formation Team – AFFT – and the coordinator of the First-Year Confirmation program, credits his parents for giving him and siblings a heart for service.

“My parents have always instilled Catholic values in my siblings and me,” Noel says. “Growing up, I remember my parents constantly helping others in need. Back when we were in the Philippines, my dad, who is a lawyer, used to provide free legal services on weekends to those who could not afford to pay legal fees, while neighbors who could not pay their hospital bills or did not have money to buy needed medication went to my mom for help. My parents’ generosity definitely shaped my view of stewardship.

“God has richly blessed me and continues to do so,” he adds. “I cannot help but be grateful to God for His goodness. Sharing my time, talent and treasure is my way of concretely expressing such thanksgiving.”

In addition to his leadership roles in faith formation at the parish, Noel also serves in the Knights of
A Family of Faith and Service: Meet the Panelos

Columbus and as a lector. He acknowledges that, especially with a demanding job, it can sometimes be difficult to find enough time in the day for all he would like to accomplish. When it comes to serving the parish, however, he trusts that God will always show him the way.

“It is during [the busy] times that I remind myself that my God is the God of time,” he says. “If He calls me to complete a task, He will provide me with everything – even time.”

Noel is inspired by the many parishioners who give of their time, talent and treasure to make St. Augustine such a wonderful community.

“The church has become an extension of my home and the parish community an extension of my family,” he says. “Many of the parishioners epitomize Christian stewardship. True to its mission, it is a faith community that lives God’s Word by continuing His work.”

“We are so blessed to be here at St. Augustine,” Colette agrees. “Fr. Rene is a very good priest and pastor. He is just like a friend to me, and all the members of our family are very close to him. St. Augustine is a very vibrant church and it’s a welcoming church – everybody feels at home.”

How blessed we are as a parish that the Panelo family took a leap of faith so many years ago and made San Francisco, and St. Augustine, their home!

Spreading God’s Warmth Through Hospitality

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and I didn’t realize how big of a responsibility it is until I became one. We help make things go smoothly at the Mass, as well as make people feel welcome and comfortable.”

The Hospitality Ministry is responsible for facilitating the welcoming and ushering of parishioners and guests, assisting in the orderly flow of parishioners during the Mass, helping parishioners find seats, taking up the collection, selecting individuals to bring up the offertory gifts, and finally distributing parish bulletins after Mass.

“I’m always happy with everything,” Buddy says. “As we prepare for larger events, I talk to each of the volunteers so that we are all on the same page and things go smoothly. We always need more volunteers, because it’s all the little things that really help make the environment reverent and comfortable for people who are coming to Mass.”

If you are interested in getting involved with the Hospitality Ministry, please contact the parish office at 650-873-2282. As Buddy says, “There is always room for more volunteers!”
Occasionally, you might hear someone jokingly refer to “halftime” 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, 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 “halftime 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!
Eucharistic Adoration: Time Well Spent

When we think about the “time” component of stewardship, we tend to focus solely upon acts of service for others. Yet, although this is an important element of our faith, perhaps the greatest gift we can give God is time spent exclusively with Him. Just as a marriage or friendship needs quality time to blossom and grow, our relationship with God requires time. This is why Blessed Teresa of Calcutta said, “The time you spend with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament is the best time that you will spend on earth. Each moment that you spend with Jesus will deepen your union with Him and make your soul everlastingly more glorious and beautiful.”

Here at St. Augustine, we are blessed with a weekly opportunity to spend quality time with our Lord through Eucharistic Adoration. Offered every Friday from 9:15 a.m. to 5:15 p.m., this is a time where parishioners can rest in God’s Presence. For parishioner Melanie Bumanglag, this time of quiet prayer has been instrumental in her faith journey, helping her better appreciate the power of Eucharistic prayer. In fact, it was adoration that led Melanie to initially begin attending daily Mass, where she now regularly serves as a sacristan for our parish.

“During the Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, I feel the closeness of God,” Melanie says. “It’s just me and my God at that moment.”

Melanie goes on to explain that Eucharistic Adoration provides a unique opportunity for us to put aside the cares and stress of the day, focusing our minds and hearts on God instead. In the process, Melanie has experienced a deep peace and a renewed sense of trust, better equipping her to face the challenges of the day.

“So much is going on around us every day,” Melanie says. “Adoration is my only time of true peace. I feel so much closer to God, allowing me to shut out all of those distractions and to focus my heart on Him. The closeness that I receive at that moment is incredible.”

Melanie notes that visiting Jesus during Eucharistic Adoration is a special way to live out our stewardship calling – not only are we spending time in conversation with and adoration of our Lord, but we are also able to spread God’s mercy through intercessory prayer.

“When I’m there, I can imagine and feel the rays of God’s blessings flowing toward me,” Melanie says. “At the same moment, I’m lifting up and imagining those rays of blessings flowing on my family, my friends, people close to me, people who have touched me life, and people that are in need of God’s mercy.” – Melanie Bumanglag

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imagining those rays of blessings flowing on my family, my friends, people close to me, people who have touched me life, and people that are in need of God’s mercy.”

Oftentimes, in looking at the world’s problems and the needs of our neighbors, we tend to focus upon what we can do to fix them. Yet, we must also remember at the end of the day that all things are in God’s loving and merciful hands. By attending Eucharistic Adoration, Melanie has personally experienced a deepening of her own trust and relationship with God. This, in turn, has allowed her to become a better disciple in the world.

“I wish I could let people know the many benefits they can receive from being in God’s presence,” Melanie says. “It has built up my spiritual life – my faith has grown stronger and I continue to learn how to trust God. I attribute my strong faith to finding union with our Lord in that special moment in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament.”

To ensure that our Lord is never alone during adoration, parishioners are invited to commit to specific hours by signing up in the book located outside the chapel. Even if you are unable to commit to a weekly time, parishioners are invited to make time to visit our Lord, whether for 15 minutes or an hour. Come rest in God’s presence, becoming strengthened and rejuvenated!

If you would like more information on how to sign up for Eucharistic Adoration at St. Augustine, please contact Vilma Lorenzo at 650-922-9322.