“It Is a Privilege to Serve God in This Way”
St. Augustine’s Sacristans

Over 20 years ago, Lu Navor first had the opportunity to support one of our priests with the ritual of using incense during the liturgy. Lu was touched and impressed by the entire process. It inspired her to become a sacristan.

“To assist a priest is a privilege,” says Lu, who serves as the Sacristan Coordinator at St. Augustine. “I have become closer to God and humble myself in my prayers when I serve as a sacristan.”

In a quiet, yet ever-ready manner, St. Augustine’s sacristans serve at the liturgy in whatever way they can to support our clergy. They take care of the sanctity in a cleanly and orderly manner and setup before the liturgy and cleanup afterward.

“A sacristan is someone who can readily find a solution to a problem,” Lu says. “In the process of the celebration, a sacristan is ready to be able to fill in or to get someone to fill in for a lector, a Eucharistic Minister, a cantor, or for whatever is necessary.”

While young adults offer their time as altar servers on the weekends, the sacristans serve as altar servers on the weekdays.

“All sacristans are trained as altar servers in a uniform procedure,” Lu says. “Our sacristans also serve on weekends, of course, if necessary.”

Any adult Catholic who is practicing his or her faith and is willing to dedicate his or her services to the Church for the glory of God is welcome to be a sacristan. Lu personally trains each new sacristan and suggests that those interested in serving in this role begin by doing some “self-training.”

“Go to church and familiarize yourself with the parts of the Mass,” Lu says. “I highly recommend
Sacristans continued from front cover

attending seminars and faith formation opportunities, because that will help you become familiar with the Catechism. We need to understand what we are doing and why we do the things we do.”

As a sacristan, Lu most enjoys serving at the altar during the exposition of the Blessed Sacrament. No matter how many times she has done so, serving in this way is still awe-inspiring to her.

“It is such an honor to work side by side with the priest when the Blessed Sacrament is exposed,” Lu says. “It is an incredibly high form of service. It is a pleasure to do this.”

Lu would encourage men and women to consider being sacristans because it is one way of giving back to the community that intimately fosters a real sense of proximity to Our Lord through his Real Presence in the Eucharist.

“Parishioners can participate in the church community and experience this feeling of closeness to God,” Lu says. “Some of our current sacristans joined because they liked the close interaction between the priest and the sacristan. It is a privilege to serve God in this way.”

For more information about St. Augustine’s sacristans, please contact Lu Navor at 650-878-3807.

“Parishioners can participate in the church community and experience this feeling of closeness to God. Some of our current sacristans joined because they liked the close interaction between the priest and the sacristan. It is a privilege to serve God in this way.”

– Lu Navor, Sacristan Coordinator
Dear Parishioners,

Pope Francis has certainly had an impact on our Church, and maybe even on each of us individually. Do you recall his first words to the world and to us when he appeared on the balcony following his election as pope? He said quite simply, “Pray for me.” That is a feeling I share sometimes when I consider what needs to be done, and what I personally need to do. It may be a feeling each of us has – not just now and then, but relatively consistently.

Prayer – one of the four Pillars of Stewardship – is foundational to our faith and the practice of it. It is through prayer and the sacraments that we prepare ourselves to accept God’s plentiful gifts and blessings.

Each of us needs to develop a consistent prayer life. We should set time aside each day to pray. It is through prayer that we cultivate our personal relationship with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. We provide many opportunities for prayer as part of our parish life. This includes time for us to pray as individuals and time to pray as a community.

Our prayer lives culminate at Mass in the Eucharist. The Eucharist, prayer and stewardship are interconnected. In Lumen Gentium, we are reminded that the Eucharist is the “Source and Summit” of our Catholic faith. With the gift of the Eucharist and an active prayer life, we are better equipped to carry out the other three Pillars of Stewardship – Hospitality, Formation and Service. You might say we pray to help us seek and find how to serve the Lord and others.

This is a time of year when we enjoy numerous opportunities to kick back and relax. One of the best ways to spend time is in prayer. In both our individual and communal prayer, we turn to God to perceive our gifts and talents – and then, as stewards, we need to place those gifts at the service of one another, and especially of the Lord.

You and I are on a journey together – a journey toward holiness. That journey involves an existence of daily conversion and an awareness of how grateful we need to be. Through prayer, we can better see ourselves as God sees us, and we can seek to find who God is calling us to be.

I want to assure you of my constant and daily prayers for you. Like the Holy Father, however, I also must admit that I need you to “pray for me.” I thank you for your prayers. I am blessed to be your pastor.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Rev. Rene Ramoso
Pastor
As a parish community, we often witness important sacramental milestones – First Communion, Matrimony, Confirmation, and Baptism. But perhaps one of the most beautiful celebrations is witnessing an individual’s journey through RCIA, or the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults. RCIA is a journey of renewal that involves Gospel study, prayer, spiritual guidance and catechesis. Importantly, it is also a journey that involves the entire parish, since those enrolled learn about the Catholic faith while within the midst of the church community.

“Of all the ministries in which I am involved, this is my favorite,” says Deacon Nestor Fernandez, who teaches the RCIA class along with catechists Eleanor Breite, Fran Guevarra and Bert Tandoc. “We are all called to live out the Gospel message to be fishers of men – to make the Church stronger and to bring people to Christ – and with RCIA we are doing just that.”

Our RCIA program, which begins in September and continues through Pentecost, unfolds over the course of several months in order to give those enrolled in the class the time they need to receive a thorough foundation in the teachings of the Catholic faith. In other words, becoming a Catholic is not meant to happen overnight. And not just a program – RCIA is a process, and even the fears, doubts and questions that anyone experiences along the way are all part of the journey.

“One of the first questions I ask the students is if they believe that when the priest consecrates the bread and wine, that it is truly the Body and Blood of Christ,” Deacon Nestor says. “With great honesty, most will admit that they are not sure. But after several months, they are in a different place. That’s why having that time to discern is an important part of the RCIA journey. When the students begin, they have so many questions, and faith just doesn’t happen all of a sudden – it comes in God’s time. So we set a comfortable pace, and we try to meet them where they are at on their journey.”

What is especially meaningful during the entire RCIA process is that the parish plays a significant role in supporting the participants as they embark on their journey of spiritual awareness and renewal.
Not only is the parish a source of most of the sponsors and bears witness to all the liturgical rites, but from the Rite of Welcoming when the participants are first introduced to the parish, Deacon Nestor says that every effort is made to ensure they feel part of the parish community.

“As a community, our role is to welcome, encourage and acknowledge their journey,” Deacon Nestor says. “This is why we have class on Sundays and then attend Mass together as a group. We want participants to fall in love with the Liturgy of the Mass, and by sitting together, we can do things like show them how to follow along in the Missalette to help them understand, follow along and participate in the Mass.”

Of course, with weekly meetings that explore the tenets of our faith, and with the opportunity to attending Mass together as a group, it is no surprise that everyone develops a special bond with one another. In fact, Deacon Nestor says that not only do he and the catechists get emotional to see someone who they have just spent months with come into the Church during the Easter Vigil Mass, but that the participants themselves become friends.

“I really enjoyed being in a group that was varied in age,” says Brianna German, a member of the RCIA class. “It was like, all together, we made up a timeline of faith. When we started, we were all in different stages of our lives – that is, we went to class for different reasons, but we all wanted the same outcome, to grow in our faith and be one in the eyes of the Church. Having the same goal allowed us to connect with each other the entire time we were together.”

While most people think of RCIA as a program for those who want to convert to Catholicism, the class is also for Catholics who are returning to the faith. Such was the case with Brianna, who was baptized Catholic, but not necessarily raised in the faith. In fact, her childhood did not provide her with a strong family foundation, but she eventually found love, support and stability from two influential women in her life – Teresa Leon Flores, her adopted abuela, and Patricia Martinelli, a teacher and mentor whose lessons extended beyond the classroom and who eventually became Brianna’s godmother. These women helped Brianna recognize within her heart a longing for her Catholic roots, and RCIA was the means for Brianna to find her way back to the doors of the Church.

“I feel so blessed,” Brianna says. “Not only has God helped me overcome obstacles, but I was finally able to be confirmed as a Catholic – something I’ve wanted to do for a while – and that I was able to share this special day with my godparents, my abuela, and all those I consider family. I am so grateful to God for leading me to St. Augustine Church, for enabling me to create new friendships, and for allowing me to demonstrate my devotion to my faith through the RCIA program.”

Finally, during the Easter Vigil Mass this past April, seven individuals were welcomed as full members of the Catholic Church. And while their weekly RCIA meetings may be officially over, the journey nonetheless continues as they, along with all of us, continue that journey of conversion to live our faith daily and to grow in God’s grace and love.
Have you ever wondered why no one really becomes uneasy when someone brings up the first two “Ts” of stewardship – giving of your time or talents – but when the third “T” comes up, many of us become uncomfortable?

That third “T” is treasure, and some people simply become so annoyed by the subject, they tune out the words from the pulpit.

Why is there seemingly such an adverse reaction? Our finances are such a personal subject. Discussing money issues with others is not easy, and having someone tell us what to do with our finances is even worse. We earn the money, after all. So shouldn’t we decide what to do with it?

Of course, the answer is “yes” – we decide every day how to spend our hard-earned dollars. Indeed, the monetary choices we make will either keep our finances in check, or put us into the red. The average American family has about $7,000 in credit card debt – so finances certainly represent a challenge to our current society. Tight budgets, trying to “keep up with the Joneses” or poor financial management may be to blame for our tight resources. Does this mean we do not have anything left over for God?

Stewardship, at its roots, teaches that we are not supposed to give God our “leftovers.” We should instead strive to return to God a portion of our “first fruits” – giving to God first and then using the rest for our other needs. God gave us our talents that help us earn a living, after all. He should come first.

This idea can be worrisome for many. If our finances are already strained, how will we ever find enough to give back to God? Or, if we do try to give God our “first fruits,” will there be enough left over to cover our required expenses?

Taking the correct financial steps toward good stewardship simply boils down to trust – believing that God, who takes care of all of His creation, will take care of us. Trust that in giving to God first, we are both acknowledging that our multitude of blessings come from Him, and that we are thankful He chose to give them to us. And finally, trust that if we give to Him first, that all else will fall into place – because He is in ultimate control.

**Stewardship of Treasure**
**Giving to God First**

Stewardship, at its roots, teaches that we are not supposed to give God our “leftovers.” We should instead strive to return to God a portion of our “first fruits” – giving to God first and then using the rest for our other needs.
When Lu Navor joined St. Augustine in 1972, Masses were held at a produce market in Westborough Square while the church was constructed.

“At that time, the boulevard had a sign that read ‘St. Augustine Church,’” Lu says. “A group of very hospitable people went door to door informing us about the new church and soliciting support.”

In those early days of our parish’s history, Lu remembers that the Sunday Mass was held at Westborough Jr. High School’s gymnasium. The few people who attended daily Mass were mostly strangers. What a difference a few decades has made!

“Now we have this big, beautiful church with a vibrant and welcoming community,” Lu says. “We have two daily Masses that are well attended and six weekend Masses that are all full. More people than ever are involved and helping.”

At the heart of St. Augustine’s increasingly involved community is a growing sense of stewardship.

“To me, stewardship means using your talent and your time with dedication and commitment for the benefit of the church community and doing all for the glory of God,” Lu says. “It also means a just management of your possessions.”

Lu began her stewardship journey with the parish shortly after joining the community when she went to enroll her children in catechism classes. It was then she discovered that there was a shortage of catechists, so there wasn’t space for Lu’s daughter who was preparing for her First Communion.

“I volunteered to teach,” Lu says, a mother of four. “At that time, catechism classes were held in the teachers’ homes, which worked well because I had a 6-month-old baby. That was the start of my participation, and I found it challenging and educational!”

In addition to teaching catechism for six years, Lu has given to the community in many different ways. A few of these ways include serving on the Pastoral Council, singing with the Music Ministry, organizing and coordinating the Small Christian Community Morning Glory and working with the Liturgical Arts Ministry. Lu has also served as a sacristan since 2000.

“I feel that I am sharing my time and talents as a volunteer,” Lu says. “Stewardship is part of discipleship.

“All blessings are gifts from our Father in heaven. All He wants is for us to share the gift of His love to all His children, all our brothers and sisters in Christ. The more we share, the more we encounter God.” – Lu Navor

continued on back cover
It is a way of responding to God’s call in every aspect of our lives. I feel closer to God when I do so.”

Over the years, Lu has spoken with many parishioners seeking a way to serve. She encourages them to talk to others about their interests and perhaps connect with Small Christian Communities for motivation.

“I take the time to talk to parishioners and find their area of interest,” Lu says. “Many of them work as sacristans or with the flowers or cleaning up after Mass. There are many things to take care of in order to maintain our church and making it welcoming for worship.”

After being actively involved in St. Augustine’s faith community for almost 45 years, Lu would encourage everyone to find where their interests lie and to share their gifts, for in sharing and serving as disciples, we grow closer to Christ.

“All blessings are gifts from our Father in heaven,” Lu says. “All He wants is for us to share the gift of His love to all His children, all our brothers and sisters in Christ. The more we share, the more we encounter God.”