Parishioner Alle Moscardini may be away from San Francisco most of the year while she studies at San Diego State University, but she still feels very much at home here at St. Augustine! Alle, who has been a parishioner since birth, remembers fondly the years she spent as the coordinator of altar servers for the parish, as well as her participation with the Youth Choir and Youth Ministry.

“I started altar serving when I was about 10 or 11,” Alle says. “A couple of years later, I was promoted to be one of the captains, and then a couple of years after that, I was promoted to be the coordinator of all the altar servers.”

As coordinator of altar servers, Alle was responsible for scheduling the servers to ensure that there were two or three present for each Mass. She particularly enjoyed her role in training the new altar servers.

“I would go over the basics with them during an orientation, and then go through the steps that it takes to be reverent during the Mass and all you have to do,” Alle says. “It can be confusing at times when you first start, so I wanted to make the new recruits comfortable.”

Serving in this special role changed the way that Alle experienced the Mass and strengthened her ties to the Church.

“Being the coordinator really helped me to get a strong foothold in the Church,” she says. “[As an altar server], you’re part of the actual Mass. You feel closer to God because you’re serving Him right at the altar. And you get a stronger bond with the priests because you’re serving alongside them, as well.”

For Alle, altar serving also acted as a bridge to involvement in other parish groups and activities.

“After I was altar serving for a bit, I got involved in the Youth Ministry,” she says. “I joined the Youth Choir in eighth grade. Then in high school, I became...”
We make constant reference to the “three Ts” of stewardship, recognizing that to truly live as a stewardship people, we must give God the first fruits of our time, talent and treasure. It is easy for us to see the concrete reality of the latter two. If we are to give God our talents, we must first recognize with what talents He has blessed us, and then use those talents for His greater glory. And as we continue our stewardship path, we know very well that our money is something concrete. When we recognize it as a gift from God, we know that we are to give a certain amount back to Him. It is easy for many of us to understand what it means to give God our talent and our treasure.

But what does it mean to give God a portion of our time? This idea is much harder to grasp, and yet giving to God the first fruits of our time is just as important as the other two. And if we understand this idea and implement it properly, our stewardship of time will serve as the very foundation from which our stewardship of talent and treasure bear fruit.

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 in the Diocese of Wichita’s The Pillars of Parish Stewardship, it is also one of the four pillars of stewardship.

Does this mean that in order to be true disciples, we should say the Our Father three times a day or pray a daily Rosary? Not particularly. Of course, we must not discount the merits of prayer, as the Church in her wondrous wisdom has given us certain prayers to help guide our lives. However, the disciple’s deep life of prayer involves even more.

St. John Chrysostom explains, “You should not think of prayer as being a matter of words. It is a desire for God, an indescribable devotion ... the gift of God’s grace” (Homilies on Ephesians 6). That is, if we look at prayer as a mere regimen that we must follow every day, then we do not see to the heart of it. The reality is that prayer will take on different forms for every one of us. One person may have a deep devotion to the Rosary, and in praying it, he is closely united to the Lord. Another person might feel deeply connected to Him through constant conversation — in the car on the way to work, before bed at night, or at other hours throughout the day. Meanwhile, for another person, a daily or weekly hour of silence before the Lord in Eucharistic Adoration is the best place for him to offer the Lord his heart. No matter how we choose to pray, we must get to the root of it all. If we are to truly give God our time, it must be a gift of ourselves. It must come from the heart and not take the form of mere word repetition. If we offer an Our Father without meditating on the words, it can simply become recitation.

The point of prayer is to get to know the Lord. If we are committed to living as His disciples, we must be on personal terms with Him. The first disciples didn’t know what it meant to pray the Rosary. And until the Lord taught them the Our Father, they couldn’t pray that either. But they were definitely true stewards of their time. They walked with Jesus, talked with Jesus, and ate meals with Him. He was their best friend, and the more they got to know Him, the more they longed to serve Him.

The same holds true for us today. We can walk with Him, talk with Him and sit with Him, just as they did. And He wants us to do this, too. St. John Chrysostom proclaims, there is nothing more worthwhile: “For prayer unites us to God as His companions” (Hom 6). How can we serve Him if we don’t know Him? If we truly desire to be a servant people, we must talk to Him whom we wish to serve. We must get to know Him. Then, most assuredly, we will fall in love with Him. We will undoubtedly desire nothing more than to serve Him.

Recognize Jesus as your best friend and spend time with Him as such. He is the Lord, the Creator of the Universe, without whom we would cease to exist. Bring Him your cares and concerns, your excitement, your worry, your fears and your frustrations, and allow Him to comfort you. He is there, and He wants to speak with you.
A Letter from Our Pastor

Stewardship: A Positive Way to Live

Dear Parishioners,

There is something about the month of August that is glorious. Summer is still in full force outside our fog belt. Some of you still have vacations on the horizon. And, yet, we can also see the end of this wonderful season drawing closer – our vacations may already be over, and we may be sadly anticipating the end of this relaxing time, with back-to-school and a return to the busyness of life just around the corner.

We are at that point in the year when things are coming to an end and things are beginning all at once. However, isn’t that the way it always is? The Russian playwright and short-story writer Anton Chekhov once said, “People don’t notice whether it is winter or summer when they are happy.” There is certainly truth to that statement. You might say it is a stewardship statement.

I am sure you are wondering how to make the connection between Chekhov’s quote and stewardship, but the connection is found quite simply in the word “happy.” I once heard someone say in a presentation about stewardship that people who live stewardship as a way of life are almost always happy. There is a reason for that.

Stewardship is a positive way to live. It means feeling grateful and centering your thoughts on gratitude. In other words, your focus is on the good things in life, not the bad. That does not mean you have perfect health or that all is ideal in your family, that you always sleep well at night, or that you enjoy everything that happens to you or around you.

However, it does mean that when the good happens, you thank God. You recognize that good and are filled with feelings of joy and gratitude. You and I know people like that, don’t we? We know people who always seem filled with joy, regardless of what may be happening to them or around them personally. To me, these kinds of people are stewardship people – the kind of people we all need to strive to be.

No doubt, you have heard that living a life of stewardship means living with an “attitude of gratitude.” That is not easy, for you or for me. Let us vow to try to be like that nonetheless. As we watch our summer season dwindle away and the busier time of year begins again, let us concentrate on how God has blessed us. If we do that, I truly believe that we can be those people Chekhov described. If we are happy, it will not matter what time of year it is.

I am grateful for you, your support, your prayers, and – most of all – your presence in my life. Thank you and God bless you.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Rev. Rene Ramoso
Pastor

Stewardship is a positive way to live. It means feeling grateful and centering your thoughts on gratitude. In other words, your focus is on the good things in life, not the bad.
We form many lifelong habits in our earliest years. As our young people take the initial steps of their faith journeys, they are surrounded by the support not only of their parents, the first educators, but also by a network of faith-filled peers and catechists through St. Augustine’s Religious Education program.

“This year, we are incorporating stewardship as a way of life in our program,” says Sr. Nona M. Barairo, the Director of Religious Education for first through sixth grades and for the Confirmation program for seventh and eighth grades. “Our goal is to help children realize how to share their gifts with others through simple and achievable deeds.”

St. Augustine’s Religious Education Program formally begins for our young people when they enter first grade. The primary and elementary levels, referred to as CCD, form a six-year program.

“The program takes the students and their families on an ongoing faith formation journey as they prepare for the Sacraments of Reconciliation, First Holy Communion and then the Sacrament of Confirmation,” Sr. Nona says.

Families have the option of enrolling their students in Thursday afternoon or Saturday morning classes. All grade levels are taught in a classroom setting by certified volunteer catechists.

Intertwined with the six-year program are two other program options for students. A two-year special program is offered for students who begin CCD later than others.

“For example, some primary students start faith formation when they are already in third or fourth grade,” Sr. Nona says. “This program must be completed prior to receiving Reconciliation and First Holy Communion. Once the program is completed, the students move on to the appropriate grade-level program.”
Another one-year program is offered for students of ages 11 to 16 who have not received Reconciliation and First Holy Communion or who initially attended CCD but discontinued faith formation after receiving First Holy Communion.

“Once the students complete the one-year program and after they pass a special one-on-one interview conducted by me, they are then allowed to enroll in the Confirmation program,” Sr. Nona says.

Confirmation is a two-year sacramental preparation program for the youth. The first year program serves seventh-graders twice a month on Thursday evenings. The second year program prepares eighth-graders for the rite, and then classes are held twice a month on Wednesday evenings.

Parents play an integral role in religious education programming at St. Augustine, and they are expected to attend four Adult Ongoing Formation meetings per year. “We will reintroduce the much-overlooked responsibilities of stewardship during the Adult Ongoing Formation meetings,” Sr. Nona says. “The meetings are attended by parents, students and their respective catechists.”

By attending the Adult Ongoing Formation meetings together, Sr. Nona notes that parents and their children form a special bond and create memories.

“One can truly see the excitement and pride in a child’s eyes when his or her parents participate at any given interactive activity,” says Sr. Nona, who facilitates the formation meetings with catechists. “Their presence alone is a prime example of their faith in action.”

If you would like more information about the Religious Education program at St. Augustine, please reach out to Sr. Nona M. Barairo at 650-873-2878 or nonatherese@aol.com.

This year, the religious education program has been intentionally planned around different stewardship activities and opportunities to give of our time, talent and treasure from prayerful stewardship retreats for the parents of students in the program to outreach opportunities like the Annual Thanksgiving food drive.

“In the spirit of stewardship, our fervent goal this school year is to help the faith community become good stewards of God by breathing life into our parish’s mission – ‘We live God’s Word and continue His Work,’” Sr. Nona says.

In a renewed way, this year St. Augustine’s Religious Education program seeks to support families as parents and children put their faith into action together.

“Our goal is to help families deepen their personal relationship with God through faith in action,” Sr. Nona says. “By encouraging families to visibly live out the Corporal Works of Mercy and pray together, children will personally experience how to live God’s Word and continue His works.”

“Help Families Deepen Their Personal Relationship With God”

Religious Education at St. Augustine

August 2016

“Our goal is to help families deepen their personal relationship with God through faith in action. By encouraging families to visibly live out the Corporal Works of Mercy and pray together, children will personally experience how to live God’s Word and continue His works.”

– Sr. Nona M. Barairo
It is ironic that today, with all of the freedom of religion that we enjoy in the United States, many of us wonder why we must go to Mass on Sunday.

However, if we really understood what the Mass is and how we participate in the celebration, we would instead be asking why we are, as sinful human beings, blessed with the opportunity to participate in the holy Mass. If we simply understood and recognized that God’s infinite goodness allows us to do so, we would be eager to go to Mass on Sunday and every other day of the week.

It is true, however, that all Catholics are obliged to “Keep holy the Lord’s Day” by sharing in the Mass. But why are we obliged?

The Eucharistic Liturgy is the center of our faith. It is “the summit toward which all activity of the Church is directed” and it is “the font from which all her power flows” (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy 10). It does not exhaust the activity of the Church, but is most certainly her greatest work.

The sacrifice of Christ on the cross is literally re-presented to the Father during Mass, and Christ allows us to join with Him in offering that sacrifice. Imagine our Lord and Savior dying on the cross for us right up the street. Imagine knowing that Mary is sitting at the foot of the cross with St. John, witnessing her Son giving Himself to the Father for the sake of all of us. Would we not run to be there? Would we not desire to share in His sacrifice, just as Mary did?

Believe it or not, the sacrifice of Calvary is really, truly happening at our parish, every time the Mass is offered.

Our participation in Mass gives us the strength and the graces we need to live our lives as Christ’s disciples. So what does this mean for us?

This means we have a front row seat to the sacrifice of Calvary. Given such a gift, how can we not accept it?

We also have a chance to join in Jesus’ sacrifice by offering our own prayers and petitions. As an example, what better gift could we give deceased loved ones than the offering of prayers for their souls in purgatory?

Most importantly, we have the opportunity to receive the Eucharist, followed by quiet time, when we offer sincere thanks and allow God’s graces to fill us. Think of all you are missing when you do not properly prepare yourself to receive the Holy Eucharist.

We ought to joyfully head to Church each Sunday, eager to give God glory in the greatest way we can! Attending and actively participating in Mass every Sunday is our obligation as Catholics. But we should not allow the fact that our attendance is “required” to stop us from going. Nor should we allow our laziness to overshadow the amazing privilege and the many blessings that lay before us in the Mass.

The pope and the bishops direct us to participate in the Eucharistic Liturgy every Sunday because they know there is no better way to keep holy the Lord’s day — giving God thanks for all He has done for us in the most powerful way possible. They know that, through the Mass, we gain the graces necessary to live our lives in this world.

Our ability to participate in the Mass is a wonderful gift, not a great burden. May Christ enlighten our minds and hearts to clearly see the wonders of the celebration, and give us great enthusiasm and eagerness to participate.
"A Greater Understanding of the Meaning and the Value of Mass"

The Altar Server Ministry at St. Augustine Catholic Church

We are blessed at St. Augustine to have a group of young people who give of themselves with commitment and dedication to be altar servers at Mass. These youngsters serve in the gathering of God’s people at Mass, prayer services, funerals, and weddings. First and foremost, they assist the presider by helping to prepare the altar, lead processions during Mass, and ensure that what is needed for the celebration is brought, carried or moved into place. Outside of the priest and deacons, altar servers more than any other liturgical ministry are concerned with almost every aspect of the liturgy.

The coordinator of the youth altar servers is Elsa Rozal. A longtime sacristan at the parish, Elsa has served in this position for the past year.

“For me, it is a privilege and an honor to work with our young altar servers,” she says. “By serving God and the parish in this way, they have a greater understanding of the meaning and the value of Mass. Not only do they assist the priest celebrant in practical ways, they also help all in attendance with their spiritual experience of the Mass.”

St. Thomas Aquinas said, “The celebration of the Holy Mass can be almost as valuable as the death of Jesus on the Cross.” The priest is a representative of the people of the parish, and in his ordained role serves as a surrogate Jesus Christ. It is the priest who presents the mystery of Calvary as it unfolds on the altar. For altar servers what an honor it is to serve the Lord as part of His gift of love to us, the Eucharist. Servers have a solemn responsibility to do their assigned duties with dignity and reverence.

“Currently we have almost 30 young people serving as altar servers,” Elsa says. “We prefer to have two or three serving at each Mass on the weekend. However, we can always use more. Some of our current servers are getting older and facing more conflicts in time. I think they understand that this is a way for them to be closer to God. They are enthusiastic about serving God and serving the Church. Of course, we provide training to any who might be interested.”

Serving at Mass is a sacred responsibility. The attitudes, demeanor and posture of the altar servers point to a greater reality – the reality that God is present. Everything they do can direct people to the reality of God’s presence. Whether they are aware of it or not, their actions represent signs and symbols whose meaning is rooted in the works of creation and in human culture, specified by events in the Old Testament and fully revealed in the Person of Jesus Christ.

If anyone is interested in being an altar server, or if you would like to learn more, please contact Elsa Rozal at 650-922-9618 or the parish at 650-873-2282.
Growing Up in Faith and Service

a section leader, and that allowed me to be open to other youth ministry when I was called to serve on the leadership and retreat teams. So, one thing led to the other.”

Alle was only in her sophomore year of high school when she was blessed with the exceptional opportunity to be a part of the leadership team for a Confirmation retreat.

“The whole experience was eye-opening because it gave us a hands-on feel of what we can do as youth to empower other youth,” she says. “Sometimes, it’s harder for young people to have faith today with everything that is going on, so it’s an honor for us to be able to speak our personal stories. We hope that they take what we have gone through and that it creates a stronger bond with God, and that we’re using his words to share the faith and His love for us.

“I witnessed a lot of the Holy Spirit in action that weekend,” Alle continues. “It was a lot of praise and prayer. I’ve never been surrounded by so many people who loved and praised Jesus like I did, so the whole experience helped me experience a stronger faith in God.”

Alle isn’t alone in her faith and service to the parish. In fact, stewardship is something of a family tradition for the Moscardinis – her mother, Meliza, used to help with the flowers at church every weekend; her father, Richard, serves on the Pastoral Council; and her younger sister, Annie, is now an altar server herself. Alle is thrilled to see her sister follow in her footsteps!

Alle’s dedication to stewardship and parish involvement during her school years has strengthened her ties to the Catholic Church, which she now carries into the new chapters of her life. And while she enjoys keeping her faith life as active as possible in college, she is always happy to come back “home” to St. Augustine!