As Catholics, we are called to a life of stewardship, an essential part of which is sharing of our time, talent and treasure with those in need within our community. While oftentimes we may feel like this is difficult to do, those who participate in ministries experience firsthand the way giving changes you from the inside out. Parishioner Sally Ortiz was looking for a hands-on ministry in which to get involved, one that took action to assist the poor and less fortunate. Little did she know how such a hands-on ministry would change her heart and impact her faith.

“My friend, Guia Carreon, was encouraging me to get involved in one or two ministries here at St. Augustine,” Sally says. “We talked for a while and she suggested I check out the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. In fact, she told me they were meeting at that time and sent me over. That’s how I became a member – I just showed up at the meeting and, after hearing about everything they did, I realized that this was really what I was looking for.”

Founded by its namesake St. Vincent de Paul, this lay organization is dedicated to offering person-to-person service to those who are suffering. Here at St. Augustine, this is done in a wide variety of ways such as providing food, clothing, household needs, and even paying for rent and utilities for individuals and families in great need.

“The goal of the Society is to move people out of poverty through a systematic solution,” Sally says. “We hope to help with long-term, positive changes that support the whole person.”

St. Augustine’s conference of the Society has also included special occasions. For example, they hosted...
Good Stewardship of Our Social Media

When we are talking about the idea of stewardship and how we care for the tools and gifts we have been given, it is not often that we stop to have a conversation about how we are caring for and using the gift of social media to positively spread Gospel values. However, this is an appropriate topic for us to consider when we are talking about the many young people, as well as adults, who gather online on a frequent basis. Therefore, it is important for us to think about how we are using the amazing gifts of technology.

If you are frequently online – especially on Pinterest – there is a popular acronym that you may have already come across. While it is used in many different contexts, it seems very appropriate to follow as we find ourselves posting statuses and pictures on various social media sites. The acronym is T.H.I.N.K., and it invites us to consider what we are saying and sharing, and whether or not it should be said!

Is what we are posting:

- **True?** Are we sharing factual information or a rumor that we heard, and if we think our information is factual, what is our source? Is it trustworthy?
- **Helpful?** Is the information we are sharing something that can be useful to another person? We don’t need to over-examine all of our content to consider its “educational factor,” but is the content we are posting going to help someone learn about us, learn about a place or an activity, think about the world, reflect on life, engage us in laughter, and so forth?
- **Inspirational?** There is certainly no requirement to be a poet or an artist, but social media has become a wonderful outlet for positive self-expression. “Positive” is the key word – are we posting to inspire others about the good in our world, or are we posting to cut someone down or to simply rant?
- **Nice?** Have we considered the feelings of others when we include them in a status or post a picture of them? Will they be embarrassed? Are we using social media to humiliate and intimidate others, or are we using it to try to better the world and the lives of others?
- **Kind?** What a great tool to compliment, show gratitude, and build the self-esteem of those you care about!

People often speak of social media in a negative way because of the content they see posted. T.H.I.N.K. is a great way for us to remind ourselves that we can be good stewards of our own social media use. Remember that there are many ways to share the Gospel without writing out its words. Gospel living has to do with the positive way we approach this life and bring God’s light and love to others – and it couldn’t be easier than sharing an uplifting status on Facebook, a Tweet of gratitude to a friend, or a beautiful image of God’s inspiring creation on Instagram. What a great way to build the Kingdom of God!
We often in the Church speak of “new beginnings.” Those two words can have almost endless meanings to us and to how we live our lives. Now that the fall season is in full swing, even though we tend to think more of spring as being a “new beginning,” now is equally so. Think of all the things in our lives and in those of our families that have begun or begun again in the past several weeks.

Two thoughts come to me as I ponder the significance of this time of year. It seems that there is never a time of year when starting over and renewing are not appropriate. We speak often of prayer – Jesus certainly provides for us both an example and encouragement to have rich prayer lives. Now would be a great time for a personal spiritual renewal, both for us individually and for our families, if appropriate.

There are prayer groups and spiritual studies beginning and ongoing at our parish. You might consider getting involved in one. No matter what you choose to do, it is always a good time to extend and formalize your prayer life. Schedule more time for personal prayer. Even better, if you have a family, try to formalize the prayer lives of your family as a group. That can enrich your life so much, and often it is something that stays with children forever.

My second thought goes back to the theme often stated by Jesus to “love one another.”

Were you aware that studies done by healthcare groups have shown that people who try to be kind to others have less pain, less depression, and less stress in their lives? That is exactly what the Lord tells us will happen if we do even small things to demonstrate our love for one another.

First, pray more on a fixed schedule. Second, smile and be kind. It is amazing how those two aspects of our lives can be fulfilled and fulfilling.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Rev. Rene Ramoso
Pastor
Khay Acosta hesitated. She was new at St. Augustine and was sitting in Mass one Sunday when she heard an announcement asking for catechism teachers. Timidly, Khay proceeded to the hall after Mass. It was a leap of faith that had a tremendous impact on her faith journey.

“I didn’t know at the time that the women at the sign-up table would greatly influence my faith,” Khay says. “They would guide me through tough times, be my role models, become my friends, and teach me to truly love God.”

Khay and Deo Acosta’s relationship is uniquely connected to St. Augustine’s faith community, since Fr. Rene actually served as the couple’s matchmaker and introduced them to each other during the rehearsal for the parish’s 40th anniversary celebration in October 2010.

“Deo is from the Philippines, and Fr. Rene thought we looked alike,” Khay says. “We started communicating and developed a long-distance relationship. When he returned in October of 2011, we solidified our relationship.”

Then, while waiting for their fiancé visa, Khay was diagnosed with uterine cancer on July 17, 2012. Within a week, Deo came to the United States using a tourist visa.

Throughout their long-distance relationship and particularly when Khay received her diagnosis, the couple prayed together over the phone.

“I was blessed to have met someone who shared the same faith in God,” Khay says. “I don’t know how we would have survived the earliest stages of our long-distance relationship, my sickness, his immigration status, and just being newlyweds without God’s presence every step of the way.”

Fr. Rene officiated at their wedding Mass on Oct. 8, 2012. As soon as their lives as newlyweds began, Deo joined Khay in serving others with St. Vincent de Paul.

“This is my 10th year with St. Vincent de Paul, and when Deo and I got married, he joined me on the home visits,” Khay says.

Since 1998, Khay has taught CCD classes, and Deo and Khay began teaching a sacramental preparation course together this September. Deo also helps with Khay at the parish’s special events like our Annual Rummage Sale.

“The people we serve with have become our second family,” Khay says. “St. Augustine is our home away from home. People..."
have supported me in every stage of my life – they have supported us both.”

Today Khay remembers her early hesitation about becoming involved and is glad that she took that leap of faith.

“Even though I didn’t know anyone and had some hesitation, I went ahead, took a risk and signed up,” Khay says. “I recommend that if there is a hint of prompting from the Holy Spirit, just go for it. Take a proactive approach. When the parish is hosting an event, attend!”

Deo and Khay are grateful to be a part of the St. Augustine faith community. When they hear their names called out at church or when they’re out in the community, Khay and Deo feel truly blessed to have somehow touched a life in some positive way.

“We hope that in years to come, we will continue to have the strength to minister to those who are less fortunate,” Khay says. “We hope that the community we have grown to love will continue to celebrate and support us, and that both of us will live lives that testify to the love that Christ has shown us.”

The Society of St. Vincent de Paul continued from front cover

a Back to School event, where Society members brought students along with their parents or guardians to Target in order to get school supplies and clothes. The Society also hosts special distributions during Easter, Thanksgiving and Christmas, spreading Christ’s love in a tangible way to others.

“They are all very appreciative and grateful for the assistance we give them, not only the material things but also the time,” Sally says. “Some of them just want someone to sit down and listen to them. They want to feel connected, that they aren’t alone.”

Active members meet every second and fourth Tuesday of the month in order to prayerfully discern how donated funds and resources should be distributed. These meetings begin at 7 p.m. in Conference Room C. These members also take turns manning the hotline phone that people can call for assistance.

Though this ministry is meant to help others, volunteers cannot help but be transformed in the process. Over the years, Sally has become more “generous and aware of others’ needs.” She has also witnessed her relationship with the Lord deepen as she serves Him through others.

“We all know how in the Gospel, Jesus says we serve Him through the poor,” Sally says. “Before, I always understood that with my head. But now, I understand it with my heart.”

There are many ways that you can help support the St. Vincent de Paul Society. First, the ministry is completely reliant upon donations to perform its good work. That is why here at St. Augustine, on every fifth Sunday of the month, there is a second collection dedicated to the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. Please consider donating toward this worthy cause. New members are also always welcomed and needed.

To get more information on the St. Vincent de Paul Society or to learn how to become involved, please call 650-273-7088. Any Society member will be happy to speak with you about the Vincentian way.
All of us were made for love. Only love can fulfill our hearts and help us realize our human destiny. We have been created from all eternity to love God and neighbor with all of our being.

St. Teresa of Calcutta, who was named for St. Thérèse of Lisieux, once said, “I am not just a number. I was made for great things, to love and be loved.”

St. Thérèse of Lisieux, whose feast day is Oct. 1, was a saint who understood the beauty of true love. As patroness of missions, she knew what it meant to quietly spend herself for the salvation of souls, making countless daily sacrifices in imitation of her Crucified Savior.

Thérèse Martin was the last of nine children born to Louis and Zelie Martin on Jan. 2, 1873, in Alençon, France. She was an overwhelmingly sensitive child. Her mother’s death — Thérèse was only 4 at the time — certainly did not help to alleviate her moodiness. However, when she was 14, on Christmas Eve, Thérèse experienced a miraculous conversion that transformed her whole life. That evening, her sensitive spirit turned away from selfishness and turned toward love. Receiving strength from God, whose very being is love, Thérèse resolved to sacrifice herself for the happiness of others.

When Thérèse was 15, she entered the Carmelite cloister in Lisieux, giving her whole life to God. There, she lived up to her religious name, Sr. Thérèse of the Child Jesus and the Holy Face, by her profound devotion to Christ Incarnate in the Eucharist, and to His Passion, as revealed in His Holy Face.

Thérèse fulfilled her vocation in Carmel to the utmost of her ability, embodying the essence of an authentic contemplative in every way. She died on Sept. 30, 1897, following a long struggle with tuberculosis. Her last words captured the meaning of her life well lived, “My God, I love you!”

Day by day, St. Thérèse lifted her soul towards heaven and her heart towards the face of Christ, both in times of trial and in joy. She practiced thorough detachment from earthly things so that her spirit could soar to unite with God above. As she writes in her poem, Jesus Alone, “Jesus, you alone can satisfy my soul. Nothing can charm me here below ... My only peace, my only happiness, my only love is you, Lord!”

When it came to loving others, St. Thérèse understood that Christians must first love Christ. As the shape of the cross demonstrates, our focus must be first and foremost on loving our Father, and then on loving others.

“You want my heart, Jesus, I give it to you. I surrender all my desires to you, and those whom I love, O my Spouse, my King, from now on I only want to love them for you,” her poem continues.

Let us take a moment to thank God for all of the saints who have gone before us, paving the way to Eternity for all. This Oct. 1, let us remember this mystical “Saint of Love” and imitate her in a special way.
Becoming a Lifelong Learner
The Adult Faith Formation Team at St. Augustine

When you hear the words “faith formation,” there are many different things that may come to mind – CCD classes, Confirmation preparation, youth ministry, and Catholic schools. While all these aspects of the faith formation of young people are certainly significant, it’s easy to neglect the area that is referred to as “the central task” of catechetical efforts by both the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and the Vatican’s International Council for Catechesis (Adult Catechesis in the Christian Community, 25). What is this area, which is of such great importance, as the Church seeks to pass on Her wisdom? It is the ongoing faith formation of adults.

Here at St. Augustine, we hope to prioritize the faith formation of adults, through our Adult Faith Formation Team, or AFFT.

“Ongoing adult faith formation is so important, in that, it does not only benefit the adult parishioners, but it directly and greatly contributes to the success of the faith formation of the youth and children in the parish,” says Noel Panelo, who serves as the Chairperson for this ministry, “Adult parishioners who constantly pursue to grow in their faith serve as witnesses and, therefore, exemplary models to the younger members of the parish that faith formation is a lifelong process.”

The AFFT serves the parish in many ways, in collaboration with other parish ministries and organizations, giving parishioners the opportunity to deepen their faith through prayer services, presentations and small faith-sharing groups. The AFFT also provides adult faith formation sessions for the parents of CCD and Confirmation students, and is currently working with the new Stewardship Council to conduct sessions that will empower parishioners to embrace stewardship as a way of life.

“These] activities provide opportunities for adult parishioners to learn more about and grow in their faith,” says Noel, who has been involved with the ministry since it began nearly 10 years ago.

For Noel, the AFFT has played a significant role in deepening his own faith and relationship with the Lord.

“I am a cradle Catholic,” he says. “I went to Catholic schools, I went to a Catholic University. Knowing that, someone could probably make an assumption that I knew so much about my faith. But that person would be so wrong.”

Initially, Noel was motivated to learn more about his faith

“Learning the truths about our faith has certainly has created a change in me, and then inspired me to learn more. There’s so much to learn about our faith, and I’m just propelled to learn more because as I do, it enriches me as a person.” – Noel Panelo, AFFT Chairperson

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The Adult Faith Formation Team at St. Augustine

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as he was questioned by other Christians in various Protestant denominations.

“That was a catalyst and wake-up call for me, when I didn’t have any responses to those questions,” Noel says. “It really prompted me to say, ‘If I really believe that my faith is the true faith, than I should be able to provide responses to such challenges to my faith.’ So, I started learning about it.”

For Noel, it quickly became a cycle. The more that he learned about God, the more he came to love God. And the more that he grew in love for God, the more he wanted to know. From growing in knowledge of the faith, to deepening his prayer life and love of the sacraments, the formation Noel received through opportunities offered by the AFFT began to transform many aspects of his life.

“Learning the truths about our faith has certainly has created a change in me, and then inspired me to learn more,” Noel says. “There’s so much to learn about our faith, and I’m just propelled to learn more because as I do, it enriches me as a person.”

It is Noel’s personal experience that inspires him to serve in this ministry, and he hopes to encourage others to become involved in the AFFT and grow in their relationships with God.

“I believe that what’s driving me to be a part of this ministry is I have been given such a great gift,” Noel says. “I have learned so much more about my faith through the AFFT, and I feel obliged to share that gift with other people. It is such a tremendous gift and it would be selfish for me to not do my part so that others can experience the same thing.”

If you would like more information, or if you are interested in becoming involved with the Adult Faith Formation Team, please contact Noel Panelo at noel_panelo@yahoo.com. You can also visit http://www.staugustinessf.org/78 to learn about upcoming meetings and events.