“Our Bible Study Program Is Good for Me and for All Those Who Choose to Be a Part of It”

The St. Augustine Catholic Church Bible Study Program

Scripture always has played an important role in the prayer life of the Catholic Church and its members. For the ordinary Catholic in earlier centuries, exposure to Scripture was passive. They heard it read aloud or prayed aloud, but did not read it themselves, for one simple reason – centuries ago, the average person could not read or afford a book. Popular reading and ownership of books began to flourish only after the invention of the printing press. In fact, once the printing press was invented, the most commonly printed book was the Bible.

Msgr. Daniel Kutys, a priest of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, spent several years as the Executive Director of the U.S. Bishops’ Secretariat of Evangelization and Catechesis. The role of that group is to promote the reading of and the study of sacred Scripture in the Bible. Monsignor explains the history of study of the Bible in this way: “For a long time, reading and interpreting the Bible was viewed as something Protestants did, but not Catholics. That all changed in 1943 when Pope Pius XII issued an encyclical, Divino Afflante Spiritu, which encouraged Catholics to study the Bible. Awareness of Sacred Scripture grew even more after the Second Vatican Council as adult faith formation programs began to develop and the focus of most was Scripture study.”

We at St. Augustine have seen this movement...
The St. Augustine Catholic Church Bible Study Program

paralleled in our parish. Deacon Virgil Capetti currently serves as the spiritual director and the facilitator for a Bible Study ministry, which meets on Tuesday evenings from 7-8:30 p.m.

“We have about 15 people who gather on Tuesdays to read and discuss the Word of God as presented in Scripture,” Deacon Capetti says. “We meet in the cry room at the church, as it is a chapel-like setting, and is large enough to accommodate us comfortably. Each year we concentrate on a Bible study guide and follow it. This year, we are using The Great Adventure Bible Timeline by Jeff Cavins. It is particularly effective and clear, as it includes DVD presentations in addition to the readings.”

The Great Adventure Bible Timeline is a 24-week series that begins with the Book of Genesis and guides the reader through a journey covering the entire Bible. It includes a study kit with videos, a Bible timeline chart, study questions and explanations to promote understanding and discussion, a workbook, and more.

Deacon Capetti is enthusiastic about Scripture and about the Bible Study Ministry.

“I have always loved Holy Scripture, and I have a gift from God in relating it to my life and to life in general,” he says. “Our Bible Study program is good for me and for all those who choose to be a part of it. We learn in the Gospels that Jesus taught His disciples in small groups. He calls each of us to discipleship in the same way. This type of faith sharing in the Body of Christ helps build community and strong relationships.”

A typical week with the Bible Study group follows a general format.

“We gather and pray, and then have a discussion of the readings and perhaps a DVD we have viewed,” Deacon Capetti says. “This is not a classroom setting – it is a group sharing effort. Our discussions help us to see how others may view a particular part of Scripture. After all, we are on a faith journey together. We keep our meetings to 90 minutes in length.”

“I really think our Bible Study would be beneficial and useful for those in the Ministry of Lectors, as it is a way to deepen understanding of Scripture, and they in particular would find that advantageous as they proclaim the Word of the Lord,” he concludes.

If you would like more information about this wonderful opportunity to learn more about Scripture and our faith, please contact Deacon Virgil Capetti at 650-438-3060 or carrera993@comcast.net, or call the parish office at 650-873-2282.
The next several weeks are certainly a busy time for us as Catholics, good stewards, good citizens, and faithful members of the Church and our parish. There are celebrations and commemorations both inside and outside the Church that are momentous in terms of faith, citizenship, and living as people of thanksgiving and gratitude.

We celebrate Veterans Day to honor and thank all those men and women who served in the United States Armed Forces in one capacity or another. Indicative of the importance of this day, every year at 11 a.m. Eastern, the President of the United States lays a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at Arlington National Cemetery.

On Sunday, Nov. 20, we culminate the Jubilee Year of Mercy on the Feast of Christ the King. In this Jubilee Year, our Holy Father Pope Francis has invited us to love, be kind, be generous, and to forgive boundlessly. How have we done? We all understand this is what we are supposed to be doing every day and every year, but this year reminds us of that, and hopefully renews us all in that reality and that hope.

We all understand that Americans celebrate a day of Thanksgiving on Nov. 24. What more can we say about this? It is a day that was faith-based from its very beginnings, and it is an indication of how much we have to thank God for in terms of the gifts we have received — our lives, our families, our Church, our Lord and Savior — everything we are and everything we have.

No sooner are Thanksgiving Day celebrations concluded, than we begin that glorious season called Advent on Sunday, Nov. 27. This prepares us for and leads to Christmas. Indeed, this is both a busy and extraordinary time of year! There is, of course, much more on which we could focus and about which we could think, meditate and pray, but that is more than enough for us to consider and absorb.

From a stewardship perspective, I would like you to not only participate and focus on all the particular things that are about to happen, but also on one of our special gifts — the gift of time. The gift of time, which we all receive from God in equal amount, is precious because it is a non-renewable resource. Although some of our time is committed because of family responsibilities, work responsibilities or simply personal needs, we have an element of freewill with how we spend a certain amount of it. We need to spend some of that time in prayer, in thanksgiving, in worship, and in works of mercy and ministry. Our time is perhaps more precious than any material gifts we receive from the Lord. How are we doing with that gift?

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Rev. Rene Ramoso
Pastor
All life is sacred – especially those small lives that depend on us to survive. We, as Catholics, have a responsibility to protect the unborn. However, we are equally called to support their mothers. Through the Gabriel Project, parishioners from St. Augustine are able to help these women choose life for their children, and support them during pregnancy and beyond.

“People are always asking, ‘If you don’t want them to have the abortion, then what are you going to do about it?’” says ministry coordinator Lita Songco. “We help these women by giving them support and alternatives to abortion. Sometimes, all they really need to change their mind is that emotional support – if we are there for them, and help them, it prevents them from doing something they don’t actually want to do.”

“Pregnant mothers need a lot of support,” adds Rosalinda Lopez, who also coordinates the ministry. “We offer them friendship, pastoral care and counseling. It’s all part of loving your neighbor. We always respond with love to anyone who asks for help. No matter what faith, or where they are in life – if they ask for help, we will provide it.”

Rosalinda recalls the story from the Gospel of Luke, when Gabriel the Archangel told Mary she was going to be the mother of God.

“Mary asks, ‘How can this be?’” Rosalinda says. “Gabriel says, ‘Fear not; the Lord is with you. Nothing is impossible with God.’ It is a wonderful message, and that’s where the Gabriel Project gets its name.”

The Gabriel Project is a national network of church communities that offer assistance to any woman in a crisis pregnancy. Women can call the Gabriel Project directly, and they will be connected with the closest participating parish or pregnancy center in their area. Volunteers meet with the women for one-on-one, confidential fellowship, and are able to give them referrals to organizations that can provide a variety of services. This includes pregnancy information, prenatal care, medical care, counseling, financial and housing assistance, baby clothing and items, parenting support and adoption information.

Here at St. Augustine, seven volunteers have been trained to help women through the Gabriel Project.

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All volunteers must undergo a one-day, eight-hour training session, led by a local Gabriel Project leader. This training equips volunteers to be able to effectively and compassionately communicate with these women.

“In my experience, when you speak with them, they can be very scared at first – then, once you tell them all the ways they can help you, their anxiety lessens,” says Lita, who is also an OB nurse. “We try to get in touch with them as soon as we hear that someone needs help, and we also follow up with them after they have the baby. It’s also very important that they know we will keep their privacy.

“This is my second year volunteering, and I have helped some people,” she adds. “One person I worked with, her baby is now 2 years old. Another one has a baby who is 6 months old now!”

Rosalinda recalls another instance where they were able to help.

“We also had a mother who had just moved to the San Francisco area, and became pregnant and knew nobody,” she says. “She saw a sign and called the helpline number, and they called us to help her. We were there to help her all the way. We helped her to find a rental, helped her to move, referred her to the closest doctor and hospital, and pointed out places where she could get unemployment funding. We took care of all these things, and provided emotional support, so that she could keep her baby. We have continued our friendly relationship with her now that she has had the baby, and they are both very happy!”

Lita notes how her faith has increased since, through this ministry, she learned to use the talents God has given her.

“I feel like God has given me a special gift for speaking to people, and I wanted to use it!” she says. “I don’t know if it’s something in the way I ask them, but people open up to me, and I feel like God is with me every time I talk to someone. Since I’ve been doing this ministry, I’ve become more prayerful – I say a special prayer every day for these moms and babies, and I go to adoration and daily Mass to help me with my ministry.”

All parishioners are invited to help support the Gabriel Project, whether it be through volunteering or through prayer.

“We just need people to pray for the end of abortion and to pray for us, the volunteers who are out there,” Lita says. “We can all pray for the culture of life, and if you can’t participate physically, prayer is a great way to help!”

To get involved in the Gabriel Project at St. Augustine, please contact Lita Songco at 650-270-8985. For more information, please visit the Gabriel Project website at http://www.gabrielproject.us/
A Modern Model of Sainthood St. Teresa of Calcutta

In the dark final years of the Cold War, a small woman — standing at barely five feet tall — offered a living counter-narrative to the inhibiting fear under-girding our daily lives and our foreign affairs. Instead of living in fear, Mother Teresa acted out of love. Instead of withdrawing and isolating herself, she gave tirelessly to others.

Many of us harbor a personal connection to this saint, for we lived during the height of the media coverage of Mother Teresa’s work and her friendships with Pope St. John Paul II and the beloved Princess Diana.

Long before she received the name Mother Teresa and the Nobel Peace Prize in 1979, Agnes Gonxha Bojaxhiu was born on Aug. 26, 1910, in Skopje, Macedonia, the crossroads of the Balkans. The youngest of three children, Mother Teresa was raised predominately by her mother after her father’s death, when she was about 8 years old. Dranafile (Drana) Bojaxhiu, Mother Teresa’s mother, undoubtedly became a strong influence on her daughter’s vocation, since Drana herself was a devout Catholic and known for her prayer life and her charity.

Agnes attended a Catholic primary school and, following the example of her mother, became active in their parish and sang in Sacred Heart’s choir. As a young person, Agnes enjoyed reading the lives of the saints — while immersing herself in the stories of these holy men and women, Agnes first felt the stirring call to become a missionary.

At the age of 18, Agnes traveled to Dublin, Ireland, to join the Sisters of Loreto. She became Sr. Mary Teresa, named after St. Thérèse of Lisieux, and began to learn English. Within a few months of arriving in Ireland, she left for India.

In India, Sr. Mary Teresa lived at the Loreto Entally community in Calcutta, where she served as an educator and taught at St. Mary’s School. After her final profession, she became Mother Teresa and, a few years later, began serving as the school’s principal.

On an ordinary day, Mother Teresa received an extraordinary call. While on a train ride to her annual retreat, Mother Teresa felt what she would describe as Jesus’ thirst for souls. Soon, Jesus called her to found the Missionaries of Charity, an order devoted to serving the “poorest of the poor.”

The order formally began on Oct. 7, 1950, and has grown from one woman tending the sick and dying in the streets of Calcutta to over 4,500 religious sisters helping the poor in over 130 countries around the world. Additionally, the order grew to include the Missionaries of Charity Brothers, the Missionaries of Charity Fathers and the Lay Missionaries of Charity.

Though externally Mother Teresa joyfully and indefatigably served the poor for nearly 50 years, during the majority of this time, she experienced a “dark night of the soul,” an extensive period of not feeling God’s presence or hearing His voice. Other saints, notably St. John of the Cross, similarly experienced a dark night of the soul. Despite this spiritual struggle, Mother Teresa continued her work joyfully throughout her sickness and until her death on Sept. 5, 1997.

Pope St. John Paul II beatified Mother Teresa in 2003. Fittingly, this year, a pontiff who has underscored the importance of social justice celebrated her canonization. On Sept. 4, 2016, Pope Francis canonized Mother Teresa, the “Saint of the Gutters,” at the Vatican.

St. Teresa of Calcutta offers us an example of ceaseless prayer and selfless service. She is a modern model of sainthood that we can emulate in our daily lives starting with how we serve and treat the other members of our family, our faith community and all those with whom we interact on a daily basis.

St. Teresa of Calcutta, Pray for Us!
Through her life’s work, newly-canonized St. Teresa of Calcutta showed us that not only are we called to help those in need of monetary or physical assistance, but also those suffering emotionally and spiritually. As she once said, “We think sometimes that poverty is only being hungry, naked and homeless. The poverty of being unwanted, unloved and uncared for is the greatest poverty. We must start in our own homes to remedy this kind of poverty.” Here at St. Augustine, the Feeding Ministry seeks to embody these words, serving alongside local Missionaries of Charity in helping the poorest of the poor.

“It’s not only food we are serving,” says parishioner Perla Estiva. “It’s the people you get in touch with and you get to know them. You have a chance to talk with them because you don’t just stand and serve. It’s very humbling helping these people.”

For Perla, the Feeding Ministry has been a way for her to “give back to God” some of the many gifts He has shared with her.

“This ministry is a way of helping,” Perla says. “It’s a way of being a religious instrument. Giving food to people in need makes us happy. We also consider it a spiritual feeding as you are helping someone out, even if it’s just one meal.”

Each year, the Missionaries of Charity pick a Sunday of each month that they are available to help with the St. Augustine Feeding Ministry. Three to five volunteers, along with the Sisters, then prepare and serve a meal to roughly 100 people each month. The meal takes place outside a park near the James Rolph Jr. Playground on Potrero and Cesar Chavez Street. During the meal, the Sisters will also offer haircuts, trim nails, or help with other basic necessities.

“It’s a way of acknowledging Christ in other people,” Perla says. “It’s fulfilling when you’re helping other people, especially by sharing food with them.”

If you are looking for a way to get involved in the community and make a difference in someone’s life, please consider volunteering for one of the Sunday meals. Another way to donate is by making a monetary or food donation to the
The Feeding Ministry continued from page 7

Missionaries of Charity. Apart from helping with the monthly St. Augustine Feeding Ministry, they offer meals to those in need every day except Thursday.

The upcoming Sunday meals will take place on Nov. 20 and Dec. 18. Please contact Khay Ronquillo-Acosta at khay_r@yahoo.com or the parish office at 650-873-2282 if you would like to get involved.

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