Fil-Am Society Active in All Phases of Parish Life

The Fil-Am Society, one of the longest-running organizations at St. Augustine, continues to promote camaraderie and spiritual engagement in the life of our parish.

The Society also works to preserve the cultural heritage and posterity of the Fil-Am members, which ultimately serves to enhance its service to the Church and our parish community.

“We have about 15 active members in the organization,” says Cora Gaduang, who was named president of the society last year. “We meet every second Sunday of the month after the 11 a.m. Mass in Room C at the church, and we’re always welcoming new members.”

Membership in the organization is open to all parishioners of St. Augustine Parish with Filipino affiliation, either by ethnicity or otherwise.

Cora says the group members are very active in a number of organizations in our parish.

“We are also active in the Small Christian Communities, Bible readings, discipleship, and the Faith in Action group,” Cora says. “We try to promote our members to be active in all parish activities. We build camaraderie among our members and we spread the Word of God to the people who come to church to worship.”

Some of the activities conducted by the Fil-Am Society include the Simbang Gabi Novena that was held from Dec. 15-23.

“We try to promote our members to be active in all parish activities. We build camaraderie among our members and we spread the Word of God to the people who come to church to worship.” – Cora Gaduang
How old do you have to be to practice stewardship? Can a 5-year-old embrace stewardship? How about a 10-year-old?

Although there is no guideline to what the right age is to begin to live a life of stewardship, God’s call certainly extends to each of His children — even the young ones.

It is especially important to show children that they are not too young to share their time, talent and treasure to help build God’s kingdom.

Sharing Your Time
A young child can share of his time in a variety of ways appropriate to his ability. For example, during the day, a child can pray for a loved one that is hurt, or say prayers with his parents or siblings. He can participate in Mass each Sunday, and even take time from his day to thank God for a veteran who has served our country.

Spending time being virtuous — such as being patient, generous and kind — is also a great example of sharing our time for love of God.

Sharing Your Talent
Using God-given talents to glorify God can also be performed by both young and old. An elementary school-aged child can easily clean her room or perform chores such as raking leaves, doing laundry, or taking care of pets. Making cards for people who are sick or who have had a death in the family are other concrete examples of being a faithful steward.

Even using our talents — such as playing a musical instrument or football — to the best of our abilities to give God glory is an example of being a good steward.

Sharing Your Treasure
Although children do not have the same type of treasure to share as adults, instilling the importance of sharing finances is an important lesson.

If a child receives an allowance, he can return a portion of it to the Church in the collection basket. If he gets money for his birthday, he can give a small portion of it back to God in thanksgiving. Little ones can even share things like their Halloween candy with their siblings or friends as a way of demonstrating generosity.

The Most Important Lesson
Above all, the most important lesson to teach our children is why we share. We don’t share because we “have to.” We don’t share because our parents tell us to. We share our time, talent and treasure with God because we are thankful for the blessings He has given us and we want to thank Him for His generosity.

Teaching these lessons at a young age will allow a lifetime of good stewardship to follow for even the youngest of God’s children.
Dear Parishioners,

It is a new year, and it is my prayer for all of you – and for me, as well – that we can take new steps on our faith journeys, and seek new ways to live out discipleship and stewardship.

Pope Francis once commented on his perspective of our modern approach to life. He said, “Certainly, possessions, money and power can give a momentary thrill, the illusion of being happy, but they end up possessing us and making us always want more, never satisfied. I have learned that the most important thing is to put on Christ in your life, place your trust in Him, and you will never be disappointed.”

The pope has been called “the world’s parish priest.” As we pray for one another in this New Year, may we all ask the Lord to help us appreciate Pope Francis’ approach to life, his simple way of seeing things, and his very basic way of appreciating things. I would hope that we see this year as a time for opportunity, a time to deepen our relationship to Christ, and for that matter to one another.

If we really wish to change our lives and the lives of others, there are two easy ways to do it. We are blessed with many opportunities in this parish to pray, but as much as it is important for us to take advantage of those, we also need to develop a strong personal prayer life. Recall the young Samuel, who was not quite sure what to do with his life, or what direction to go. When he finally settled on that one important prayer, “Speak, Lord, for I am listening,” Samuel gave us the hint as to what we need to do. Prayer is a two-way street, and part of that is taking the time to listen to God.

The second important way is to exude joy. Christ certainly called us to do that. Pope Francis has had much to say about joy, as well. The Holy Father says, “Joy cannot be held at heel; it must be let go. Joy is a pilgrim virtue. It is a gift that walks – walks on the path of life, that walks with Jesus... proclaiming joy, lengthens and widens that path.” We must seek that joy and then we need to share it. That is truly our call. Joy translates quite easily into “love your neighbor.”

Yes, there may be challenges ahead in 2017, but we must focus on the opportunities, and then exert the effort to benefit from those opportunities. Happy New Year!

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Rev. Rene Ramoso
Pastor
Did you ever wonder what the Sacrament of Baptism is really about, anyway? Sure, most of us have seen baptismal water poured on babies’ heads, and maybe taken some great photo shoots of this monumental moment. Perhaps, you have even had your own child baptized, are a godparent, or are hoping to have one of your children receive the sacrament in the future. But the question is, for all of us – do we understand how profoundly beautiful this sacrament is, and what it really implies? That is where our parish’s Pre-Baptismal Catechesis course comes in handy.

“During the course, we teach them about the Catholic faith, and about what we believe and celebrate as Catholics,” Deacon Virgil Capetti says. “Baptism is a base sacrament, and just as a carpenter must have a sound foundation for what he is building, so we must have a strong foundation of baptism for our life of faith. Baptism is not just a social affair – it is a faithful fulfillment of a vocation.”

The Pre-Baptismal Catechesis courses, which are coordinated and taught by Deacon Virgil and Lari Collins with the assistance of Frances Afuang, meet in the Choir Room year-round on the first and third Monday of each month for about an hour and a half. Those who would like to have their child baptized, as well as those who have been chosen to be the child’s godparents, are asked to attend one course prior to the baptism. The role of godparents is to stand as witnesses to the sacrament and to help the parents raise the child in the faith.

To register for the Pre-Baptismal Course, visit the parish website at www.staugustinesisf.org, download the application and submit it to the parish office, or contact the parish office directly at 650-873-2282.
“During the course, I like to find out where the parents and godparents are coming from in their understanding of the Catholic faith and of the Sacrament of Baptism,” Deacon Virgil says. “I try to see where they stand, and if they understand what they are about to ask the Church to do for their child, as well as for themselves.”

With loving concern and personal interest, Deacon Virgil inspires the parents to live their faith in a meaningful way in sight of their baptized children.

“Parents usually want their child to be baptized because they desire them to be strong in faith, and to have good moral character,” he says. “Therefore, during the course I emphasize to them that what they really want for their child will have to start from themselves and how seriously they take their faith at home. Children are very, very attentive to what is going on around them. Religious sisters such as Mother Teresa’s Missionaries of Charity have found by experience that children normally need to be taught about their faith by the time they are about 3 years old or they will not stay Catholic throughout their lives. This fact directly correlates to the mission of our course.”

Furthermore, the parents are instructed about what to expect during the baptismal ceremony, and reminded of the respect that should be present during it. They are also reminded of the importance of bringing their baptized children to Mass regularly, and given a book that explains the basics of Catholicism and what it means to be a Child of God.

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– Deacon Virgil Capetti
Before Thomas Aquinas was even born, a holy hermit told his mother he was to be more learned and holy than any other person of his time. As a young boy, he was devoted to prayer and meditation, and his intellectual gifts were quickly recognized. When he was about 11 years old, he was sent to the University of Naples, and about five years later, he became a Dominican friar.

Thomas’ parents were Italian nobility and were not enthusiastic about Thomas’ choice of vocation. They went so far as to have his brothers capture him while he was en route to Rome, and they held him prisoner for two years in an effort to destroy his vocation and his virtue. After the family made one particularly heinous attempt at breaking Thomas’ faith and spirit, he begged God to give him integrity of mind and body, and he was miraculously given the girdle and grace of purity for the rest of his life. This gift almost certainly was essential to the remarkable clarity of his intellect.

After he regained his freedom, Thomas received the best education that was available during a time in human history that arguably represents the best the world has ever offered to scholars and philosophers. His greatest works arise from his total focus on knowing and understanding God, and revealing as clearly as possible the Truth of God to others. He showed that faith and reason are not in conflict, but exist in harmony.

Thomas’ *Summa Theologica* uses philosophical principles presented in scientific form to systematically explain Christian theology. It was his last work and was left unfinished. Thomas stopped writing after he experienced an unusually long vision on Dec. 6, 1273. When he was urged to finish his *Summa*, he stated that he could no longer write, for the secrets he had been shown during his vision made all he had written “seem as straw.” He died three months later.

Thomas composed more than 60 works. His powers of synthesis were truly extraordinary. He was able to sift through all that he read, distill the truth, and summarize his conclusions simply, clearly and briefly. His writing is of such genius that it transcends style and art in the beauty of its truth. His works are as relevant today as they were to the 13th century. His principles offer a remedy to such evils as socialism, communism, nihilism, as well as pantheism and spiritism.

Thomas was canonized in 1323, and was declared a Doctor of the Universal Church in 1567. In 1879, Leo XIII declared Thomas Aquinas “the prince and master of all scholastic doctors,” and in 1880, Thomas was designated as patron of all Catholic universities, colleges and schools throughout the world. We celebrate St. Thomas Aquinas’ feast day on Jan. 28.
In the fall of 2016, our parish leadership here at St. Augustine conducted our Stewardship Renewal. And in this month’s newsletter, we are sharing the numbers of the Stewardship Renewal, which demonstrate the growing commitment to stewardship in our St. Augustine parish family.

- Commitment Cards totaling 101 were submitted to the parish for the Renewal.
- There were 561 Prayer commitments – or commitments to Stewardship of Time – made during the Renewal.
- There were 265 Ministry commitments – or commitments to Stewardship of Talent. Of these, 143 were re-commitments to current ministries, while 122 were new ministry commitments.
- A total of 24 families with no prior activity signed up to participate in at least one of the parish’s many ministries.
- There were 84 Offertory commitments – or commitments to Stewardship of Treasure.
- The average annual pledge was $1,217.
- There was a pledged Offertory increase of $47,540.

If you haven’t yet made commitments in any of these areas, please consider how you can give back your gifts of time, talent, and treasure to God. We thank all who participated in the 2016 Stewardship Renewal at St. Augustine, and we look forward to further living out the Stewardship Way of Life as a parish family!
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“We also lead the saying of a novena at midnight Mass at Christmas,” Cora says. “We are in charge of the Salubong, the Easter Sunday Sunrise Service,” Cora says. “We also conduct the Santacruzan, the May devotionals to the Blessed Virgin Mary.”

The Fil-Am Society formerly was in charge of the Santacruzan Festival, but it now is a parish-run activity.

Besides spiritual activities, the Fil-Am Society has been active in providing for needs in the church building.

“We have contributed to many things at the parish,” Cora says. “We provided the public address system in the parish hall, and erected the granite church sign at the corner of Callan Boulevard and Greendale Street. We contributed more than $5,000 towards the expansion of the church building, provided a pew for the renovated church, security cameras, and landscaping. The Society also installed diaper changers in the restrooms, provided chairs in the chapel and purchased three ciborium.”

As far as outside activities in 2017, Cora says the Society is going to try to schedule casino trips.

Interested in joining the Fil-Am Society?

Please contact Cora Gaduang at 650-219-9243, past President Flora Nolasco at 650-255-1244, or Treasurer Colette Panelo at 650-296-5817.