

St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Community

A Disciple's Response: Serving God and Neighbor with our Time, Talent and Treasure

A Letter From Our Pastor

Hear The Voice Of God

Dear Parishioners,

Do I have enough time to respond to this prompting of God's spirit? So many requests for a piece of my time, my resources (money, expertise, skills), my presence at meetings and events.

If you remember, in Greek mythology, Ulysses had to navigate beyond hearing the voices of the sirens and had his men block their ears. Sometimes, it is not a bad piece of advice. Don't open the mail, email, and don't answer the cell phone, or no TV for one hour each evening and just do something that will de-stress your life.

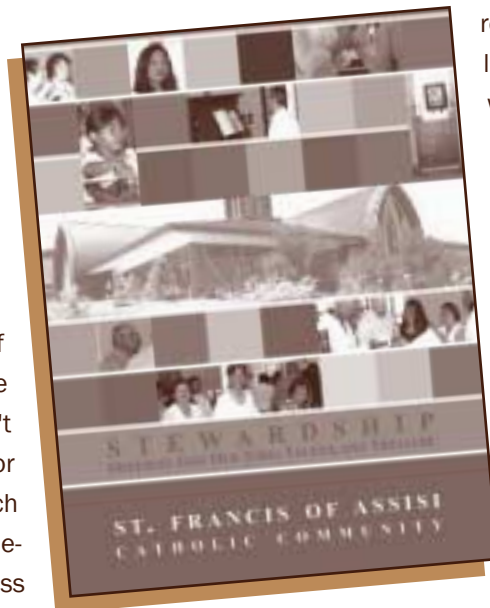

But the real question for us, as disciples of the Lord, is what does God ask me to do, how does God want me to act and live in my situation. What gifts has God given me for others and therefore for myself. For our fulfillment is in love. Some gifts I need to request of God, because he has given them for me. Isaiah tells

us that God has also given us gifts for others — charisms — gifts of God's spirit which in God's name I have been invited to contribute to the building up of others.

God has called us and empowered us with these gifts, and we will not be at rest until we fulfill our destiny in life or use our full potential until we have incorporated them in some part of our life. It is an opportunity to give of ourselves, to act in our lives the relationships and use these gifts and as we do, it matures and grows and enhances our life and our personality as we find meaning, purpose and fulfillment.

This is the time in our prayerful journey to discern from all the voices we

heard and focus on the voice of God. We will need to block out all other voices even the internal tape recording of expectations in order to hear the voice of God, the promptings of God's spirit.



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Parishioner Profile - Joe Cabrido

Little Steps to Big Involvement

“It started with small things, like bringing donuts to Mass once a month.”

This is how Joe Cabrido refers to the beginnings of his faithful dedication of his time and talent to the Catholic Church. Joe hasn't always been involved in numerous activities at St. Francis of Assisi, but it is hard to remember what things were like before he got here! Since becoming a parishioner in 1994, Joe has lovingly served our parish in a variety of ways.

Joe was born in Hawaii, but he moved to Wake Island in the North Pacific Ocean at a young age when his father's job put him in charge of supplying fuel to military aircrafts during the Vietnam War. When he was in the sixth grade, Joe and his family moved to the Philippines, where his mother hails from. Joe spent his formative years there, and he says he learned quite a bit about the Filipino culture first hand, before returning to the United States in 1977.

“Growing up, I was exposed to a whole range of types of people and cultures,” says Joe. “I feel that that makes it a lot easier to talk to different kinds of people now, because you can relate to what they are talking about.”

Joe says that he became lost in his faith journey for a little while, but he

actively returned to the Church when he married his wife, Kelly. At first, Joe was reluctant to become involved in parish ministries, but he credits his involvement to the warmth and hospitality that his family was given by his fellow parishioners.

“At first it is scary; you are hesitant, but as you start doing things, it feels more rewarding, and then you want to take advantage of more opportunities,” says Joe. “I don't think it was like this one big jump. It took gradual steps.”

Joe's first step was “passing around the basket” at Most Holy Trinity, and he also lectured there before becoming a parishioner at St. Francis of Assisi eleven years ago. To say that he has been actively involved with our parish since then would be an understatement!

Joe started off as a Lector and Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion at St. Francis of Assisi. Since then, he has been a Worship Coordinator for the 9:00 a.m. Ecclesial Community, and he was recently named co-chair of the Parish Council. He and Kelly coordinate the Baptismal Prep classes, and Kelly is also involved as a catechist for the children's liturgy. Joe also helps the parish work towards social justice through his involvement with the Bread Program, which delivers food to different pantries on Friday afternoons.

Joe is most proud of his involve-

ment with St. Francis of Assisi's Filipino Ministry Team. Having grown up in the Philippines, he understands the importance of fostering the liturgical traditions of the Filipino community, which makes up about 60% of our parish population.

“One thing that has been very rewarding for me is to see that there has been a lot of involvement on the part of the Filipino people at the parish already,” says Joe. “Continued leadership is something that we pride ourselves in, and we have been successful in spreading the word, but we are not done. There is still a lot of work to do, and outside of Mass, there are still a lot of opportunities for participation.”

In his professional life, Joe is a senior engineering manager for Lockheed-Martin. He says that, while it is time consuming, serving the parish is very fulfilling, and he feels that it has given him the opportunity to live by example, particularly while raising his three sons.

“The core of Christianity is to love God, and to love our neighbors. Helping out at the parish is very simple, and it is a way to show your love for your neighbors. The more people involved in the Liturgy, the better it is for everyone, and the doors to participate are always open.”

Joe, thank you so much for your selfless service to St. Francis of Assisi. Your love and commitment to the Church and to our parish community have helped to enhance the liturgical and social experience for everyone that you come into contact with. We can never thank you enough!





Stewardship Grows Through Leadership & Example

In September, the members of our Stewardship Team joined the leaders of the ministries and committees in our parish at our Parish Leadership Retreat. Over a weekend, through lectures, prayer, and discussion, they were able to reflect on the true nature of Stewardship as our response to the gifts and tasks Jesus has entrusted to us. In our last newsletter, you met two members of the Stewardship team. Meet two more members of the team who are striving to increase our understanding and application of stewardship at St. Francis.

Glenna Walraven

Glenna has been a parishioner at St. Francis for ten years now. She joined the parish when her son was preparing to receive his First Communion. Glenna says she considers St. Francis her home and family. "This community has supported me tremendously through the years, including the hard times in my life," she says. "With my family being more than 400 miles away, the friendships I've formed at the parish have been such a blessing to me." For Glenna, giving herself to the parish community in various ways is the least she can do in response to the blessings she receives. "That is what Stewardship is," she says, "although you end up getting far more back than you ever expect. You cannot measure the love people give you. It's amazing," she reflects.



Glenna first got involved actively in the parish almost by accident. "I was asked to read some Scriptures at my son's First Reconciliation Service, and I was petrified!" she recalls humorously. "But the Holy Spirit gave me the strength, and I read anyway. That was kind of a turning point for me." Glenna has been a regular lector for the 5:00 pm Ecclesial Community for a while now, for which she is also the Ecclesial Coordinator. She also helps with the Children's Liturgy of the Word. Glenna believes

that practicing Stewardship is the key to being fulfilled as a parishioner. "If there is something you think you should do to help with regard to a need in the parish, and you feel that tug, listen to the Holy Spirit in your heart, and respond. Try different ministries. You can always adjust according to your schedule. The rewards are beyond measure."

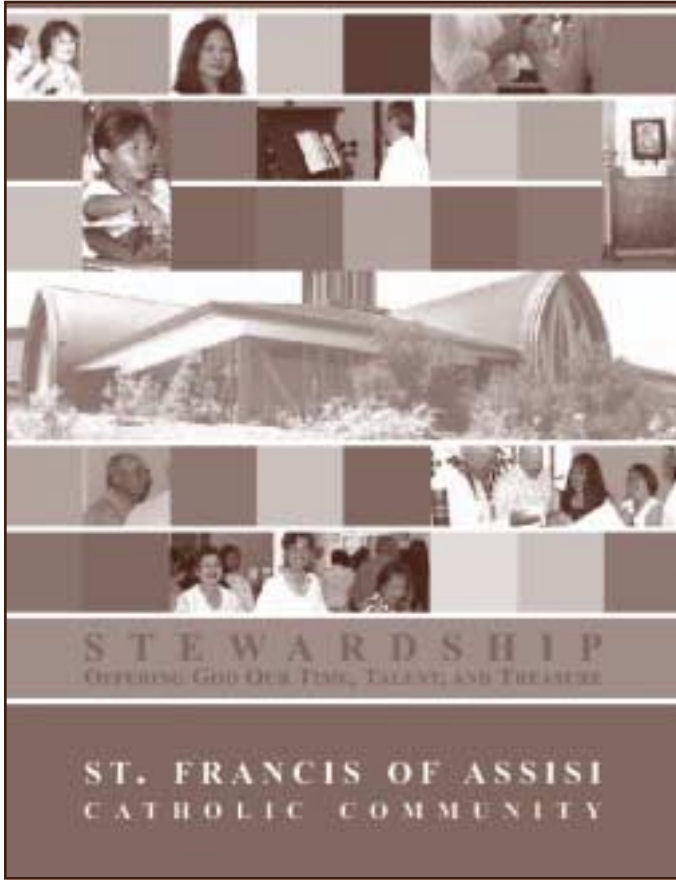


Fernando Saraya

While Fernando has only been a parishioner at St. Francis for three years, he comes to us with a long history of involvement and leadership in the Church. At Most Holy Trinity, his former parish, he spent seven years as chairperson of the diocesan appeal, where he helped the parish reach their goal for the first time. Among many other roles, he also served as president of the Filipino Organization, and chair of the Business Operation Council. At St. Francis, he serves as a member of the Finance Committee, Stewardship Team, and the Committee for our Filipino Organization, as well as Pastoral Coordinator, Lector, and Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion for the 12:30 p.m. Ecclesial community. For Fernando, true Stewardship is not complicated. "It is becoming an active member of the parish community," and from his example, he makes it clear that Stewardship also involves putting a lot of energy and dedication into the ways you serve, whether you are serving in small or large ways. "You just make time to serve in whatever capacity you can, and you try to implement the teachings of Jesus by helping to build the Church as His disciple." In turn, Fernando says, you see it bear fruit in your life. "My wife, Gloria and I take the time to serve in various ways, and it makes us so happy to see that our children are doing the same, without even being asked; through the power of example."



2005 Stewardship Renewal



Please bring your Commitment Card to Mass on Commitment Sunday, October 23. How will you use your time, talent & treasure in our parish?

Stewardship of Time

Our definition of Stewardship of Time: Using my time on earth wisely; making time for personal prayer, family prayer, and quality time with friends and loved ones.

The bottom line about prayer: Without prayer, our spirituality cannot thrive. As Catholic Christians, it is a necessity to spend time each day speaking to God. This includes reading scripture and saying prayers such as the Our Father and Hail Mary, but even more importantly, it should include a heart-to-heart conversation with Jesus. He wants us to bring him all our fears, longings, needs, and desires.

What kind of Time commitments should I make? Your commitment card lists several suggestions for how to spend time with God in prayer. Review your current prayer life and take a step forward. For instance, start having daily prayers with your children or spouse. Commit to praying the rosary on the way to work or reading scripture before bed each night.

Stewardship of Talent

Our definition of Stewardship of Talent: Using my God-given abilities to strengthen the Church and help others, especially through parish ministries and activities.

The bottom line about parish ministry: No Catholic Christian exists in a vacuum. Scripture makes it absolutely clear that we must function within the wider faith community, putting our gifts in the service of others. It's not enough to go to Sunday Mass; we need to be involved in parish life and ministry.

What kind of Talent commitments should I make? If you're not involved in anything in our parish, now is the perfect opportunity to take a step forward. Check out our commitment card for a list of ministries. If you're already involved, re-commit yourself to the important work you do. And if you feel God is calling you forward-sign up for something new!

Stewardship of Treasure

Our definition of Stewardship of Treasure: The wise and just management of my financial resources; giving a proportionate amount of my income to the parish.

The bottom line about financial support: We need to take seriously the Biblical concept of the tithe, and start giving based on a percentage of income. It's our responsibility to support the Church with our involvement and our financial support.

What kind of Treasure commitments should I make? Our goal at St. Francis is to give 5% of income to the offertory. Grab a calculator and figure out your gift based on your total household income. Then make a plan for increasing your gift incrementally to reach 5%. During this Stewardship Renewal, choose a weekly or monthly gift to the parish, and be faithful to it for the next year.



Basic Questions About Our Stewardship Renewal

Why are we holding Stewardship Renewal?

This isn't our annual parish fundraiser-far from it. This is the time when we are asking each other to re-prioritize the way we use God's gifts in the Church. It is the time we write down how we will support Parish St. Francis of Assisi.

Why should I fill out a commitment card?

Your Commitment Card allows you to make commitments to prayer, parish ministries, and offertory giving, what we at St. Francis of Assisi call "time, talent, and treasure." There's a two-fold reason to complete your card. First, it is an excellent opportunity to move forward spiritually and personally. Second, when you fill out a card, our parish is much better able to manage our many volunteers and make budgeting decisions.

How many parish ministries are there at St. Francis of Assisi?

"Ministry" is a general term for any parish group, organization, or regular activity. There are over 60 ministries described in our parish ministry catalogue. You can sign up for any of these or re-commit yourself if you're already involved.

What if I sign up for a ministry, but later find I'm not very interested?

You are not making a solemn promise to participate in a particular ministry when you mark it on your commitment card. If you find that the parish group is different than you thought, or simply that their meeting time doesn't fit your schedule, you can change your mind. There are plenty of other ministries to consider.

I'm hesitant to make a firm financial pledge.


What if I lose my job?

Your commitment card isn't a legal contract. If your circumstances change, your gift will change. In scripture, we are asked to "give according to our means." So if you lose your job, you may be unable to give at the level you pledged. Likewise, if you get a promotion, you may be able to give more. That is why at St. Francis of Assisi our standard of giving is based upon a percentage of income.

What happens if I don't fill out a commitment card?

Returning a card is an important part of being an active member of St. Francis. If for some reason you lose your card, we'll send you a reminder letter with an extra commitment card.

**ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI
CATHOLIC COMMUNITY**



**STEWARDSHIP RENEWAL
COMMITMENT CARD**

First & Last Name (use one card per family)

Street Address

City State ZIP

Telephone (important)

Please bring this card to Mass on October 22nd or 23rd, or mail using the envelope provided. Thanks and God bless you!



The Rosary

A Sure Pathway to Knowing Christ

October has been designated as the Month of the Rosary. While it seems a little extravagant to dedicate a whole month to a prayer, one needs to only read a little of the Church's spiritual history to recognize that the Rosary of the Blessed Virgin Mary carries with it a power that cannot be underestimated.

No other prayer seems to combine so perfectly and simply the elements of vocal and contemplative prayer. From the time it was given to St. Dominic by Our Lady in the Middle Ages, through the centuries until now, the Rosary remains for all intents and purposes, the most powerful prayer of the Church, aside from the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

Padre Pio spoke of it as "The Weapon" against Satan. Our Lady herself gave 15 promises to St. Dominic for those who faithfully pray the Rosary, not the least of which was "Those who are faithful to recite the rosary shall have during their life and at their death the light of God and the plenitude of His graces; at the moment of death they shall participate in the merits of the saints in paradise." It was the favorite prayer of our late Pope John Paul II, who said that through the Rosary, Mary leads us "to contemplate the beauty on the face of Christ and to experience the depths of his love," and to "receive abundant grace, as though from the very hands of the Mother of the

Redeemer."

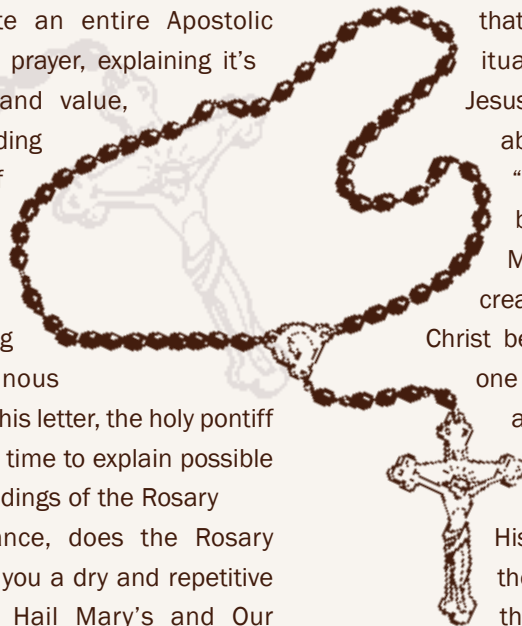
In honor of his favorite prayer and his love for Our Lady, Pope John Paul II actually wrote an entire Apostolic Letter on the prayer, explaining its significance and value, and even adding a new set of Mysteries for us to contemplate while praying — the Luminous Mysteries. In his letter, the holy pontiff even took the time to explain possible misunderstandings of the Rosary

For instance, does the Rosary ever seem to you a dry and repetitive recitation of Hail Mary's and Our Father's? Pope John Paul II addressed this very subject, saying "If the repetition is considered superficially, there could be a temptation to see the Rosary as a dry and boring exercise. It is quite another thing, however, when the Rosary is thought of as an outpouring of that love which tirelessly returns to the person loved with expressions similar in their content but ever fresh in terms of the feeling pervading them." In other words, just like loved ones never tire of hearing the words, "I love you," spoken to them in various ways, neither do these prayers lose their weight and fervor when spoken to Our Lady and her Son.

Some of us also may have the fear that the Rosary focuses too much on

Mary and not enough on Jesus. John Paul II also addressed this misunderstanding by reminding us that our goal in the spiritual life is to know Jesus Himself, not just about Him. Therefore, "could we have any better teacher than Mary? . . . Among creatures no one knows Christ better than Mary; no one can introduce us to a profound knowledge of His mystery better than His Mother." She was the one who "taught" the servants at Cana to listen to Jesus when He performed His first miracle. In all probability, she was the one who taught Jesus Himself to pray when He was a child.

It is little wonder that St. Frances de Sales called the Rosary, "the greatest method of prayer," and St. Louis de Monfort likewise, "The Rosary is the most powerful weapon to touch the Heart of Jesus, Our Redeemer, who loves His Mother." In this month of the Holy Rosary, take the time to grow closer to Jesus with Mary by renewing your commitment to praying the Rosary. And if you haven't yet learned this amazing prayer, this month is a perfect opportunity to start!





Take Another Look

Leading Our Way Back to the Church

Our faith journey does not always lead us in a straight line. Whether it be from external pressures such as time constraints or internal concerns with the teachings of the Faith, our frustrations can ultimately lead us away from the Church altogether. But God's love is omnipresent, and he always invites us to live our lives as his disciples.

At St. Francis of Assisi, the Take Another Look program ministers to Catholics who, for whatever reason, are estranged from the Church, as well as those who want to come back but don't know how to go about returning. Its focus is on clarification and honest dialogue, and it has been a wonderful source for Catholics who need answers to what are sometimes very difficult questions.

Willy and Cynthia Agbayani are the co-facilitators of this program at St. Francis. They have been involved with the group for three years, and Willy says that, although he is involved with other ministries at the parish, he holds a special place in his heart for Take Another Look.

"We find it quite important, because people usually, for one reason or another, leave the Church because they have been hurt or had some negative experience with it in the past," says Willy. "St. Francis is a very welcoming community, and we thought that this would be an opportunity to do something for the parish and ourselves. We learn so much from each experience."

Willy himself left the Church at one point, and he says that he understands how difficult it can be to struggle with faith questions as an individual.

"I have had doubts about my faith," says Willy. "I know how it is to be on the other side, and I know how difficult it is to come back. We wanted to share experiences with people who are in the same boat that we were and to help people come back into the fold."

There are currently about four people involved in the program, which began meeting last month and will run through April. Individuals attend the program voluntarily, and some are referrals from other ministries such as Generations of Faith and Baptismal Prep.



Willy and Cynthia Agbayani

"We get a lot of parents in the program who want their children Baptized but haven't been practicing themselves, says Willy. "These people usually have a lot of questions about the Sacraments and matters of their faith that they want to discuss before they come back. They want to know what to currently expect from the Church, since they have often been gone for many years.

Sessions meet at 7:15 p.m. and usually last until about 9:00 p.m. Each meeting begins with a prayer and a discussion of the upcoming week's Gospel. The participants then delve into discussions of various topics ranging from the Sacraments

and the Church calendar to Church traditions and social justice. Occasionally, outside speakers will join the group to give talks and lead discussions on subjects such as the Scriptures and morality. The group ends each session with a prayer, and they then have social time for fellowship because, as Willy explains, "people often have so many questions that they aren't ready to leave!"

"Willy says that the backbone of the program is open, honest dialogue among the members of the group. "It is a very non-judgmental environment," he says. "We have a very welcoming group, and just by listening to them, it is clear that they probably don't have anyone to talk to about their own faith. But this is a pretty good way to openly discuss what you think and what you feel, and participants often answer their own questions before we even have a chance to!"

Willy says that every person who has been involved in the program in his three years of involvement has re-joined the Church, and that many of the participants have become very active in other ministries at St. Francis of Assisi as well.

"There is nothing like a one-on-one opportunity to talk about your faith," says Willy. You realize that being a Catholic is not just about believing in a thing, but it is about sharing experiences with everybody and being leaders in the community as well." It is about living for Christ!

Everyone is welcome to attend the Take Another Look sessions at any time throughout the course of the year. If you are interested in more information, please call Willy and Cynthia Agbayani at (408) 531-0784 or e-mail them at wagbayani@hotmail.com.



For We Are So Blessed

Offering the Lord our finances is a very important part of true stewardship. Though some of us find it hard to do, it is necessary that we see every dime we make as a gift from God, and so we must give back to him in generous thanksgiving. After all, everything could be taken from us in a heart beat, as is evidenced from the recent devastation all of those in Louisiana and Mississippi have encountered. But if we recognize all we have as God's, there is no devastation to be had. In fact, the need to help the hurricane victims only reiterates for all of us our need to give back in thanksgiving. At St. Francis, we have established a standard of financial giving, based on the biblical tithe of 10%: 5% to the parish and 5% to the diocese and local charities. Have we all accepted the challenge? There is no time better than the present to do so. We encourage you to donate to those local charities that are helping the hurricane victims such as Catholic Charities. Pray and discern God's direction. Use your money as you feel He is calling you to. But remember, all we have is His, and at any moment we could have it no more!



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Catholic Community

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