

# 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*

## *Look For Opportunities To Give!*

### *Inside:*

- 2 A fulfilling Life Of Christian Service
- 4 Stewardship Team Sets Example Of Discipleship
- 6 True Stewardship - A Witness To All
- 7 Stewardship - Time For God

Dear Parishioners,

“Sign up for school, classes, soccer, and after school programs. The time has come for the end of summer; it is time to begin life again in earnestness.

Stewardship can seem to be an invitation to more responsibility, less freedom – a time of commitment. We are asked to give of our time and reminded of our duties as parents, disciples, children, students, and workers.

The gifts which God has given us are our blessings. They make our lives and personalities rich and full. The gifts that others have shared with us in our lives have enriched us - we can learn to do math, play soccer, and drive a car - because someone else took the time to teach us, and did so with joy and pride. They thought that it was a privilege to be helpful to pass something on. They were blessed by our response and appreciation.

I hope that as you discern from the many requests which come in the mail, on line, or over the phone you will ask yourself, “What is God asking? What gifts have I received that



God is asking me to share?” May you see each request (among many) to be a privilege, a blessing, and an opportunity given by God to enrich your life and to draw meaning, purpose and true sense of your best self.

Sincerely In Christ,

Msgr. John Sandersfeld  
Pastor



Stephen Ministry - Elaine Swyt

# A Fulfilling Life Of Christian Service

Have you ever wondered why you are in this world? Have you ever wondered whether or not your life has meaning? If so, this story is for you.

Elaine Swyt spent 25 years in the professional world. She did everything from Staffing, Human Resources, and Corporate Communications to running her own executive firm. Elaine found that she had a knack for creating organization out of chaos. Things were on track, so she thought. She did not even notice that something was missing in her life.

Everything changed, however, when Elaine and her husband Joe joined St. Francis Parish. Father John inspired them both to begin working seriously for the parish community. They worked as a team. Joe joined the Finance Team; Elaine began setting up the office computer systems. Joe became the Parish Business Manager; Elaine developed the parish and diocesan website. Joe founded and launched the Multi-Parish Cooperative of Parishes; Elaine became the chairperson for the Parish Communications Team. They both helped Father Kevin with the development of SpiritSite.org. Before Elaine knew it, so much in her life had changed. Elaine found herself not only managing large projects and making decisions in a competitive corporate environment, she found herself listening to others and using her skills wher-

ever they were of help; she found herself volunteering her time and giving her entire heart to the service of others; she found the true meaning of her life, in the words of St. Francis: "and it is in giving that we receive...."



this ministry in my life and am looking forward to giving back where I am able, to help others who need the support of a Stephen Minister."

Some people might think that success is what brings true happiness.

Elaine can tell you first

hand that although she maintained professional success, and although she met many wonderful people and tackled incredible tasks during her years of professional life, she was not truly complete. "Faithfulness, not success" are the famous words of Mother Teresa that resound so truly today. Success, money, power, talent...all of these things are good in themselves, however, there is only one means to personal fulfillment: faithfulness in the Christian spirit to help your fellow man. It is only when you are successful in serving others does life really take on its full meaning. "Though I didn't realize it at the time, my soul has been unforgettably nourished by those I have met and those who invited me to participate. More important, I have a renewed faith — in Christ, in people and in the Catholic community."

Let Elaine be an example to us all. God is calling us each to a life of total fulfillment in Christian charity. Do not wait any longer to look for a way to serve — here lies life's blessed secret.

**"I am so humbled by the gift of this ministry in my life and am looking forward to giving back where I am able, to help others who need the support of a Stephen Minister."**

The culmination of her experience at St. Francis began this past March when Father John invited Elaine to help him organize and introduce Stephen's Ministry at St. Francis. She hesitated, because she was so busy with the other parish and diocesan projects. "It is amazing how things happen," she says, "It isn't so much having too much or not enough to do that makes us decide whether to be involved in a new adventure or not. For me it has been trusting in the Holy Spirit to help guide me when presented with life's wonderful opportunities. Once I said 'yes,' amazingly, things just fell into place. I am so humbled by the gift of



## Liturgy Corner - Standing

Like scouts at the pledge of allegiance, we Catholics rise to our feet when we hear the words, "Let us pray." We stand a lot at church. Of course, we also sit and kneel a lot. Visitors to a Catholic parish often find that figuring out when to stand and sit poses a mystery almost as great as the incarnation.



Standing is key to understanding liturgical postures. A basic principle to remember is that we stand for prayer. Not everything that happens at Mass is precisely prayer. We listen to readings, we dialogue with the priest, we process to communion. But at certain times we pray to God. Often the priest prays on our behalf, as in the opening prayer. Sometimes we pray together out loud, as in the Lord's Prayer. Generally, when we pray, we stand.

The largest exception, of course, is the Eucharistic Prayer. It is the longest single prayer at Mass and the only

one which calls for kneeling.

Kneeling came fairly recently in our history. When eucharistic piety grew during the Middle Ages, several customs changed — the faithful knelt for the eucharistic prayer, they rarely came to communion, and they received it in the mouth instead of in the hand. Pews were invented; prior to this time people stood for Mass.

The infrequency of communion indicated that the piety had become exaggerated, so the teaching authority of the Church actually legislated that people had to receive communion at least once a year. Although the more regular reception of communion was praised, centuries passed before it finally caught on again. In the beginning, though, people stood for the eucharistic prayer just as for the other prayers of Mass because they felt reverent standing, as Americans do when we pledge allegiance to the flag or sing the national anthem.

A vestige of the earlier posture remains when we stand for the preface. It's just as

much the eucharistic prayer as the part which follows the "Holy, Holy." Some communities around the world have maintained the custom of standing for the entire eucharistic prayer in keeping with the ancient tradition.

We stand for other occasions—the entrance rite, the Gospel, the Creed, the communion rite and the dismissal, for example. But ordinarily standing signals prayer.

*Paul Turner, holds a doctorate in sacramental theology from Saint Anselmo University.*



# Stewardship Team Sets Example Of Discipleship

Here at St. Francis, we pride ourselves in being a Stewardship parish. Through Baptism, we were graced to become adopted sons and daughters of God. Jesus in turn calls us to be His disciples, building the Kingdom of God in our parish and community, and growing ever deeper in our relationships with God. Just like any family in which everyone has an important role to play, all of us at St. Francis have roles in parish life. By using our God given gifts of Time, Talent, and Treasure, we live out our call as disciples of Christ, and sons and daughters of God. For many years now, a number of men and women have dedicated their time to promoting Stewardship as a way of life at St. Francis. They are the members of our Stewardship Team. This year's team consists of eight parishioners:



Ederlyn Suriaga (*Chairperson*), Juanita Espinoza, Fredy Guevara, Sharon Hurley, Dan Mendoza, Fernando Saraya, Joe Swyt and Glenna Walraven. Here are profiles of two members of the team, who through their words and actions, have become living examples of true Stewardship for all of us.

## Sharon Hurley

Sharon has been a member of St. Francis parish for almost 10 years now, and she joined the Stewardship Team last year. We heard her speak

on Stewardship during a few of the Masses last year during our Stewardship Drive. She simply loves being part of the parish. "I love belonging to this parish along with so many Spirit-filled people." More specifically, she enjoys staying active in parish life. "It gives me a great feeling of fulfillment to contribute in various ways to the life of the community and a sense of ownership in our parish."

She and her husband, George, can be seen at many of the parish events and activities. Sharon also serves the 12:30 Ecclesial Community by coordinating the Greeters and assisting the coordinator of the Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist. She and George make an effort to help where they are needed at the parish in addition to their regular jobs.

For Sharon, Stewardship is synonymous with living parish life to the full. "To really be a member of St. Francis, fellowship is necessary, and so is the desire to give in some way, whether it be giving time to volunteer, ministering at the Masses, just investing spiritually in the awesome gift St. Francis is to us."

## Fredy Guevara

Fredy has been a member of our parish for at least five years, but recently decided to join the



Stewardship Team after experiencing an internal change of heart. "I heard a sermon Fr. John preached and the light bulb just went off in my head," Fredy recalls. "I

realized more clearly than ever the fact that we are the Body of Christ, the Church, and so we are called to live that out in our parish. Now, when I pray, I no longer just

look up. I look from side to side at my brothers and sisters. We should all be doing our part to respond to God's call." In his everyday life, Fredy has dedicated a great deal of his energy to helping a non-profit organization based in the Philippines that reaches out to the poor. Here at the parish, he serves as a lector, takes up collections, and serves wherever help is needed. Stewardship is "Faith in action," according to Fredy. "Theology is important, but we need to be putting things into practice. How much do we really love our neighbor? Are we giving back to God the gifts He has given us, and sharing them with others? Are there needs in the parish that we are just talking about, but not doing anything to solve them. Stewardship is being a part of the solution."

**Stay tuned for our October newsletter, which will feature the rest of the team!**



## St. Francis of Assisi

# The Little Man Who Changed The World

Nowadays, the name “St. Francis of Assisi” generally evokes nothing more than images of a preaching beggar who regularly communed with birds and flowers. Nothing could further underestimate the overwhelming power of St. Francis of Assisi, who in essence transformed his city, his country, and indeed, all of civilization by the power of his love for Jesus Christ and the radical way he lived the Gospel.

Francis Bernadone was born in Assisi, in the region of Umbria, Italy in 1181. He spent the first 25 years of his life as a fairly reckless youth. Although he possessed a winning personality and charm, and a certain generosity of heart, Francis’ spent most of his early years frequenting parties with his friends, wasting money, and aspiring after worldly glory of knighthood and military prowess. When he finally got his wish and was called to join the 4th Crusade, his life took a sudden turn. Only a day into his journey, he contracted a sudden illness whereupon he had a dream in which a voice told him to return to Assisi. He returned immediately. Although he still reveled with his friends, his heart was no longer with his former reckless lifestyle. He began spending more time in prayer, solitude, and sorrowful reflection on his past life.

Two things happened shortly after this change of heart that would shape the rest of his life. One day, while he was traveling on horseback along the Umbrian countryside, he happened upon a poor leper. Although the smell and appearance of the leper greatly repulsed Francis’ delicate sensibilities, he nevertheless dismounted his horse, embraced the leper, and gave him all the money he



had. At that moment, he was filled with unspeakable joy and a desire for a life of poverty. Not long afterwards, he was praying before a crucifix in the ruins of a church called San Damiano, when Jesus he heard Jesus speak to him from the cross, saying, “Go Francis, and repair my Church, which as you see is falling into ruin.” Francis assumed that the Lord had meant the little church of San Damiano, but, in fact, God was calling on him to be the means of renewing the whole Church, which was, at the time, beset by scandals and greed within and heresies and rebellion without.

Francis proceeded impetuously to sell a number of his father’s wares in order to buy stones for restoring San Damiano. Enraged, his father ordered him to pay back everything, and renounce his entire inheritance. Francis willingly gave back everything, including

the clothes on his back, and embraced a life of poverty.

By simple begging, Francis managed to restore many little churches in his area, while preaching the glories of poverty and exhorting people to penance, charity, and peace. At first, people scoffed at what they saw as madness, but soon, they saw the beauty in Francis’ supernatural simplicity and the message he proclaimed. It was with this simple way of life that Francis would change the world!

In 1208, Francis officially started his order. The men of his order joyfully embraced poverty wanting desperately to follow Francis’ example. And with nothing, Francis sent them out two by two to evangelize the world. They did so, and their examples not only changed the hearts of many, but a number of people felt called to join them. Within 10 years, the order had grown to 5,000, and the Church and the Medieval world had experienced a tremendous renewal.

Francis died in 1226, having imitated the life of Jesus to such a degree that the Lord blessed him with the stigmata (the wounds of Jesus), with which he died in joyous pain. He was canonized only two years after his death. Although he didn’t own a single thing at the end of his life, he was completely free. He had God — and so he had everything. Historians say that of all the saints, he is the one who most resembled Jesus Christ. St. Francis’ feast day is coming soon on October 4th. Take the time this year to celebrate the life of this amazing man, whose holiness and simplicity are an example to us all.



## Parishioner Profile - Ederlyn Suriaga

# True Stewardship - A Witness to All

When asked if she has always been active in the Church, Ederlyn Suriaga pauses, because she has gotten highly involved in the ministries at St. Francis, active membership has taken on new meaning for her. You will find her active in numerous areas of parish life, because she explains, "I am trying to help people see that stewardship should filter into every parish ministry." She hasn't always felt this way.

Ederlyn grew up in a Catholic family and has always done what she lovingly refers to as the "obligatory Catholic practices," but then, about five years ago, things changed as her faith became a much more intimate reality. "I realized it's not an obligation," she reflects. "Faith is to be lived!" Recognizing this, Ederlyn began to make her faith a fundamental part of her daily life. Primary to this new way of life, in addition to increased personal prayer, was a complementary increase in parish ministries. She began to volunteer her time as a greeter; it was the start of her new sense of ownership in the Church, particularly in the parish.

Msgr Thomas McGread explains hospitality as one of the four pillars of stewardship, stating that "when parishioners feel a warm sense of welcome, they in turn become open to give themselves to others." How true this is! Yet for Ederlyn, it seemed to work the other way around. Unbeknownst to her, as she seized opportunities to be gracious to others and welcomed newcomers into the church, God was welcoming her in a new way! She began to feel more at home in our parish,

and thus became more open to serving the parish in other capacities.

"I began to work on the Social Justice Committee," she explains, "and then became the pastoral coordinator of the



**"I have found that the more I give of myself, the more God makes me at peace. Everything in life just seems to fall into place."**

5:00 p.m. Ecclesial Communities." Meanwhile, Ederlyn's understanding of stewardship — what it means to live as a disciple of Christ — was growing as she was living it! "I began to understand stewardship as something that needs to be weaved in to every aspect of our lives, as a parish and as individuals," she says.

Ederlyn then began to serve as the stewardship chair, a job that is right up her alley. "It is so fun!" She explains. "The more I began to understand stewardship (particularly in her new role) the more I wanted others to understand it and live it as well! I found myself speaking of stewardship everywhere I went. I go to social justice meetings and tell everyone how they should embrace the beautiful vocation of stewardship," she says, laughing, "They all think it's just because I am on the stewardship committee, but that's not it at all." Rather, Ederlyn simply wants all of us to find the joy she has found in living the stewardship way of life. "It's such a joyful way to live," she says. "I have been given so much, and I am very thankful for it all. I am thankful for my family, my parish, and serving others is the best way that I can give back from what I have been given," she explains, summing up what Fr. John so eloquently loves to say: "The gift you have been given, give as a gift." That's what stewardship is all about, and that's just how Ederlyn strives to live: giving everything she's been given.

"It's such a joyous way to live," she exclaims. "I have found that the more I give of myself, the more God makes me at peace. Everything in life just seems to fall into place." If we live solely for God, our lives will inevitably see tremendous blessings, as is evident through Ederlyn's personal testimony.

Thank you for all you do, Ederlyn. You are a true example of a Christian disciple! May we all heed your example!



## Stewardship - Time For God

Time is one of the greatest gifts God has given us in this life. And yet, how easy is it for us to take it for granted, especially when it passes by so quickly. It seems like only yesterday that we were looking forward to the dawn of the new millennium; but it's been half a decade since then! Like all gifts from God, time was given to us for a purpose. Because God is the author of time, only He knows how best it can be used to make us happy. How do we find out what God wants for each of us in this earthly life? Just like any loving relationship, in order to know what God desires, one must first get to Him.

As it turns out, God wants nothing more than an intimate friendship with us for all eternity. We can begin that relationship right now. The means through which we become friends with Jesus in this life can be summed up in one simple word: Prayer.

Prayer may be a simple word, but putting it into practice takes effort. Nevertheless, if there is one goal that is worth all the time and effort we have on this earth, it is to develop the habit of prayer. Prayer is, essentially, a loving relationship with God, without which our lives are meaningless. St. Augustine says, "You have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you." St. Teresa of Avila further explains, "Prayer is nothing else than an intimate friendship, a frequent heart-to-heart conversation with Him by whom we know ourselves to be loved." The new year is a great time to ask ourselves if we need to renew our commitment to prayer, and to think of ways to cultivate the intimate friendship Jesus wants to have with us.

While there are numerous ways to pray, every spiritual authority includes a few essential elements in developing a life of prayer. Here are some of them:

**Make it a daily affair:** Even if it means starting with five minutes a day, set aside some time each day for conversation with Jesus, and then build from there. Proceed in little steps.

**Give it some structure:** Reading the Scriptures, other spiritual material, studying a picture of Jesus or reflecting on



scenes of His life are some great ways to focus your mind on the Lord. Include opportunities to talk to Him, thank Him, express sorrow or anger, and ask Him for the desires of your heart. Talk to Him as you would your closest friend.

**Allow for silence:** Choose a quiet place where you won't be disturbed and where you won't disturb others. Remember, Jesus often withdrew to pray. This makes sense. People who truly love each other often desire to be alone. Jesus loves each of us individually and wants to whisper words that only we can hear. Silence is necessary if we want to hear Him speak to our hearts.

**Make time for family or group prayer:** praying with others strengthens us, holds us spiritually accountable, and is a good example to others. Try praying the Rosary with your family.

**Turn everyday undertakings into prayer:** When we perform any action, even the smallest one, out of love for Jesus, it becomes a prayer. We can make our entire day a prayer if we remember this simple concept.

**Don't be discouraged when you encounter struggles:** however distracted we become, or however unfruitful our prayer seems to be, Jesus is always pleased when we spend time with Him. In fact, it is often when we persevere during difficult times that He is most pleased. And when we feel unworthy, we should all the more run to Jesus in prayer. He alone holds the key to our healing and happiness; He is the only one who can transform us into the persons He created us to be.



*“In the Eucharist, we ourselves  
learn the love of Christ.”*

“Thanks to this center and heart, thanks to the Eucharist, the saints have lived, bringing the love of God to the world in ever new forms and ways. Thanks to the Eucharist, the Church is always reborn. The Church is no more than that network – the Eucharistic community! – in which all of us, by receiving the same Lord, become only one body and embrace the whole world. To preside in doctrine and love, in the end, must be only one thing: all the doctrine of the Church, in the end, leads to love. And the Eucharist, as the present love of Jesus Christ, is the criterion of all doctrine. On love depend all the law and the prophets, says the Lord (Matthew 22:40). Love is the fulfillment of the law, wrote St. Paul to the Romans (13:10).”

*From Pope Benedict XVI's first homily in Rome May 10, 2005*



*St. Francis of Assisi  
Catholic Community*

5111 San Felipe Rd.

San Jose, CA 95135

Phone: 408-223-1562

Fax: 408-223-1759

Non-Profit Org.  
US Postage  
**PAID**  
Permit No. 2035  
San Jose, CA