



01.2014

Saint Paul

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

The Respect Life Ministry: *Building a Culture of Life*

Day in and day out, the Respect Life Ministry at our parish is making an impact, building the culture of life, brick by brick, and prayer by prayer.

“This year, we had a baby shower for a mom who had decided against abortion and was going to keep her baby,” says Lauren Treven, who coordinates the ministry along with Emily Hanley. “Things like this make us realize how much of a tangible impact we can have on others. It solidifies our conviction. When you say that you are pro-life, it is not just about a political statement. It is about realizing the call to help mothers and save babies. The more active you become in pro-life efforts, the more you see the benefits that come from them and it encourages you to do more. You see families get helped, and you get ‘hooked!’”

According to their mission statement, “The mission of the St. Paul Respect Life Ministry is to educate the parish and community about the Catholic perspective on life issues; to provide community support for the unborn and those whose fundamental right to life is threatened; and to create a prayerful and respectful environment where life is cherished and valued.”

When it comes to living out their mission, members of the Respect Life Ministry are creative, courageous and dedicated. Currently, they are working



The Respect Life Ministry group attends a baby shower.

alongside the Knights of Columbus to put up a memorial in honor of the unborn. As of now, the plan is for the memorial to be tomb-shaped, and to feature Scripture verses Jeremiah 1:5, “Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you,” and Psalm 127:3, “Certainly children are a gift from the Lord.” This memorial will be placed in our parish courtyard some time this year.

“Our group is a member-driven ministry,” Lauren says. “We get the word out and let others know about pro-life activities that are taking place. That way, the whole parish community can be involved and work together to build the culture of life. We really try to get the entire parish involved. We can all pray for the pro-life movement, or spread the culture of life through our own personal vocation or walk of life.”

continued on back cover

Stewardship: *New Year's Resolutions*

The new year has arrived, and we have all been busy making and trying to keep our list of New Year's resolutions. Many of us choose resolutions geared toward health and fitness. After all, possessing good overall health is critical to our well-being. Others may try to avoid a particularly bad habit. Maybe you need to quit smoking or stop swearing. Still many of us plan things we have always wanted to do, but never get around to doing.

As the days of January continue onward, however, many of us find the inspiration of keeping our good-intentioned resolutions to be fading fast. By the end of the month, most of us have given in to our temptations and returned to our old ways. We are only human, right? Discouraged by this yearly failure, many of us don't even bother making New Year's resolutions anymore, especially if we feel like we won't succeed.

Maybe our failures lie in both how we make our resolutions and what resolutions we actually choose. What we need to understand is the "root" of our resolution. For example, if you resolve to eat less candy to drop those recently added holiday pounds, is the "root" of your resolution a selfish one — wanting to look better since you overindulged? Or, are you genuinely seeking to stop giving in to each "sweet tooth" craving by practicing mortification — giving up of a personal pleasure to glorify God? If the "root" is a selfish one, only to benefit yourself, then it is often difficult to keep in the long run.



Tying your New Year's resolutions into the principles of stewardship — giving of your time, talent and treasure back to God — is a great way to ensure that the "root" of your resolution is right on track!

However, if we are trying to glorify God, our mission is much more important and worth keeping.

Tying your New Year's resolutions into the principles of stewardship — giving of your time, talent and treasure back to God — is a great way to ensure that the "root" of your resolution is right on track! For instance, resolving to pray each evening before going to bed glorifies God, brings you peace before slumber, and allows you to grow in your relationship with Christ. The "root" is pure. Your desire to keep it will be stronger and make it easier for you to keep. In the same way, resolving to return your talents to God by helping others in need is an excellent choice in creating a selfless resolution with the right "root." Furthermore, resolving to re-evaluate your finances is also extremely important, and the beginning of a new year is a great time to do it. Are you giving back to God out of gratitude for all He has given you? Or, are you merely dropping a dollar or two in the collection basket just to feel good about yourself?

If you are not where you would like to be as a good steward — either with sharing your time, talent or treasure — you can resolve to do better. The new year is a perfect opportunity to start anew and become the good steward that God desires each of us to become. And when we choose selfless things that build His kingdom instead of ours, we are sure to not only stay on track, but to succeed!

A Letter From Our Pastor

Are We Returning Our Gifts to God?

Dear Parishioners,

If we have a genuine stewardship attitude, we know that every month of the year is a wonderful month. December, with all of its joy and reflection and feelings, is behind us — but January is no less of a glorious time for us as Catholics.

Of course, we know that Christmas is not quite over. It officially ends when we celebrate the Baptism of the Lord on January 12. Good stewards realize nonetheless that every day and every month is a time to improve our stewardship efforts. We speak of the gifts we have received from the Lord. Our most precious initial gift is life itself. That gift is augmented by the gift of time.

I would like to think that we understand the importance of sharing all we have, including our time. All time is God's time. We each receive the same amount of it, although we also each have been given different responsibilities and opportunities in relation to time. The word "opportunity" is important in our understanding of stewardship. Too often we look at our response to the needs around us, including in our parish, as an obligation, a duty. It is not that we do not have obligations, but in truth we should be pursuing the opportunities we see. In their pastoral letter on stewardship, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops stated through their title what stewardship should be — *Stewardship: A Disciple's Response*. We can conclude from this that stewardship is how we respond to the opportunities presented to us to be good stewards.



Here we are at the beginning of a new year (at least according to the calendar), a year filled with opportunities. My hope is that we recognize our gifts, see and pursue the many ways we can share our gifts, and then put all of that into action, for stewardship requires action on all of our parts. I would call on each of you to return a portion of your gifts — time, talent and treasure — to God. Note that I said "return," not "give." Everything that we have and everything that we are is through the grace of God.

We are fond of using the term "New Year's resolutions." I would challenge you to make your primary resolution an effort to live out stewardship through love. Love really is good stewardship. Let us each resolve in this official first month of the year to share who and what we are through acts of love, which may

mean returning our gifts to God in a wide variety of ways. Let us spread God's love to all we encounter and to all we know so that the light of that love shines into every dark corner of our world.

The Irish have always had interesting ways of looking at things. A traditional Irish piece of wisdom which applies to the new year is "Always remember to forget the troubles that pass away. But never forget to remember the blessings that come each day." My prayer is that your new year be filled with blessings and that you live in gratitude for them.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Fr. Doug Halsema
Pastor

Serra Club of Pensacola

To Foster and Promote Vocations

by Joe Pastucha



Members of our parish's Serra Club with Bishop Gregory L. Parkes, Fr. Matthew Worthen and Msgr. Stephen Bosso.

This message is to call your attention to a very special ministry within our parish, as well as in many parishes throughout the world — Serra International, an organization of Catholic laypersons of all ages and from all walks of life who share a deep faith and want to incorporate the teaching of Christ into their daily lives.

Serrans' special work is to foster vocations to the priesthood and the religious life by offering affirmation to those who already serve the Church and by encouraging new Church vocations through prayer, education and collaboration with their bishop and church vocation offices. (Please keep in mind that we are *not* a member of the Sierra Club, which is an environmental group.)

Our members normally meet on the third Wednesday of each month at noon for a luncheon meeting at the Pensacola Yacht Club. The Board of Directors meets on the first Friday of each month at the Pastoral Center, and special meetings are called when deemed essential.

The monthly meetings usually feature a variety of speakers, panel discussions, films and group discussions on subjects which challenge Catholics to bring about a Christian social renaissance.

Serra International was initially organized in 1935 by a small group of laymen in Seattle, and they chose as their patron Blessed Junipero Serra, the 18th century Franciscan missionary priest who established nine of the 21 missions in present-day California — he is sometimes called the state's "founding father" — as well as a number of missions in Mexico.

Serrans pray for Church vocations daily, and we encourage others to do the same. Through our "31 Club," each Serran chooses one day each month to offer his or her Mass on that day for Church vocations, and we ask our fellow parishioners to do the same. Annually, we sponsor essay contests — on the subject of "Vocations" — in our parochial elementary schools. There are many more projects in this regard that we would love to share with you, so kindly join us

at one of our monthly luncheons.

To summarize this very important need for you to become a Serran, the following is a statement by the late Fr. Jack Gray — formerly the pastor of St. Anne's in Bellview, and more recently, the Navy Chaplain at NAS Pensacola — when he addressed his congregation:

"Are you aware that in many dioceses around the country these days that weekly Mass is no longer celebrated? Are you aware that the average age of priests on duty in the United States is now over 60 years of age? Are you aware that in most dioceses, the number of priests lost each year to illness, retirement and death is not even close to being made up by the number of men being ordained?"

Perhaps not shocking, but these statistics are certainly a 'wake-up call' for Catholics concerned about the future of Sunday worship and the administration of the sacraments in the United States. As priests get older and the demands of the ministry increase, a cyclical toll of

There is currently an exhibit at the Huntington Library Art Collections and Botanical Gardens in San Marino, Calif. featuring nearly 250 objects from the life of Junipero Serra. This exhibit, which runs through Jan. 6, 2014, coincides with the 300th anniversary of Serra's birth.

Students Visit Angel Gift Shop

Students at St. Paul Catholic School visit the Angel Gift shop to do a little early Christmas shopping. Not only do they purchase gifts for loved ones, but they learn about special and sacred items, like medals, rosaries, and more.



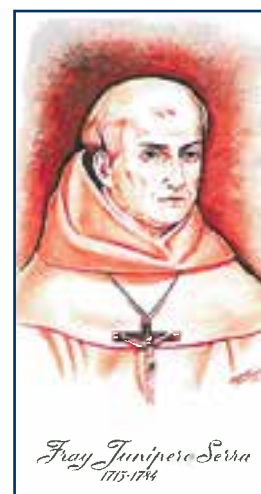
Serra Club continued from page 4

stress and burnout is seen in those still actively ministering. One organization that has worked for many years to forestall this problem by promoting vocations to the priesthood is the Serra Club. We have a very active Serra Club in Pensacola — but like the priesthood, illness and death have taken their toll on its membership in recent years.

Serrans promote vocations within our schools, they sponsor programs for our seminarians, and they work closely with the bishop to pray and foster a call to the priesthood and religious life wherever possible. Now, they are urgently in need of more men and women to carry on this important lay ministry in our community.”

We need you, *all of you* — but a special plea and emphasis is directed to those who are between the ages of 30 and 50 to become involved and help us carry the mission load of this very special ministry of our parish and the Church. Dues are nominal, with a modest cost to each member if they attend any of the luncheons.

Please do not hesitate to call me or Jim Daigle at any time in this regard. I am Joe Pastucha, a charter member of this parish and a three-term president of the Pensacola Serra Club, and I can be reached at 850-438-0241. Jim is a trustee and past president of the Serra Club, and is also a member of this parish. He can be reached at 850-432-7879.



Prayer from the Mass

O God, in your ineffable mercy, you chose Blessed Junipero Serra as a means of gathering many peoples of the Americas into your Church. Grant that through his intercession our hearts may be united to you in ever greater love so that at all times and in all places we may show forth the image of your Only-Begotten Son our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

SERRA CAUSE
The Old Mission
2201 Laguna Street, Santa Barbara
California 93105-0611

A Serra Club prayer card.

The Great Catholic Educator: *St. Thomas Aquinas*

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.

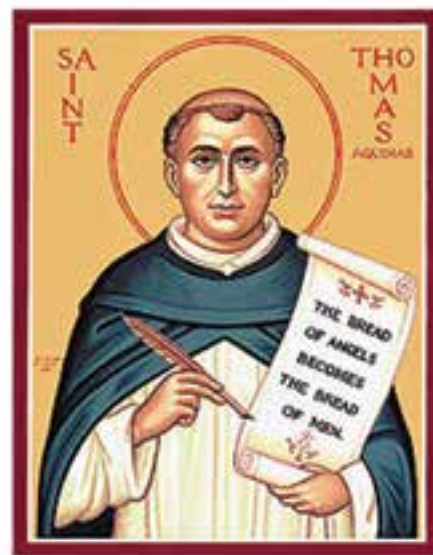
Thomas' parents were Italian nobility and were not enthusiastic about Thomas' choice of vocation. They went so far as to have his brothers capture him while he was en route to Rome, and they held him prisoner for two years in an effort to destroy his vocation and his virtue. After the family made one 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 at 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.

The *Summa Theologica*, which immortalized Thomas, 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 1877, Leo XIII declared Thomas Aquinas' philosophical system the official Catholic philosophy, and Thomas "the prince and master of all scholastic doctors." He named Thomas Aquinas patron of all Catholic universities, colleges and schools throughout the world. We celebrate his feast day on Jan. 28.



Thomas' 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.

Parishioner Engagement Continues to Rise

Now Ranks in Top 25 Percent of Catholic Parishes Nationwide!

Results from 735 recently completed parishioner engagements surveys have brought some great news for our parish. October survey results showed that both parishioner engagement and spiritual commitment levels rose significantly from levels reported in our last survey taken in July 2011. The survey noted especially strong increases in the number of parishioners who know what is expected of them as members of our parish and in the number of parishioners who feel their spiritual needs are being met in the parish. These two areas are extremely

important as foundations to growing a vibrant and faith-filled parish community. The recent scores in these two areas are the highest in the diocese and among the best nationally!

Since we began the diocesan-developed Faith Engaged process four years ago, we have seen our parishioner engagement levels grow steadily. The process uses evidence-based leadership tools and tactics to improve organizational leadership and execution leading to measurable outcomes. One of the primary goals of our parish leadership team has

been to grow parishioner engagement. Per Gallup's definition, "engaged" parishioners are defined as parishioners "that are loyal and have a strong psychological connection to the parish." Further, "they are more spiritually committed, more likely to invite friends, family members, and coworkers to parish events, and give more both financially and in commitment of time." As can be seen in the table below, we have been very successful in growing parishioner engagement over the past four years. This is a great thing!

	November 2009	July 2011	October 2013	Mean Diocese	Nationwide 75th%
Grand Mean Engagement	3.42	3.73	3.87	3.79	3.85
Grand Mean Commitment	4.22	4.26	4.37	4.29	4.27

When reviewing the table above, our parish engagement and spiritual commitment grand mean scores are shown in the first three columns. As you can see, they have been steadily climbing. An increase (or decrease) of a grand mean score of 0.10 is considered a "meaningful" change. The mean diocese scores are composite scores from 10 parishes within our diocese that were participating in the Faith Engaged process, and tracking engagement levels, in 2011. The last column shows the minimum scores required to be at or above the 75th percentile scores from Catholic parishes nationwide, essentially the top 25 percent.

According to Gallup research, growing engagement levels lead to many good things for the individual and for the parish — higher levels of satisfaction with one's personal life, more inviting of others to parish functions and

activities, more volunteering of time to help and serve others in the community and more financial support given to the parish. These outcomes are all good things that help us to grow as stewards and disciples while at the same time improving the spiritual health of our parish community.

As a parish family, we should be very proud of these latest engagement results. We are growing as stewards and disciples! We are improving in many ways as a parish community because of the support of many of you. Congratulations to you for making this possible. Please continue to pray for each other and the continued spiritual growth of our parish family. For more information on the Faith Engaged process or growing engagement, please contact Donnie Plombon, our parish Growth & Development Director, at 434-2551 ext. 103 or plombond@stpaulcatholic.net.

Address Service Requested

Respect Life Ministry continued from cover

In observance of the anniversary of Roe v. Wade, the court decision that legalized abortion, the ministry will be offering a holy hour of Eucharistic Adoration on Jan. 22. In the spring, they will be participating in the 40 Days for Life campaign, which includes 40 days of prayer and fasting to protect the lives of the unborn. Further information about these efforts, as well as Respect Life Ministry meetings and outreaches will be listed in future parish bulletins. Sign-up opportunities will be made available on the parish website, www.stpaulcatholic.net.

“We get the word out and let others know about pro-life activities that are taking place. That way, the whole parish community can be involved and work together to build the culture of life.” — Lauren Treven



Respect Life Ministry members attend a candlelight vigil at an abortion clinic.

Liturgy Schedule

Saturday Vigil: 4:30 p.m. | **Sunday:** 7:00, 9:00, 11:00 a.m., 6:00 p.m. | **Daily Mass:** Monday-Saturday, 8:30 a.m.

Confessions: Saturdays, 9:00 a.m., 3:30 p.m. - 4:15 p.m.,

Most Sundays during 9:00, 11:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. Mass, 1st Wednesdays, 6:30 p.m., and by appointment

Eucharistic Adoration: Thursday 9:00 a.m. until Friday 7:30 a.m.