

THE AUGMENTER

Webster's Definition:

Augment (verb) - to make or become greater
augmenter (noun)

Newsletter for Families of St. Augustine Religious Education in Larchmont, NY

"God loves each of us as if there were only one of us." - St. Augustine

Enter to Learn and Leave to Serve

The motto of my high School, St. Cyril Academy, was **"Enter to learn, and leave to serve."** I have been affected by those words my entire life. They may hold the life and breath of what our family based religious education program could yet be.

Our religious education program has grown in the last ten years from 465 to 640! That is encouraging and the number of catechists and assistants has also grown exponentially BUT, has Christian discipleship taken root in the lives of our children and young people, their families? Only God knows, but I am always desiring authenticity, relevance and passionate Gospel living in practice. The person of Christ is at the heart of our faith.

*"But today, when young people are surrounded by a culture in which choosing to believe is more and more a revolutionary act, **religious education must do much more than hand on the basic tenets of the faith. Unless the option of belief is made real by family and community relationships that offer examples of true Christian discipleship, creedal affirmations are taking root in the rocky soil . . . The good news is that innovative models of catechesis that look beyond the classroom, like family-based religious education programs that center on small group discussion and service, have shown great potential. What seems to be the key is that these models are not just about education but formation. They work to make discipleship tangible and imaginable first, rather than focusing on transmitting the content of the faith. Not coincidentally, they can also be resource-intensive, requiring greater involvement and investment on the part of the families, parish staff and clergy.***

No program, however, can ever replace the central role of parents as "the principal and first educators of their children" (Catechism of the Catholic Church No. 1653). **We must also discern how to form parents for this mission . . .**

Now is the time for the church to reflect on these words and move urgently to develop religious formation programs that introduce children to the person at the heart of our faith, who desires not only well-informed students but lifelong disciples." — "It is Time to Fix Our "Sunday School" Culture," in the January 23, 2017 of America.

The above words, since I first read them, continue to haunt me.

We already have a lectionary-based program that involves the Sunday readings of Scripture -- Pflaum Gospel Weeklies, which is developmentally appropriate at the various levels. This program implies that families participate weekly in Sunday Mass. I pray for this. Only parents can make this happen. We have dedicated adult catechists and now, teen catechists, who are taking the challenge of passing on the faith. But we need the added missing piece of **service**. I am imploring parents who give their children every opportunity for sports, the arts and music to also walk the mile of service. Working for the **common good** has always been my passion with my eyes on **social justice**. Unless **social justice** is an integral part of our program the Gospel of Jesus is not real to any of us.

I am suggesting that parents take a lead role in this pursuit. Opportunities of service abound. **Kristin Bevilaqua**, mother of Caleigh, Gr. 7, Tessa, Gr. 5, Lucy Gr. 4 and William, Gr.1, and **Katy Romita**, mother of Helen Rose, Gr. 5, and Charlotte, Gr. 2, have volunteered to **coordinate the service** and air opportunities on our website and Facebook page. I will send out **family opportunities**, as email blasts as often as I receive them.

Parents just need to make service as a family, a priority with their children. This is a form of **family catechesis** that can root us in putting the Gospel of Jesus in practice! I am hoping to find teens and young adults who will also become involved in this service aspect of living our faith. Please send suggestions, service opportunities to:

Sr. Suzanne at srsuzanne@staugustineny.org

Kristin at kristensiegel@yahoo.com

Katy at katy.romita@gmail.com.

After each service opportunity performed as a family, it is important to talk to your children about what they experienced, how their service reflected their living like Jesus. The **follow-up is essential**. These questions might be a starting point.

- **Did anybody or anything surprise you while we were there today?**
- **Did anybody in particular inspire you/make you think about things differently?**
- **How did the people you helped make you feel?**
- **Were you helped and changed by them?**
- **How was Jesus speaking to you?**

A list of service opportunities are provided for your convenience. As new ones become available they will be emailed to you. My hope is that every family in our Rel. Ed. Program (not CCD anymore) will engage in at least two service activities this year.

FAMILY SERVICE ACTIVITIES

Don Bosco Center (Director, Ann Heekin heekin@donboscocenter.org)

22 Don Bosco Place, Port Chester, NY 10573

(914) 939-0323 ext 11

The Read Aloud Program provides teen mentors to support the reading literacy skills for children ages 5-8. Teen mentors model a love of reading and foster good reading habits through encouragement and support of young readers. Each week, every child receives a new book to read with their mentor and gets to take the book home to read again with their family.



Read Aloud Program

Don Bosco Boys and Girls Club

Opportunities for after school and Saturday service hours for teens. Contact: Associate Director, Mrs. Margaret Diaz at acmv3859@gmail.com

Open Door Family Medical Center

165 Main St Ossining, NY 10562

(914) 632-2737

www.opendoormedical.org

Donate Your Time

- Reach out and Read: Volunteers are the heart of our Reach Out and Read Program . Come and read aloud to our young patients in the waiting rooms, model reading techniques, and promote reading aloud at home. This is a perfect position for both adult and high school volunteers who enjoy working directly with young children.
- Layette and Learn baby Showers: Help to host a baby shower for expecting mothers at Open Door.
- Distribute fresh produce for a 3-hr shift on the last Saturday of every month in Mamaroneck. Sign up at www.volunteermatch.org/search/opp2975513.jsp

Every month on the second Wednesday and Sunday we will be collecting food staples for the **Hope Food Pantry** in Kenny Hall and the cafeteria (Gr. 1). There is such a need. Reminders will be sent. Jack Romita will be driving the food to New Rochelle. This could be a great family service opportunity if you want to help.

Contact Katy at katy.romita@gmail.com .

Soup Kitchen, Food Pantry and Children's Closet

Don Bosco Center offers the community a Soup Kitchen serving breakfast and lunch, a Food Pantry for groceries and a Children's Closet for clothing, books and toys. The Soup Kitchen serves 2377 people on average per month and the Food Pantry serves 471 families on average per month.

Monday– Friday Soup Kitchen

Food Prep 8:30 am—10:30 am

Meal Service 10:45 am— 12:45 pm

Tuesday/Saturday Food Pantry and Children's Closet

Tue 8:00-10:30 am and Sat 7:00 am-9:30 am

Opportunities for weekday and Saturday morning service hours for youth and adults. Contact :

Larchmont Mamaroneck Hunger Task Force Community Resource Center

134 Center Avenue

Mamaroneck, NY 10543

- Packing groceries into bags

Tuesdays 5:05-6:30 pm

To volunteer email Joan at volunteer@LMFoodPantry.org

- Distributing food to clients

Tuesdays 6:30-8:30 pm

To volunteer email Malcolm.frouman@LMfoodpantry.org

- Upcoming dates: Aug. 7 and 21

Sept. 4 and 25

Oct. 9 and 23

Nov. 6 and 20

Dec. 4 and 18

Sister Suzanne Duzen, SS.C.M.,

Director of Religious Education

Publisher of *The Augmenter*

Send suggestions for future articles to:

srsuzanne@staugustineny.org

The *Augmenter* logo expands our vision of God through the seasons. It reminds us of God's presence in the here and now of our community in Larchmont, where most of the streets are named after trees. It takes us into a new realm of naming God through the signs of the seasons and makes greater the marvel of who God is—life, warmth, color and silence.

