

THE AUGMENTER

Webster’s Definition:

Augment (verb) - to make or become greater

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

Our entire task in this life consists in healing the eyes of the heart so that they may be able to see God. — St. Augustine

Caring for Creation

Our relationship with the environment can never be isolated from our relationship with others and with God. Pope Francis Laudato Si, 119

The entire material universe speaks of God’s love, his boundless affection for us. Soil, water, mountains: **everything is**, as it were, a **caress of God**. The history of our friendship with God is always linked to particular places which take on intensely personal meaning; we all remember places, and revisiting those memories does us much good. Anyone who has grown up in the hills or used to sit by the spring to drink, or played outdoors in the neighborhood square; going back to these places is **a chance to recover something of their true selves**.

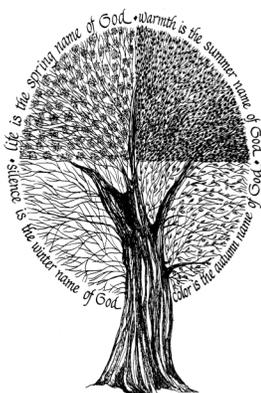
Pope Francis. Laudato Si’, Paragraph 84

With the leadership of Pope Francis we forge a new path this year, “Caring for Creation” as our theme. Climate change will not just be words that get lost in the political rhetoric but a clarion call for remarkable care, change and conservation of our planet for our children. If we hope to give our children the best, the care of our planet needs to be our primary resource and preservation of Earth.

The lens through which we hope to view the present and future will be one with “new eyes” and a heart that connects our loving God with everything and everyone. This theme will be integrated in all our lessons at the heart of each Sunday’s Gospel. With Jesus who first used parables about creation we will use stories to capture the hearts of our children and young people, weaving the threads of creation at every moment. I am asking the parents and extended family to do the same. — Sister Suzanne

Stewards of God’s Creation “Going green” can easily sound like a popular trend, one that is likely to fade when the next one comes along. In truth, **care for our natural environment is an essential element of our faith**. Catholic Social Teaching, which calls us to work for justice and peace as Jesus did, includes care for God’s creation as one of its seven themes. **Responding to this call means becoming stewards of creation, respecting and protecting the environment for future generations**. Switching off an unnecessary light, recycling a newspaper, and utilizing public transportation are all acts of stewardship. These acts—done by us and by others—add to a collective commitment that can make a difference in our vast and beautiful world. Children love to learn about and care for creation. By participating in the care of creation, children feel a sense of empowerment that comes from contributing to the greater good. Their love of animals, delight in small wonders, and ability to show compassion make this theme of Catholic Social Teaching especially relevant.

“Some people, to discover God, read books. But there is a great book: the very appearance of created things. Look above you! Note it. Read it. God whom you want to discover never wrote that book with ink. Instead, He set before your eyes the things that He had made. Can you ask for a louder voice than that?”
St. Augustine



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.

Sister Suzanne Duzen, SS.C.M., Director of Religious Education and Publisher of The Augmenter Send suggestions for future articles to: srsuzanne@staugustineny.org

LAUDATO SI': Do You Invite your Children into Encounter with God's Creation?

Of course part of being a "just parent" is teaching my children about the ecological crisis and ways we are called by our faith, as articulated so well by Pope Francis, to respond. When we go to Glacier Park next week, I will explain to my children what a glacier is, and why, in one of the most visually shocking examples of global warming, those ancient glaciers are disappearing. But in the meantime, if I want my children to respect and protect creation, first they deserve to have encounters with it that provoke wonder and awe, freedom and delight. Such "caresses" nurture connection to the earth, and to each other. And while sharing my sacred place, I need to trust that their landscapes, both interior and exterior, are different from mine. Their lives have more highways and screens, but no less meaning or magic. And whether through city parks or mountain peaks, sand or snow, God's boundless affection speaks to them in myriad ways. Our sense of self is tied into a sense of place.

What are your particular places in the natural world where you recover your true self?

How do you invite your children into encounter with God's creation?

If you have read *Laudato Si'*, which passage (s) spoke to you? (If you have not read it, what are you waiting for?)

What new places have you explored this summer?

Michael Downs is a native of Montana, Michael Downs now lives in the Bay Area where he serves as Religious Studies Department Chair and Assistant Cross Country Coach at Bellarmine College Preparatory, an all-boys Jesuit high school. An alumnus of the University of Notre Dame (B.A. '00, M.Ed. '02) and the Jesuit School of Theology at Berkeley (M.A. '07), Michael served as a classroom teacher in Texas, campus minister in Europe, volunteer in India, and outdoor educator in the Northwest before settling in California.

"7" ways to protect our planet

1. **Turn off your engine** rather than idling when you are stopped for more than a minute – when dropping kids off at school, waiting for a train, or chatting with the neighbors. This limits the emissions that pollute our air and cause respiratory illnesses like asthma.

2. **Use Fair Trade products** to support local artisans and farmers and protect the environment. Learn about **Catholic Relief Services Fair Trade** and the impact it has on vulnerable communities around the world.

3. **Store food in reusable containers**, not plastic wrap or foil, to cut down on your household trash. This kind of waste fills up landfills, litters neighborhoods, and contributes to the **Great Pacific Garbage Patch**.

4. **Avoid using Styrofoam**. Styrofoam can rarely be recycled, and it takes 500 years to decompose in landfills! If you can't use "real" dishes, opt instead for recyclable or biodegradable plates, cups, and utensils.

5. **Conserve water** by shortening shower time, not letting water run when brushing your teeth or washing your car, and ensuring your sprinklers are watering plants, not the sidewalk or street. Consider landscaping that is drought tolerant or resistant to local pests – you'll save water and limit use of pesticides.

6. **Recycle, reuse, repurpose**. Be creative, Make sure your electronic recycler does not ship e-waste overseas, where components are often dismantled in unsafe conditions or even by children.

7. **Ask your elected representatives to support legislation** that limits carbon pollution, protects natural resources, supports international efforts to fight climate change, protects environmental health, or promotes energy efficiency and renewable energy.

These actions may seem small compared to the threat of climate change, but Pope Francis reminds us that "many things have to change of course, but it is we human beings above all who need to change." (*Laudato' Si*, 202)

Yolanda Park is Environmental Justice Program Assistant at Catholic Charities, Diocese of Stockton.

Food Safety

Because of significant **ALLERGIES** that more children have than ever before, it has become a necessity to make sure that **peanuts or any form of nuts do not enter the school**. Milk and gluten allergies are also looming. Though most are accustomed to a peanut free school during regular school hours, some forget this rule in Religious Ed especially on Wednesday afternoons. Some children buy or bring snacks on their way to Kenny Hall. Residue is left on fingers and clothes that could contaminate the classrooms and desks.

Therefore, children entering Kenny Hall in 2nd, 3rd and 4th grades must eat the snacks they may not have finished eating in the foyer on the bench. Then, sanitize their hands before entering the white doors to Kenny Hall.

In the cafeteria the 1st graders who still may be eating an unfinished snack will sit at a special table upon entering, sanitize their hands with one provided, and then proceed to their assigned table.

For the Sunday and Wednesday evening programs no food at all should enter the building.

There are life threatening situations where children are at a greater risk than ever before. Epi pens and their administration are now becoming an issue. **No candy or any kind of food is ever allowed in classrooms.** **Catechists will not give rewards of sweet treats to children.** The risks are too great. The only allowance is a bag of treats at Christmas or the end of the year when the students are leaving the classrooms.

Early dismissals

In the event of early dismissal for a doctor appointment or an emergency, parents report to the main office. Linda Brown will intercom the classroom for the student. Parents don't contact the catechist. All requests must be transmitted through the main office. **Sports are not a reason for an early dismissal. No child is dismissed via their own decision by a cell phone request of a parent. Every early dismissal and/or late entrance must be authorized via the Rel. Ed. office, not the**

Latecomers

A student is considered late if they arrive after 3:30 pm or after 7:00 pm on Wednesday or after 9:00 am on Sunday. We begin in Kenny Hall where Sister Suzanne sets the theme for the class with a prayer and most often a YouTube clip of the Gospel. The 1st grade on Wednesdays begin with music and movement and/or a YouTube clip for setting the Gospel theme. If the student arrives ten minutes after the starting time s/he reports to the main office to receive a late slip and/or their Gospel Weeklies. No student may enter the classroom without a late slip and/or the Gospel Weeklies from the

The safety and supervision

of our children are essential concerns. We have hall monitors walking the hallways during each session. Robert Paoli and Iraci DiBuono on Wednesday afternoons, Tom Burns and Maurizio Bertini on Wednesday evenings serve in this capacity. On Sundays Rachel Erfe monitors the



Weather Related Closings — Wednesday: We follow the directives of the Mamaroneck School District. If the weather worsens throughout the school day, please call the office at 834-9523 to check for a cancellation message.

Sunday: Call the office for a cancellation message.

What Parents and Young People Need to Follow for St. Augustine's Religious Ed

Wednesday afternoons for Grades 1– 4

Arrival:

- ◆ **Gr. 2, 3 & 4 enter the main doors to Kenny Hall from Larchmont Avenue** (only entrance available for safety reasons) and sit in assigned row of chairs.
- ◆ **Gr. 1 enters through the red side door to the cafeteria** off the parking lot and is directed to their assigned table.
- ◆ **Sister Suzanne provides care and supervision** from 3:15 p.m. on in Kenny Hall and the cafeteria.
- ◆ **At 3:30 p.m. the actual start time**, Sister Suzanne will provide the “heart home time of prayer” and a Gospel related YouTube clip before the children are directed to their classrooms. Gr. 1 will have music and movement in the cafeteria, and/or a Gospel related DVD before

Dismissal:

- ◆ **Pick-up for Gr. 2 for parents/caregivers** is done via the **main doors to Kenny Hall** from Larchmont Avenue in Kenny Hall.
- ◆ **Pick-up for Gr. 1 parents/care-givers through the cafeteria side door leading to the parking lot in the back of the school to the cafeteria.**
- ◆ **Gr. 1 and 2 parents/care-givers must initial the exit chart for the child to be dismissed.**
- ◆ **Gr. 3 and 4 via the main doors** led by their catechists on the first floor to Larchmont Avenue. **Parents and caregivers will wait on the sidewalk.**
- ◆ Children with younger siblings will follow the exit of the youngest sibling.

Wednesday evenings for Grades 5 – 8

- ◆ **Entrance and exit will occur only through the main doors to the school near the Religious Ed office.** (This is the only door that will be open for safety reasons.) Gr. 5, 6, 7 and 8 will assemble in Kenny Hall. **At 7:00 p.m. classes officially begin with the gathering prayer and Gospel.** After 7:10 learners must report to the office for a late slip and/or Weeklies before they enter their classroom.
- ◆ **At 8:15 p.m. Gr. 5, 6, 7 and 8 will be dismissed only via the main doors led by their catechist.** No learner may exit any other doors at dismissal for safety reasons.

Sundays for Grades 1 – 8

- ◆ Entrance and exit are via the main doors near the Religious Ed. Office. **ALL LEARNERS will assemble in Kenny Hall. At 9:00 a.m. classes officially begin with the gathering prayer and Gospel.** After 9:10 a.m. all learners must report to the office for a late slip and/or Weeklies to enter the classroom.
At 10:15 a.m. the bell will ring for dismissal.
- ◆ Grades 1 and 2 will be dismissed in Kenny Hall with a parent/caregiver. **Grades 3-8 will exit only via the main doors to Larchmont Avenue.**

Special considerations, please, from your director:

- **No food may be brought into the classrooms by young people or catechists.**
- **Parking is available in the parking lot behind the school, on Larchmont Avenue, Cherry Avenue and Elm Avenue.** Double parking is prohibited by the Larchmont Police. Extra moments of patience will provide safety for our children. We are grateful to the **Larchmont Police** for the traffic control and supervision they provide.
- Any young people without pickup will be brought to the Rel. Ed. Office where parents/caregivers will claim them.
- **No child is dismissed via their own decision by a cell phone request of a parent. Every early dismissal, late entrance and late dismissal must be authorized via the Rel. Ed. Office, not the catechist.**
- **Consistent attendance is expected.** A call from a parent to report an absence is expected .
- **Confirmation preparation begins at Baptism and continues throughout all the years preceding this sacrament. Therefore, absenteeism is considered rare and consistent participation is an absolute!**