

Stewardship is YOU

Editor's Note: With this issue, we'd like to take the next step in the evolution of our Stewardship Ministry with the introduction of a new series of articles entitled *Stewardship is YOU*, featuring insights and points of view from a wide range of Parishioners and guests from our community who bring Stewardship alive in various ways. The aim of *Stewardship is YOU* is to engender thought and dialogue on a host of issues about the many programs of our Parish and to remind us all that Stewardship is alive in everyone at St. Teresa. I encourage you all to bring your thoughts and ideas to us to share with our Parish members.

This issue features thoughts from Jose Cervantes. Jose and his wife Mary Paz, have been members of St. Teresa for many years. A familiar sight in our kitchen, Jose is the reigning "Chef in Residence" of St. Teresa and has been leading the food preparation and cooking for many of the events that support our Ministries. Most recently, he has led the planning, preparation, and cooking of food for the Night Ministry outreach program.



What inspired you to become involved in the Night Ministry?

I've been involved in a variety of things since become a parishioner. Having contributed auction items (Mexican dinner for 20) for the *Time of Your Life* event, cooking and handling the food for the first two block parties the church held, and helping with *Cuisine de Coeur*, I was thrilled to learn about Night Ministries.

It provides an opportunity for me to help on a more consistent basis throughout the year rather than on an event driven basis. I am able to best express and spread my faith through the joy that food brings.

One of the key lessons I have learned at St. Teresa is that it is important to find the best way for each of us to spread the Gospel, to continue the acts of Jesus, by finding ways in which we can utilize our unique

strengths. I cook for a living and now I am able to feed the hungry in my spare time. I feel blessed that I can do this.

What do you do specifically for the Night Ministry?

I am responsible for menu planning, ordering items and leading the team every other Wednesday doing the actual prepping, cooking and packing of the food to be distributed. I also provide direction to the late

night volunteer team that comes in to pick up the food and then go out to meet the bus and feed people.

And, invariably I end up giving cooking lessons for all of the volunteers! I find this to be a lot of fun and I get to meet a lot of people.



Does any particular experience in providing food for the needy come to mind that has been special for you?

About a year ago my wife Mary Paz came up with the idea of having a “Taco Tuesday.” I had recently opened my own commercial kitchen for my business and much of the food went unused after the first shift. She has always inspired me to be a better

person, so on a Tuesday late last spring Mary and I made over a hundred burritos and we went out to feed the hungry and homeless. After many hours of driving around to underpasses and other areas, we still had a lot of food left.

While we managed to find a need for the remaining food (donating it to a single room occupancy building in the South Loop where I used to represent Holy Name Cathedral on the board of directors) we realized that we needed to find a more efficient way to distribute food.

Shortly thereafter, Father Frank announced a partnership with Night Ministries in feeding their clients. It felt like a calling.

How does your experience in the Night Ministry influence your faith?

One of the ways is that it brings me closer to people that I don’t usually interact with on a daily basis in business. Seeing the look

on their faces when they are given a meal that we prepared with lots of love, and the thankfulness and joy they exude, brings me closer to God. It reaffirms what I hear every Sunday in one way or another, that together as a loving faithful community, we can make a difference.

What does Stewardship mean to you?

Using whatever skills or strengths we have to continue the good works of the Lord by helping those in need. Feeding those who are hungry.



To volunteer with the Night Ministry meal service ministry visit vols.pt/d6ABZj. To discuss how you can use your own God-given talents at St. Teresa of Avila, contact Rebecca in the parish office at (773) 528-6650 or robrien@stteresaparish.org.