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Arlana DeLeo's RCIA Journey Cultivating a Loving Relationship with God

Arlana DeLeo spent a decade attending Mass at various churches around Oahu before taking the step to join RCIA at St. John Apostle & Evangelist.

"I realized it was time to become a member of God's family instead of just being a bystander," Arlana says. "This is not something decided at the drop of a hat — it's taken a lifetime of experience, heartache and joy."

In fact, you might say that Arlana's journey to RCIA actually began when she was a youngster growing up in Ohio. Arlana had one aunt who was Catholic and patiently answered her questions about her wreath and candles during Advent. Then, they lost touch for about 25 years until Arlana's aunt called her a few months ago.

"She told me she had been praying for me all these years," Arlana says. "When she found out I had joined RCIA and was on the journey to becoming a Catholic, her joy was contagious. There are no coincidences. God is so amazing."

Serving with the Air Force brought Arlana to Hawaii, and when she moved to the Mililani area last March, she wanted to be part of a church community near her home that was "alive, vibrant and spiritually strong."

"I inquired about RCIA at Our Lady of Sorrows, but they directed me to St. John," Arlana says. "Everything I encountered, from the first parking lot greeting, to the warm welcome and encouragement from Msgr. John, Fr. Joseph and others, has confirmed that this is the place to be."

During the RCIA process, Arlana met once a week for an hour and a half to two hours with a group of other adults, both candidates and catechumens, for a structured



Candidates and catechumens entering the Church at the Easter Vigil Mass

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Arlana DeLeo's RCIA Journey *continued from front cover*

program. The catechists consisted of a mixture of lay people including cradle Catholics, converts, married and single, and older and younger parishioners.

“Seeing firsthand how God’s Word is alive for them personally was very encouraging,” Arlana says. “We even had a priest discuss some more in-depth theological information with us at times. This made me want to start taking some college classes again!”

Learning more about the faith and the Mass — such as how every part of the Mass is based in Scripture — brought Arlana into a deeper relationship with Christ and Mary.

“There’s so much to learn,” Arlana says. “Understanding more what Mary’s ‘yes’ meant and how she intercedes for us and really loves us as our Mother enriched my prayer life. It opened my eyes to better appreciate all the things God does to draw us close to Him.”

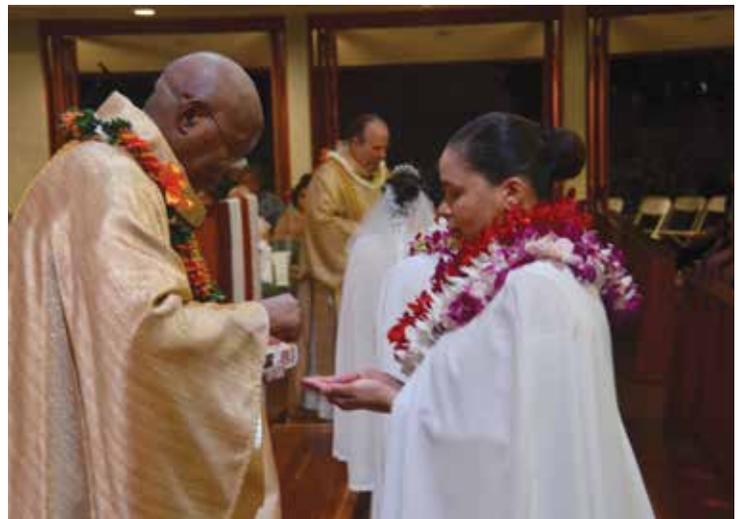
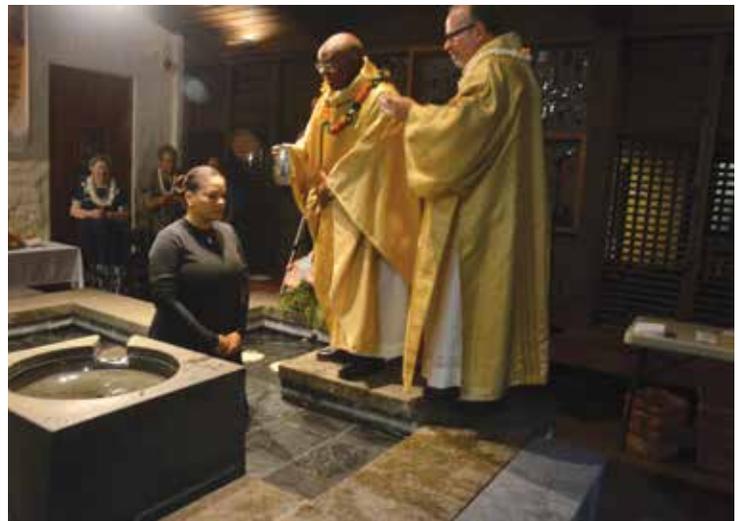
Arlana describes her journey to the Church as “deeply spiritual,” and she knows that her decision to become Catholic might alienate her from some of her family.

“Having Christian brothers and sisters to pray with and talk to, and even praying the Our Lady of Perpetual Help Novena Rosary every week, has been a pillar of strength,” Arlana says. “Also, attending a Basic Christian Community Hawaii retreat and visiting the Benedictine monastery gave me energy and comfort.”

Pray and trust — that’s what Arlana would say to anyone interested in joining the Church. She personally knows how realizing that we need God and that He has always been there for us can transform your life.

“Nothing on earth and no other relationship or feeling can compare,” Arlana says. “Don’t hesitate. Dive in and cultivate a loving relationship with God. Listen to Him, participate in the Church, join a ministry and be a living example of your faith in action.”

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Candidates and catechumens entering the Church at the Easter Vigil Mass

A Letter From Our Pastor

The Month of Mary: A Time for Celebration and Joy

Dear Parishioners,

In the Catholic Church, we designate a particular devotion for each month — and May is when we honor our Blessed Mother Mary. Thus, this is a good time for us to think about and concentrate on our devotion to the Mother of God. Perhaps we can add a few more Marian prayers to our daily routine. Praying the Rosary might be even more important. Of course, that assumes that daily prayer is part of our daily routine — which it should be.

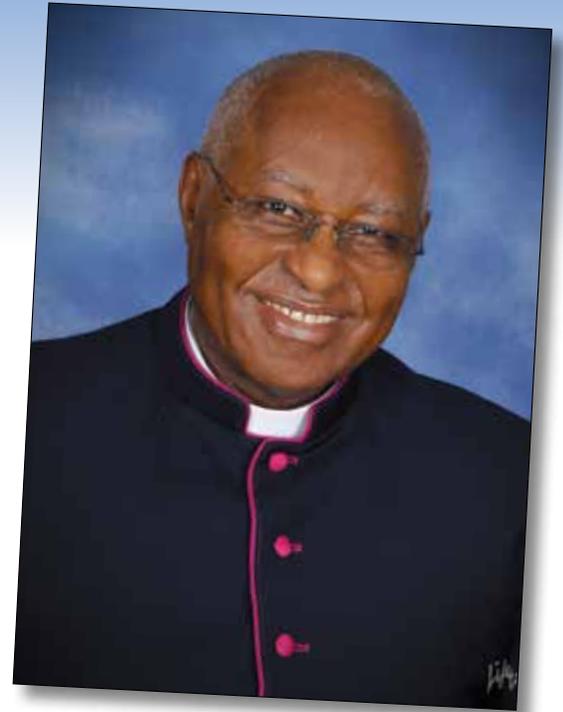
Our Blessed Mother is important to our faith and to our Church. Her willingness to serve in a way that allowed the Lord to take human form really made our salvation a possibility. Because of her complete trust in God, she lived her life free from sin, and after her life, she was assumed into heaven by the power of God and crowned Queen of Heaven and Earth.

She is, of course, not divine. We worship only our Lord Jesus Christ, but we honor Mary as a saint and in many

other ways. We honor God when we remember the role of Mary in our salvation. Devotion to Mary always leads to Jesus Christ Himself.

Mary was joyous when she said “yes” to God. That is the kind of joy we need to seek — and we, too, must say “yes” to the Lord. Let us be grateful to Mary for bringing us her Son. This is why we crown her on our Catholic version of Mother’s Day. Through Mary, we are given an invitation into the Catholic fold. Her feminine presence and the safety of her motherhood may help us grow.

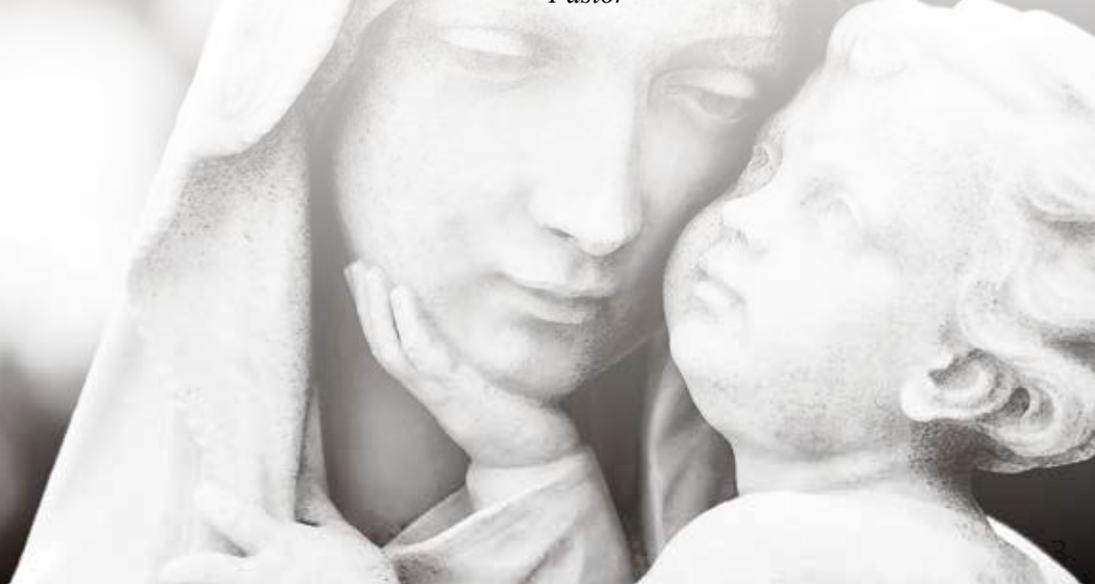
For most of us, this time of year is a month of growth in relation to nature. It is difficult not to have May as one of our favorite months for so many reasons. May is a beautiful time. We are called to make it even more beautiful, and we can do that as we serve and love one another.



I am deeply blessed to be your pastor. I may say that often, but it is true. My priesthood has been a blessing, and serving you all has made that blessing even more significant. I pray for you daily. Please pray for me. God bless you and keep you always.

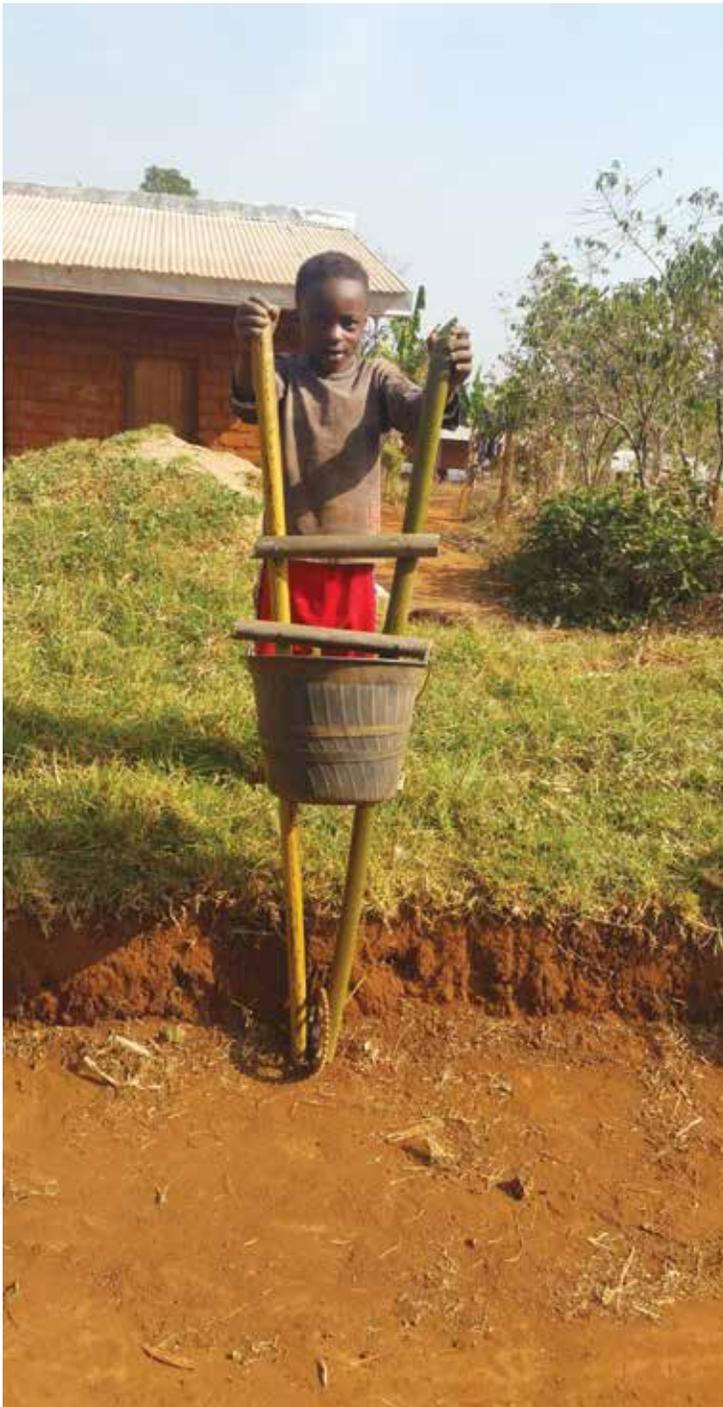
Sincerely yours in Christ,

Msgr. John S. Mbinda
Pastor



Vidi Aquam (I Saw Water): A Reflection o

By FR. EUGEN



*Ingenious means for carrying water home by this young guy.
We hope to bring the water nearer to him.*

V*idi Aquam* refers to the words of the prophet Ezekiel (47:1) who saw water gushing forth from the Temple as a sanctifying flood that flows through the earth. It constitutes the antiphon that is sung in Eastertide and for the *Asperges* outside of Eastertide. “I saw water” captures the very human excitement and yearning for this life-giving substance: “And wherever the river goes, every living creature that swarms will live, and there will be very many fish. For this water goes there, that the waters of the sea may become fresh; so everything will live where the river goes” (Ez 47:9).

I have borrowed these words to express immense gratitude for the kind donation of \$5,400 that St. John Apostle & Evangelist Parish in Mililani made to assist in the provision of water for two needy communities in Cameroon, West Africa. Yes indeed, they have seen water in the village of Nkar and in the Catholic University of Cameroon, thanks to your kindness.

Among the most highly rewarded universal kind acts requested by Christ, is giving water to the thirsty: “And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones who is my disciple, truly I tell you, that person will certainly not lose their reward” (Mt 10:42). It is no doubt therefore, that providing water to the thirsty is among the six good things that qualify those who will be admitted into heaven on the last day for the important reason: “I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink” (Mt 25:35).

The Church continues to assist water projects around the world, and indeed, contributing in such efforts provides occasion for any Christian to evaluate his or her work in the world — have I helped to provide water for the thirsty somewhere?

Jesus adopted the image of water in his ministry to communicate the presence of God, as Providential: “Anyone who is thirsty may come to me! Anyone who believes in me may come and drink! For the Scriptures declare, ‘Rivers of living water will flow from his heart’” (Jn 7:37-38). Paradoxically, the last thing Jesus asked of those who killed him was water: “I thirst” (Jn 19:28). And they gave Him vinegar to drink. As a Christian, have I been a giver of water for thirsty to drink or vinegar for their already parched throats?

In every chapel of the sisters of Mother Teresa of Calcutta are written beside the crucifix the words, “I thirst.” They remind

Water in Appreciation of St. John Church

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the sisters of God's thirst for humanity and also of humanity's thirst for God as the purpose for the passion of Christ.

As is often said, one can give without loving, but one cannot love without giving, and that the relationship we keep with people is better than the good things we do for them. Hence these fruits of joy, the work of human hands, swelling like water from the spirit of their souls come, thanks to the friendship Msgr. John Mbinda and the Church of St. John have enhanced with Fr. Eugen Nkardzedze, Fr. Daniel Ache and Fr. Michael Suh Niba, who have visited and served at St. John. We very much appreciate coordination of the people's generosity by the Social Ministry Commission and Global Outreach Ministry. These people and these things shall we always remember as we sing the *Magnificat* of our gratitude to God and St. John Church.

Presently, the joy of children, students, teachers and parents having water within their doorstep reach bespeaks and resounds the Christian response to our Savior's thirst today. The donation we received has been distributed into two parts. The Fatima Fountain in Nkar received \$2,900 for its electrical water pump and connection, while the Catholic University, that is still very much in need of a water borehole, received \$2,000 to construct a water storage facility to hold 6,000 liters of water (approximately 1,600 gallons).

And for giving us water to drink, St. John Church will certainly not go without her reward.

*Written by Fr. Eugen Nkardzedze
For the beneficiaries in Cameroon*

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Nkar water field work.



Nkar Village.

Making the Most of Every Sunday

Putting God First

Many Americans set aside their Sundays to enjoy various leisure activities. Indeed, Sundays during the summer months may include cookouts, or perhaps afternoons spent at the swimming pool or baseball stadium. And when fall arrives, many fans will certainly be spending their Sundays in front of the television, as they become engrossed in the excitement of the National Football League's highly anticipated Sunday games.

Sunday is also the day when more than 18,000 Catholic parishes in the United States will be celebrating Masses. But if recent statistics are any indication, the percentage of the U.S. Catholic population attending Mass that day will stand in stark contrast to the percentage of the U.S. television audience watching Sunday football games.

According to the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life's *U.S. Religious Landscape Survey*, Catholics account for roughly 23.9 percent of the adult population in the United States. But of the 70 million-plus registered Catholics in the U.S., only 36 percent attend Mass once a week or more, according to Georgetown University's Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate. Only 12 percent of U.S. Catholics participate in the Sacrament

of Reconciliation at least once a year, and a mere 17 percent of Catholic men say they have ever even slightly considered becoming a priest or religious brother.

God gives us leisure time to clear our heads and recover from what can often be a hectic daily life. But it is important that we glorify God in all that we do, and time away from work or school provides a great opportunity to regularly celebrate the sacraments. As Catholics, we are obligated to attend Mass on a weekly basis, barring illness or extenuating circumstances. But this is just the first step. Spending time in prayer, Eucharistic Adoration and Reconciliation provides us with the grace, healing and the wisdom to live as disciples of Christ on a daily basis. And sharing our time, talent and treasure through ministry participation and charitable giving enables us to serve our brothers and sisters in Christ, thus ensuring that we are placing God at the top of our list of priorities.

Each Sunday presents an opportunity for us to foster our discipleship commitments to Christ. So, make the time and discern ways that you can put God first, on every Sunday throughout the year.

Sharing our time, talent and treasure through ministry participation and charitable giving enables us to serve our brothers and sisters in Christ, thus ensuring that we are placing God at the top of our list of priorities.



Serving All God's People: Romple Emwalu's Ordination to the Transitional Diaconate

On Friday, May 25, our St. John Apostle & Evangelist parishioner and seminarian Romple Emwalu will be ordained a transitional deacon. A deacon is an ordained minister of the Church, and there are two types of deacons. Permanent deacons are assigned to positions by the bishop and serve as deacons throughout their lives. Transitional deacons, however, are seminarians preparing for their last phase of training before being ordained as priests — normally, they are ordained as priests within a year after being ordained a transitional deacon. Romple is scheduled to be ordained a priest in the spring of 2019.

Deacons of both types can baptize, witness marriages, perform funeral and burial services, distribute Holy

Communion, declare the Gospel, and preach the homily at Mass. Deacons are ordained as a sacramental sign to the Church and to the world of Christ who came “to serve and not to be served.” In fact, the term “deacon” comes from the Greek word *diakonos*, which means “one who serves.”

In a sense, all seminarians and priests are unique, but Romple falls into a special category in that he will be the first Chuukese priest in the Diocese of Honolulu.

“When I first arrived in Hawaii and I became aware that the population of the Chuukese community was substantial here, I realized that the community needed a priest,” he says. “Although the Chuuk people are predominantly Catholic, and we have no shortage of

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Romple Emwalu, third from left

Serving All God's People *continued from page 7*

priests there in Micronesia, no priest had ever been ordained for or in the Diocese of Honolulu. I hope to change that.”

The Chuukese are an Austronesian-speaking ethnic group indigenous to the island of Chuuk and its surrounding islands and atolls. They constitute almost 49 percent of the population of the Federated States of Micronesia, making them by far the largest ethnic group in the country.

“I was born on May 24, 1982, and raised on Polowat Island, [Chuuk],” Romple says. “I am a middle child of 20 siblings. My mother married my uncle, Celestino Emwalu, a widower, after my dad, Sostehnis Emwalu, died on May 30, 1997. My birth mother and father had 13 children, and then after remarrying, my mother and my uncle/stepfather had seven more children.”

Romple attended Nanataku High School and graduated in 2001, after which he entered the College of Micronesia-FSM in Pohnpei and received his Associate's degree in Liberal Arts in 2004. In 2007, he earned his teaching certificate, specializing in Elementary Education.

“I taught in Pohnpei at Palikir Elementary School for a year and worked with Habitat for Humanity and the Lion's Club for three years,” he says. “I moved to Hawaii in 2008 to further my education at UH Manoa and to assist my family.”

In relation to his vocation, Romple recalls his upbringing. “I was really raised by my grandparents from the time I was a young boy,” he says. “I know that my vocation began in part because of my grandfather. He is a devout Catholic, and he would awaken me early almost every morning, so we could pray the rosary at 5 a.m. in the church. It was a combination of seeing his deep faith and praying those Rosaries which planted the seeds of the priesthood in me.”

As Romple recounts, from the time he first arrived in Hawaii, St. John Apostle & Evangelist was his

parish. “I know that I expressed the desire to serve my people, and that was an early motivation for me to enter the seminary,” he says. “However, I became involved in many other aspects of church ministry and service, including Youth Ministry at St. John, Habitat for Humanity, and working with the elderly. Those experiences have really broadened my interests, and increased my desire to be a priest. I want to serve all God's people. Now I cannot wait to have the chance to bring people to Christ. The world needs Christ.”



Romple Emwalu, middle back row

Anyone interested in a vocation can contact Fr. Rheo Ofalsa at 808-585-3355. For more information on Romple's diaconate ordination, please contact the parish office at 808-623-3332.