



Join Us for the Child Jesus of Prague Novena

Beautiful Devotion Honors Christ Child as Our King and Protector

Here at St. John Apostle and Evangelist, a spiritual tradition continues to draw parishioners together each year — the novena to the Child Jesus of Prague. This devotion honors the Christ Child as king and protector, inviting the faithful to approach Jesus with child-like trust and confidence in His loving care. The novena begins on Jan. 5 and ends on the vigil of the Jan. 14 feast day.

This is an important devotion within the Filipino Catholic community. Each year, parishioners gather at the parish for the nine days to pray, share intentions, and celebrate God's blessings as a community. All are invited to participate in this beautiful tradition, whether to deepen their prayer life, seek spiritual support, or experience this long-standing devotion.

Marcie Wong has been carrying on this novena from a friend for about 10 years. During the nine days, there are



upwards of 20 people who gather to pray.

"It's not just the prayers — it's getting together with other people that I enjoy," Marcie says. "It's also beautiful to continue this tradition, like in the Philippines. We want it to continue."

Marcie says that many people who gather for the nine days have a specific intention.

People pray this novena at other times in the year, also for a particular intention. There are many specific intentions that people ask of the Child Jesus of Prague — specifically blessings, healing, and protection.

"This is an important tradition to continue because that's how we keep our faith closer and stronger," Marcie says. "And we are welcoming people and gathering them together."

The Filipino group at the parish, Fil-Am Catholic Group, leads this devotion. They also do a novena in September for St. Lorenzo Ruiz of Manila, a Filipino saint. The group also

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The Harmonious Path to *Stewardship*

Liturgical Music in the Catholic Mass

Mass is a sacred and central act of worship that brings together the faithful to partake in the body and blood of Christ. At the heart of this divine celebration lies liturgical music, which serves as a powerful medium to deepen our connection with God. The significance of liturgical music during the Mass cannot be overstated. In this article, we will explore the profound importance of this musical element and how parishioners can live out stewardship by sharing their time and talents through participation in parish music ministries.

Liturgical music plays a multifaceted role in the Mass. It uplifts our souls, allowing us to transcend the mundane and connect with the divine. Here's why it holds such significance:

- **Enhancing Worship:** Music adds depth and emotion to the Mass, helping us express our love, gratitude, and devotion to God. It is a channel through which we can praise and adore Him.
- **Scripture Reflection:** Many hymns and chants are based on the Scriptures, reinforcing the message of the Gospel, and aiding in its reflection. The music often accompanies the liturgical readings, making the Word of God resonate more deeply within us.
- **Community Bonding:** Singing together fosters a sense of unity among parishioners. The choir and congregation become a spiritual family, bound by the common goal of glorifying God through music.

Stewardship is the responsible and generous use of our time, talent, and treasure, in thanksgiving for God's gifts to us, and for the service of God and others. Participating in parish music ministries is an excellent way to actively live out stewardship.

God has bestowed unique gifts on each of us. Those gifted with musical abilities can use their talents to serve the Church. Whether you sing, play an instrument, or have skills in music composition and arrangement, your contribution is invaluable.

Joining a music ministry allows you to work collaboratively with fellow parishioners. The bonds formed while creating harmonious melodies extend beyond the rehearsal room, enriching your sense of community and shared faith.

By actively participating in the music ministry, you contribute to the spiritual ambiance of the Mass. The beautiful hymns and melodies you create can inspire others and bring them closer to God.

When you offer your musical talents in service to God, it is an expression of gratitude for the gifts you have received. You become a steward of the gifts God has bestowed upon you, using them to bring His message to life.

Liturgical music is not merely an embellishment of the Mass; it is an essential element that elevates our worship, deepens our connection with God, and strengthens our sense of community. Through active involvement in parish music ministries, you can live out stewardship by sharing your time and talents in a way that enriches the spiritual experience of the entire parish. As you make music that resonates with the hearts of your fellow parishioners, you are living out your faith, serving your community, and contributing to the beauty and sanctity of the Mass.

A Letter from Our Pastor

Carrying the Light of Christ in Every Season

Dear Parishioners,

As we begin a new year, we are reminded that each season — whether filled with sunshine or rain, calm or challenge — is a gift from God. Here in Hawai'i, our winter months don't bring snow or cold winds, but they do offer a sense of renewal and reflection. It's a time when the rhythm of life slows just enough for us to pause, give thanks, and consider how we might grow as disciples of Jesus Christ.

Even in the beauty and warmth of our islands, we know that life brings its share of struggles and uncertainty. Yet no matter what we face, the light of Christ continues to shine within us and through us. That light is what we are called to carry into our families, our neighborhoods, and our parish 'ohana. As we live out stewardship as a way of life — sharing our time, our talents, and our treasure — we reflect God's presence to others and help build a community rooted in faith, hope, and aloha.

Stewardship begins with gratitude — recognizing that every breath, every sunrise, and every person in our lives is a gift from our loving Creator. From that spirit of thankfulness flows a desire to serve. Perhaps this season is an invitation



to spend more time in prayer, to volunteer in a ministry, or to reach out to someone who needs encouragement. Each act of love, no matter how small, is a way of letting Christ's light shine.

Our parish 'ohana is blessed by so many who live this way already — those who serve quietly, give generously, and show compassion daily. Their example reminds us that stewardship isn't about doing more; it's about doing everything with a heart centered on Christ. When we care for one another and share our gifts freely, we

bring the warmth of God's love to everyone we meet.

As we journey through this new year, may we each carry the light of Christ into every corner of our lives — into our homes, our workplaces, and our communities. May our faith be steady, our gratitude deep, and our spirit of aloha reflect the love of Jesus to all.

Sincerely,
Fr. Anthony Rapozo
Fr. Anthony Rapozo
Pastor



Coffee

A Simple Space for Conversation,



Every Tuesday morning at St. John Apostle and Evangelist, parishioners gather in the hall for something both simple and meaningful — Coffee Hour with Fr. Anthony and Fr. Jojo. From 9 to 10 a.m., parishioners sit together over coffee and light snacks, while sharing in open conversations about the Catholic faith.

Fr. Anthony explains the purpose plainly.

“Parishioners can ask us any theological or Church questions they may have,” he says.

The format is uncomplicated — questions, discussion, and time spent together — but the impact has been significant.

Coffee Hour began on June 25, 2024, and was initiated out of Fr. Anthony’s desire to connect with parishioners.

“The purpose was to let the parishioners get a chance to meet us outside of our regular priestly duties,” he says. “It also gives people the opportunity to try to answer any questions they may have about their Catholic faith.”

Each week, about 10 to 20 parishioners attend. The group is open to everyone, and no registration, preparation, or commitment is required. People simply show up, ask what’s on their mind, and join the conversation.

The questions that arise vary widely — sometimes they are challenging, sometimes simple, and other times unexpected.

“All types of conversation and questions come up,” Fr. Anthony says.

Topics have included “Why does God allow evil?”, “Why does the Catholic Church only allow Catholics to receive the Eucharist?” and questions about whether the Church believes in aliens from another world.

Fr. Anthony notes that occasionally, he and Fr. Jojo need to research an answer.

“Sometimes we need to tell them we will get back to them on a question that we need to research, and we normally get them the answer by the next session,” Fr. Anthony says.

Beyond answering questions, the weekly gathering helps the priests understand their community more deeply.

Coffee Hour:

Connection, and Growing in Faith

“It allows us to get a better feel for what our parishioners would like to learn or know more about the Catholic faith,” Fr. Anthony says. “In turn, it helps us to better improve or offer different types of faith formation.”

The informal setting also helps parishioners see their priests in a different context. When asked what people can expect, Fr. Anthony answers simply.

“Fun,” he says. “And hopefully they learn something new or interesting about their Catholic faith and the Catholic Church in general. Coffee Hour allows parishioners to get to know their priests better and, most importantly, outside of our ministry duties and see us more as friends and teachers.”

One of the quiet strengths of Coffee Hour is the way it encourages connection among parishioners. Fr. Anthony hopes the openness of the format supports this.

“The point of allowing them to ask us any question is

based on getting everyone, clergy included, to get to know more about our faith and the official Church teaching,” he says. “I also hope it brings parishioners closer to each other and helps them feel safer and more open to share their faith and the views they have of their Catholic faith with each other — and hopefully with others outside of our church.”

As Coffee Hour continues, it remains a simple but valuable part of parish life — a weekly moment to pause, ask questions, and build relationships. It reflects the pastoral desire of the priests to know their parishioners personally and help them grow in understanding and confidence in their faith.

If you haven’t attended before, consider stopping by. Bring a question, enjoy a cup of coffee, and spend an hour with fellow parishioners and your priests!

Join Us for the Child Jesus of Prague Novena *continued from front cover*

leads the Misa de Gallo, which is a novena leading up to Christmas at the morning Masses.

Over all these years of praying the Child Jesus of Prague novena, Marcie has focused on various needs. One thing she always prays for is unity and our priests.

“We pray for them because we need priests — we’re in dire need of priests — and also to continue the tradition for the young generation, for them to learn this beautiful devotion,” she says.

Marcie enjoys the time after the prayers for visiting and telling stories. She appreciates having these dedicated days to be in fellowship with others.

The Fil-Am Catholic Group also conducts community service, specifically for seafarers, providing food, toiletries, and other essential needs.



St. John Bosco:

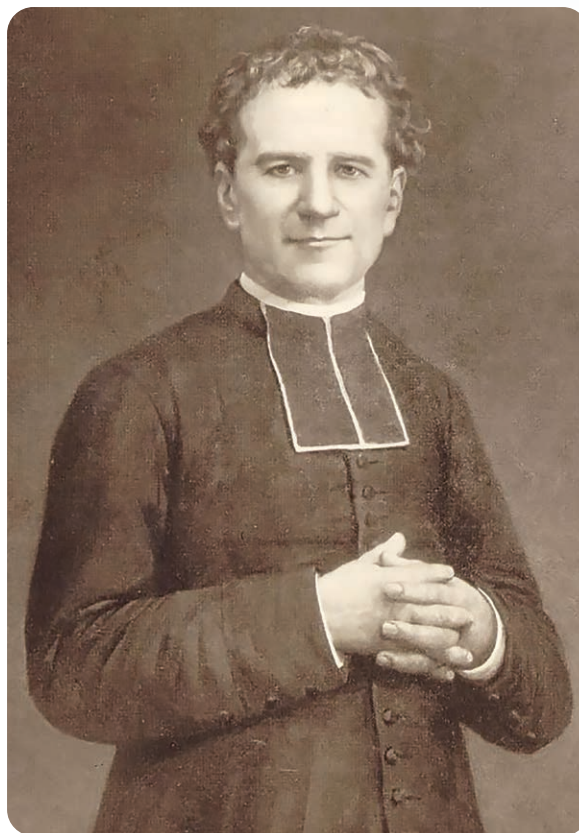
A Steward of Youth and Hope

Many saints have modeled faithful Catholic discipleship and stewardship, and St. John Bosco is a shining example for January, as we celebrate his feast day on Jan. 31.

Known affectionately as Don Bosco ("Don" means "Father" in Italian), he dedicated his life to the care, education, and spiritual formation of poor and neglected youth in 19th-century Italy. His legacy continues to inspire the Church today, particularly those who work with young people or seek to serve with generous hearts.

Born in 1815 near Turin, Italy, John Bosco was raised in poverty by his widowed mother. Even in his youth, he demonstrated a deep devotion to the Eucharist, a love for the poor, and an extraordinary ability to engage and teach his peers. These qualities became the foundation for his lifelong mission of stewardship and discipleship.

Ordained a priest in 1841, Don Bosco began ministering to the street children and working-class boys of Turin. Many were orphaned, imprisoned, or left to fend for themselves. Rather than ignoring their suffering, he saw them as precious gifts from God and responded with a heart full of compassion. He opened a youth center that provided food, shelter,



education, and spiritual guidance — planting the seeds of lifelong faith and purpose in the lives of countless young people.

Central to Don Bosco's mission was the understanding that all our time, talent, and treasure are gifts from God to be used in loving service to others. He saw himself not just as a priest or educator, but as a steward of souls entrusted to his care. His joyful, approachable spirit and tireless work for the good of others reflect the very essence of a stewardship way of life.

In 1859, he founded the Salesians of Don Bosco, a religious congregation committed to the education and evangelization of youth, especially the poor. Today, the Salesians serve in more than 130 countries, continuing his vision of loving and forming young people in a Christ-centered environment.

St. John Bosco's feast day offers us a time to reflect on how we, too, are called to serve others with the same devotion and purpose. He is the patron saint of apprentices, schoolchildren, boys, young people, and juvenile delinquents — a fitting tribute to his life's mission.

As we grow in our own journey of stewardship, may we look to St. John Bosco as a model of faith in action, and respond to God's call with the same love, joy, and generosity.

Celebrating Catholic Schools Week at St. John's Catholic Preschool

United in Faith and Community

Catholic education is important in the upbringing of children and the building of our society. Parents are the primary educators of their children, but Catholic school education also assists children to learn about the faith and teachings of Christ. Each year, Catholic schools across the nation take a week at the end of January to celebrate the importance of Catholic education and those who are involved in our schools.

This year, St. John's Catholic Preschool will participate in Catholic Schools Week, from Jan. 25 through 31. The theme is "Catholic Schools: United in Faith and Community."

"It is always the goal of the preschool to be the ambassadors for Catholic education — to integrate the school community and the life of the parish," says Angie Thomas, director of the preschool program.

Each year, Catholic Schools Week kicks off on Sunday with a celebration of the parish. The preschool typically hosts an Open House, inviting the parish community to rediscover the preschool environment and classroom setting.

"Activities include a tour of the classroom, meet-and-greet parents, and the alumni who are now parishioners," Ms. Angie says. "We will end Catholic Schools Week by honoring the 'spirit of the child' and 'families.' We highlight school pride for all to see!"

For the remainder of the week, there are daily themes that include celebrating the community, the students, our country, vocations, faculty, staff, volunteers, and families. Within these days, a number of activities highlight our Catholic identity within the education system.

"Activities for our preschoolers will not only be enjoyable, but they are activities that will also provide a tangible learning experience where they can recognize the sacred in each of their classmates/friends, and that they are aware and capable of living out our Catholic call — like Jesus," Ms. Angie says.



Many parents choose to send their children to Catholic school, so that their children may receive a comprehensive education that includes faith learning — particularly in their youngest years.

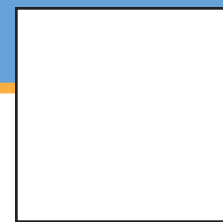
"Prospective and current SJCP parents seek a Catholic education, especially for the early years, because they know that their child will not only be provided academics but will be allowed to connect and unfold their faith in action daily — which is different from being in a public school," Ms. Angie says.

For more information about St. John's Preschool, visit www.stjohnmililani.org/preschool.



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Ash Wednesday: *A Catholic Tradition of Reflection and Renewal*

Ash Wednesday falls 40 days before Easter Sunday, excluding Sundays, and serves as a period of penance, fasting, and prayer, mirroring the 40 days Jesus spent in the desert. Rooted in centuries-old traditions, this observance is laden with symbolism and significance, providing a profound opportunity for spiritual reflection and renewal. The name itself is derived from the practice of placing ashes on the foreheads of the faithful in the sign of the cross. This year, it falls on Feb. 18.

The history of Ash Wednesday can be traced back to the ancient Jewish tradition of penance and fasting, symbolized in Judaism by the sprinkling of ashes on the head. This practice was later adopted by early Christians as a public expression of repentance.

The liturgy of Ash Wednesday is profound and poignant, emphasizing humility and

mortality. The priest applies ashes in the shape of a cross to the foreheads of the faithful, uttering the words, "Remember that you are dust, and to dust, you shall return" or a similar phrase. It heralds the beginning of Lent, a period of self-examination, prayer, and fasting.

The 40 days of Lent are symbolic of the time Jesus spent fasting in the desert, facing temptations from the devil. Through prayer, fasting, and acts of charity, we seek to emulate Christ's journey, fostering a deeper connection with their faith.

Ash Wednesday serves as a powerful reminder of the transformative journey toward Easter, where the faithful celebrate the resurrection of Christ. In this season of Lent, we are encouraged to embrace the call to repentance, turning away from sin and towards a life of holiness and grace.

