



Inside This Issue...

- 2 Advent: Preparing for the Coming of Christ
- 3 November: Time to Be Grateful
- 4 Serving the Parish Community and Beyond
The Social Ministry Commission
- 6 Reaching Out to the Community and More
Our Knights of Columbus Council

“Marriage and Family are the Bedrock of the Church and Society”

The Marriage and Family Commission

In a world where marriages and families are struggling, Duane and Wanya Ogata, married for 33 years, are on a mission to follow Pope Francis’ call to love and bring a sense of *ohana* (family) to St. John Apostle & Evangelist Church to include everyone so that no one gets left behind.

As the leaders of the newly established Marriage and Family Commission, the Ogatas are striving to reach out to people in all stages of life with the emphasis of supporting marriage and families.

“We are looking for opportunities to strengthen existing marriages and family relationships, provide care for hurting couples and families, and provide support groups for divorce recovery,” Wanya says. “This is a priority within our parish because the church understands that marriage and family life is the foundation of strong churches and society. The success of the domestic church is important to the Church at large, because the home is the first church, and this is the first place where we learn to love, trust, pray, forgive, and serve.”

“We’d like to collaborate with other ministries within the church to address gaps of involvement because we notice there has been a decline of marriages

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“We are starting out with the relationship between husband and wife and God, because this is the bedrock of the family. In order to keep God in the center of our marriage, we do a lot of praying. We believe that families that pray together, stays together. We acknowledge that in our humanness, we cannot do it alone. So, we constantly pray for God’s grace and mercy for ourselves, our children and our family.” – Wanya Ogata



Duane and Wanya Ogata, who have been married for 33 years – enjoying a visit to Love Park in Philadelphia – are the leaders of the newly established Marriage and Family Commission, a ministry that seeks to strengthen marriages and families in our parish community.

Advent:

Preparing for the Coming of Christ

There are six seasons in the liturgical year for Catholics. The first is and always will be Advent. Advent is a season unto itself – it is not part of Christmas. The six seasons are, in order: Advent, Christmas, Lent, the Sacred Paschal Triduum, Easter, and Ordinary Time (which is divided into two sections, one from the end of Christmas time until the beginning of Lent, and one from the end of Easter time until Advent).

The point for us as Catholics as we approach Advent is to realize that Advent is *not* Christmas, even though it is possible to get caught up in the Christmas feeling that is so prevalent during this important liturgical cycle. Advent stands alone, and we need to approach it in that way. The mystery of Christ unfolds to us throughout the Church year, and that disclosure begins with Advent.

Each of us Catholics is most likely aware that the Church has spent centuries of prayer, thought and study, inspired by the Holy Spirit, to define and identify how we are to live out our faith. We have Canon Laws set down for us from Rome. Also, at the Vatican, in the Curia overseen by the pope, there is something called the Congregation for Divine Worship. It is this sector of the Church that has given us our calendar and the reasons for it.

According to the *General Norms for the Liturgical Year and the Calendar* issued by the

Congregation, “Advent has a twofold character: as a season to prepare for Christmas when Christ’s **first** coming to us is remembered; as a season when that remembrance directs the mind and heart to await Christ’s **Second** Coming at the end of time” (39).

We may think in terms of Advent being merely as a time to prepare for Christmas. Nevertheless, it is much more important than that, or at least it should be. The word “Advent” evolves from the Latin word *adventus*, which means “coming.” We all understand that Christ is coming; His first coming is celebrated on Christmas, and that is to what our Advent preparations may tend to lead.

To really be prepared nonetheless involves also understanding the second reason for the Advent season – to prime us for the Second Coming of Christ. Although this may seem to us not in keeping with the “Christmas spirit,” it is exactly what we need to remember to include in what we do during Advent. Just as Lent is a penitential time leading up to Easter, Advent should be a penitential time leading up to Christmas.

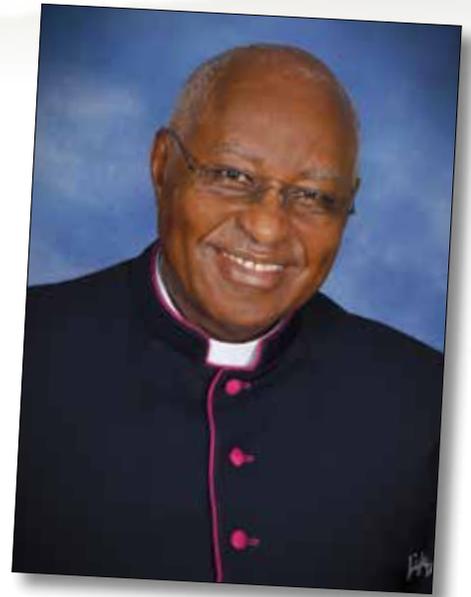
It is important for us, as stewards of the Church, to understand and appreciate both aspects of Advent. And it is equally important as good stewards to live out those expectations.



Be Grateful

A Letter From Our Pastor

November: Time to Be Grateful



Dear Parishioners,

I thank God every day for my priesthood; I thank God every day for each one of you; I thank God when I say the Mass; I thank God for each and every day. There are so many ways that the Lord has blessed me that I cannot really mention them all. That is a lot of gratitude, I know, but it is that kind of attitude of appreciation for God's presence in our lives, and His many gifts to us, that we need to concentrate on — not just this month when Thanksgiving is so much on our minds, but throughout the year.

It has been said many times that people who are good stewards are grateful people and, as a result, are happy people. If we think about the good things in our lives — no matter how many challenges and sorrows there may be — and make them the center of our thoughts, it makes everything better.

As Catholics, we are thankful people by nature. We share the Eucharist regularly, and this is a gift from God on which we should always unite. You are probably aware that the word “Eucharist” itself comes from the Greek word *eucharistia*, which means, quite simply, “thanksgiving.” As a faith family, we share this meal of “thanksgiving” often, and certainly at every Holy Mass.

Thus, my thoughts of thanksgiving are not confined to one time of year, but every day of the year. That should be the goal for each of us. I heard someone say recently that our Thanksgiving holiday has Protestant roots, but there are Catholic roots to the tradition, as well. Were you aware that in 1565 — 56 years before the Pilgrims celebrated their first Thanksgiving — Spanish Catholic settlers and Native Americans celebrated a Thanksgiving at a Holy Mass in St. Augustine, Fla.?

Thanksgiving is a way of life for us. Every time we gather to celebrate Mass, to pray, or to just enjoy one another's company, it is a time for that eternal gratitude. Everything we have is a gift from God. It may be something basic like fresh air and clean water. It may be food. It is certainly family, friends and our very parish. Let us thank God not just at this time of year, but always. You and I are blessed.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Msgr. John S. Mbinda
Pastor

Serving the Parish Community The Social Ministry Commission

Reaching out to those in need. Offering compassion and healing to the wounded.

These are the cornerstones of serving the world as a Catholic. In recognition of this need, our Holy Father Pope Francis has emphatically encouraged Catholics around the world to carry out this essential mission of our faith.

“The thing the church needs most today is the ability to heal wounds and to warm the hearts of the faithful; it needs nearness, proximity,” Pope Francis said in an exclusive interview with *America: The National Catholic Review*, in 2013. “I see the Church as a field hospital after battle. It is useless to ask a seriously injured person if he has high cholesterol and about the level of his blood sugars! You have to heal his wounds. Then we can talk about everything else. Heal the wounds, heal the wounds... And you have to start from the ground up.”

Here at St. John Apostle & Evangelist, there are many social and outreach ministries that aim to carry out this mission through service to the parish and surrounding communities. In July, the Social Ministry Commission, or SMC, one of eight commissions set up for our parish by Msgr. John S. Mbinda, was formed to serve those ministries in many ways.

“The Social Ministry Commission is really a consolidation of all the parish’s outreach ministries,” says Social Ministry Commission Chair Deb Zedalis. “The SMC is all about service – to those in our parish, to those in our community, to the state, and in some cases global outreach to the world. The goal of the SMC is to

improve social services and the outreach ministries through information sharing and coordination in order to reach new people. We have many Social Ministries, including Local Outreach, Parish Health Ministry, Ministry to the Institute for Human Services, Kupuna Kokua, Hui O Laulima and Bereavement and Grief. And we have added some new ones – the Seniors, Social Justice, Global Outreach, and Disability.”



Parish Health Ministry

The parish held a town hall meeting in February, during which Deb was part of a breakout group that focused on social and outreach needs in our community. Deb says that through this meeting, it became clear that there are many resources available at our parish, but that no one was working to align the ministries with each other and with the needs of the community. Thus, the SMC was formed with those goals in mind.

“I think from the town hall meeting, we saw that there are so many needs and many resources to meet those needs, but they weren’t really being knitted together well,” Deb says. “So there were

two specific needs that became obvious – we need to assess the ever-changing needs of the community, and we need to really coordinate the different ministries, and match them with the needs of the community. That became really key.”

So how does the SMC plan to reach these goals?

“The first thing is lots of prayer!” Deb says. “Prayer is so important to knit this all together and really to do the Lord’s work. When I first took on the SMC, I realized it is immense. The needs are immense. We can’t do it all, so it’s important to really take the time and use it deliberately. We also want to expand beyond the parish, to address our community’s needs, the needs of the diocese, the state, the country, and even global needs. So the first thing is to assess the programs that we do have, ask ourselves the hard questions and decide what we need to add, modify or delete. We will also work to determine the needs of the community – local and beyond. What’s needed? Where? By whom? And what do we have that can address that need? Lastly, we will work to identify resources. We want to find out who else is out there to help.”

Like Pope Francis, Deb views the Church as a field hospital, and envisions the SMC as the hands and feet of Christ, working directly with the people to meet their needs.

“When Monsignor came and talked to us in July at our first meeting, he mentioned one of Pope Francis’ favorite images, of the Church as a field hospital,” Deb says. “He really wants this ministry to be engaged just like a

Community and Beyond Social Ministry Commission

field hospital. We want to really get our hands dirty, and to be out there working with the people who need our help. There's need everywhere. And that's really our task – to help wherever the need is. Anybody who volunteers in social ministry will have their lives touched and their hearts changed for the better. You're not just healing in those moments, you're also being healed. And I think that's key for the life and vibrancy of our individual faith and our Church, and the world!"

We call forth and encourage all parishioners with a heart for service to join the Social Ministry Commission. There are endless ways to help – from leading a team, to joining the ministry in prayer on your own. For more information on the Social Ministry Commission, or to find out how you can help, please contact Deb Zedalis at 808-348-2973 or via email at dzedalis@hawaii.rr.com.



(First row, from left) Gloria Pfister, Mary Alvarico, Msgr. John Mbinda, Deb Zedalis, Elaine Gibson, Bill Castro. (Second row, from left) Paul Thames, Pearl Bates, Yolanda Morreira, Connie Murphy, Ron Thames.



Social Ministry Commission

Commission Chair: Debra Zedalis

Teams

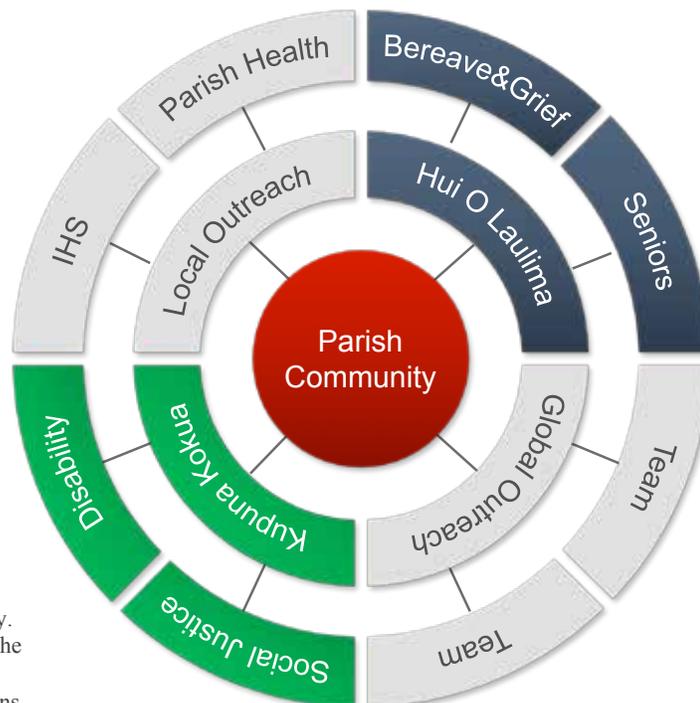
- Local Outreach
- Hui o Laulima
- Bereavement & Grief
- Kupuna Kokua
- IHS
- Parish Health
- Disability
- Global Outreach*
- Social Justice*
- Seniors

*Global Outreach is a ministry whereby the parish serves the needs of others outside the USA, e.g. Nigeria at the moment.

*Social Justice Team will help the commission and parishioners in ongoing formation sessions on social justice topics

Implementation timeline for the new model is July 1, 2015. The commission will meet quarterly.

Each team will meet monthly or bi-monthly. The team leaders will meet quarterly with the commission chair to share information on their team ongoing activities and future plans.



Goal Statement: To improve social services and outreach ministries through information sharing/ coordination in order to reach more people.

Action: Coordinate quarterly meetings with different ministries representatives in order to exchange information on what each team is doing; provide ongoing social justice formation for all teams and the whole parish community.

Reaching Out to the Community and More

Our Knights of Columbus Council

Charity. Unity. Fraternity.
Patriotism.

All good works done by the Knights of Columbus are based upon these four core principles. And as our own Knights of Columbus Council 14663 notes on its website, “Our Catholic faith teaches us to ‘Love thy neighbor as thyself.’ Our members show love for their neighbors in many ways, both spiritually and materially. We recognize that our mission, our faith in God, compels us to action. There is no better way to experience love and compassion than by helping those in need, a call we answer every day.”

Knight Dennis Tulang, who serves as the Director of Community Activities for our council, understands

the purposes of the Knights, and the ways in which members can effectively live out those purposes.

“To be a Knight is to understand what stewardship means,” Dennis says. “Living out stewardship means one must act, must do something to show faith and trust in God. The best way to do that is to help those who need help. The Knights, and I personally, are interested in charity, in service to the poor and needy.”

Recently, the council has undertaken two important projects.

“Of course, we do much more than this, but these represent very well how we try to help,” Dennis says. “We joined with the Habitat of Humanity organization in the community to assist

a family facing very difficult situations. Both parents were battling cancer and their home was in bad shape. It needed extensive roof repairs, renovations and upgrading, and painting. Working with other volunteers, our Knights were able to provide all of that at no expense to the family. In effect, they got a new house.”

Another project closer to our Catholic roots and connections, which has been ongoing over the past few years, is helping Benedictine Monastery of Hawaii located in the hills on the north side of the island.

“The sisters and priests who live there are elderly and need help in maintaining the monastery facilities,” Dennis says. “Men from our council

continued on page 7

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Reaching Out *continued from page 6*

go four times a year. We basically do whatever they need to have done, from cleaning rain gutters on the roof, to landscaping, to repairing equipment, to developing and reorganizing their library. “We have also repaired water and sewer lines.”

And of course, our Knights council is very involved in projects

within the parish and the local community.

“We are involved in much locally and here in the parish by working at many events. In the community we support and participate in the programs of the Hawaii Institute of Human Services and the Hawaii Food Bank to feed the hungry,” Dennis says.

Our local Council has more than 100 members, and Dennis believes they have even more potential.

“I think we could do so much more,” he says. “We would welcome the membership and involvement of more men. And we keep trying to set up programs which would allow more to be involved.”

The Knights of Columbus is a true service organization and a great example of stewardship in action. If you are interested in becoming a member, or would like more information, please contact Grand Knight Jack Cleghorn at 808-623-5194 or jackeaglelover@msn.com.



"Love is the measure of faith." – Pope Francis

Marriage and Family Commission

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celebrated at our parish," Duane states. "It is our hope to increase the number of Sacramental marriages at St. John's and we plan to stress the importance of marriage preparation, as well as the opportunity for people to have their marriages blessed and validated by the Church."

For these parents of four who met on a blind date, their marriage is built upon and strengthened by their faith, and that is a gift they want to share with others.

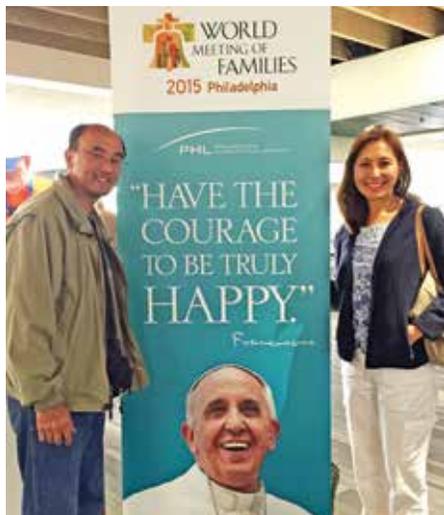
"Faith – that's what carried us through our marriage and life." Wanya says. "We don't have a perfect marriage and we are like most couples who have their ups and downs. We, too, can get caught up with the busyness of life with kids, work, family responsibilities and the challenges of life – but what brings us together, is our faith. It is the glue that keeps us together."

For Duane, his relationship with God really began to grow through his relationship with Wanya.

"I was a cradle Catholic and my siblings and I went to Church with my mom every Sunday (while my father remained at home)," he says. "But after I graduated from high school, I stopped going. I wasn't practicing my faith when I met Wanya. We started dating and she would invite me to attend Mass with her, and I did because I wanted to impress and please her. We later got married in the Catholic Church, but my commitment to attend Mass soon fell short and my Sunday priorities were filled with either work or recreational activities like watching football on TV. Wanya continued to encourage me to accompany her to Mass and I'd go once in a while. But it wasn't until we attended a Marriage Encounter Weekend (marriage enrichment retreat) that it transformed me and I began seeing our church and our sacrament in a whole different light."

Since they became involved with Marriage Encounter in 1988, Duane and Wanya have felt strongly about the importance of supporting and encouraging other married couples, as well as those preparing for marriage.

"The purpose of the Marriage and Family Life Commission is to help couples and individuals understand God's plan for marriage and the family," Wanya says. "And also to provide the support, skills and resources that foster Catholic values which are needed to help families live out God's plan in their daily lives. After all, the family is the heart of a home."



In order to be enriched as they prepare to serve couples and families in our parish, Duane and Wanya Ogata traveled to Philadelphia for the World Meeting of Families this past September.



Members of the Marriage and Family Commission

According to Duane and Wanya, supporting marriages takes many forms, from offering marriage enrichment programs and marriage preparation opportunities, to pro-life ministry and Catholic faith formation for men and women.

"Life can be challenging, and we need the Church to support us, especially when everything falls apart in our lives," Wanya says. "The Church represents God's house and it becomes the 'family of families' where it embraces, nurtures, heals, and wants the best for us.

"We are starting out with the relationship between husband and wife and God, because this is the bedrock of the family," she continues. "In order to keep God in the center of our marriage, we do a lot of praying. We believe that a family that prays together, stays together. We acknowledge that in our humanness, we cannot do it alone, so we constantly pray for God's grace and mercy for ourselves, our children and our family."

Faith and family – most certainly a good combination to ensure that no one gets left behind!

If you'd like to get involved in a marriage or engagement program, or would like to serve as part of the Marriage and Family Commission, please contact Duane and Wanya Ogata at ogataohana@msn.com or 808-625-8863.