



Allowing the Presence of Christ to Change Our Hearts and Minds

As Catholics, we come together every week to worship at the Eucharistic feast of the Mass. It is a liturgical celebration where we offer worship to our Heavenly Father and He, in turn, feeds us with the very Body and Blood of Christ. The nourishment of the Eucharist aids us in our spiritual journey as we share our time, talent, and treasure with our community.

Parishioner Ursula Ramos can describe the moment at Mass in 1985 when she felt called by our Lord to give more by volunteering as an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion.

“I kept watching the Extraordinary Minister,” Ursula says. “It came to me that, by that simple act, what they were doing was such a gift. It seemed so simple, but to be able to serve the Body and Blood of Christ to the faithful was such a gift, and I thought to myself, ‘I can do that – after all Christ did for us, I can show my love for Him by sharing His Body and Blood.’”

Within a week after this internal revelation, there was a ministry fair where Ursula was able to sign up, and she subsequently began her training to become an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion. Now, 31 years later, Ursula calls herself a “minister for life” and is still receiving spiritual fruits from her service.

“We can see [God’s] love for us,” Ursula says. “And it makes life easier to take on. It makes us better people in general – in the way we help others and in joining other ministries. It helps us to focus on how our relationship with Christ is number one.”

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STEWARDSHIP

THE FOUR PILLARS

You've heard about the three Ts of stewardship, but what about the four Ps?

The three Ts — time, talent and treasure — describe the personal gifts we offer to the Church. The four Ps are the “four pillars” of parish stewardship described by the renowned pastor Msgr. Thomas McGread. They are the hallmark of a stewardship parish — hospitality, prayer, formation and service. Let's take a look at each of them to understand how we can improve in each area.

HOSPITALITY

CHRISTIAN KINDNESS

“When I was a stranger, you welcomed me” (Matthew 25:35). The Gospel teaches that whenever we welcome the least of our brothers or sisters, we welcome Christ himself. That is why the first mark of a stewardship parish is hospitality. Being friendly is one of the first ways we can be Christ-like toward others.

Modern Catholic parishes are often so large and have so many Masses that many parishioners don't know one another. To create a sense of community, be sure to smile and greet others as you enter and exit the Church. Let's try harder than ever to be a welcoming community.

PRAYER

HEART-TO-HEART WITH GOD

“Do not become so involved in the work of the Lord that you forget the Lord of the work,” a seminary professor once taught. In other words, don't get so caught up with parish projects and outreach efforts that you forget to draw aside to spend time with God in prayer. Every great saint has taught that prayer is the most essential component in the life of the Christian. Through prayer, we nurture our most important relationship — the one that will last for all eternity.

A healthy prayer life should include communal prayer such as Mass, as well as personal prayer and family prayer. The two biggest obstacles to prayer are lack of time and lack of understanding of how to pray. We have to schedule time for prayer just as we would for an important appointment. And we have to learn how to pray from other people. Many saints have written spiritual books that describe different methods of prayer.

FORMATION

CONTINUOUS CONVERSION

Pope John Paul II always emphasized ongoing conversion. From childhood through adulthood, our whole life must be a process of drawing closer to God. He never stops calling us forward to learn more and to examine ourselves more deeply.

Very often our society values material things more than interior virtues. But as personal experience shows, when we finally acquire the car or house or “toy” that we wanted so badly, it doesn't really satisfy. On the other hand, we don't tend to desire spiritual virtues with the same kind of longing, but when we actually have them, we find them far more rewarding than material things.

SERVICE

LOVE IN ACTION

“Amen I say to you, whatever you did to the least of my brothers, you did it to me” (Matthew 25:40). This Scripture was one of Mother Teresa's favorites. Each time she picked up a poor and hungry child, she knew she was ministering to Christ. While we may not view ourselves as saints, we too are called to such heroic service right within our own community. As Mother Teresa said, “To be a saint is not the privilege of a few, but the duty of everyone.”

We have many service opportunities right here within our own parish. If you have the willingness to serve and take the initiative to find where you are needed, you'll find that there is no end to the families and individuals who truly need help. How can you reach out to them in love?

A Letter From Our Pastor

We Are All Ministers of Hospitality

Dear Parishioners,

This is a time of many celebrations in the Church. The list is almost endless at this time of year – First Communions, Confirmations, graduations, and weddings. There are so many events that bring people who are not from the parish, or even members of the Church, into our parish.

You may recall that we speak of the Four Pillars of Stewardship – Hospitality, Prayer, Formation, and Service. I want to particularly speak of that pillar of Hospitality this month. It is important every day of every year and at everything we do as a parish community. However, at this time of year, when there may be strangers and newcomers in our midst, it becomes even more important.

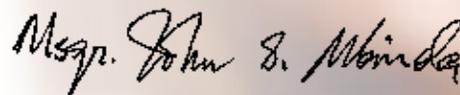
Jesus is the cornerstone of our faith. In Matthew 25:35, the Lord speaks to us in terms of expectations when He says, “I was a stranger and you welcomed me.” He makes it clear to us that whenever we welcome any of His brothers and sisters, we welcome Christ Himself. Sometimes, we may think that this concept of hospitality is the responsibility of a committee, ministry or group of people assigned that task – but the truth is that we are all part of the parish hospitality effort.

If we are going to be a stewardship parish, and if each of us is going to be a good steward, we need to be aware that we need to seek and find Christ in everyone around us, everyone we meet, and certainly everyone who enters our church or other parish facilities.

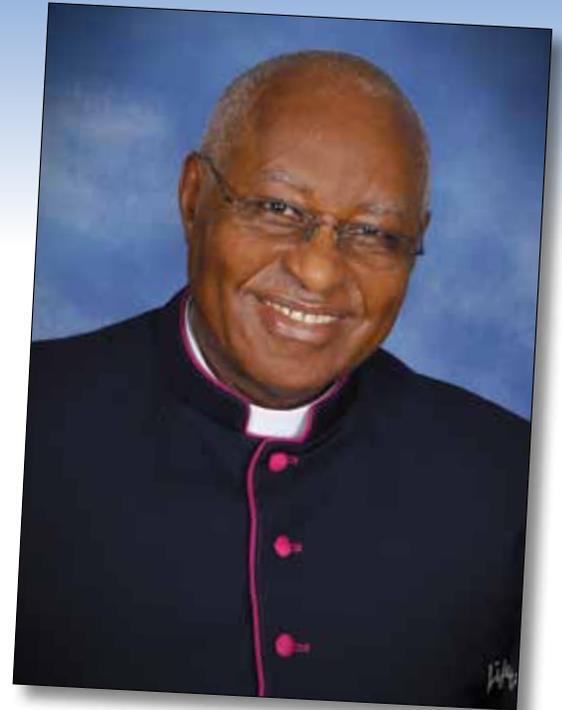
Hospitality is a parish priority that each of us must take to heart. It is not so challenging to greet someone, smile at them and welcome them – yet, it may require a little extra effort on our part. That means we must have an awareness of those near us, of those who may appear to be alone or new. We may not always think of Christ in this way, but if we carefully listen to Holy Scripture, we must realize that He was a caring, welcoming and friendly person. If we are to be His disciples, we need to be the same.

As stated, Jesus assures us that when we welcome others, we are welcoming Him, as well. St. Paul once said that people who are hospitable sometimes entertain angels. For us, parish hospitality is not an option. It is our way to model the Kingdom of God right here and right now.

Sincerely yours in Christ,



Msgr. John S. Mbinda
Pastor



“I Want to Be a Good Steward – My Some RCIA Stories from Our New Members”

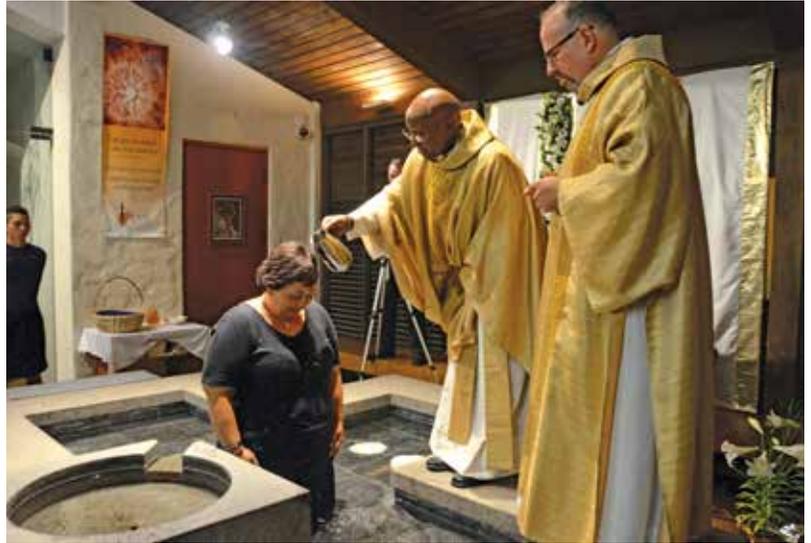
Easter, and the many celebrations that occur around it, is the holiest time of year for us as Catholics. Something very special occurred at 7 p.m. on the night of Holy Saturday, March 26, when a group of people became fully initiated members of our faith community at our Easter Vigil Mass.

The Easter Vigil Mass begins with darkness – representing all darkness. Then a light is struck – representing the Light of Christ. The entire Mass is filled with symbolism and meaning for all who are present, but it is particularly meaningful for those who are receiving the Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and the Eucharist so that they will be in complete communion with the Church.

Those receiving these sacraments reached this point by completing what the Church calls RCIA. The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, promulgated by the Church in 1974 and revised in 1988, is a ritual process, not an automatic process, through which those desiring to be in full communion with the Catholic Church are formed as disciples of Jesus Christ through evangelization, catechesis and the Sacraments of Initiation.

Each of these newly-initiated has a unique and compelling faith story. We wish to take an opportunity to share the backgrounds and stories of two of our newest members – Cary Sparks and Dominique Kekiwi.

For Cary, the process may have seemed inevitable. Raised a Southern Baptist, he became involved with the Church in 1988 when he and his wife, Heidi – who is Catholic – were married at St. James Catholic Church in Davis, Calif.



Dominique Kekiwi receives the Sacrament of Baptism.

“Before we were married, I would attend Mass with Heidi,” Cary says. “During our engagement, we attended a Catholic Engagement Encounter program, and we met regularly with her parish priest, Fr. Bill. He explained to me the requirements for me, a non-Catholic, to get married in the Catholic Church. Part of that was a commitment that if we had children, they would be raised Catholic. It was a simple decision and I made it without hesitation. We have been blessed with three children. Our family has attended St. John since 1998. Our two oldest children have received all of their sacraments, and our youngest is completing her first year of Confirmation classes.

“For more than 25 years, I had attended the Catholic Church,” he continues. “My children had received the

“Everything in your life, in your growth as a person, requires time, effort, and a good foundation. My faith has grown through some of the other things I learned in RCIA, like praying more and reading Holy Scripture. We at St. John talk about stewardship. I want to be a good steward – my faith is the foundation for that.”

– Cary Sparks



Cary Sparks came into full communion with the Catholic Church at the Easter Vigil.

My Faith Is the Foundation for That”

Parish Members, Our New Catholics

sacraments. If someone asked me at work if I was Catholic, I always said ‘yes,’ but the truth is that I was not really Catholic. That is why I pursued full initiation into the Church through RCIA.”

Dominique’s story is a bit different. Her decision to become part of the Church did not have the influence of a spouse or children.

“Once I expressed interest in learning more about the Church and being Catholic, Deacon Modesto Cordero was very welcoming,” she says. “He introduced me to RCIA. I wanted to learn more. The RCIA process and the people who are part of it who shared their faith with me have made me such a better person. This has been an emotional and faith-filled experience.”

Cary also cites Deacon Modesto as having a very positive influence on him.

“I appreciate the deacon for his support and encouragement,” he says. “I also need to thank Jack Cleghorn for his interest and our many discussions. Most of all, I thank my wife, Heidi, who was my sponsor and my partner in learning. This experience has helped strengthen and deepen our marriage.”

“In addition to Deacon Modesto, Julie Zamora-Quiroz has had a huge impact on me,” Dominique says. “She introduced me to Laura Peeters and Taylor Mitchell, who became my sponsors and are now my godparents. I would not be here today without them.”

Dominique and Cary both recognize that becoming full members is only the beginning of the journey.

“I know I am still growing and embracing my new faith more fully,” Dominique says. “I know my endeavor has just begun, and I have a lot more to learn.”

“Everything in your life, in your growth as a person, requires time, effort, and a good foundation,” Cary says. “My faith has grown through some of the other things



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The newly baptized.

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If you are interested in learning more about RCIA, or would like to become involved either on the RCIA team or as a candidate, please contact Deacon Modesto Cordero, Director, at 808-623-3332 or mcordero@rcchawaii.org.

Celebrate the Feast of the Visitation:

May 31

At first glance, the Visitation seems a simple enough event — Mary went to Judah, where she visited her pregnant cousin, Elizabeth.

And, yet, the reality behind the events that took place on this fateful day is so profound that we celebrate the Feast of the Visitation every year on May 31.

Imagine being 12 years old again. For most of us, that brings back memories of playing in the park, riding our bikes, watching TV, playing baseball, and so forth. Now, imagine that at the young age of 12, you find out that you are expecting a child — and, even more daunting, that this child is the Lord.

As unimaginable as that situation is for all of us, it is the reality that 12-year-old Mary knew. What a weight to bear!

Yet, it is clear that God knows what He is doing, because Mary's reaction to this reality was much different than most of ours would be. "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord,"

she responded to the angel. "Be it done unto me according to your word" (Lk. 1:38).

Then, she set out to the town of Judah to visit her cousin, Elizabeth, whom she just learned was also expecting a child.

Instead of keeping to herself and processing the fact that she was pregnant with her Lord and Savior, Mary immediately set out to bring Christ to others. She was indeed the first steward of the Church — offering her whole life to the Lord as His "handmaid," and revealing Christ to others through her service.

As soon as Mary entered the house and greeted Elizabeth, John the Baptist leaped in Elizabeth's womb, rejoicing at the presence of the Lord within Mary. "And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and exclaimed with a loud cry, 'Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And how does this happen to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me?'" (Lk. 1:41-43). Mary radiated with the presence of Christ. Elizabeth had not been told that Mary was pregnant with the Savior, and yet, no sooner did Mary enter her home, Elizabeth knew.

No doubt, Mary is the steward of all stewards. So selflessly had she given herself to the Lord that she became His mother, and, in that way, her very being radiates Christ. It is for that reason that we venerate the Blessed Mother. Everything about who she is as a person, so closely united is she to the Lord and His will, brings us to her Son. And in her words that followed Elizabeth's joyful greeting, we see exactly that. Christ is glorified through her.

In response to Elizabeth's veneration of Mary, Mary exclaims, "My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord; my spirit rejoices in God my Savior. For He has looked upon His handmaid's lowliness; behold, from now on will all ages call me blessed. The Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is His name" (Lk. 1:46-49).

This month, as we celebrate the Feast of the Visitation, may we all venerate the Blessed Mother for her selflessness, and ask her to bring us closer to her Son.



Becoming God's Mouthpiece on Earth

The Lectors Ministry

When we think of someone serving as a lector, we may tend to think of someone who loves public speaking, or someone who is comfortable in the limelight. Yet, longtime lector Paul Olszewski shares that he has always found public speaking to be both difficult and intimidating. Despite this, Paul has been an avid lector for more than 15 years, using his participation in this liturgical ministry as an opportunity to overcome his fear while also deepening his relationship with Christ.

"Getting up and talking in front of people has always been a hard thing for me, so this has kind of allowed me to get over that fear a bit," Paul says.

"I think lectoring is important because proclaiming the Scriptures give people a better feel or perspective of our interaction with God," Paul says. "You are reading and hearing God's Word, allowing each of us to come to know Him better."



Seeking to proclaim God's Word in a clear and eloquent manner, Paul begins his Mass preparations several days in advance. He starts off by reading a prayer that was given to him years ago when he first began lectoring at his former parish,

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There are currently 49 lectors serving in the ministry. 20 lectors have joined the ministry since the Stewardship Renewal in 2014. Recruitment for new lectors is always on going.



Becoming God's Mouthpiece on Earth *continued from page 7*

St. Ann's. Through this prayer, Paul asks the Holy Spirit to transform his own understanding of the Word, enabling him to speak with reverent eloquence to the congregation: "Help us to proclaim your Scripture with sensitivity and understanding so that our careful rendering will allow those who listen to discern and respect the true meaning of your Words and your Way."

After concluding his time of prayer, Paul then spends time over the next few days practicing the reading aloud

in front of a mirror, so that he can better engage the faith community on Sunday. Over the years, Paul's life has been greatly blessed through his service as a lector – he is continually challenged to really live out the words that he is proclaiming on a weekly basis.

For Paul, knowing that he is doing his best to share God's Word is tremendously fulfilling. His hope is that God will use him as His mouthpiece, touching someone's heart and driving the Bible's message home.

If, like Paul, you have a love for God's Word and are seeking a simple way to serve Him, perhaps you are being called to join the Lector Ministry. To get involved, please contact Paul Olszewski (Lector Coordinator) at candski@hawaiiantel.net or 808-627-7111.

Allowing the Presence of Christ to Change Our Hearts and Minds *continued from front cover*

faithful. The key word in our ministry is 'Extra' [Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion]. We are not the Ordinary Ministers of Communion (Clergy), so we must be humble and understand our role in receiving and serving our Lord. By serving the parish community in this way, these ministers experience a special closeness to Christ, and it is His presence that changes their hearts and minds.

"The Eucharist is one of the most important parts in the life of the Catholic person," Ursula says. "It is the foundation of our faith, and the work of the Extraordinary Minister is to help the priests and deacons. Since Christ is really present, our position is very important to us, and it's a beautiful way to serve the faithful in the community."

If you are looking for a way to get involved that is simple, doesn't take much "extra" time, and can change your life, please prayerfully consider this beautiful ministry. Please contact the parish office at 808-623-3332 with any questions or to express interest.

