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*The March for Life*



## “Signs That Make Us Strong in Our Faith” *The Marriage Convalidation Program at St. John*

**A**s Catholics, we are particularly blessed to have sacraments that keep us in close communion with the Lord. In the Sacrament of Matrimony, a couple enters into a grace-giving covenant relationship with one another and with God. Sometimes, couples who have been married in a civil ceremony or in another religious tradition desire to have a sacramental marriage. In these cases, the couple can participate in St. John’s Marriage Convalidation program. This is not just a blessing of the marriage – rather, the convalidation culminates with a full Catholic wedding ceremony performed in the Church by a priest or deacon.

Deacon Modesto Cordero works with many couples in this parish program, and he greatly enjoys officiating at convalidation weddings.

“My experience has been very positive,” he says. “The feeling

is often one of excitement when you explain to the couple that they have to go through the whole ceremony. Some couples had just gone to the courthouse to get married, so they are excited talking about the wedding ceremony. You can see their eyes brighten up and they feel like young kids again, remembering those moments of engagement and preparation for the wedding. And some of them have children at the ceremony, or even grandchildren, and it’s really great.” *continued on page 2*



*The 2016 Marriage Convalidation ceremony*



*The 2015 Marriage Convalidation ceremony*

## “Signs That Make Us Strong in Our Faith” *The Marriage Convalidation Program at St. John*

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For many couples, marriage convalidation is motivated by a Catholic spouse who wants to fully re-enter into participation in the Eucharist. The Church recognizes marriages that are performed outside of the Catholic Church, but because those marriages were performed in an invalid form, a Catholic spouse cannot receive Holy Communion until the marriage is convalidated in the Church.

Deacon Modesto has witnessed the joy and strengthened faith life that come to spouses as they enter into a sacramental marriage. In one instance, following the convalidation of her long marriage, a woman in her 60s finally engaged fully in the Church once more, becoming an active leader in numerous parish ministries.

“In many situations, we have couples where one of the spouses is Catholic and the other is not,” Deacon Modesto says. “So by doing this, the Catholic spouse is welcomed back into Communion. It is really important to them – it’s a relief to be back in full participation of their faith. We have also seen this become a catalyst for a spouse who is not Catholic to want to become Catholic, and that is really wonderful for both spouses.”

While the preparation for a marriage convalidation is somewhat similar to normal marriage preparation in the parish, the clergy take into consideration how long the couple has been married in determining the amount of preparation that needs to be done before the convalidation. For all couples, the process begins with a prenuptial survey that collects information from the bride and groom, as the spouses are called during the process. During this evaluation, the priest or deacon determines whether there are any canonical issues to address – such as a prior marriage that has not been annulled – before



*The 2014 Marriage Convalidation ceremony*

moving forward with the convalidation. Once any identified issues have been resolved, or if no issues are found, the couple can move forward in preparing for the Sacrament of Matrimony.

It is impossible to overstate the value of the Marriage Convalidation program to our parish. When a couple’s existing marriage is convalidated, their relationship receives the abundant graces of God that are granted to us through each and every sacrament.

“We are a Church that believes strongly that sacraments are signs that make us strong in our faith,” Deacon Modesto says. “It’s a sign of who we are as Catholics that we have the sacraments the Church has provided us. A sacrament brings us closer to Christ and unifies us with Him. When you bring your marriage into the Church and unify it with Christ, your marriage is no longer a marriage of two, but a marriage of three – God is a part of it. So you are strengthening your marriage by having God become a part of the relationship.”

*The Lord has richly blessed our Church with the gift of His many graces, made available to us in the sacraments. For couples who have been married outside the Church, there could be no better way to strengthen your faith life and marriage than by entering the Marriage Convalidation program and preparing for the Sacrament of Matrimony! We encourage all parishioners interested in this wonderful opportunity to contact the parish office at 808-623-3332 to set up a meeting with one of our priests or deacons.*

# A New Year, New Challenges, New Opportunities

Dear Parishioners,

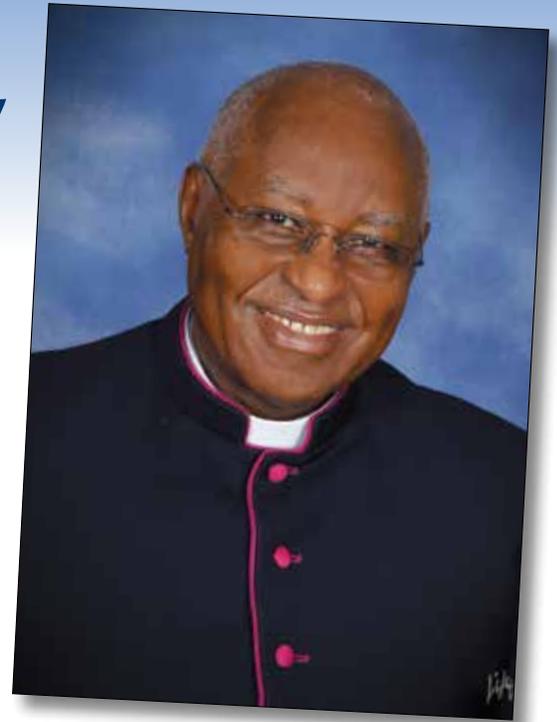
It is a new year, and it is my prayer for all of you – and for me, as well – that we can take new steps on our faith journeys, and seek new ways to live out discipleship and stewardship.

Pope Francis once commented on his perspective of our modern approach to life. He said, “Certainly, possessions, money and power can give a momentary thrill, the illusion of being happy, but they end up possessing us and making us always want more, never satisfied. I have learned that the most important thing is to put on Christ in your life, place your trust in Him, and you will never be disappointed.”

The pope has been called “the world’s parish priest.” As we pray for one another in this New Year, may we all ask the Lord to help us appreciate Pope Francis’ approach to life, his simple way of seeing things, and his very basic way of appreciating things. I would hope that we see this year as a time for opportunity, a time to deepen our relationship to Christ, and for that matter to one another.

If we really wish to change our lives and the lives of others, there are two easy ways to do it. We are blessed with many opportunities in this parish to pray, but as much as it is important for us to take advantage of those, we also need to develop a strong personal prayer life. Recall the young Samuel, who was not quite sure what to do with his life, or what direction to go. When he finally settled on that one important prayer, “Speak, Lord, for I am listening,” Samuel gave us the hint as to what we need to do. Prayer is a two-way street, and part of that is taking the time to listen to God.

The second important way is to exude joy. Christ certainly called us to do that. Pope Francis has had much to say about joy, as well. The Holy Father says, “Joy cannot be held at heel; it must be let go. Joy is a pilgrim virtue. It is a gift that walks – walks on the path of life, that walks with Jesus... proclaiming joy, lengthens and widens that path.” We must seek that joy and

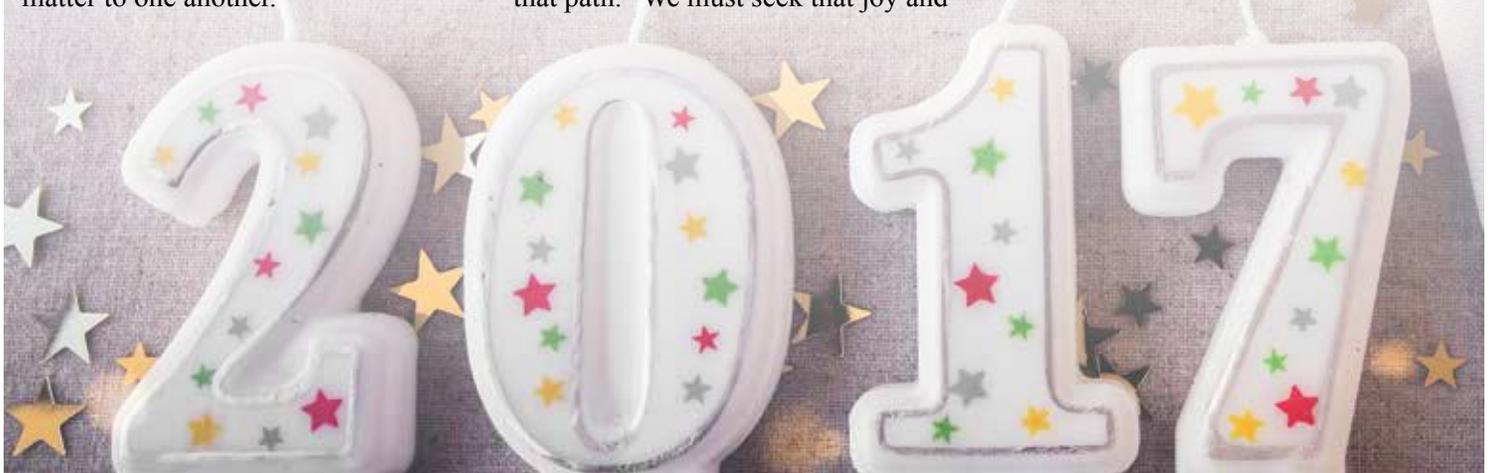


then we need to share it. That is truly our call. Joy translates quite easily into “love your neighbor.”

Yes, there may be challenges ahead in 2017, but we must focus on the opportunities, and then exert the effort to benefit from those opportunities. Happy New Year!

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Msgr. John S. Mbinda  
Pastor



# A Family Cent

## *Meet the*

Ask Scott, Debi and Kapri De Silva what makes their family so tightly knit, and they will not hesitate to give full credit to their shared faith life. From daily prayers of gratitude, to regular Mass attendance, to service in various parish ministries, the De Silvas continuously find ways to nurture their faith together as a family.

Scott and Debi first met 33 years ago through friends, and they soon became high school sweethearts. Now married for 17 years and parents of 16-year-old Kapri, the couple has created a family life and home firmly rooted in the faith. Staying active in the parish has been a blessing for the De Silvas, who enjoy finding ways to serve together. Debi and Scott are catechists, with Kapri acting as their aide, in the Religious Education classroom. Debi and Kapri serve as a mother-daughter lector team, and both also participate in the Kupuna Kokua Ministry, helping to clean the homes of elderly individuals in the community.

As Kapri notes, serving the parish with her parents has been an invaluable way for the three of them to stay closely connected.

“Serving as a family has brought us closer together,” she says. “We talk about what we discussed in the class that day on the way home or the next day. We pray on the trials and tribulations together as a family at church.



*Debi and Scott De Silva with their daughter, Kapri*

It has helped us understand each other better.”

While Debi, who has a bachelor’s in education, has experience teaching various ages, the De Silvas have found themselves in the seventh-grade classroom for about four years now, and truly love working with this particular age group.

“I enjoy teaching the seventh-graders because their participation and enthusiasm are more serious, yet open,” Debi says. “I found that middle school-aged children are a huge challenge to engage – but when many of them finally do, they

are anxious to build a relationship with God and find that He can be a source of tremendous help and guidance in dealing with daily issues. Seeing this is so rewarding.”

Like Debi, Scott also came into Religious Education with prior experience working with students. Having served as an athletic coach for kids in fifth grade through high school, seventh grade proved to be a good fit for Scott as a catechist.

“The setting is different, but the teaching of young people is the same,” Scott says. “That is my passion. Whether it is athletics or church, basically it’s the same: to

# ered on Faith:

## De Silvas

make each student become the best they can be on and off the court or field – just like church, inside and outside of church. I am a true believer of making sure we prepare young people with all the tools they need to become great citizens of this world.”

A teenager herself, Kapri enjoys the opportunity to work with middle school students, as she is able to share her testimony with them and help open them up to the tenets of our faith in a unique way.

“Since I am only a little older than the students that come through the class, it is easy for them to relate to what I have to say and it creates a comfortable environment for them to share their own stories with their brothers and sisters in Christ,” she says. “What I enjoy most about being a catechist aide is to see the growing of faith within each and every student in the class. Seeing these children in our parish community thrive as children of God makes us want to help more and more children know God.”

All three of the De Silvas have found their own spirituality deepen while serving as catechists. Knowing that they are role models of the faith for their students inspires them to lead a life of visible Christian service and values, and the thoughtful questions of their students push them to research and learn more

about the Church teachings. Most of all, making the time to practice stewardship together helps them prioritize and keep God at the center of their family relationship.

“Stewardship is my gift to God,” Scott says. “Basically, stewardship is our lifeline. Being a

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– Scott De Silva

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For Debi, stewardship is a way to show gratitude to God for staying by her side in times of joy and hardship alike. She thanks God

for carrying her father through two bouts of cancer and for bringing her strength in the midst of her own battle with colon cancer.

“Through these events of struggle, adversity and sheer terror, when faith is often abandoned, I have learned the value of hardship and the opportunity to walk closer with Him,” Debi says. “In learning that I am more blessed because of my struggles, I am motivated to give back to Him and those in need through stewardship and service to others.”

Debi and Scott seek, above all, to instill in their daughter the faith in God that is so central to their lives. Debi’s hope is that, by acting as living examples of the faith, she and her husband can show Kapri that a family that prays and practices faith together daily, stays together.

Thanks to inspiring families like the De Silvas, the faith continues to be passed down through the generations, making the future of our Church very bright indeed!

“The practices modeled by my parents, grandparents, and great grandparents have shaped the Christian I am today,” Kapri says. “Being an active, contributing member of my parish helps to build and strengthen the youth movement in our parish, and only with such commitment can our Church continue to thrive well into the future. It’s invaluable to be a part of that.”

# The Eucharist and Stewardship as a Way of Life

More than 20 years ago, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops approved a pastoral letter titled *Stewardship: A Disciple's Response*. This document was an invitation to follow Christ Who gave of Himself for us. Each of us is called to serve our neighbors and to be stewards of God's creation and of all that has been entrusted to us. However, to truly understand stewardship, we must look to the Holy Eucharist. The Holy Eucharist is the total gift of our loving Savior to us. Stewardship is our response to that gift.

Even the word "Eucharist" implies stewardship. The word "Eucharist" finds its roots in the Latin word *eucharistia*, which in turn came from the Greek word *eukaristos*, which meant, quite simply, "gratitude" or "thanksgiving." How fitting that we, who are called to be a stewardship people, celebrate at the focal point of every Mass an act of thanksgiving and gratitude — namely, the reception of Jesus' gift to us — the Eucharist.

In their pastoral letter on stewardship, the bishops speak of the Eucharist in this way: "The Eucharist is the great sign and agent of this expansive communion of charity... we enjoy a unique union with Christ and, in Him, with one another. Here His love — indeed, His very Self — flows into us as disciples and, through us and our practice of stewardship to the entire human race."

When we receive Christ's Body in the Holy Eucharist, we hear the minister say, "The Body of Christ." To this, we respond, "Amen" — which means in Hebrew, "Yes; it is so." This is the essence of stewardship. We should enter the Church for Mass out of "gratitude." We recognize the presence of the Lord in Holy Communion, and then we truly receive the Lord. What is left for us to do is the fulfillment of stewardship — that is, sharing what we have received in love of God and neighbor. Our entire experience speaks to stewardship — we are grateful; we recognize the real presence of the Lord; we receive the Lord; and then we share what we have received.

Christ's gift to us through the Eucharist is an invitation to us. We are called to give beyond what is convenient or what may be comfortable. We are called to forgive even when forgiveness may not be deserved; we are called to love even when that love is not returned. We are called to love as God loves us.

The Eucharist is stewardship celebrated. The Mass is more than a ritual. It is an actual encounter with God, with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. We need to respond to the Eucharist with our complete selves. What we experience in the Eucharist should, in turn, translate into our daily lives. We are committed to the Church, which is Christ's body. We show our love for His body by acts of charity and generosity. We spend time in prayer, expressing our gratitude and our love.

God's greatest gift to us is Christ's great love for us — this was shown when He was crucified on the Cross to pay the penalty for our sins and to give us eternal life. God's love for us is without limit, and He offers Himself to us in the Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist. Stewardship is how we respond to that gift.



*“The Eucharist is ‘the source and summit of the Christian life.’ ‘The other sacraments, and indeed all ecclesiastical ministries and the works of the apostolate, are bound up with the Eucharist and are oriented toward it. For in the blessed Eucharist is contained the whole spiritual good of the Church.’”*

*— Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1324*

# Standing Together to Defend Life

## *The March for Life*

Each year, thousands of people from all faith backgrounds gather at our nation's capitol on the Anniversary of the Roe v. Wade court decision legalizing abortion. In peaceful protest, people gather to show our nation's policymakers their desire to overturn that decision and give a voice to the countless babies who have lost their lives. By doing so, they witness to the words of Pope Francis in his Apostolic Exhortation *The Joy of Love*, where he writes that "if the family is the sanctuary of life, the place where life is conceived and cared for, it is a horrendous contradiction when it becomes a place where life is rejected and destroyed... the family protects human life in all its stages" (83).

The Diocese of Honolulu Respect Life Ministry invites people to participate in this peaceful protest by marching for life at the Hawaiian capital of Honolulu. In solidarity with those who march at our nation's capital, St. John Apostle & Evangelist parishioners have the opportunity to stand for the values of the family and protecting human life in all its stages by participating in the march.

"It is important for our parishioners to participate in the March for Life to peacefully and prayerfully remind the citizens of Hawaii about how the legalization of abortion has hurt many women and their families, and to educate the public about what we can do to bring about a culture of life in our communities," says Respect Life Ministry Coordinator Melissa Crisostomo.

The day is filled with presentations, music, prayer, and marching around the Capitol block to symbolize harmony with the national March for Life. As Catholics, we practice stewardship by passing on our morals within our own families and defending the weak and

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*The Hawaii March for Life allows parishioners to come together and share their values with other communities, our state and our country. Please consider joining in this year's Hawaii March for Life. All who are unable to attend are invited to participate spiritually by keeping both the event and pro-life efforts in their prayers!*



*The annual March for Life is not only an opportunity to stand up for pro-life values, but it is also an opportunity to remember all the babies who have been lost through the legalization of abortion.*

## Standing Together to Defend Life

### *The March for Life* continued from page 7

vulnerable in our society. This annual opportunity further allows us to represent and share those values with other communities, our state, and our country.

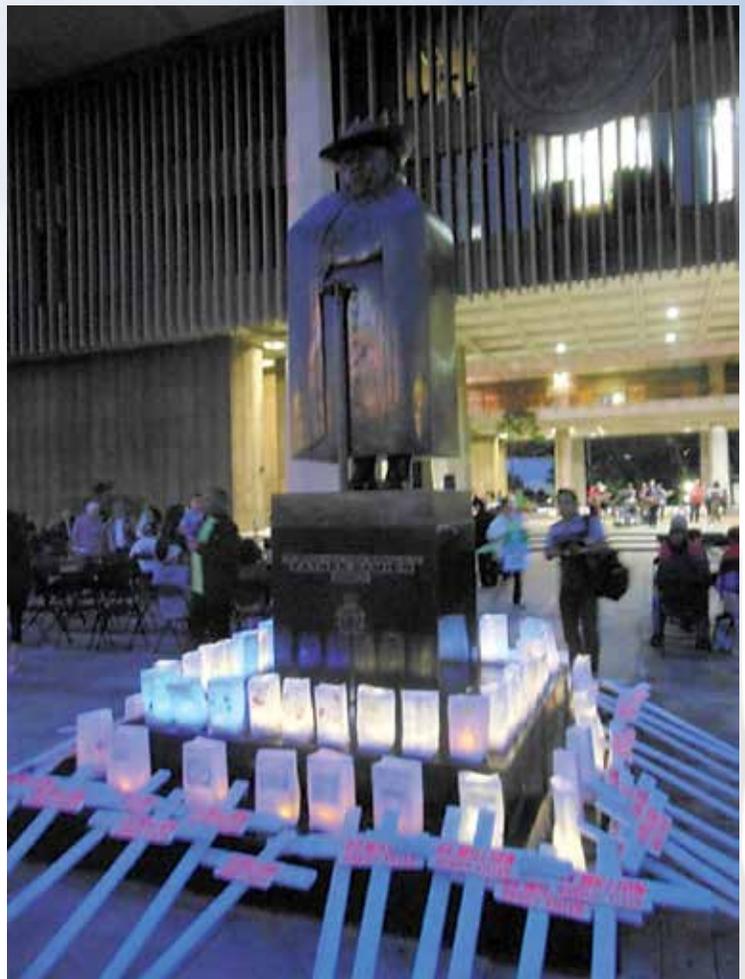
“We will have the opportunity to listen to speakers who have been affected by abortion, who defend life through political action, and who provide services through prolife outreach programs,” Melissa says. “Others who have participated in the March for Life realize that they are not alone in valuing the lives of the unborn and the most vulnerable in our society. They realize that each human life is precious and when one life is taken, it has a ripple effect in our families and our society. Many have been empowered and inspired to get more involved in the pro-life activities in their parishes, communities and within their own families.”

This year’s Hawaii March for Life is on Friday, Jan. 20. To facilitate a greater turnout, free bus transportation

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– Melissa Crisostomo

will be offered from the parish to the Hawaii State Capitol Building. The sign-up for the bus transportation will be at the main entrance to the church.



*By organizing a state March for Life, the Diocese of Honolulu invites those within the state to stand in solidarity with those who will attend the national March for Life at our nation’s Capitol.*

*To learn more about the March for Life, please visit [www.marchforlife.org](http://www.marchforlife.org). If you would like to get involved with the Respect Life Ministry at St. John Apostle & Evangelist or have questions, please contact Coordinator Mary Smart at 808-741-2358 or [mghsmart@yahoo.com](mailto:mghsmart@yahoo.com).*