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## Comforting the Sorrowful as Members of the Body of Christ

For a family facing the recent loss of a loved one, the funeral planning process can easily become overwhelming. In the midst of intense grief, they are suddenly faced with numerous decisions – from funeral homes, to coffins, burial plots and an entire funeral liturgy. Parishioner Melody Ofalsa remembers well that feeling of being lost in the process. When she tragically lost her 7-year-old son, Richie, in 1980 to a terrible accident, she had no clue where to begin in arranging a funeral Mass.

At the time, Melody and her family had recently moved from the Philippines and were living in military housing. Not having a faith community to turn to, they got through the process as best they could. So, when Melody was later given the opportunity to become involved in St. John Apostle & Evangelist's Bereavement Ministry, she saw it as a unique opportunity to both remember her deceased son and to help other families going through similar experiences.

"In the beginning, when I was asked to join, I was hesitant because I always cry at funerals, thinking about my son's death," Melody says. "But then, I realized that we are all connected in our grief, and this was a way for me to continue grieving and remember my son. I also realized that there are many families who don't have anyone to help them through the funeral process. So, this was a way for me to help them, and remind them that the church family is here for them."

The Bereavement Ministry exists to assist parishioners and community members in the funeral-planning process. The ministers are there at the funeral Mass to help comfort those grieving, to lift up the deceased and their family in prayer, and to assist



*Melody Ofalsa serving a recent funeral liturgy at St. John Apostle & Evangelist*

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# Comforting the Sorrowful as Members of the Body of Christ *continued from front cover*

with the planning and execution of the funeral visitation and liturgy. Bereavement ministers try to be with the grieving family every step of the way.

“Shortly after the death, a representative from the Bereavement Ministry will meet with Father and the family,” parishioner Rodney Kekina explains. “We learn about all of the family’s needs and requests at that time, and then put them into gear on the day of the actual funeral. We’ll serve as altar server, lectors and Eucharistic Ministers as needed. We’ll handle the set-up and serve drinks and light refreshments when needed.”

Like Melody, Rodney is no stranger to grief. Having lost multiple family members, he understands personally the need for support during times of loss. And that, Rodney says, is what this ministry of care is all about – comforting the sorrowful as the body of Christ.

“When a family loses a loved one, that’s when they need to experience the parish the most,” Rodney says. “Grief is a natural process that we all must experience at some point in our life. Our goal as a ministry is to help parishioners

through this process, lightening the load as much as possible.”

Both Melody and Rodney speak positively about their experience in this ministry. It has been a concrete way for them to help those who are suffering – a way to live out that spiritual work of mercy to comfort the sorrowful. They also describe the ministry as the “perfect vehicle for evangelization,” serving those who might have otherwise never walked through our parish doors.

“It’s a very good way to evangelize, because not all of our guests or families are Catholic,” Melody says. “When they see how we help out and how we conduct our funeral Mass, I think they can’t help but be touched. They can’t help but experience God’s love for them and the love of His Church through us.”

“The Bereavement Ministry is there to help the family – to create a loving and understanding atmosphere during this difficult time, and to help them provide a beautiful Mass in memory of their deceased loved one,” Rodney adds. “And as we help them through this process, we automatically form a relationship with them.”

*“When a family loses a loved one, that’s when they need to experience the parish the most. Grief is a natural process that we all must experience at some point in our life. Our goal as a ministry is to help parishioners through this process, lightening the load as much as possible.”*  
– Rodney Kekina



*Bereavement Ministry member Rodney Kekina*

*Currently, the Bereavement Ministry is in great need of additional members who can help our parish in its important mission. If interested in helping, please contact Gloria Pfister at 808-754-4312 or glodie99@gmail.com.*

# November is a Time for Thanksgiving

Dear Parishioners,

November seems to automatically bring us to thoughts of thanksgiving and Thanksgiving – it is both a time of year when we tend to think in terms of gratitude to God, and a time when we also formally celebrate our American holiday. My memories of Thanksgiving are filled with food, of course, but they are also filled with thoughts of family and a sense of togetherness and a sense of my faith.

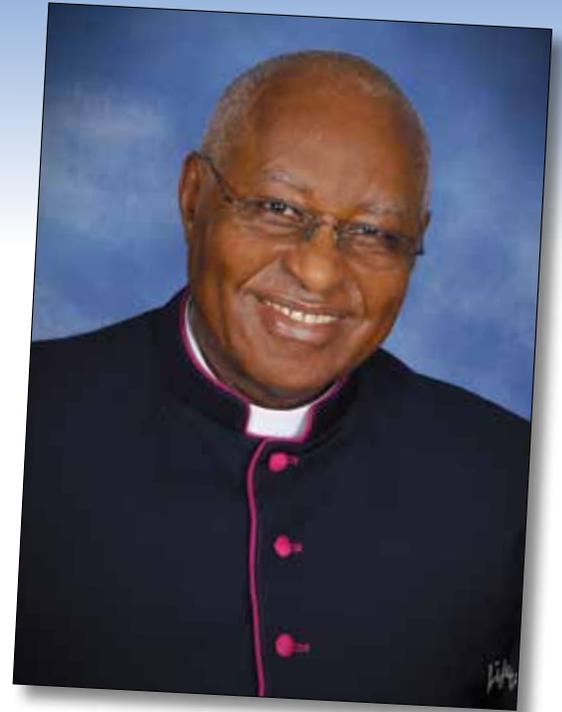
But this is also a significant month in the Church from a number of perspectives. Nov. 1 is the Solemnity of All Saints, a day devoted to all the saints in our lives - known and unknown. The next day is All Souls Day, a day to remember all the Faithful Departed.

Most of us have people in our lives who have had a profound impact on us – people we can consider our own personal saints. This month is a wonderful reminder to think of them, thank them, and thank God for making them a part of our lives.

Our Thanksgiving holiday falls on Nov. 23, and is a time for families and

gratitude. Thanksgiving became official in the United States in 1863, and in his proclamation, President Abraham Lincoln made very clear Whom we needed to thank. “To these bounties, which are so constantly enjoyed that we are prone to forget the source from which they come, others have been added, which are of so extraordinary a nature, that they cannot fail to penetrate and soften even the heart which is habitually insensible to the ever watchful providence of Almighty God,” Lincoln said. In other words, we all need to thank Almighty God for our many blessings.

Finally, November also brings us to the end of one Church year and the beginning of a new one. The Feast of Christ the King on Nov. 26 officially begins the final week of our liturgical year, and the First Sunday of Advent is on Dec. 3. From the beginning of the month when we thank God for the example of the saints and the saintly people in our lives, to the end



of the month when we thank God for everything we have and everything we are, November is a time to approach the Lord with a grateful heart. That is what stewardship truly is all about – about approaching God, about approaching each day, and about approaching all those with whom we come in contact, with hearts filled with gratitude and love.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Msgr. John S. Mbinda  
Pastor



# Our Annual Stewardship

## Pray At A

**Y**ou have to take care of yourself before you can take care of those you love. This rationale is difficult for many of us to accept. Mothers and fathers routinely place the needs of their children before their own; soldiers at war often throw their own safety to the wind in the interest of protecting their fellow soldiers. The story of Jesus also focuses on giving to others. If Christ calls us to imitate Him – to become completely selfless – then it would seem that focusing on ourselves might counteract our efforts as Christians.

Nevertheless, as we enter into our annual Stewardship Renewal, Msgr. John S. Mbinda is asking us all to focus a bit more on ourselves. No, he's not encouraging self-centeredness; he's asking us to examine our own lives and determine the areas that are in need of growth. Before the stewardship way of life can totally transform our parish, it must begin in each of our hearts. As each individual's spiritual life blossoms and grows, so will our parish as a whole. Will you plant the seed of stewardship in your own heart?

*Commitment Weekend is November 11-12. Don't forget to bring your Commitment Card to Mass!*

### How do I use my Commitment Card?

Your commitment card allows you to make commitments to prayer, parish ministries, and offertory giving. It is designed to be used by the whole family.

**Time Section:** Except for the ill and homebound, everyone should be able to check "Come to Mass on Sundays and Holy Days." Try to check at least a few other items. Daily prayer should be a priority for every person trying to grow closer to God.

**Talent Section:** You can either sign up for new ministries or re-commit to your current ministries. Be sure to write your first name next to the ministry! This is especially important if the card is being used by more than one person.

**Treasure Section:** Clearly print how much money you plan to give each week or month to our parish. Try to take a step toward giving five percent of your income to St. John Apostle & Evangelist.

### Is your prayer life in need of a tune-up?

Honestly ask yourself, "How much time do I spend in prayer each week?" The answer is probably a bit embarrassing. Everyone wants to spend more time in prayer, but there's just never enough time to do everything we want to do. Good intentions are just that: intentions. This year, as you're discerning how you will offer your time to God, resolve to follow through with your commitments. Consider each moment you spend in prayer as nourishment for your soul. The spiritual health of our parish is only as strong as the sum of its parts (individual parishioners).

### Is your level of parish involvement in need of a boost?

We give our talents back to God when we get involved in ministries at St. John Apostle & Evangelist. And, with a host of ministries to choose from, there's something for everyone. Sure, ministries give parishioners opportunities to serve others in the community, but they also benefit those in the ministry itself. Ask anyone who actively participates in a ministry at St. John Apostle & Evangelist, "Why do you enjoy serving in this way?" They'll probably say, "I get more out of the ministry than the people I serve." This year, as you're discerning how you will offer your talents to God, considering signing up for a ministry that may benefit you, like a Bible study, prayer group, or retreat. Or, contribute to an outreach ministry where your good deeds not only help others in the community, but also give you feelings of satisfaction and thankfulness.

### Do you give a percentage of your income to the offertory?

It may be hard to see offertory giving as a way to "help yourself," but when we approach the subject from a spiritual viewpoint, it can lead to individual spiritual growth and an increase in faith. Even the most savvy businessperson

# Stewardship Renewal

## At All Times

worries about his or her personal finances from time to time. Adding a weekly offertory check to the list of monthly bills may seem crazy but, ultimately, sacrificial giving forces us to cut unnecessary spending, create a budget and have faith that God will help us make it through the month. All of these are good things for each of us, individually. After faithfully giving to the offertory for a few months, many Catholics find that it's not only possible to give a weekly offering, but that the fruits of their gift far outweigh the expense.

At St. John Apostle & Evangelist, we ask that you give five percent to our parish, one percent to the diocese, and four percent to other charities. Why a percentage of income? First, because the tithe is a scriptural benchmark that the Church has honored for centuries (see Malachi 3:10). Secondly, we give a percentage of income because it is a common-sense standard by which everyone can equitably support the parish. Most of all, we give because we believe God comes first in everything, even finances.

### Talent (continued)

= Currently Involved     = Interested in Joining

Please clearly write the first name of interested family member on the line.

### Talent (continued)

= Currently Involved     = Interested in Joining

Please clearly write the first name of interested family member on the line.

#### Prayer (continued)

- Rosary Group
- Rosary Making Ministry

#### Information

- Catholic Book Club
- Catholics Returning Home
- Liturgical Movement
- Marriage and Family Life Ministry
- Miles Christi Women's Bible Study Group
- Religious Education Ministry
- Respect Life Ministry
- St. John Apostle & Evangelist Fil-Am Catholic Group
- Women's Bible Study Group
- Worldwide Marriage Encounter

## St. John Apostle & Evangelist



## Pray At All Times

### 2017 Stewardship Renewal Commitment Card

First & Last Name \_\_\_\_\_

Street Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_

ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone (Important) \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Please bring this card to Mass on **November 11 or 12**, or mail using the envelope provided. Thanks and God bless you!

**ST. JOHN APOSTLE & EVANGELIST CATHOLIC CHURCH**  
 Kuahelani Ave. • Mililani, HI 96789  
 808-253-3332 • www.stjohnmililani.org

# The Finance Council: Good Stewardship of Our Parish Resources

As Rich Guillory, Chair of the parish Finance Council says of the ministry, “We like to quietly do one job – do work for the Lord.”

And so they do, the five members of the parish Finance Council, who normally meet at least quarterly during the year, offer their time, talent, and treasure as they steward how our parish monies are spent.

The group advises Msgr. John Mbinda on his financial decisions for the parish. Although Monsignor attends the meetings, he is not a voting member. The Council prepares a proposed budget for the parish that Rich and Monsignor sign and submit to the diocese by June 30 of each year. The Council also oversees the weekly collections and makes sure the process meets the diocesan guidelines.

Rich recalls that he had approached Monsignor about volunteering for the Finance Council after the stewardship appeal for parishioners to volunteer their time, talent, and treasure.

“I’d only joined the Church about four years ago, and I was a relatively new member,” Rich says. “I wanted to do something to contribute my time.”

With a Certified Public Accountant on the Council and other members with career experience in the budgeting process as well as government and industry financial expertise, there are exceptional minds at work.

“It seems to work OK,” Rich says. “Our function is to be of an advisory nature for the pastor. We make recommendations, and the pastor makes the final decision on whatever the issue is.”

Rich volunteered to serve on the Finance Council after having reconnected with the Church through the Catholics Returning Home program. His participation on the Council has enabled him to feel more connected in his faith.

“It has allowed me to at least make some contributions in the areas I felt needed to be done,” Rich says. “As Chair, I organize the meetings, set the agenda, seek input from the members, assure the communications with the pastor, and make sure all the issues are addressed. I also attended, with the pastor, the workshop at the diocese about our fiduciary responsibilities for addressing the needs of the church according to the guidelines set out in the diocesan *Finance Manual*.”

The Council’s meetings always start with the Stewardship Prayer, and if he is present, Monsignor will lead. The Council prays for the capital campaign now underway for the One Community Center.

Rich’s time freely given to the Finance Council brings him closer to Christ. He is aware of this when, despite the sometimes difficult discussions over budget matter, Christ’s love prevails.



# Ministry Performs the Often Forgotten – But Essential –

## ..... Work of Mercy .....

When it comes to powerful and profound works of mercy, parishioner Deb Zedalis recalls a recent example – an example that should make us take pause and consider how we might perform works of mercy ourselves.

“Normally, the pope would have gone to wash the feet of the bishops and priests who were there in the Vatican,” she points out. “But instead, on the first Holy Thursday that Pope Francis was pope, he chose to go to a prison.

“It’s right there in Matthew 25 – ‘When I was hungry, when I was thirsty, when I was naked, when I was *imprisoned*,’ – it is there!” Deb continues. “I think it’s important because it’s challenging – because, perhaps, it scares us.”

For faithful Catholics, the words of Matthew 25 are quite familiar – the challenge of Christ to meet and serve Him in the “least of these.” However, there is a group on the list of those in need that is often forgotten or ignored – those who are imprisoned.

After realizing the need, Deb set out to find a way to get involved in this important work of mercy. It wasn’t long before she connected with Jackie Barney, a fellow Catholic, in Kailua. Jackie has been serving the women incarcerated at Women’s Community Correctional Center – WCCC – in Kailua, for the past



*Parishioners are invited to serve the women incarcerated at the Women’s Community Correctional Center.*

nine years, and is currently working together with Deb to help more people get involved in this mission.

“You meet many kinds of women, you hope that you plant the seed,” Jackie says. “There’s so much more to life than the life that they’ve had. I hope that when I walk away, they’re gonna say, ‘I’m worth it. I’m worth someone coming to see me. I’m worth something in this world. There’s something I can do with my life.’”

For the past year and a half, St. John has worked with Jackie and the Pu’a Foundation, a local organization serving

those who are imprisoned, by providing baskets of necessities for those who are being released from WCCC.

“When the women come out of the facility and go the first night to their flat, we make a basket,” Deb says. “We put in that laundry basket everything they would need the first night – sheet, towels, toiletries, a journal, a cup of noodles, something they could have and take with them, because they leave with nothing beyond a few personal items.”

Georgette Ane and Alexis Salvador, the respective President

## Ministry Performs the Often-Forgotten – But Essential – Work of Mercy *continued from page 7*

and Secretary of our parish Women’s Guild, have played an active role in the success of this effort.

“We hope that our service will let the women prisoners know that we support their efforts in succeeding in the outside world – that we are keeping them in our prayers for their safety and making the right decisions,” Georgette says. “We care about these women because they are God’s children, and we all need God’s love and guidance. Maybe they made mistakes, just like us, but God is all forgiving and shows us mercy.”

“They are not forgotten or alone,” Alexis adds. “Many people want to help.”

According to Deb, this is an important way to help encourage and bring hope to those who might otherwise find themselves quickly returning to negative environments.

“I hope they feel the love and forgiveness and good wishes from all the people here who have had something to do in preparing that basket for them,” Deb says, “[I hope they know] there are people who think they can do it. They can step out that day, on their own, go to someplace new and use those items and begin anew. I would love them to have a sense of love and hope for tomorrow.”

Deb hopes to expand parishioners’ service to working inside of the prison. Jackie, and her parish, St. John Vianney, in Kailua, offer regular Communion services, Bible studies, classes, and one-on-one mentorship opportunities. Deb hopes they will be able to expand their offerings, as more people feel called to serve in these areas.

“Working with this population is challenging because sometimes it’s very different than the life experience we have had,” Deb says. “I think there can be fear and judgment there. It takes a very special person who wants

to bring Christ to them. Many of them haven’t had that light, that sense of forgiveness and mercy and generosity. It calls for a special person, with a special heart, who can look beyond where that person is and help them dream for their future.”

Deb reminds her fellow parishioners of the example of Pope Francis.

“Our pope has gone to the imprisoned,” she says. “He is showing us what to do – you go and wash their feet and you show them, ‘You’ve made a mistake, but that doesn’t mean it ends here.’”

*“We hope that our service will let the women prisoners know that we support their efforts in succeeding in the outside world – that we are keeping them in our prayers for their safety and making the right decisions. We care about these women because they are God’s children, and we all need God’s love and guidance. Maybe they made mistakes, just like us, but God is all forgiving and shows us mercy.” – Georgette Ane*

*For more information, or to become involved in serving incarcerated women on Oahu, together with the Pu’a Foundation, the Diocesan Prison Ministry and St. John Vianney in Kailua, please contact Deb Zedalis at 808-348-2973 or [dzedalis@hawaii.rr.com](mailto:dzedalis@hawaii.rr.com).*