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Respect Life Committee Advocates for Human Dignity from Conception to Natural Death

All life is sacred — and as Catholics, we have a responsibility to protect life and share the truth with others. For the past 10 years, our Respect Life Committee has worked to educate people on pro-life issues encompassing all stages of life, and to effect change through action.

The ministry was formed about 10 years ago, at Bishop Larry Silva's request for all Hawaii parishes to form a Respect Life ministry in light of the state legislation being proposed and passed at the time. Coordinator Mary Smart, who serves as an officer, board member and volunteer for pregnancy centers in Maryland and Hawaii, was voted to lead the ministry along with Melissa Crisostomo. Melissa is a nurse who has specialized in hospice care. The ministry has continued to grow, bringing in members close to the pro-life cause for various reasons.

"Some have known people who have struggled with the announcement of an unplanned pregnancy, and want to help others through their panic to choose a life-giving path for themselves and their baby,"

Mary says. "Others have helped an aging or terminally ill family member at the end of their life, ensuring that each day was precious, enjoyed and full of love.

"Two members, Julita and Clyde Sauget, remember being told to abort their baby because of the mother's age and likelihood of disability," she adds. "Determined to carry their child to term, they changed doctors and delivered a healthy baby boy who later became a Naval Officer and a dentist with advanced specialty degrees."

Over the years, the ministry has organized various activities to celebrate life and family life, to encourage parents to choose life, and to support children and families. These activities



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PRAYER:

Becoming More Generous with Our Stewardship of Time

A professor stood in front of a class, and in his hand was a big glass jar. He put six big rocks in the jar, with the rocks up to the edge. He then asked his students, “Is the jar full?” And they replied, “Yes.”

The professor told the students, “No, it’s not.” Then, he pulled out gravel and put it in the jar. He then asked, “Now is it full?” The students once again replied, “Yes.” The professor responded, “No, it’s not.” He reached down and pulled out sand, which he poured into the jar with the same responses. Then, he reached down again for a pitcher of water, and poured water in, all the way to the brim. Then he asked, “Now is it full?” And the students replied, “Yes.”

The professor then asked, “Okay, what lesson do you learn from this?”

The students responded, “No matter how many things you’ve got in the jar, there’s always room to put a little more in.” The professor told them, “No, that’s not the lesson. The lesson is, if I didn’t put the big rocks in first, they would have never fit!”

Most Catholics can appreciate this story — in particular, how it can apply to our own prayer lives. Essentially, every person has to decide what the “big rocks” are in his or her life. And, for us Catholics, prayer should be one of those big rocks in the jar.

As Catholics, we *know* that prayer is important, and we know that we can and should always pray more. Yet, connecting with God in this way often slips through the cracks of our busy lives.

The stewardship spirituality is about trying to become ever more generous with our Time, Talent, and Treasure. And there is a reason why “Time” is first in line. Time in a



stewardship context refers to the time we spend with God in prayer. We need to take time to talk to God and take time to be quiet and seek to listen as He expresses His love for us and wants us to know His inspiration in our life.

There are many different forms of prayer — from weekly prayer, such as the Mass, to daily personal prayer. A daily Rosary is one of the most universal spiritual practices that can enrich the lives of Catholics around the world. Even if the decades are spread out throughout the day, or even if you pray just one decade a day, you will find yourself growing closer and closer to the Lord each time.

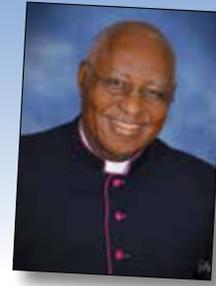
Morning and night prayer are also important disciplines to maintain. Set aside a comfortable place in your home

where you can find silence. Maybe focus on a spiritual image and take time to center yourself with Scripture or some other kind of spiritual reading.

For many, spending large portions of the day in silent prayer may not always be possible. But make it a priority to find those moments of quiet throughout the day, and to find ways to incorporate prayer in the midst of your busy schedule. When you get into a vehicle, pray — before a meal, after a meal, if you’re faced with a tough decision. Just pray!

Ultimately, the bottom line is this — just as in any human relationship, communication is a central aspect of a vibrant relationship with God. Prayer is fostering this communion of love with God. He loved us into existence and He wants us to enter into a loving conversation with Him. We’ve got to talk to Him. And we have to listen to Him. He will take care of everything if you just trust Him. He’s knocking at the door and waiting for us to open it in prayer.

NEW YEAR'S Resolutions



Dear Parishioners,

As we arrive at the New Year, it is customary that we make resolutions, which hopefully will be carried out during the course of the year. So many times these resolutions pertain to our physical lives — we resolve to exercise more, build a healthier diet, become more organized, etc. These resolutions may also involve the mental aspect of our lives — reading more, attending more cultural events, and so forth.

Too often we forget about the spiritual part of our lives. Our souls need to be tended to, and we need to make sure that we are deepening our relationship with God throughout the entire year.

I would like to give you a list of possible spiritual resolutions. While it might seem difficult for one person to undertake *all* of these, hopefully anyone can try several of these resolutions at one time or a number of them throughout the year.

- Attend Mass once a week over and above weekend liturgies.
- Spend a hour (or any amount of time) in Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament once a week.
- Pray the *Liturgy of the Hours* (the *Divine Office*) at least once a day.
- Read and meditate on a chapter of Scripture a day.
- Take up a devotion of the Church (e.g. Rosary, Stations, novena, other prayers, etc.) and pray it daily.
- Read a spiritual book once a month.

- Make a morning offering as you begin your day, then an examination of conscience as you end your day.
- Offer a prayer of blessing/thanksgiving before/after a meal.
- Take time to pray daily with your spouse/family.
- As an individual or a family, take time once a week to do some form of charitable work — visiting those who are homebound or in a nursing home, do some work for an elderly friend or neighbor, bring food to someone in need, etc.

This is not an exhaustive list, but hopefully it gives you an idea that the small things done with great love can make a world of difference — both in your life and the lives of others.

Do not try to overdo any of these, but build up to doing them on a regular basis, thus laying a reasonable foundation upon which to build. Enjoy doing these resolutions, and see what a blessing they are for you and others.

Let us pray that 2019 will be a year of grace and favor from God. I wish you and yours a very happy New Year!

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Msgr. John S. Mbinda
Pastor

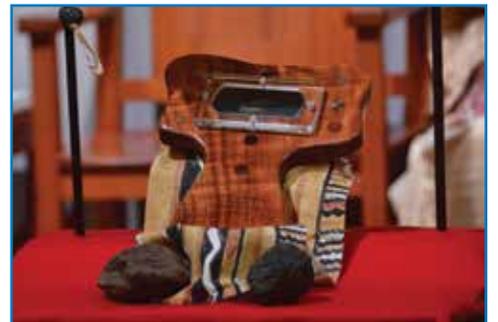
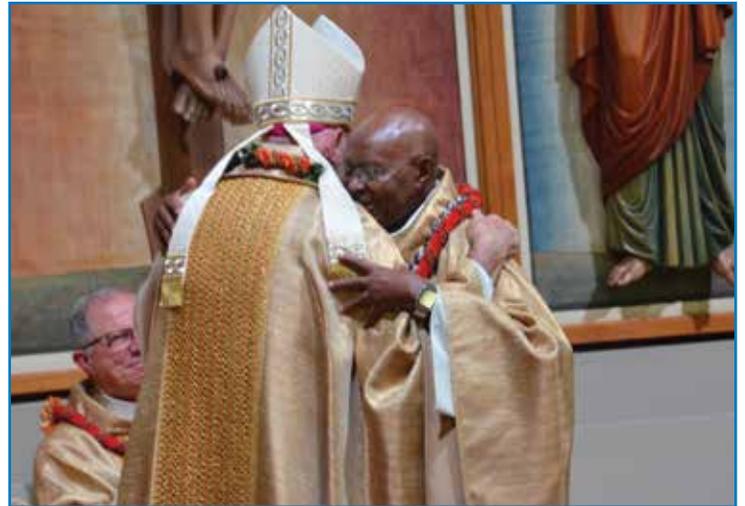
A Look Back on Msgr. John's 50th Anniversary Pilgrimage to Rome, Assisi and Siena

Twenty-seven members of our faith community recently enjoyed the opportunity to make a 50th anniversary pilgrimage with Msgr. John to Rome, Assisi and Siena.



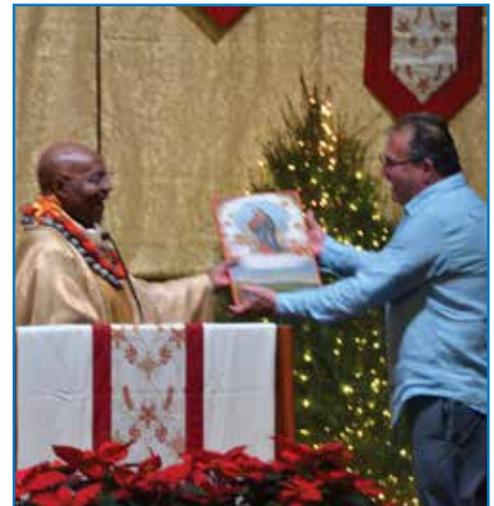
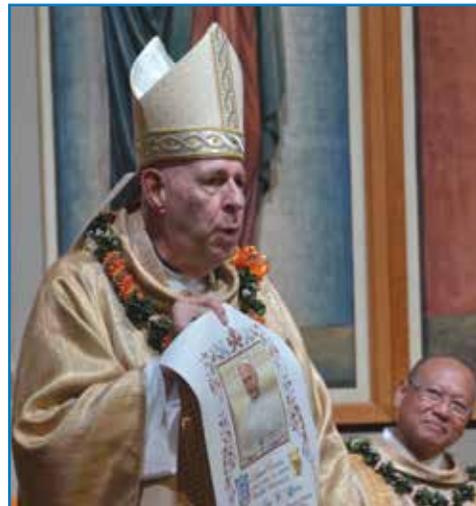
Celebrating Msgr — 50 Years of Fa

*We thank all who took part in Msgr. John S. Mbir
Our community also extends its heartfelt gratitude to Msgr. John for*



John S. Mbinda's Faithful Service

*John S. Mbinda's 50th anniversary Mass and celebration party.
His years of faithful service to our faith family in Mililani and beyond.*



The Sign of the Cross:

A Powerful Prayer Tradition in the Catholic Church

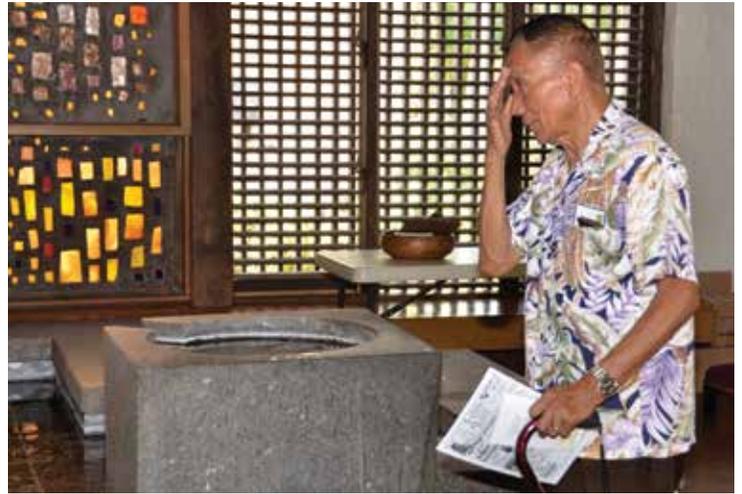
Since we say and make the Sign of the Cross so often, it may easily become a rote, perhaps even thoughtless, action. However, it is important to remember that the Sign of the Cross is much more than a simple gesture. Even in its most basic form, the Sign of the Cross — accompanied by the spoken or unspoken words “In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit” — is a prayer, a creed stating our belief in the Holy Trinity, the dual nature of Jesus Christ, and the dependence of our salvation on His crucifixion and resurrection.

In addition, making the Sign of the Cross is an indication of a willingness to take up our own cross and suffering for the sake of Christ. The prayer is considered one of the greatest weapons against Satan and all demons, and an added strength against the temptations of the flesh.

In the Roman Catholic Church today, the Sign of the Cross is typically made with either three fingers or an open hand touching first the forehead, then the chest, followed by the left shoulder and then the right (in the Eastern Church, the right shoulder is touched before the left). The concept of making a sign, or “setting a seal,” upon the forehead of those who place their faith in the Lord appears in both the Old and New Testaments of the Bible — see Ezek. 9:4 and Rev. 7:3, 9:4, and 14:1.

Early versions of the Sign of the Cross were traced on just the forehead, using the thumb and forefinger held together in the shape of a tiny cross. We still see this version of the blessing performed during Baptisms (with the cross traced on the infant’s forehead) and on Ash Wednesday (with the cross traced in ashes on the foreheads of the faithful). Similarly, when the Gospel is read during the Liturgy of the Word, the priest or deacon leads the congregation in forming this small cross on the forehead, mouth, and chest, indicating a willingness to keep the Word of the Lord in our minds, on our lips, and in our hearts.

There is no doubt that our early Church fathers were strong believers in the sanctifying power of the Sign of the Cross. A second-century ecclesiastical scholar, Tertullian, and a third century saint, St. Cyril of Jerusalem, both wrote about the necessity of performing the Sign of the Cross at



one’s waking and one’s lying down, at entering and leaving a room, at mealtimes, and more. St. Augustine also referenced the importance of marking the cross on the faithful’s forehead during the administration of the sacraments.

It is likely that the sign transformed from the tiny cross on the forehead to the larger, full-body cross used today sometime in the fifth century, when heretics began questioning both the dual nature of Jesus Christ — fully human and fully divine — and the unity of the Holy Trinity. Believers in these crucial Church doctrines began forming the cross with three extended fingers (representing the Trinity), keeping the ring finger and little finger pressed down into the palm (representing Christ’s dual nature), and tracing a cross on their entire upper body so there could be no mistaking the gesture.

Today, the Sign of the Cross still figures predominantly in our prayer life as Roman Catholics. We commonly perform it upon entering a church; at the beginning and end of the Catholic Mass, a Benediction, or the Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament; when opening and closing our personal prayers; at mealtimes; and when passing by a Catholic Church (in recognition of Christ, present in the tabernacle). As the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* reminds us, the frequent, intentional use of the Sign of the Cross can help the faithful dedicate each day to the glory of God and provide strength in the face of trial and temptation (2157).

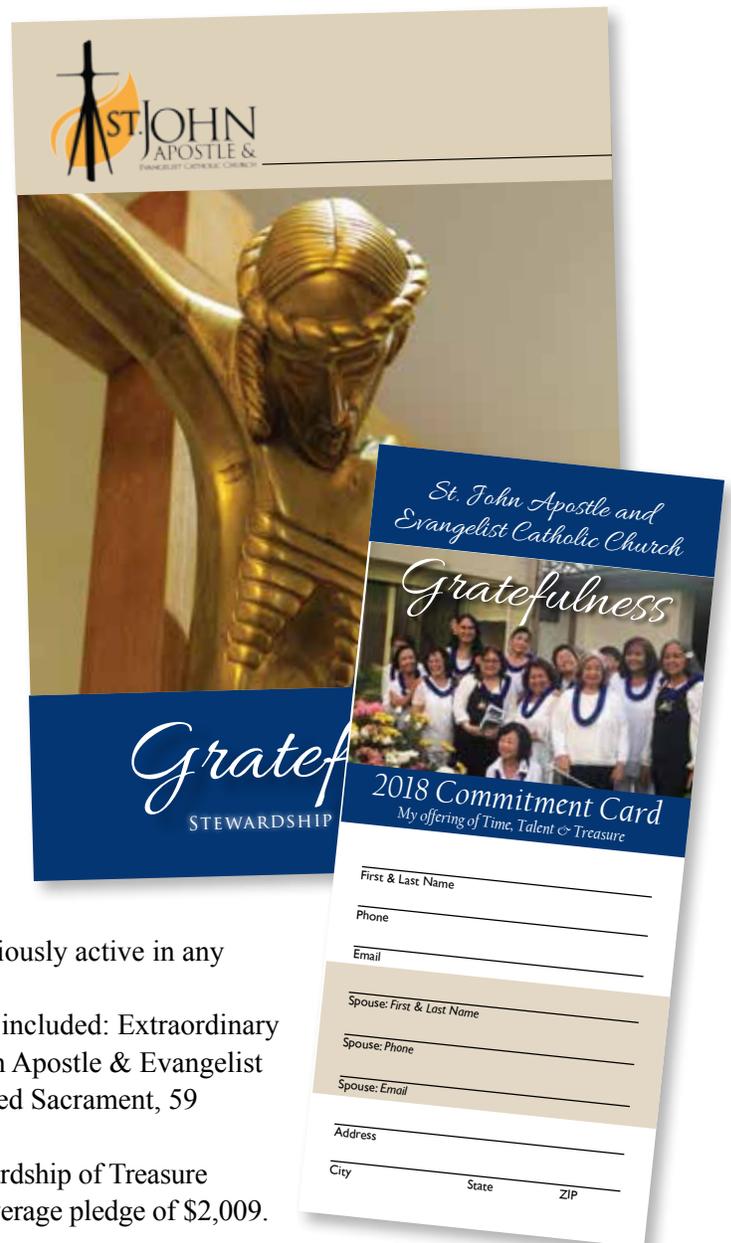
Highlights of Our 2018 Stewardship Renewal

Recently, our parish leadership at St. John Apostle & Evangelist held the 2018 Stewardship Renewal. This renewal gave our parish community the opportunity to recommit to God through sharing their gifts of time, talent and treasure.

We are happy to note that the stewardship way of life continues to flourish here at St. John Apostle & Evangelist. In this issue of our parish newsletter, we share with you some of the highlights of the 2018 Stewardship Renewal.

- There were 295 commitment cards received, at a return rate of 27 percent.
- There were 1,767 commitments to prayer — the Stewardship of Time — from 97 percent of participating households, with each household making an average of six prayer commitments.
- Some of the prayer commitments made by parishioners included: “Attend Mass every Sunday and on Holy Days,” 270 commitments; “Spend at least 15 minutes a day in personal prayer,” 228 commitments; “Pray for our priests,” 221 commitments.
- There were 803 commitments to ministries — the Stewardship of Talent — from 72 percent of participating households. Of these, 185 were new ministry commitments, while 618 were ministry re-commitments. In addition, 45 families who were not previously active in any ministry signed up to get involved in ministries.
- Some of the ministry commitments made by parishioners included: Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, 62 commitments; St. John Apostle & Evangelist Women’s Guild, 60 commitments; Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, 59 commitments.
- There were 237 commitments to the offertory — the Stewardship of Treasure — from 80 percent of participating households, with the average pledge of \$2,009.

We would like to thank all our parishioners who participated in the 2018 Stewardship Renewal. If you did not return a commitment card as part of this recent renewal, we invite you to consider the ways you might become involved in parish life here at St. John Apostle & Evangelist, sharing your gifts with God and our faith community. After all, it’s never too late to begin living out the stewardship way of life!



Respect Life Committee *continued from front cover*

include pro-life Rosaries, Mother's and Father's Day events, movie nights (such as the recent film *Gosnell*), education sessions on *Theology of the Body* and Natural Family Planning training. In the past, the committee has held sessions on adoption and foster parenting, which once directly resulted in a child finding a permanent family. The committee is currently working with a foster parent/adoption organization to hold more of these presentations for parishioners.

The ministry also participates in the international 40 Days for Life program in both the spring and the fall, in which participants pray, fast, participate in community outreach and hold prayer vigils at local abortion facilities. On two separate occasions, committee members have also participated in a Spiritual Adoption program, during which they prayed for an unknown child who was recently conceived, as well as the child's mother.

"Each month we would learn about the most recent development of the baby in the womb until finally he or she is ready to be born," Mary says. "After the ninth or 10th month of prayer, we held a baby shower. Participants brought baby gifts and financial support that was distributed to local pregnancy centers and the Mary Jane Home for pregnant women in need of housing."

It's important to also support and pray for post-abortive women, their family members, and their healing. The committee promotes efforts to help them, as well.

"We are aware that there is much subsequent suffering by all involved, not only the mother — the baby's father, grandparents, and aunts and uncles can feel the pain of loss as an after effect," Mary says. "There is help for these women, and at Rachel's Vineyard, retreats occur twice a year. This program has helped many women overcome some destructive impulses they experienced as a result of their abortion. Scholarships are available to anyone who cannot afford the modest cost of the program."

Committee members also advocate for life when Hawaii's legislative sessions are open. In the past two years, bills have

been passed to legalize assisted suicide and to require private pro-life pregnancy centers to promote abortion. It is important that Catholics speak out to counter this "culture of death" on the legislative level.

"Members of the Respect Life Committee review proposed bills and submit testimony in support or opposition," Mary says. "One of our committee members ran for political office during 2018 to be a voice for the most vulnerable of the community, the pre-born, the elderly, those with disabilities, and the ill.

"During the 2017 legislative session, a bill was passed forcing private pro-life pregnancy centers to advertise for abortion," she adds. "Many individuals wrote testimony and attended the hearing in person, but the bill still passed and the governor signed it. Because the pro-life community spoke out and fought this unjust and unconstitutional measure, there was a Supreme Court decision that threw out the advertising mandate. This bill and many others, are direct threats to Catholic teaching. It is our obligation to stay aware of what bills are being considered and passed. Some bills are infringing on our religious freedom, freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, and many other freedoms that are protected by the Constitution. This is not a time for church members to be complacent."

This month, the Respect Life Committee plans to coordinate a bus to bring participants to the annual March for Life at the Hawaii State Capitol grounds. All parishioners are encouraged to attend the march, which will be held on Jan. 22.

"We received a generous donation from one of our members that will cover the bus expenses," Mary says. "The event usually begins around 3 p.m. with prayers, speakers and music, and occasionally an elected representative or senator will join us for inspiration and encouragement. The actual march around the Capitol begins around 5 p.m. The bus will pick us up around 7 p.m. and we will return to the church parking lot no later than 8 p.m."

*All are invited to join the Respect Life Committee or to participate in the committee's activities!
For more information, please contact Mary Smart at 808-741-2358 or mghsmart@yahoo.com.*