



St. Michael the Archangel Parish

DEBRA GIBERT Finds Her Home in the Catholic Church

For Debra Gibert, finding her faith home has been a lifelong search. In 2018, Debra and her husband, Pike, had the idea to begin attending faith formation classes. For Pike, this was a way to get closer to the faith he was born into — for Debra, these were the first steps toward becoming Catholic.

“I have always been searching,” Debra says. “I have always believed in God — my search wasn’t very pointed, but I had this desire. Over the last year, I had been listening to various podcasts, and they led me to the idea that maybe the Catholic Church was somewhere I could find my way to be closer to God. So when things came together for the catechism classes last year, I said to my husband, ‘Why don’t we take these classes?’”

The Giberts began to take classes with Cynthia Taylor, who passed away earlier this year.



Debra Gibert celebrates her entry into the Catholic Church — (from left) catechist Judy Glickstein, Debra Gibert, Pike Gibert, and sponsor Lynn Hartz.

“Our journey with Cynthia was cut short, too soon,” Debra says. “I love her, she was a very special woman. She had such a wide amount of knowledge, and was able to address any questions we had. We learned about the different prayers, the stories of saints, Church

In this Issue

- 3 “Coincidental” Stewardship
- 4 A Winding Road to Seminary: Meet Our Seminarian, Larry Denis
- 6 Living According to God’s Will *Forming a Conscience and Moral Code*
- 7 *Feeding the Hungry in our Community* “Shining the Light of Christ”

75-5769 Ali‘i Drive,
Kailua-Kona, HI 96740
(808) 326-7771
stmichaelparishkona.org

AUGUST/SEPTEMBER
2020

continued on page 2

DEBRA GIBERT Finds Her Home in the Catholic Church *continued from front cover*

“The reason this all started is because I wanted to have a close relationship with God. The deeper I dive into it, the closer I’ll become, and the more I’ll be able to receive graces from Him. I will continue learning, and my husband will continue learning. There’s just so much there.”

— DEBRA GIBERT

history, the meanings of things, the sacraments, all kinds of things.

“Everything is new to me,” she adds. “For example, you hear phrases throughout your life, and then later you realize that they come from the Bible! Everything was just a surprise and a joy. I loved learning about how the Church started, the Rosary, the relationships between Elizabeth and Mary, and Jesus and John the Baptist. The way Cynthia would weave everything together was wonderful. It’s going to be an ongoing process for the rest of my life — RCIA will continue, and I’m really happy that Judy Glickstein will be my catechist. Now I really feel a sense of the scope of things, and I feel so strongly about getting closer to God. Through the Catholic religion, I can do that.”

Although her initiation into the Church was delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Debra was able to receive the Sacraments of Baptism, Eucharist and Confirmation on June 14.

“I am just so grateful I was baptized,” she says. “When COVID happened, I was really sad at first because I knew it wasn’t going to be able to happen the way it was planned. But you know, it’s not just me in this COVID quandary — it’s the whole world. So I’m very thankful that I was able to have my baptism two weeks after the churches opened, on the Feast

of Corpus Christi. That felt very special to me, and it was great to have people there supporting me. It’s such a wonderful feeling.

“I was also so grateful to be able to receive the Eucharist,” she adds. “I really felt the gravity and the grace and the joy of finally being able to receive. I loved learning about the Holy Spirit in our classes, so receiving the Holy Spirit at Confirmation was also very special to me.”

Going forward, Debra looks forward to continuing the ongoing learning process of RCIA, and is excited to get more involved in parish life as it becomes safer to do so.

“The reason this all started is because I wanted to have a close relationship with God,” she says. “The deeper I dive into it, the closer I’ll become, and the more I’ll be able to receive graces from Him. I will continue learning, and my husband will continue learning. There’s just so much there.”

“I really love St. Michael — the people are amazing, and Fr. Lio is just wonderful,” Debra adds. “It immediately felt like home to me. I’m hoping to really be able to participate and contribute to the church. I’m 67, so I’ve been waiting a long time! My true journey is now starting.”



Debra was grateful to be able to receive the Eucharist. “I really felt the gravity and the grace and the joy of finally being able to receive,” she says. “I loved learning about the Holy Spirit in our classes, so receiving the Holy Spirit at Confirmation was also very special to me.”



A Letter From Our Pastor

"Coincidental" Stewardship

My Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

The famous author G.K. Chesterton once said, "Coincidences are God's way of staying anonymous." Some have told me they have no time for coincidences and even regard them as unimportant. There may have been a time when I might have agreed with them. But since a "conversion" to the stewardship way of life, coincidences have become cherished experiences for which I thank God. And rightly so! While God stays anonymous, coincidences are God's way of interacting with the world He created. Are we not grateful for this mysterious intervention?

I think back to an article I once read in a Catholic publication about a seminarian who recalled Chesterton's quote at his ordination to the episcopacy. Since then, I also have relied on the wisdom of that statement. When it comes to the stewardship way of life, that statement couldn't be truer.

As I continue to witness the grace-filled effects of the stewardship way of life on others at our parish, as well as on my own life, it is definitely God's hand at work in our lives of faith. If some identify a coincidence as a "surprise blessing" that lifts the spirits and draws one closer to gratefulness to God, we cannot deny that in those circumstances that God is giving us the grace to live and celebrate

our faith. So, let's celebrate the coincidences!

Celebrate the coincidence that this famous author converted to Catholicism late in his life, yet wrote book after book affirming and defending the Catholic faith long before his conversion. Four years after Chesterton joined the Catholic Church, he wrote a phenomenal book called *The Catholic Church and Conversion*. It is one of the best works on conversion to Catholicism out there. It is also a wonderful description of conversion to the stewardship way of life — the same experiences, or "coincidences," apply when we find ourselves curious and then drawn into the understanding, practice and expression of discipleship, known to us as "stewardship."

Chesterton describes conversion in three steps.

"The convert takes his first step rather unwittingly when he decides he's going to be fair to the Catholic Church," he wrote. "He does not think the Roman religion is true, but for the first time, he also doesn't think that the accusations against the Church are true." The convert to stewardship must also dispel the "myths of stewardship" and give it a chance.

The first step of conversion to Catholicism then leads to a long and enjoyable second step, which is the utter fascination of learning

what the Catholic Church really does teach. Chesterton says, "It is like discovering a new continent full of strange flowers and fantastic animals, which is at once wild and hospitable." For the stewardship convert, it is recognizing that stewardship is a practical way of living the Gospel. It makes sense, and others are doing it with joy and passion. What they have, the convert also wants.

Then, the convert to Catholicism suddenly realizes with a shock that he can no longer be detached and impartial about the Catholic Church. He must belong! The convert to the stewardship way of life realizes this is the way he or she wants to live — and makes the decision and commitment to do so.

If this were not true of what Christ has called us to be, I would not be writing this today. If this were not true of our commitment to stewardship, you may not be reading this today. And, if this were not true of a stewardship parish such as ours, we would not be the faithful stewards we are today. Wouldn't you also agree it is a "coincidence" to thank God for each day of our lives?

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Fr. Lio Faletoi

A Winding Road to Seminary: Meet Our Se

For some people, it's a sudden aha moment. For others, it's a calling — one that might at first be met with some resistance and reluctance. And still, in some cases, it's a slow and gradual work of discovering oneself and the plans God has in store. This is "vocation." In each of our lives, God calls and invites us to grow closer to Him on our journey towards heaven. For some, this vocation takes the form of serving God and the Church as a seminarian, and Lord-willing, someday, a priest.

"I heard the calling to the priesthood shortly after high school," says Larry Denis, a seminarian for the diocese who served at St. Michael the Archangel this summer. "But I never answered the calling, and it was never nurtured. I think that if someone had told me, 'You should consider the priesthood, and here's how to discern,' I probably would have entered seminary a long time ago. But there are no regrets. The calling is like a boomerang — it will keep coming back."

So, after spending 15 years as a teacher in a career he loved, Larry finally began discerning a vocation to the priesthood in 2017 and started his studies in 2018. Now, after spending two years studying



Although brief, Larry Denis enjoyed the time he spent at St. Michael's. He hopes our parishioners will continue to pray for him and ask for the protection and intercession of our patron on his behalf.

Philosophy, Larry will begin his first year of Theology. When all is said and done, he will have spent seven years in formation — six of them studying Philosophy and Theology, and a pastoral year gaining experience in a parish. He enjoys the sense of camaraderie found among the seminarians at St. Patrick's Seminary, in Menlo Park, Calif., where he will resume his studies this fall.

"We go through a lot while at the seminary, and having the support of each other is a key part of what gets us through," Larry says. "We eat breakfast, lunch and dinner together

— go out for ice cream or a coffee occasionally, and try to do fun things when we have a long weekend.

"The hardest part of being at the seminary is being away from the people of God," he adds.

Although the decision to enter seminary meant a dramatic change from Larry's previous lifestyle — leaving his condo in Waikoloa and his freedom to travel the world — he has not regretted the decision.

"I have been blessed beyond measure once I said 'yes' to God's calling," Larry says. "I worked hard to get where I was in my career, and the money was good — to turn all

continued on page 5



Seminarian, Larry Denis

of that away was a very difficult decision, but I trusted in the Lord and followed Him, and He has been by my side every step of the way.

“I am learning to live a simple life,” he adds. “God provides for my necessities and I am blessed by the love and support of people I know.”

Larry encourages others to be open to hearing God’s calling for their lives, and to spend time praying and discerning where He might be asking them to serve.

“Pray, pray, pray,” Larry says. “Listen to the Holy Spirit. Spend time with Him in adoration. Spending quiet time, away from distractions, is when we can hear His voice. He will talk to you and guide you.”

“It is never too late to answer the calling,” he adds. “If you feel

you’re being called to the religious life — as a priest, deacon or sister — I encourage you to pray on it. Contact your Pastor or the Vocations Director. They can lead you in the right direction.”

Although brief, Larry enjoyed the time he spent at St. Michael’s. He hopes that our parishioners will continue to pray for him and ask for the protection and intercession of our patron on his behalf.

“I chose St. Michael as my patron saint when I got confirmed, so I love being at this parish,” Larry says. “The evil one does not want holy seminarians because, God-willing, they will become holy priests one day. But with the help of St. Michael, and everyone’s prayers, I am doing everything I can to keep him away.”

Larry would like to share a special thanks to Fr. Lio for his support and everyone else who made his summer assignment so enjoyable.

Please continue to pray for Larry, as well as his brother seminarians as they continue their formation! If you would like to keep in touch with Larry when he returns to the seminary, feel free to write to him at:

Larry Denis
St. Patrick’s Seminary
320 Middlefield Road
Menlo Park, CA 94025

“It is never too late to answer the calling. If you feel you’re being called to the religious life — as a priest, deacon or sister — I encourage you to pray on it. Contact your Pastor or the Vocations Director. They can lead you in the right direction.” — Larry Denis





Living According to God's Will

Forming a Conscience and Moral Code

The next time you are faced with a moral dilemma, take some quiet time to look inward, weigh the positive and negative outcomes, and listen to the voice of your conscience. Read the Gospels for examples of Christ's teachings. By making this a regular practice, you will find that the voice of your conscience will come in louder and more clearly than you may have initially expected.

As disciples of Jesus, it is important that we learn to recognize the difference between right and wrong — both morally and ethically. Sometimes, though, this line can become blurred.

Many situations we encounter in our lives include variables that can leave us internally conflicted and unsure of how to move forward in accordance with God's will.

So, how do we work through these moral conundrums? One way is to develop a solid Christian conscience.

A moral conscience exists in the heart of every individual. As the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states, "When he listens to his conscience, the prudent man can hear God speaking. Conscience is a judgment of reason whereby the human person recognizes the moral quality of a concrete act that he is going to perform, is in the process of performing, or has already completed" (CCC 1777, 1778).

Think of your conscience as the "angelic" version of yourself sitting on your shoulder, giving you sound advice.

While everyone is blessed with a conscience, each individual has a responsibility to develop this conscience from the time they are young. Parents obviously play an important role in developing their children's consciences. As the primary educators of their children on ethical issues and the Catholic faith, parents have a responsibility to teach virtue to

their keiki and help them to avoid fear, selfishness, and pride. As we grow older, we take on the lifelong challenge of continually forming our own consciences and establishing a moral code that enables us to make the proper judgments.

One valuable tool in forming a conscience is the practice of introspection. "It is important for every person to be sufficiently present to himself in order to hear and follow the voice of his conscience" (CCC 1779). In contemporary society, where there are so many distractions and routines, it is extremely important that we take the time to look inward and truly listen to what our inner voice is telling us.

Another way to ensure we are developing a good moral code is by conforming to the mind of Christ. God the Father gave us Jesus, physically present on this earth and recorded in Sacred Scripture, as the ultimate example of what to do and how to behave according to God's Will. In turn, when we act in loving imitation of Christ, we are certain to make practical judgments of conscience.

The next time you are faced with a moral dilemma, take some quiet time to look inward, weigh the positive and negative outcomes, and listen to the voice of your conscience. Read the Gospels for examples of Christ's teachings. By making this a regular practice, you will find that the voice of your conscience will come in louder and more clearly than you may have initially expected.



Feeding the Hungry in our Community

Shining the Light of Christ

Each of us is called to mālama one another and to see the face of Jesus in the faces of those in need of our kōkua. For the past couple years, parishioner Thelma Bacxa and her family have been feeding the hungry in our own community through the simple “street outreach” of Shining the Light of Christ.

“My husband and I started bringing my girls out when they were about 8 or 9 years old,” Thelma says. “After Mass, we went out to the front of Ali’i Drive, and started giving out little snacks to the people there. One time, one of the young women on the street asked for a sandwich, and I thought, ‘OK, we need to fulfill that need here.’”

Every Sunday after the 9 a.m. Mass, Thelma joins a small group of parish individuals and families to bring sandwiches to the people on the street outside the parish. Children are welcome to come, and Thelma takes families with children out in groups of two families at a time. Parishioners are asked to bring a loaf of bread’s worth of individually-wrapped sandwiches, such as tuna salad, peanut butter and



jelly, or egg salad — Thelma also provides small bottles of water and bags of chips. The group then goes on a walk to give out the food items.

“We serve about 10 to 20 people at a time,” Thelma says. “Before we go out, I go over safety guidelines, what you should and shouldn’t do, and make sure everyone is dressed appropriately. We say a little prayer, and then we journey out. For safety reasons, I go to approach people first and then tell the parishioners to come

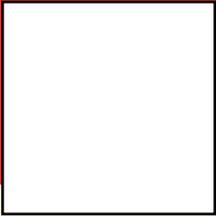
and follow. It’s a great way to evangelize, and a lot of fun, and everyone is very grateful. They often say, ‘We look for you!’

“After we’re done, we come back to the church and we reflect,” she adds. “The ministry touches people in different ways. It’s also a way of showing and appreciating everything we have been given from God — all our gifts are gifts from God, so we need to give back to others who are less fortunate.”

Before holidays such as Thanksgiving, Christmas and Easter, the ministry does some special street outreach. Two days before the planned day, Thelma

continued on back cover

“The ministry touches people in different ways. It’s also a way of showing and appreciating everything we have been given from God — all our gifts are gifts from God, so we need to give back to others who are less fortunate.” — Thelma Bacxa



St. Michael the Archangel Parish

75-5769 Alii Drive
Kailua-Kona, HI 96740



Shining the Light of Christ *continued from page 7*

hands out flyers and encourages their “regulars” to spread the word.

“Last Thanksgiving, we served about 45 individuals — there were people there who I had never seen before!” Thelma says. “We had a simple meal, fresh-baked cookies, and we even had a women’s group provide female necessities in bags.”

Thelma has seen firsthand how this ministry encourages parishioners to open their hearts to those in need.

“This is part of what I do for my work every day, and I wanted to pass that along to other people who also want to experience that,” Thelma says. “This ministry has caused other ministries in the church to want to get involved, so I’ve been taking people out in phases.

“It’s also a really great way for the young people to get involved, as well,” she adds. “When I was a youth

minister, I took the kids out on the street to evangelize. After they all went to college, I’d hear about all the things they had been inspired to do. One of them started studying human services, and others will go to McDonald’s and buy an extra meal so that when they see someone who needs it, they can give it to them. Ministries like this really make them want to do more. We haven’t been able to go out recently due to COVID, but I can’t wait until we are able to start up again.”

If you would like more information about Shining the Light of Christ, or to get involved, please contact Thelma Bacxa at 808-430-9118.

Mass Schedule

Saturday Vigil: 5 p.m. • **Sunday:** 7 a.m., 9 a.m., 1 p.m. and 4 p.m. (English), 11 a.m. and 6 p.m. (Spanish)

Daily: Mon-Sat 7 a.m. • Mon-Tues-Thurs-Fri 5 p.m. • **Confessions:** Saturday 9 a.m. • **Adoration:** Wednesdays 7:30 a.m. to 4:45 p.m.