



St. Michael the Archangel Parish

Moms and Tots Ministry *Helping Parents Make Ends Meet*

In her work with Early Head Start, a federally-funded family support program, parishioner Thelma Bacxa has seen the immediate needs of many families here on the Hawai'i Island. Due to her expertise in this area, she is an invaluable resource for our parish Moms and Tots Ministry, which serves these families in need.

"I got involved in the ministry because of the work I do — Monday through Friday, my job is to work with poverty, so I see the needs of these families with little kids," she says. "We really get a feel for them and their struggles, and the lack of education they might have with regards to the needs of the children, knowing how the economy works, budgeting and how to make it on a daily basis."

Through her job, Thelma helps provide families with crucial education to help them avoid emergency financial situations. She helps them learn how to problem-solve on their own, and teaches them skills to help them save funds so they're not running short at the end of the month. However, she doesn't hesitate to lend a helping hand in emergency situations — and that's where Moms and Tots comes in. The



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The Spirituality of Stewardship

Following in the Footsteps of the Saints

The word “stewardship” has long carried with it the association of a financial obligation to the Church. Many believe that stewardship means “giving my time and money to the Church in support of its work, lest it is unable to survive and thrive.”

Indeed, stewardship does often require sacrifice of some kind. But the reality is that stewardship is not simply a guilt-laden obligation, or a “bill.” Nor is stewardship in any way comparable to a tax payment or a charitable networking opportunity at work. Instead, stewardship is a spiritual way of life – an active response to Christ’s invitation to unreservedly “come after me, and I will make you fishers of men” (Mt 4:19).

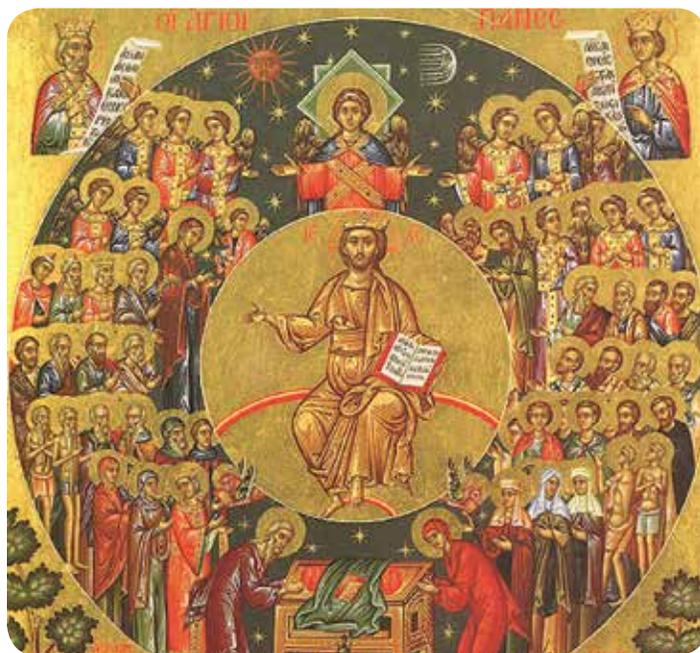
Stewardship is about how we respond to God’s call to discipleship, and there are many different ways we can respond to His call. We can, in turn, live the stewardship way of life simply by making small choices in our daily lives, under normal, everyday circumstances.

Nowhere in Christian history is there a more archetypal example of the variety of ways we can respond to God’s call, than in the lives of the saints. The saints represent a wide cross-section of individuals – old and young, rich and poor – living in different times in human history. Some were called to the religious life, focusing their lives on spirituality and material simplicity through prayer, and helping to form the tenets of faith. Others were individuals focused on charitable outreach, dedicating their whole lives to feeding the hungry and clothing the naked. Still, others faced great adversity and challenges to their faith, and ultimately suffered death and martyrdom in loyalty to Christ and His Church.

However, the commonality that all of these individuals share is that they responded to God’s call to discipleship by utilizing the unique talents that God had given them. They did so in ways that were conducive to their individual personalities, and that actively influenced the circumstances presented to them in their respective days and times. Contemplative spirituality, charitable giving, great courage – all of these roads have led to canonization and, ultimately, eternal life with God in His glory. We are all called to do the same.

As the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops states in its pastoral letter on stewardship, *Stewardship: A Disciple’s Response*, “The challenge, then, is to understand our role – our vocation – and to respond generously to this call from God” (43). When thinking about the spirituality of stewardship, take some time to discern your talents, and how you can best respond to God’s call by naturally and effectively using the gifts He has given you. If you are a gregarious person, this might mean reaching out to a co-worker you don’t know very well, thus helping to create a hospitable work environment. If you are an individual who is often “on the go,” perhaps this means praying the Rosary while you are driving from place to place. If you have recently experienced a financial windfall or unexpected increase in income, this might mean sponsoring a little league team in your community by paying for their uniforms.

God has provided many roads to the Kingdom of Heaven, and in the saints, we see examples of the many roads that have been taken. Choosing the one that is best for us means that we can live stewardship as a spiritual practice and a way of life, and that we may answer His call to discipleship.





A Letter From Our Pastor

Celebrating God's Love

My Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

What is the most widely observed saint's day in February — the one that is kept even by those who aren't practicing Catholics? Undoubtedly, it would be St. Valentine's Day, Feb. 14.

So who was St. Valentine? The saint we celebrate was a priest of Rome martyred in the late third century. But that doesn't explain how his feast came to be celebrated as the day for sending letters, cards and presents as expressions of romantic love.

The truth is that the custom of sending tokens of love comes not from any direct connection with St. Valentine, but from the ancient belief that birds begin to pair off on Feb. 14. And if courtship in the natural world occurred then, it must be appropriate for humans, as well. The association between St. Valentine and love notes is a later development.

Nevertheless, it's not wrong to connect the two. Love has many aspects, and our conception of it is richer if we keep more than one of them in mind. Martyrdom is the result of loving God more



than our earthly life. St. Valentine was a martyr because of his love — his love for Jesus Christ and the Church. If he had not loved God so much, he could have repudiated his Lord and saved his life. We, in turn, express our love by sending cards and gifts on St. Valentine's Day.

But isn't that what stewardship as a way of life is, a little martyrdom? Not to push the image too far, but when we are faithful stewards, we give up a little portion of our lives out of our own

love for Christ. Most Christians will not be called on to be martyrs, in the sense of forfeiting our physical lives for God. But we are called to give up some of our comforts, indulgences and riches because of our love for Him.

So then, as you prepare to celebrate and share your love with your valentine this month, remember St. Valentine and his love for Christ. As well, keep in mind that God loves us, and return that love with your own toward Him. Loving God will be reflected in how you prioritize your use of the time, talent and treasure God has entrusted to you. As St. John wrote (1 Jn 4:19), "We love because he first loved us."

Happy St. Valentine's Day!

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Fr. Lio Faletoi



Meet the Abaire Family,

Recipients of a 2018

Sometimes the most powerful way of sharing our Gospel call with others requires no words at all. As recent Island Treasures Award recipients Paul and Debra Abaire know from experience, witnessing the example of people who are actively living out their faith on a daily basis can certainly inspire someone to grow closer to God and His Church.

Paul and Debra moved to our area from O`ahu in 1990 and joined St. Michael in 1995, but it was another

five years before they became truly engaged in parish life. Paul began volunteering with our parish Cub Scout Pack when his son joined, and then helped out with a youth group fundraiser.

From there, the example and encouragement of a fellow parishioner led the family to become even more involved in church life.

"Shortly after we helped with the fundraiser, Robert Leopoldino invited all the volunteers to come to his house for a 'thank you' party," Paul says. "And pretty much since then, everything we do is with the church. Robert and his wife are kind of like the examples we've been following. They are a guiding light for us."

Twenty years later, Paul is still heavily involved in our parish scouting programs, serving as the Committee Chair for Cub Scouts and Scoutmaster for Boy Scouts. His son, J.T., reached the top rank of Eagle Scout in 2010, but that hasn't stopped Paul from continuing to enjoy volunteering with our scouting programs.

"I believe in scouting," Paul says. "For a child who has no direction or who might become an irresponsible adult, this gives them a sense of what they can do with their life. There is a lot they get out of scouting — it opens a lot of doors and gives them confidence. That's why I do it — I see the positive impact I can make. That's my reward."

Whether they are helping with parish-related activities or during Mass — Debra has served as a Eucharistic Minister and Paul currently serves as an usher — the Abaires have always strived to model an active faith life to their two children, J.T. and Paulette.

"The biggest thing that got me back into the faith was having children," Paul says. "One thing I tell a lot of parents — and this isn't just for the church, but for anything — is that no matter what you want your children to do, you have to give it 110 percent-plus. You need to support them. Instead of just taking them somewhere and dropping them off, stay there with them and guide them."



The Abaire family — (from left) Paul, Debra, Paul "J.T." and Paulette



Island Treasures Award!

"I'm just glad for the life I have, glad for my wife and two children, and really thankful for all the friends we have made throughout all these years. St. Michael has become like family to us."

— Paul Abaire

Inspired by their parents' involvement in parish life, both J.T. and Paulette served in Mass as altar servers throughout their middle school and high school years. Now that they are both working adults, the example set for them by Paul and Debra remains an important part of their life.

As Paul points out, when it comes to sharing the joy of the Gospel call with the next generation, actions often speak louder than words.

"Debra and I were both 'cradle Catholics,' so when we had kids, we figured that we wanted them to grow up in the faith," he says. "So we needed to lead by example. Instead of just saying, 'Go to church or go to RE classes,' we needed to show them the way and lead the way — not just point the way. Before they came along, I had been out of the Church for years. I had drifted away as a teenager. Then when we had them, I wanted to make sure they had a decent example to follow."

Reflecting on their life here at St. Michael, the Abaires are thankful for the parishioners who continue to inspire them to a life of active faith, and for a faith community that has allowed them so many opportunities to share the example of Christ's love at work in the world.

"I'm just glad for the life I have, glad for my wife and two children, and really thankful for all the friends we have made throughout all these years," Paul says. "St. Michael has become like family to us."

Moms and Tots Ministry *continued from front cover*

ministry collects diapers, wipes, hand sanitizers, and disposable garbage bags, creating baby care packs for these families.

"I have seen moms keep babies in their diapers until they have soiled them two or three times, because they can't afford to buy more, and this causes health issues," Thelma says. "When we expressed this need, people at our church started to donate diapers and wipes. We pre-bag these items so they are ready to go, and we have five major areas that we stock.

We provide them for the families in our program, but we also reach out to other agencies. They call us and say they need refills of certain sizes, and we'll load it up and deliver to them."

Moms and Tots has been a huge help to the families with whom Thelma works, and she sees their gratitude on a regular basis. Going forward, she hopes to continue to teach these families skills that will help them to be proudly self-sufficient.

"Sometimes when I arrive, they're down to maybe two diapers, and they say, 'Thank you so much — how did you know?'" Thelma says. "They are very grateful for the help and they express that. We also work with them so that they can learn how to problem solve and rethink the ways that they spend money, so that at the end of the month they don't have to ask for help because they already have what they need on hand. It's all about teaching them the basic skills."

If you would like to help with the Moms and Tots Ministry by purchasing, packing or delivering items, please contact Thelma Bacxa at 808-430-9118.

Understanding the Role of *Sacramentals* in Our Faith

Most Catholics are familiar with the *sacraments* of the Church: Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, Reconciliation, Anointing of the Sick, Matrimony, and Holy Orders. Sacraments are the foundation of the spiritual life of the Church. Sacraments are visible signs of invisible grace — God’s very presence and action in our lives. These signs of God’s love make present what they signify: the action of God in our life that transforms us. A person benefits — receives the gift of grace — from the sacraments whether or not they are well disposed to them, however, one must cooperate with what the Spirit is doing in the Sacrament to receive its full benefit.

Sacramentals are different. These are also sacred signs that can build holiness, but they do not work on their own. One must be aware and fully conscious of the sacred action. Sacramentals sanctify us to get the most benefit from the Sacraments (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1667). Sacramentals are given to us to make holy certain actions in life and life’s circumstances. There are many such sacred signs that are reminders for us of God.

The Sign of the Cross is one of these fundamental signs. This invocation is done at the start of every sacred action and prayer. Holy water is also a sacramental, as it reminds us of our Baptism. By dipping our fingers into holy water and making the Sign of the Cross, we are combining two foundational symbols of the Christian life and the Paschal Mystery — the birth, life, passion, death, and rising of Christ — and bringing them to life in us as we recall our own Baptism.

The exchange of peace in the Mass — and at other Catholic rites — is another example of a sacramental. By making some kind of meaningful sign of peace, we are giving the peace of Christ to another person. The

chalice and other sacred vessels at Mass also are sacramentals, as they remind us of what they are to contain — the very Body and Blood of Christ.

It might be helpful to organize the types of sacramentals into categories, as author Michael Pennock lists in *This Is Our Faith: A Catholic Catechism for Adults*:

"Actions (blessings; genuflections; the Sign of the Cross; bowing one’s head at the name of Jesus; church processions); *Objects* (candles; holy water; statues and icons; holy pictures; blessed ashes; palms; rosaries; relics; incense; vestments; scapulars; church buildings; crosses; religious medals); *Places* (the Holy Land; Rome; Fatima; Lourdes; the National Shrine in Washington, D.C.; and other places of pilgrimage; chapels, retreat centers, and even Catholic cemeteries); *Prayers* (short prayers we say throughout the day; grace before and after meals; prayers at rising and going to bed; praying the rosary, praying a host of other traditional Catholic prayers and devotions); *Sacred Time* (liturgy; holy days; feasts of saints; your saint’s



name day; special days of prayer; fasting and abstinence; retreats, etc.)" (*This Is Our Faith: A Catholic Catechism for Adults*, 176-177).

"Sacramentals...prepare us to receive grace and dispose us to cooperate with it" (CCC 1670). In a word, sacramentals, through the prayer of the Church, bring us to holiness in Christ. All devotions of piety, including sacramentals, should point us toward the liturgy of the Church, a connection to a local parish community, and to the Eucharist (CCC 1675).

The Church has given us these sacred signs to point our thoughts towards holiness, so our lives are filled with reminders of His great love for us. How many sacramentals can you recognize in your life? Probably more than you think.



Kūlia i ka Nu`u ~ Strive for the Summit —`Ōlelo No`eau **Growing as Spiritual Leaders Through the Men's Group**

Through our parish's Men's Group, parish men of all ages are given the opportunity to get to know each other, grow in their faith and develop their role both at the parish and in their families. The ministry meets from September through May — with the exception of December — on the last Monday of each month. At each meeting, group members work through a Bible study or faith formation program and gather for a meal afterwards.

"We start at 6 p.m. and try to be done by 7 p.m., and then we have a simple dinner that the Knights of

Columbus prepare — either ribs or chicken or hamburgers, and some sides to go along with it," says ministry leader Joe James. "The Knights do the cooking while we're in the Men's Group. We all get to sit down and have some social time, and get to know a little bit about each other — what they do, where they're from, what other things they are involved in."

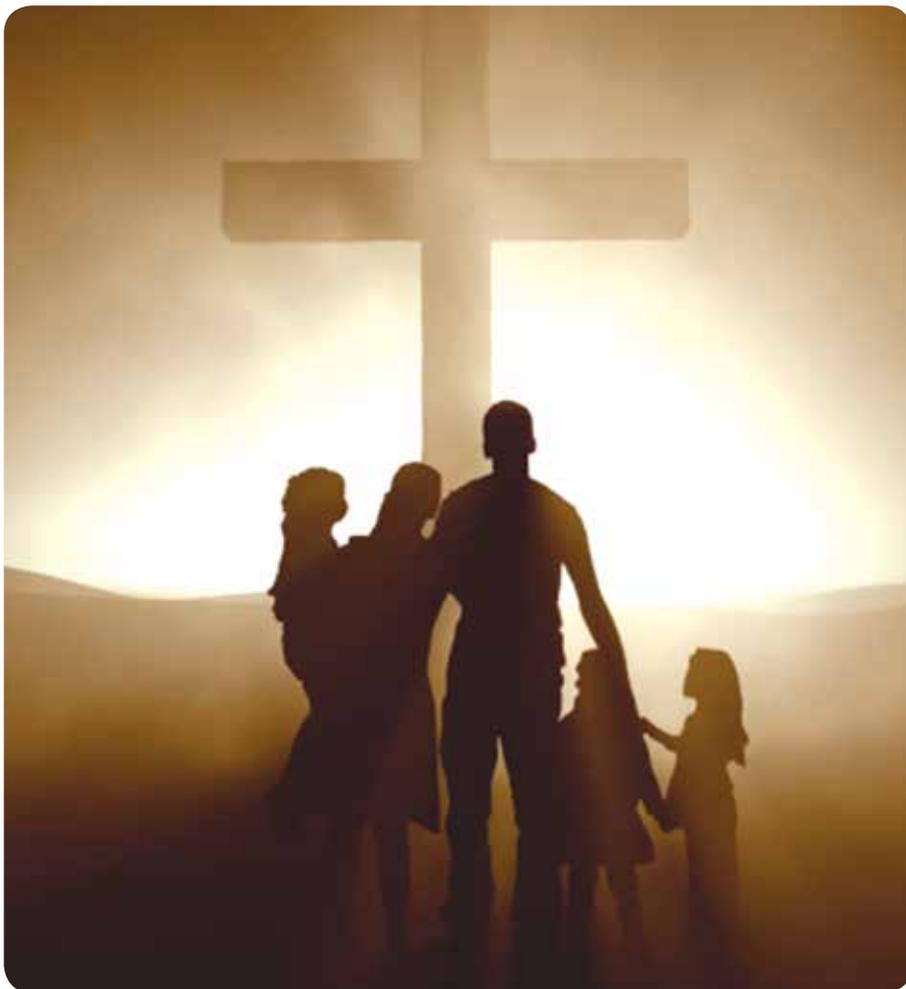
This year, the men of the ministry are doing a program developed by the Knights of Columbus called *Family Fully Alive*. Joe first encountered this program through the Knights and was asked by Fr. Lio to bring it to the Men's Group.

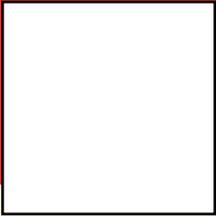
"The program is designed for the men of the family, to help them become the leaders of their families and help build their domestic church," Joe says. "Your spiritual life starts at home, but a lot of men are a

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"Your spiritual life starts at home, but a lot of men are a little hesitant or unsure how to lead their families in this way. This program [Family Fully Alive] helps them to come up with ideas on how to do this, and ways to sit down and talk about it with their families. The men we have involved are very enthusiastic about it this year."

— Joe James





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Growing as Spiritual Leaders Through the **Men's Group**

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Each month's session focuses on a different theme, and involves spiritual readings, discussion questions and an action item to complete over the next month.

"For example, October is the month of the Rosary, so the action item for October was to pray the Rosary once a week with your family," Joe says. "Our November theme was about the saints, so the action item was to pick a couple of saints you weren't familiar with, and research and read about them."

Going forward, the Men's Group plans to continue doing programs like this one, as well as to add a weekend retreat for the men. The men look forward to working through Bishop Robert Barron's *The Mass* program in the near future.

"The idea is that all these programs will go together and have the same focus," Joe says. "It's our responsibility as men to be leaders for our families in this way. We're just trying our best to serve God and build the domestic church."

If you would like more information about the Men's Group, please contact Joe James at jojames9733@aol.com or 727-480-4172.

••••• **Mass Schedule** •••••

Saturday Vigil: 5 p.m. • Sunday: 7 a.m. (Hawaiian/English), 9 a.m. and 4 p.m. (English), 12:00 noon and 6 p.m. (Spanish)
Daily: Mon-Sat 7 a.m. • Mon-Tues-Thurs-Fri 12 p.m. • Confessions: Saturday 9-9:30 a.m.
Immaculate Conception Mission: Sunday 8 a.m. • Holy Rosary Mission: Sunday 10 a.m.