

# ANNUNCIATION CATHOLIC CHURCH & ASCENSION MISSION



## EMBRACING NEW OPPORTUNITIES TO GROW AS STEWARDS AND DISCIPLES THIS NEW YEAR



This is the time of year when we traditionally commit ourselves to new resolutions and goals. We make plans to do things like lose weight or develop a new exercise regime, all in the hopes of increasing our overall health and happiness. Yet, sometimes in our New Year's zeal we're in danger of forgetting the most important aspect of life — namely, our spiritual wellbeing.

“Just as the new calendar year begins, we have also recently begun a new Church year,” says Fr. Stephen. “This presents the perfect time for us to evaluate our journey with the Lord — to ask ourselves where we are in our relationship with Christ and what we can do to help us grow stronger and closer to Him.”

The goal of the parish, then, is to help facilitate this process by providing parishioners with additional opportunities to grow in love and service of the Lord. Taking the theme, “Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations” (Matthew 28:19), Fr. Stephen and his staff hope to further encourage and support parishioners in taking a more active role within the parish, and to help “breathe new

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## 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).

*A Letter from Our Pastor*

## RESOLVE TO GIVE BACK TO GOD IN 2019

Dear Parishioners,

Another new year — 2019! There was a time in my life when this date (and others) seemed so far in the future. It is amazing how those dates start to pile up and stream by, isn't it? I have reached a point where measuring one's life by the years and dates is not as significant as many other things.

I recall reading somewhere, "The world around us asks, 'What does a person own?' But God asks, 'How does a person use what he or she has been given?'" This month of January is one filled with reminders of holiness — the official end of the Christmas season; the Epiphany of our Lord; the Baptism of the Lord; and the return to Ordinary Time, which, as we know, is not "ordinary" at all.

At Epiphany we hear, "Then they opened their treasures and offered him gifts" (Matthew 2:11), a reference to the Magi and their visit to the Christ Child. The image of the Magi kneeling before the infant Jesus and opening their gifts for Him is one we should all try to follow. Each of us is called to open our gifts before Jesus and offer Him what He needs. I heard a suggestion once that if you have a problem with this thought, you should perhaps keep one of the Magi from your Christmas Nativity and place it on your desk as a reminder.



God has given us the greatest gift He could give. He gave His only Son. When we think about the enormity of that gift of Jesus sent to save us, in addition to all the other blessings which God has entrusted to us, it is very humbling. God has given us so much. What do we give in return?

Making resolutions is common at this time of year. We will also hear this month about how Jesus called the first apostles. The Lord calls us as well to follow Him. Let us resolve to try to do that better — all of us. That does not mean we have to leave our work and our families behind, but we do need to offer our service to Jesus. That should be our top resolution.

In *The Theology of the Hammer*, Habitat for Humanity co-founder Millard Fuller wrote, "The only truly safe investment one can make in life is what is given away." First and foremost, God wants us. That should be our real resolution — to give ourselves to the Lord. May we all do a better job of that in 2019. God bless you all.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Reverend Stephen Macedo



## Annunciation Pilgrims to At



*Larry, Deeann, Dore, Helena and Jaydon gather to make a video to say "hello" to JMJ Travel staff.*

This month, 13 pilgrims from Annunciation Parish will be traveling to Panama City, Panama for the 2019 World Youth Day celebration! World Youth Day was initiated by St. Pope John Paul II in 1985, and has continued throughout the years as an international gathering of Catholic youth from around the world. Four of our parish youth will be embarking on this pilgrimage accompanied by our Pastor Fr. Stephen Macedo, Fr. Lio Faletoi from St. Michael the Archangel, three parents, three church-sponsored adults, and another adult from Hilo.

"I hope our youth grow in their faith and come back from World Youth Day as stronger Catholics ready to evangelize and spread the Good News of our Lord Jesus Christ," says Larry Denis III, one of the adult pilgrims accompanying the youth.

"I'm most looking forward to traveling and getting closer to other pilgrims, as well as meeting

people from around the world who have the same beliefs as I do," says teen pilgrim Jaydon Tripp.

For over a year, the pilgrims have been meeting monthly to prepare. The youth have created presentations on the culture and food of the area, safety, and the saints of World Youth Day. In addition, some of the pilgrims went to watch the movie *Pope Francis: A Man of His Word* when it was in town. They have also gone on long walks to prepare for the 11-mile-long route to see the Holy Father at the event.

The group will depart on Jan. 20 and return on Jan. 30. The overall event will take place over six days, and will include catechesis, Mass, music, the Stations of the Cross, and opportunities for prayer and the Sacrament of Reconciliation. World Youth Day culminates in the walking pilgrimage to the site of the closing

# Attend World Youth Day 2019

Mass, which will be celebrated by Pope Francis.

“I look forward to meeting all the different youth from all around the world, also seeing the pope,” says teen pilgrim Deeann Bokuku. “I hope to learn more about our religion.”

“We can’t wait to see our Holy Father,” Larry says. “That is definitely going to be a highlight. I am also looking forward to meeting pilgrims from around the world and to be energized by their enthusiasm and love for our Church.”

The pilgrimage will also be an opportunity for the group to experience the culture of the area, and to visit other spiritually significant sites.

“While in Panama, we will take a cruise down the Panama Canal — we are looking forward to that!” Larry says. “On our way back, we will be spending two days in Mexico City to visit the Cathedral of Our Lady of Guadalupe, and to visit Mexican pyramids and a few other famous sites. The Evangelista family from Puako will be our tour guides in Mexico, along with a bodyguard to keep us safe.”

“I am excited to learn from the people we meet there and from the things we see,” adds teen pilgrim Helena Goto.

The pilgrims are grateful to all those who have helped make this pilgrimage a financial reality.

“A large amount of the pilgrimage has been funded by a generous and anonymous donor,” Larry says. “Our youth worked hard doing work for this individual and, in turn, money was donated to the parish to help us pay for our pilgrimage. The balance, and that of the three church-sponsored adults, is being paid for by our parish through our stewardship efforts. We are blessed that we didn’t have to do any other fundraisers, and we thank our donor and parishioners for being so generous.”



*Deeann, Helena, Josiah and Jaydon — the four teenagers from Annunciation who will be representing Hawaii and our parish at World Youth Day.*



*Pilgrims Larry, Deeann, Helena and Dore are excited for World Youth Day.*

*Please pray for our pilgrims, and keep track of their progress through photos posted on the Annunciation Facebook page! The page can also be accessed through our parish website at [www.bigislandcatholicchurch.org](http://www.bigislandcatholicchurch.org).*

## MAKING THE DIFFERENCE



All life is sacred — and as Catholics, we have a responsibility to protect life and share the truth with others. Annunciation’s Respect Life Ministry aims to educate people on pro-life issues and to effect change through action.

“As Catholics, we believe in the sanctity of life in all its stages, as our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit,” says ministry leader Mary Erickson. “Our ministry is active in that we promote pro-life issues, but we would like to see more activity and involvement.”

Our parish’s Respect Life Ministry was started in 2007. In addition to Mary, parishioners Celeste Tandora, Cathy Elliazar, Jan Brencick, and Dick and Carol Gilsdorf are involved. The ministry currently organizes efforts such as a Respect Life table at the church to educate parishioners, blurbs in the church bulletin, and the Rosary for Life.

“Our members help to lead a Rosary for Life, where we stand outdoors holding signs and praying the Rosary,” Mary says. “We do this at least twice a year.”

Ministry members Dick and Carol Gilsdorf have both worked to raise awareness of pro-life issues, both with the adults and children of the parish. They have placed prayer cards in the pews of both Annunciation church and Ascension Mission in Puako, and have provided a DVD on the development of the baby in the womb, which is being shown to our parish youth as part of our Religious Education program.

“I thought one way to combat the pro-abortion mindset is to educate our young people in Religious Education,” Dick says. “I

***Congratulations to our 2018 Annunciation Island Treasures Paul, Angela, and Hunter Bugado, Deeann Pitiol and Jessica Pavao (not pictured). Mahalo to our Island Treasures for all you do for our parish!***



# OF A LIFETIME THROUGH THE *Respect Life Ministry*

talked to Father about using this movie as a part of our program, to get the concept through to our young people that a pregnancy is a real person inside — it's a human being, not just a piece of tissue."

Both the Gilsdorfs have been passionate about the pro-life cause for a long time — Dick himself faced the issue in the medical field when he worked as an anesthesiologist on the mainland. Dick and Carol hope that the ministry will be able to educate more Catholics on the Church's stance on life issues, and that subsequently, more people will get involved in our parish's Respect Life Ministry. This way, we can work together to effect change in whatever ways we can.

"I think what makes me feel passionate about this is that the unborn child is not recognized on a national basis or by many people in our society," Dick says. "No one is defending the unborn child other than anti-abortion activists. The unborn child is not protected by the law, and that right to live should not be taken away from the child."

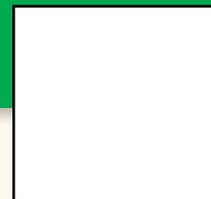
"I feel very strongly about what is happening legally in this country — it's been going on and not getting any better," Carol says. "That it has been so accepted is very disturbing. I just feel like something has to be done, and I think we should step forth and try to help anyone who is trying to make this decision. Psalm 139 says that we are formed by God, that He knows us before we are born. To me, as a Christian and as a Catholic, it's clear that the Bible teaches us to respect all life."

In the future, the ministry hopes to bring in pro-life speakers, and to create more opportunities for parishioners to learn about the cause and take action. On Tuesday, Jan. 22 — the 46th anniversary of the Roe v. Wade decision — the ministry will host an outdoor Rosary for Life at noon in front of Annunciation Church. All are invited and encouraged to participate.

## **A Prayer for the Respect of Life**

*Heavenly Father, the beauty and  
dignity of human life  
was the crowning of Your creation.  
You further ennobled that life when  
Your Son  
became one with us in His  
incarnation.  
Help us to realize the sacredness of  
human life and to respect it  
from the moment of conception until  
the last moment at death.  
Give us courage to speak  
with truth and love  
and with conviction in defense of life.  
Help us to extend the gentle hand of  
mercy and forgiveness  
to those who do not reverence Your  
gift of life.  
To all, grant pardon for the times we  
have failed to be grateful  
for Your precious gift of life or to  
respect it in others.  
We ask this in Jesus' Name.  
Amen.*

*If you would like more information about the Respect Life Ministry, or to get involved, please contact Mary Erickson in Waimea at 808-887-1220 or [annchhi@hawaiiintel.net](mailto:annchhi@hawaiiintel.net), or Dick and Carol Gilsdorf at 808-895-4953 or [caroldic123@gmail.com](mailto:caroldic123@gmail.com).*



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## *Embracing New Opportunities* continued from front cover

life into ministries that have been struggling” and “lighten the responsibility” of ministries by sharing the load through a team approach.

“I hope we can help parishioners grow a deeper relationship with the Lord,” Fr. Stephen says. “That we can journey together toward the Lord in 2019.”

Yet for this to happen, adds Fr. Stephen, our faith must be more than something we hold within. It must become a lifestyle, permeating all aspects of our daily living, taking root in action, both in the parish and the wider community.

“Being a disciple of Christ demands action, not just good thoughts,” Fr. Stephen says. “Being a bump on a pew once a week will not get you to Heaven. Someday we will all have to answer to our Lord and be held accountable for how we used of our time, talent, and treasure — which are all total gifts from God.”

We invite all parishioners to spend a few quiet moments this New Year, reflecting on their many gifts and asking of ourselves, “Lord, what is it you are calling me to do? How can I serve you better this year?”

***“Being a disciple of Christ demands action, not just good thoughts. Being a bump on a pew once a week will not get you to Heaven.” — Fr. Stephen***

### MASS SCHEDULE

**Saturday Vigil:** 5 p.m. (Waimea) | **Sunday:** 8 a.m. (Waimea) & 10 a.m. (Puako) | **Confession:** Saturday 4 p.m. (Waimea)